



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

FORUM ARCHIVE — 2007-2011

Political Inbox:

2007-2011

Edited by Steven W. Baker for FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE

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Dedicated to
my incredible daughters,
Laurel Elizabeth
and
Marissa Susan,
and to all my worthy
friends at FotM.

Introduction and Excuses

This is a project I embarked upon six months ago, and that's just the editing part—an average of probably 15-20 hours a week. I wanted to do justice to special writing that comes from the hearts of friends, and I guess I'm just slow sometimes. :-)

The project has certainly been no chore. Instead, it has been fun and interesting, communication usually is. I have learned more than in the original moments of the emails because I've had time to reread and rethink things. I've appreciated that time.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this effort. To my wife, **Marcela**, who has brought me coffee, coca tea, and grilled cheese sandwiches at odd hours, so I could keep working, I offer you the love of our first kiss, which continues and grows, and I thank you for your help in all things.

The most important group of people for me to thank are the members of Friends of the Middle who have contributed their thoughts and feelings and a little part of their lives to this effort. Not that anyone knew, until maybe the very end of these emails, that they were doing anything remotely like contributing to some future ebook project. No, they were engaged in a higher purpose, simply trying to communicate with a friend. These are special people, also smart, knowledgeable, successful people, and that's why this project is so special. This compilation resulted from these people doing something to try to make the world a little better place, a world that might find the answers to its problems if led by people who care as much.

Thank you all, my friends! Thank you **Pam**, who has probably written the most words of any of us and they are thoughtful, well-written words, indeed; **SteveM**, who essentially ended my apolitical years by sending me emails that pi*sed me off, our argument continues, but we can't forget the great times we had traveling coast-to-coast when we were young enough to need to learn everything; **Dennis**, who kept sending me things that almost always made sense, even though I began thinking of him as a conspiracy theorist, but I finally concluded in the end at last that it's way past the conspiracy stage; **SteveG**, who has probably introduced us all to more good sources, information, and causes than anyone; **GaryC**, who wrote more interestingly from a conservative perspective than most of us have seen anywhere, he can make the Right seem almost logical, I swear; **Charis**, who welcomed me as a friend to a new and strange land and loves writing almost as much as I do; **India**, who took me around the world with her.

Thank you all so much for the words you have written and the treasures you have led us all to: **AliceMarie, Art, Ben, Bill, Bob, BobK, BrentR, Charlie, Clark, Dale, DaveY, David, Dick, GaryF, Jim, Larry, Lianne, Marci, Marissa, Mark, Mary, Mike, SteveBA, Pat, PamB, Patti, Paul, Paula, Phil, RickF, Robert, Sandy, Susette, Tom, and Trudy.**

The other group to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude is our F0tM Newsletter subscribers and readers, who now number almost 400 and growing. Everyone, please keep forwarding the FotM Newsletters to everyone in your Contacts List and, now, the link to this free FotM ebook!

Someone might ask: Why would anyone want to read 1856 emails and articles in 44 categories, consisting of about 977,000 words (roughly half from FotM members and half from sources), in a 1550 page, 20 Mb., PDF ebook? Simple! Because, for most of us, this was the first opportunity we had to describe a sort of philosophy of life for ourselves. It's all here. Who we are. What we value. What we want to change. What we fear. What our hopes and dreams of the future are. What we believe in and do not believe in. For those who know any of us or will, for our grandchildren and the future, I wish I had something like this from my parents...maybe as good as a video. For everyone else, the subject matter is one that will, I believe, prove to be a crucial time in American history, from 2007 through 2011 and into 2012 with the FotM Newsletters. Frankly, many of us hope this will prove to be the beginning of the transition away from the failed policies of both major political parties during most of our lifetimes.

And, as I have often told people as I have worked on this project, the end result is an undergraduate education in the inner workings of the Current Events of this important four year period. Few on the Right or the Left could read it cover-to-cover and not come away with an altered view of what's going on in America this century.

Political Inbox: 2007-2011 contains many valuable little treasures: President Obama's birth certificate and Inaugural Address, "William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech, The Treaty of Tripoli, which answers the question of whether the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation. Articles by famous people like Mitt Romney, Robert Reich, Alan Grayson,

Noam Chomsky, Bill Moyers, Oliver North, Christopher Hitchens, and many, many more. The short period covered encompasses a lot of history: two important elections, the election of our first black president, the formation of the Tea Party, the Housing Bubble Crash of 2008, the Bail-Out, the passage of Obamacare, the transfer of power from the Republicans to the Democrats, then back to the Tea Party Republicans in the House, the stalemate, gridlock, and near default of the government, coming out of Recession, and, at last, the beginnings of a slow Recovery.

Lest I continue on and overstate my case, instead, please allow me to apologize for many lost emails, especially from the early period, many that I simply deleted, not having imagined this compilation or FotM. But, even then, if I or a friend wrote very much on any non-personal subject, or sent something very interesting, I tended to keep them. Much of the stuff I deleted was redundant material, most of the rest was personal. I probably received every one of the Obama attack emails from the Right at least a dozen times and tried to reflect a little of that in these pages. In very few cases does anything missing affect that which remains. Where that was the case, I have usually provided a few notes to compensate: **[This is a note. —SteveB]**.

As time passed and the vision became clearer, I started saving just about everything, though most communications of an entirely personal nature do not appear in this compilation and, obviously, except in my own case, User Names protect the identities of FotM Members and Subscribers.

I can't explain the strange lull in email activity about and around the 2010 elections, other than to say we must have all felt a collective sense of dread that suppressed communications in that direction. Maybe we all knew, so nothing needed to be said, maybe I got discouraged and tossed it all, but I can't remember doing any such thing, nor would that be like me.

A Few Technical Things About *Political Inbox: 2007-2011*

1. To read this ebook online: http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org/Political_Inbox_2007-2011.pdf.
2. To download this ebook: <http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org/>. <right-click> on the picture of the ebook and, depending on which browser you use, select "Save target as..." or "Save Link as..." Then you can change the name of the file and determine where to store it on your computer. Also, if you open the PDF file in your browser (#1, above) or using the Adobe Acrobat Reader, you can select the picture of a disk to save the file.
3. Email: FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com.
4. There are two hyperlinked indexes. The first contains only the 44 subject matter categories and links to the main index of all emails segregated by category and arranged mainly by date, oldest first, but also by logical thread. All related links go back and forth. After you jump to an email, clicking that date code will take you back to that entry in the index.
5. In the body of the compilation, all emails appear strictly by date and time, oldest through news.
6. To navigate, click on Category Headings (back and forth between the two indexes) and Date Codes (back and forth between the main index and the emails. Red links are internal to this document, blue links connect to the internet.
7. Here is how the date codes work: DATE-ID = YYYYMMDD-##.
8. Training Link: [20120504-01](#). Try it, then jump back here. (If you're computer savvy, please excuse.)
9. See? It's very easy to get around and not get lost. Alternately, it can be enjoyable to skip the index and simply read the emails and articles in any order you like.
10. Many of the SUBJECT lines of the original emails have been changed to unify and better represent the contents of the particular THREADS of conversation.
11. Organizing the Categories and their emails is as much a work or art as a science. The largest categories ended-up being, basically, Economics and Taxes. I left these Categories broad because it's too often a toss-up, since many related subjects can be touched upon in any one email or article. Some Categories are very small, but

they have very distinctive subject matter, so I tried to accommodate. I hope you will find the index easy to use. These same categories, approximately, will be used when the daily FotM Newsletter indexes are combined and organized into the monthly compilations.

12. As usual, please try to inform me of errors, inconsistencies, confusions, or any other problems that you find.

Salud! And, as Alan Grayson says, Courage!

--Steven W. Baker (SteveB)

FotM Editor/Moderator

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<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

Conviction's Lies

To enter the realm of truth
Certainty must be left behind
With all the other forgotten
And lost things of this world
Neither hope nor love among them
Though bright beyond all imagining
Remember conviction's lies.

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FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE — FORUM ARCHIVE

Jan. 4, 2007 thru Oct. 24, 2011

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SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — BARACK OBAMA			
20080923-03	18:14	Ben	Fw: "A Conservative for Obama"
20081014-01	12:11	SteveB	Fw: "Sorry, Dad, I'm Voting for Obama"
20081021-02	17:00	SteveB	"In Endgame, Metrics Are Adding Up for Obama"
20081022-05	14:01	SteveB	Editorial Endorsement: "Barack Obama for President"
20081025-01	10:29	SteveB	Why Are So Many Republicans Endorsing Obama?
20081026-01	20:44	SteveB	Barack Obama Quote: "The Real America"
20081027-08	21:45	SteveB	Republicans for Obama
20081028-07	18:34	Mike	What Do You Like About Obama?
20081029-01	11:00	SteveB	Re: What Do You Like About Obama?
20091010-02	18:33	SteveB	Re: What Do You Like About Obama?
20081030-02	20:31	SteveB	"Raising Arizona"
20081030-03	20:50	SteveB	"Obama the Unruffled"
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — BARACK OBAMA CAMPAIGN CORRESPONDENCE			
20080128-01	13:05	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries & Election
20080128-02	14:08	SteveB	To: Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries & Election
20080311-01	10:47	B. Obama	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton
20080312-03	17:52	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton
20080318-01	18:00	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Video of Speech
20080319-02	20:18	B. Obama	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Iraq War
20080320-01	18:31	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton
20080324-02	17:46	G. Cohen	Barack Obama; 2008 Montana Primary
20080415-01	18:20	B. Obama	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries
20080507-02	18:50	C. Glenn	2008 Montana Democratic Primary
20080611-01	09:56	J. Carson	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Are you up to the challenge?
20080620-01	16:47	B. Obama	Declaring Our Independence
20080814-01	10:19	H. Dean	Fw A Book of Lies—your action urgently needed
20080815-03	10:02	SteveM	Re: A Book of Lies
20080921-14	18:01	SteveB	Re: A Book of Lies
20080822-04	18:58	D. Plouffe	Keeping Track
20080822-06	23:04	S. Schale	10 New Offices: Florida Campaign for Change
20080831-02	16:39	J. Fornof	Senator Obama's Campaign for Change in Hamilton, Montana
20080918-01	14:30	B. Obama	Solving Our Financial Crisis
20081006-04	19:03	D. Plouffe	Just Released: Full McCain/Keating Video
2008 PRIMARIES — HILLARY & BILL CLINTON			
20080121-01	12:19	SteveB	Hillary Clinton's Lack of Experience
20080207-01	08:32	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-02	13:53	David	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-05	15:14	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-03	14:06	Bill	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-06	15:23	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-04	14:23	Mark	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080207-07	15:33	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080217-01	13:57	SteveB	"Hillary Hopes You've Forgotten—Have You?"
20080310-01	11:28	SteveB	"Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"
20080310-02	11:35	Bill	Re: "Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"
20080310-03	12:10	SteveB	Re: "Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"
20080318-02	18:24	SteveM	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
20080319-01	09:19	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
20080324-01	21:00	SteveM	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
20080401-01	19:50	SteveB	"The Tall Tale of Tuzla" Hillary Clinton
20080402-01	09:21	Ben	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Bolivia

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20080403-01	14:58	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Bolivia
20080413-01	09:02	SteveB	"The Hillary Deathwatch: Bill Clinton Opens the Old Bosnia Wound"
20080413-02	09:12	SteveB	"Do They Want Us to Hate Them?" Hillary & Bill Clinton
20080413-03	09:14	SteveB	Video: Hillary Clinton Laughs Off Question
20080426-01	12:20	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
20080501-01	09:56	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Evan Bayh & Hillary Clinton
20080510-01	18:04	H. Clinton	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
20080524-02	14:07	SteveB	To: Hillary Clinton; 2008 Primaries
20080602-01	12:05	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton in Stevensville, MT
20080605-01	14:58	SteveB	"Five Reasons Why Clinton Lost"
20080605-02	12:39	David	"How We Haven't Seen the Back of the Clintons Yet"
20080605-03	13:05	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, John McCain
20080605-04	13:10	SteveM	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, John McCain
20080607-02	14:40	SteveB	"The Comeback Id" 2008 Primaries, Bill Clinton
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — JOE BIDEN			
20081022-01	09:55	SteveM	Joe Biden Gaffe: "Obama Will Be Tested by Russia"
20081022-04	13:37	SteveB	Re: Joe Biden Gaffe
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — JOHN McCAIN			
20080516-09	12:32	SteveM	John McCain
20080516-11	14:38	SteveB	Re: John McCain
20080516-12	14:58	SteveB	John McCain; War
20080516-13	15:46	SteveB	Re: John McCain; Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton
20080523-01	13:56	SteveB	John McCain; VP Pick Pointers
20080605-05	14:29	SteveB	Re: John McCain Can't Win
20080605-06	15:03	SteveM	Re: John McCain (defense)
20080605-07	19:04	SteveB	Re: John McCain, Energy
20080611-02	13:59	SteveM	Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election
20080611-03	16:20	SteveB	Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election
20080611-04	21:00	SteveB	Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election, Barack Obama
20080802-02	15:21	SteveB	"McCain: The Most Reprehensible of the Keating Five"
20080803-08	15:17	SteveB	Re: John McCain, Keating Five
20080804-01	10:31	SteveB	Re: John McCain, Keating Five
20080808-02	20:00	SteveB	"McCain Madness"
20080810-01	15:54	SteveB	"John McCain's Skeleton Closet"
20080810-02	16:03	SteveB	"John McCain and Adultery"
20080810-03	16:18	SteveB	"Is John McCain Stupid?"
20080814-06	18:13	SteveB	Colin Powell on John McCain
20080818-06	21:07	SteveB	To: Keith Olbermann; "John McCain, Grow up!"
20080819-07	19:37	SteveM	1999 <i>Arizona Republic</i> Articles on John McCain (Chapts. 1-7), incl. The Keating Five
20080820-01	11:25	SteveM	Re: The Keating Five
20080902-05	19:53	SteveB	Fw: P.O.W.
20080909-01	10:20	Ben	Fw: McCain-Pain Bumper Sticker
20080912-01	07:12	SteveG	Fw: Candidates' Educational Backgrounds
20080916-01	08:28	SteveM	"Spotting a New Leader"
20080916-04	13:04	SteveB	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080916-05	14:08	SteveM	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080916-06	15:48	SteveB	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080916-07	19:08	SteveM	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080917-01	09:03	SteveB	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080917-02	10:07	SteveM	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080917-03	10:23	SteveB	Re: "Spotting a New Leader"
20080919-05	19:07	SteveB	This Is the Week McCain Lost the Election
20080924-12	17:29	SteveB	The Wounded POW Hero Ploy
20080924-13	17:52	SteveB	Panic!!

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20080925-02	14:41	SteveB	"I Am a Republican..."
20081005-01	17:57	SteveB	"The Dumbing Down of the GOP" (Palin), "Guess Who's Not Coming to Dinner" (McCain)
20081010-04	21:10	SteveB	McCain-Palin Ticket Sinks in the Polls
20081011-02	09:33	SteveB	Overheard Conversation: John McCain & Rush Limbaugh
20081015-01	09:29	SteveB	"McCain's Mission Impossible"
20081015-02	09:45	SteveB	Say Something Positive, John McCain
20081019-03	13:10	SteveB	Overheard Conversation: John McCain & Rush Limbaugh, Part 2
20081024-02	16:32	SteveB	"McCain's Hero: More Socialist Than Obama!"
20081025-02	10:52	SteveB	McCain's Message of Change
20081027-07	18:19	SteveB	I Read the News Today, Oh Boy!
20081028-03	08:19	SteveB	Redistributing the Wealth Is a Bipartisan Activity
20081030-01	12:27	SteveB	"McCain Camp Trying to Scapegoat Palin"
20081031-01	16:15	SteveB	"The Low Road Don't Lead to Nowhere"
20081105-01	08:55	SteveB	"Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"
20081105-02	11:47	Dennis	Re: "Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"
20081108-01	08:55	SteveB	Re: "Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"
20081106-01	08:33	SteveB	"Rifts Divided McCain, Palin Camps"
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — SARAH PALIN			
20080830-04	11:37	SteveM	"Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"
20080830-05	12:46	SteveB	Re: "Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"
20080830-06	13:17	SteveB	Re: "Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"
20080830-07	16:08	SteveB	Fw (from MoveOn): Who Is Sarah Palin?
20080903-03	17:06	Clark	"Noonan, Murphy Trash Palin on Hot Mike: 'It's Over'"
20080903-06	19:45	SteveB	To: Pat Buchanan; About Sarah Palin?
20080908-01	10:25	David	Fw: Photo: Patriotic & Likes Guns
20080917-06	17:55	SteveM	Fw: "Sarah Palin is the U.S.'s Answer to Margaret Thatcher!"
20080921-02	09:59	SteveB	Fw: Donate to Planned Parenthood in Sarah Palin's Name
20080924-03	10:18	SteveB	"The Twelve Lies of Sarah Palin"
20081002-01	10:07	SteveB	"Skepticism of Palin Growing, Poll Finds"
20081020-01	18:14	SteveB	Fw: Sarah Palin Debate Flow Chart
20081022-02	10:19	SteveB	"Sarah Palin Flunks a 3rd Grader's Question"
20081031-04	20:57	SteveB	"Palin Misreads First Amendment; Eagleburger: 'Palin's not ready!'"
20081117-01	09:58	Bill	"The Wild Wordsmith of Wasilla"
20081206-02	10:21	SteveB	"Despite Earlier Furor, Palin Shopping Continued"
2008 PRIMARIES & ELECTION — MISC.			
20080215-01	16:08	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama
20080215-02	18:06	Dick	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama
20080215-03	19:11	Marissa	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama
20080418-01	13:49	SteveB	Graph: Barack Obama vs. Hillary Clinton
20080422-01	09:38	SteveM	Fw: Election? 2008 Primaries
20080423-01	10:00	SteveB	Re: Election? 2008 Primaries
20080507-01	11:16	SteveB	2008 Indiana Democratic Primary
20080818-01	10:13	SteveM	Fw: "I'm Voting Democrat"
20080818-02	10:40	SteveB	Re: "I'm Voting Democrat"
20080826-02	11:33	SteveB	"The Election from Hell" 2008 Election
20080905-03	15:54	SteveB	The End of Two Political Dynasties?
20080917-05	17:53	SteveM	Fw: Presidential Candidate Comparison
20081010-02	13:43	SteveB	The Great Awakening
20081027-09	12:12	SteveB	Needed: A Populist Party of the Center
20081029-10	14:39	Charlie	Re: Needed: A Populist Party of the Center
20081029-13	16:00	SteveB	Re: Needed: A Populist Party of the Center
20081102-01	08:04	SteveB	"Sheepish, Proud or Set to Flip a Coin, They're Still Undecided"

2008 ELECTION — THE EXPERIENCE LIE: JOHN McCAIN vs. BARACK OBAMA

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20080630-01	18:33	SteveM	John McCain's Military Experience
20080630-02	20:08	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Military Experience
20080701-01	15:45	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Military Experience
20080701-02	17:52	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Military Experience & Other Problems
20080701-03	18:37	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Other Problems
20080701-04	18:59	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Military Experience
20080701-05	19:14	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Military Experience
20080721-01	12:28	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Military Experience
20080801-01	11:03	SteveM	Fw: Executive Summary; McCain vs. Obama
20080801-02	16:31	SteveB	Re: Executive Summary; McCain vs. Obama
20080801-03	19:27	SteveB	To: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point 08/01/08 @ 18:45, Experience
20080801-04	20:19	SteveM	Re: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point, Experience
20080802-01	10:10	SteveB	Re: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point, Experience
20080921-07	14:58	Trudy	Fw: "143 Days of Experience"
20080921-12	17:21	SteveB	Re: "143 Days of Experience"
20081024-03	16:44	SteveB	"This Is Not a Test"
<u>2008 ELECTION — SERIES: JOHN MCCAIN'S FAMOUS SENILE MOMENTS OF THE DAY</u>			
20080721-02	09:19	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08
20080722-01	10:21	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08
20080723-01	17:22	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08
20080723-02	20:11	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08
20080724-01	10:27	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08
20080723-03	08:11	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/23/08
20080724-02	20:53	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/24/08
20080802-03	15:48	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/02/08
20080805-01	23:08	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/05/08 & Bonus: "Cindy McCain as Miss Buffalo Chip?"
20080806-01	20:56	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/06/08
20080806-02	21:06	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/06/08—Bonus
20080807-01	19:31	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/07/08
20080808-01	18:12	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/08/08; "John McCain: Profile in Courage? Older Than God?"
20080811-01	20:46	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/11/08 & Bonus
20080812-01	20:57	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080812-02	21:46	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-01	08:29	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-02	08:54	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-03	09:09	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-04	09:39	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-05	12:00	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08
20080813-07	13:23	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08; "Rice Told Georgia to Avoid Conflict with Russia"
20080813-10	21:20	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/13/08
20080814-03	17:56	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/14/08
20080815-01	06:50	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/15/08
20080816-01	06:56	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/16/08
20080818-04	07:34	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/18/08
20080818-05	08:48	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/18/08—Part 2; "The McCain Doctrines"
20080819-08	21:08	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/19/08; "John Lewis: John McCain's Wise Man?"
20080821-02	11:29	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/20/08; "McCain Unsure How Many Houses He Owns"
20080821-09	19:44	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08
20080821-10	20:22	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus
20080821-13	23:47	Dennis	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20080822-01	09:52	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus
20080822-05	19:44	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/22/08
20080825-01	21:15	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/25/08
20080826-01	10:13	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/26/08
20080827-01	00:32	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/27/08
20080828-01	15:03	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/28/08
20080829-01	06:55	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/29/08
20080829-02	07:40	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/29/08—Addendum
20080830-01	06:41	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08
20080830-02	07:43	SteveM	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08
20080830-03	11:07	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08
20080901-01	16:58	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/01/08; "Palin Flipped on Alaska's 'Bridge to Nowhere'"
20080902-06	21:28	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/02/08; "Bushies Come to Palin's Aid"
20080903-02	16:06	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08; "Obama hits Davis on 'Issues'"
20080903-04	18:33	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08—Bonus
20080903-05	18:53	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08—Bonus—Addendum
20080905-01	09:47	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
20080905-02	11:07	Mike	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
20080905-04	19:11	Mike	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
20080910-01	19:53	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
20080915-01	20:40	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08
20080916-02	12:38	SteveG	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08
20080916-03	13:01	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08
20080916-08	20:31	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/16/08
20080916-09	22:01	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/16/08—Addendum
20080918-02	20:50	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/18/08
20080919-01	10:03	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/18/08
20080919-06	20:25	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/19/08
20080922-05	22:41	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/22/08
20080923-01	15:37	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/23/08; "McCain Loses His Head"
20080924-09	15:07	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08
20080924-10	15:54	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08—Bonus
20080924-11	16:17	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08—Bonus
20080925-03	20:28	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/25/08
20080925-04	21:14	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/25/08
20081001-01	11:37	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/01/08
20081023-01	12:27	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08; "My Friends, That's Change That We Can't Not Believe in Disagreeing With"
20081023-02	12:36	SteveG	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08
20081023-04	14:38	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08
20081023-03	13:07	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08—Bonus; "McCain Says Obama Will 'Say Anything' to Win"
20081024-01	09:06	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/24/08
<u>2012 PRIMARIES & ELECTION</u>			
20110516-02	15:33	GaryC	2012 Primaries/Election; President Obama
20110516-03	15:49	SteveB	Re: 2012 Primaries/Election; Republicans
20110516-04	15:53	GaryC	Re: 2012 Primaries/Election; Mitch Daniels Not a Socialist
20110516-06	16:21	SteveB	Re: 2012 Primaries/Election; Mitch Daniels Not Running
20110518-02	19:32	SteveB	"Horrifying: Newt Gingrich Wants to Make America 'Like Texas'"
20110523-01	08:38	SteveB	2012 Republican Candidates
20110523-02	09:06	SteveB	"AP Exclusive: Former Palin Aide Pens Tell-All"
20110524-01	13:04	SteveB	2012 Election & Fw: Alan Grayson

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20110604-01	08:08	SteveB	"Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110605-01	18:08	Lianne	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110605-04	20:23	SteveB	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-01	07:29	Lianne	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-02	08:53	SteveB	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-03	09:18	Ben	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-13	18:59	GaryC	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride" President Obama
20110606-17	19:37	SteveB	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride" President Obama
20110606-18	19:44	GaryC	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-19	19:53	SteveB	Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"
20110606-07	11:19	SteveB	"Palin Defends Her Grasp of History"
20110610-01	09:29	SteveB	"Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse"
20110610-02	09:32	GaryC	Re: "Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse" President Obama
20110610-03	09:56	SteveB	Re: "Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse" Sarah Palin
20110610-04	10:02	SteveB	The Beginning of the End for Sarah Palin
20110612-01	15:50	Dale	"Palin Emails Show Engaged Leader Who Sought VP Nod"
20110612-02	16:05	SteveB	Re: "Palin Emails Show Engaged Leader Who Sought VP Nod"
20110726-02	07:26	SteveB	"God Urges Rick Perry Not to Run for President"
20110808-01	10:30	Ben	Rick Perry's Texas A&M Transcript
20110808-04	21:05	GaryF	"Poll: Will Anti-Congress Mood Cause Another 'Wave' Election?"
20110816-01	08:37	SteveB	Rick Perry
20110826-02	16:58	Jim	Electile Dysfunction
20110929-01	08:36	Pam	Hillary Clinton in 2012?
20110929-02	12:49	Clark	Re: Hillary Clinton in 2012?
20110930-01	10:44	SteveB	Re: Hillary Clinton in 2012?
20111007-01	06:38	SteveB	"Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow"
20111013-24	14:14	SteveB	Democratic VP Candidate?
20111015-01	09:28	SteveG	"Rick Perry Makes Post-Debate Gaffe: 'We Fought the Revolution in the 16th Century'"
20111016-01	06:01	SteveB	Re: "Rick Perry Makes Post-Debate Gaffe..."
20111017-07	09:35	Jim	How Can We Frame the Debate?
20111018-10	18:24	Art	Re: How Can We Frame the Debate?
20111019-03	09:23	SteveB	No More Pretending: The Republican Candidates
20111019-06	10:44	Ben	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-05	10:41	Charis	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-07	10:45	GaryC	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-12	15:26	Pam	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-14	15:57	SteveB	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-15	16:12	Charis	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-17	16:32	SteveB	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-26	19:34	Mark	Re: No More Pretending
20111020-04	06:20	SteveB	Re: No More Pretending
20111019-13	15:27	SteveB	The End of the GOP?
20111019-16	16:27	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-18	16:50	Ben	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-19	17:04	Phil	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-21	17:13	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-22	17:33	Charis	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-24	18:17	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111019-25	19:10	Art	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-01	05:56	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-02	06:00	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-03	06:17	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP? & William Jennings Bryan's 'Cross of Gold' Speech
20111020-05	07:34	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-06	08:25	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-07	08:32	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-08	08:43	Charis	Re: The End of the GOP?

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20111020-09	08:47	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-10	09:08	Art	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-11	09:13	Clark	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-16	09:27	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-21	09:38	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-12	09:14	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-13	09:15	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-14	09:19	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-15	09:23	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-18	09:32	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-17	09:30	Art	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-20	09:38	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-22	09:55	SteveB	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-25	10:32	Pam	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-26	10:40	Charis	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-28	11:02	Pam	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-29	12:14	GaryC	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111021-05	07:10	Clark	Re: The End of the GOP?
20111020-19	09:35	Jim	A Middle Way?
20111020-23	10:01	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
20111020-24	10:12	Charis	Re: A Middle Way?
20111020-27	10:50	Mark	Re: A Middle Way?
20111020-32	18:55	Art	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-02	06:15	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-01	05:47	Pam	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-03	06:46	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-06	07:44	GaryC	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-07	08:52	Pam	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-08	09:24	GaryC	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-09	09:32	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-10	09:35	GaryC	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-12	09:58	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-14	11:08	SteveG	Re: A Middle Way?
20111021-47	16:22	Art	Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
20111021-48	16:28	Clark	Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
20111021-57	16:48	Pam	Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
20111022-13	14:39	Jim	Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
20111022-15	15:48	Charis	Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
20111022-16	16:19	Clark	Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers
ATTACKS DIRECTED AT BARACK OBAMA			
20080312-02	23:51	SteveM	Fw: "Say What, Barrack?"
20080606-01	13:47	Mark	Fw: "Obama Explains National Anthem Stance" Debunked
20080607-03	14:57	SteveB	Re: "Obama Explains National Anthem Stance" McCain
20080607-01	12:52	SteveM	"Obama and McCain"
20080607-04	16:53	SteveB	Re: "Obama and McCain"
20080628-01	21:29	SteveM	Fw: Can Obama Legally Serve?
20080629-01	09:20	SteveB	Re: Can Obama Legally Serve?
20080713-01	13:38	SteveB	"Finding His Faith" Barack Obama's Religion [defense]
20080713-02	17:52	SteveM	Obama Says No to English as National Language
20080714-01	12:04	SteveB	Re: Obama Says No to English as National Language
20080721-03	09:29	SteveM	Fw: Obama's Gaffes
20080813-09	17:53	SteveM	Fw: The Obama Tidal Wave
20080817-01	15:33	Mary	Fw: No "Change" for Him!
20080817-04	17:36	Dennis	Re: No "Change" for Him!
20081006-02	05:16	SteveB	Re: No "Change" for Him! [to 10/5 duplicate]
20081022-06	15:14	SteveB	Re: No "Change" for Him! [to 10/22 duplicate]

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20080823-03	12:43	SteveB	Barack Obama's Birth Certificate: The Evidence
20080823-04	12:45	SteveB	Re: Barack Obama's Birth Certificate: The Evidence & Other Smears
20080829-03	07:59	SteveM	"Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080829-04	10:02	SteveB	Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080829-05	11:16	SteveM	Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080829-06	12:00	SteveB	Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080829-07	12:39	SteveM	Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080829-08	15:21	SteveB	Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"
20080902-01	13:15	Phil	Fw: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..." Colombo/Birther, etc. [& see 09/25/10, below]
20080902-02	15:35	SteveB	Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..." Palin
20080902-03	16:02	Phil	Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."
20080902-04	16:29	SteveB	Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."
20080917-04	15:31	SteveB	Fw: Defending Against the Republican Lies
20080917-07	18:05	SteveM	Fw: "Obama's Not Exactlys"
20080921-04	12:11	SteveM	Fw: Chicago Information
20080922-03	13:47	SteveB	Re: Chicago Information
20080921-08	15:22	Trudy	Fw: Change???
20080921-13	17:25	SteveB	Re: Change???
20080924-01	07:30	SteveM	Fw: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20080924-04	11:13	SteveB	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20080924-05	12:23	SteveM	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20080924-06	13:15	SteveB	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20080924-07	13:35	SteveM	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20080924-08	14:39	SteveB	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20081006-01	05:06	SteveB	Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
20081002-02	10:24	Trudy	Fw: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street"
20081002-03	11:07	SteveB	Re: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street"
20081006-03	05:29	SteveB	Re: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street" [to 10/5 duplicate]
20081010-05	21:36	SteveB	"Anti-Obama Anger Erupts at McCain Events"
20081011-01	09:13	SteveB	Re: "Anti-Obama Anger Erupts at McCain Events"
20081013-01	13:21	SteveB	"The Man Behind the Whispers About Obama"
20081018-01	19:28	SteveB	"Cracking the ACORN Case"
20081019-01	08:25	SteveB	Fw: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?" [defense]
20081019-02	10:32	SteveM	Re: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?"
20081019-04	13:24	SteveB	Re: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?"
20081104-01	07:17	SteveB	"If Obama Had Campaigned Like McCain..." [defense]
20081020-02	18:16	SteveB	Fw: Joe the Plumber / Obama the Muslim [defense]
20081021-01	14:36	Phil	Fw: Illinois Politics
20081022-03	11:56	SteveB	Re: Illinois Politics
20081027-02	10:12	Phil	Re: Illinois Politics
20081027-03	10:20	SteveB	Re: Illinois Politics
20081026-02	21:34	Larry	Fw: "Straight Talk" to Republicans & Democrats
20081027-01	10:00	SteveB	Re: "Straight Talk"
20081027-04	13:07	SteveM	"Investors: Obama Rise Is Tanking the Stock Market"
20081027-05	13:33	SteveB	Re: "Investors: Obama Rise Is Tanking the Stock Market"
20081028-01	06:45	SteveM	"W Ketchup Exhorts Americans to Defend the Constitution"
20081028-04	10:02	SteveB	Re: "W Ketchup Exhorts Americans to Defend the Constitution"
20081028-02	08:08	SteveB	Lies & Damned Lies [defense]
20081028-08	19:01	Mike	Fw: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081028-09	20:30	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-02	11:14	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081028-10	21:59	Bob	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081028-11	22:54	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-03	11:20	Bob	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-04	11:27	Dennis	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-05	11:34	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

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20081029-08	13:11	Bob	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-09	13:39	Dennis	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-12	15:03	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-14	19:53	Bob	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081029-15	21:24	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081031-02	16:32	SteveG	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081031-03	17:37	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081116-01	06:03	Bob	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
20081103-01	07:59	SteveM	Fw: "The Standard Obama Response: 'I Didn't Know'"
20081103-02	12:20	SteveB	Re: "The Standard Obama Response: 'I Didn't Know'"
20081111-02	11:57	SteveM	"White Guilt Is Dead"
20081111-04	16:20	SteveB	Re: "White Guilt Is Dead"
20081120-02	16:02	SteveM	"Not the End of the World"
20081124-01	10:04	SteveB	Re: "Not the End of the World"
20081126-01	16:53	SteveM	Re: "Not the End of the World"
20081126-02	17:47	SteveB	Re: "Not the End of the World"
20081127-01	09:46	SteveB	Re: "Not the End of the World"
20081209-01	13:59	SteveB	"Obama Derangement Syndrome"
20081212-01	10:50	SteveB	Fw: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley
20081213-01	04:25	BrentR	Re: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley
20081214-03	11:28	SteveB	Re: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley
20081214-01	10:46	SteveB	"Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"
20081214-02	10:56	SteveM	Re: "Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"
20081214-04	12:45	SteveB	Re: "Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"
20090825-01	10:25	SteveB	"Attack on Obama Riles Beck's Advertisers"
20100526-01	13:17	Paula	Fw: Video: Fog Cutter
20100526-02	15:07	SteveB	Re: Fog Cutter
20100526-03	17:03	Pam	Re: Fog Cutter
20100527-05	23:29	Tom	"President's Socialist Takeover Must Be Stopped"
20100622-01	09:19	Phil	Fw: "Overwhelm the System"
20100622-02	10:07	SteveB	Re: "Overwhelm the System"
20100622-03	12:47	Dennis	Re: "Overwhelm the System"
20100622-04	13:01	SteveB	Re: "Overwhelm the System"
20100704-01	19:27	GaryF	Fw: "Happy 4th!"
20100705-01	19:15	SteveB	Re: "Happy 4th!"
20100803-01	09:08	Ben	"Why Some Republicans Want to 'Restore' the 13th Amendment"
20100804-02	09:44	SteveB	Re: "Why Some Republicans Want to 'Restore' the 13th Amendment"
20100908-03	19:37	Tom	"President's Socialist Takeover Must be Stopped"
20100909-01	07:10	SteveB	Re: "President's Socialist Takeover Must be Stopped"
20100910-01	07:59	Laurel	Fw: The Photos Say It All
20100924-03	12:06	SteveB	Re: The Photos Say It All
20100923-01	02:10	SteveBA	Fw: Motivational Poster: A Finger for President Obama
20100923-02	07:07	SteveB	Re: Motivational Poster: A Finger for President Obama
20100923-06	19:43	SteveB	Re: Motivational Poster: A Finger for President Obama
20100924-04	12:24	SteveB	Fw: "Stupid is, as Stupid Does....."
20100925-02	15:55	Dennis	Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..." [see 09/02/08, above]
20100926-01	07:44	SteveB	Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."
20110216-05	17:37	Dick	Fw: Are You Better Off after Two Tears of Obama?
20110225-01	19:09	Dennis	"Obama's Secret Plot to Bring 100 Million Muslims to the U.S." & "The Plutocrat's Coup d'Etat, Their Republican Allies & Their Democratic Enablers"
20110322-07	18:14	SteveB	To: Ron Paul: Impeachable, Imschmeechable! [defense]
20110513-01	18:55	SteveB	To: Ron Paul: Impeachable, Imschmeechable! Part 2 [defense]
20110606-10	15:44	Dick	Fw: President Obama's Expensive Visit to London
20110606-11	18:05	SteveB	Re: President Obama's Expensive Visit to London
20110615-01	09:31	Dale	Fw: What Charles Krauthammer Didn't Say
20110618-01	06:16	SteveB	Re: What Charles Krauthammer Didn't Say

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20110701-03	17:55	SteveBA	Fw: A Short Quiz
20110914-03	21:05	Dick	Fw: 1% Tax on All Bank Transactions—HR-4646
20111018-04	11:06	Ben	Re: 1% Tax on All Bank Transactions—HR-4646
20111018-12	20:07	Larry	Fw: Where Are Obama's Girlfriends?
20111019-23	17:50	SteveB	Re: Where Are Obama's Girlfriends?
<u>CONSERVATISM, GOP, TEA PARTY, ETC.</u>			
20080218-03	12:08	SteveB	"The 'Angry White Man'" 2008 Election
20080919-02	10:25	SteveB	Party Ideology
20080919-03	12:42	SteveM	Re: Party Ideology
20080921-06	14:17	SteveB	Republican Party Loyalty
20080921-09	15:42	Trudy	Fw: "Bad American"
20080921-10	16:37	SteveB	Re: "Bad American"
20080921-11	17:14	Trudy	Re: "Bad American"
20080922-02	11:12	SteveB	Re: "Bad American"
20081028-06	17:00	SteveB	Fw: Disunited States—Red & Blue
20081130-01	08:35	SteveB	The GOP: Hijacked by Evangelicals
20090107-01	19:05	SteveB	To Glenn Beck: Doom
20090117-01	10:53	SteveB	To Glenn Beck: Fired from CNN
20090119-01	12:56	G. Beck	Re: Fired from CNN
20090120-01	10:41	SteveB	Re: Fired from CNN
20090214-01	12:25	SteveM	Fw: Jimmy Carter: The Worst President in American History
20090214-02	15:02	SteveB	Re: Jimmy Carter; "The Violent Language of Right-Wing Pundits Poisons Our Democracy" Etc.
20090214-03	20:19	SteveM	Re: Jimmy Carter; Etc.
20090215-01	06:07	SteveB	Re: Jimmy Carter; Etc.
20090616-02	13:38	SteveB	To: KLYQ AM Radio; Rush Limbaugh & Glenn Beck
20090727-01	13:18	DaveM	Fw: "We the People Are Coming"
20090727-02	16:11	SteveB	Re: "We the People Are Coming"
20100113-01	11:36	Dick	Fw: Andy Rooney
20100215-01	22:57	Dick	Fw: Quotes: Thomas Jefferson
20100623-01	15:23	SteveB	Fw: "The Plan"
20100727-02	13:23	SteveB	"Right-Wing America: Rascism and Religion"
20100903-01	14:06	Dennis	"5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
20100904-01	01:01	Mary	Re: "5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
20100904-02	07:24	SteveB	Re: "5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
20100916-01	20:48	Mary	Re: "5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
20100917-01	11:42	Dennis	"This Country Just Can't Deal with Reality Any More"
20100922-02	12:46	Dennis	"Socialism in America? You Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie"
20100923-05	15:47	Dennis	"GOP's New 'Pledge to America': A Pathetic, Destructive Sham"
20100924-02	08:22	SteveB	Re: "GOP's New 'Pledge to America': A Pathetic, Destructive Sham"
20100930-07	21:21	SteveG	"The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics" & Treaty of Tripoli
20101001-01	07:31	SteveB	Re: "The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics" & Treaty of Tripoli
20101008-02	17:17	Dennis	"White America Has Lost Its Mind"
20101009-02	08:25	SteveB	Re: "White America Has Lost Its Mind"
20101012-05	11:03	GaryC	"Revolt of the Accountants"
20101012-07	16:24	SteveB	Re: "Revolt of the Accountants"
20101017-01	07:49	GaryF	Fw: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?
20101025-03	08:39	SteveB	Re: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?
20101025-05	10:01	Charis	Re: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?
20101025-06	10:18	SteveB	Re: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?
20101022-01	17:23	Dennis	Tea Party Training Video
20101025-09	16:16	Dennis	"Tea Party Inc.: The Big Money & Powerful Elites Behind the Right Wing's Latest Uprising"
20101130-01	17:21	Dennis	"5 Right-Wing Scumbags Bankrolling Dangerous (& Plain Weird) Conservative Causes"
20101130-02	17:53	GaryC	Re: "5 Right-Wing Scumbags

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20101202-03	20:49	SteveB	"Anti-Earmark Tea Party Caucus Takes \$1 Billion in Earmarks"
20101220-01	11:38	Dennis	"Glenn Beck Book Tour Makes Bizarre Visit to Heartland America"
20110212-01	16:06	Dennis	Joe, the Self-Made Republican
20110212-02	16:21	SteveB	Re: Joe, the Self-Made Republican
20110221-03	21:53	Tom	Video: "Rewriting Black History Month"
20110222-01	08:26	SteveB	Re: "Rewriting Black History Month"
20110226-01	11:10	Robert	Fw: Divorce Agreement
20110226-02	14:49	Robert	Fw: This Should Be Posted in Every School
20110227-01	07:28	Skimantom2000	Re: This Should Be Posted in Every School; Healthcare
20110227-02	17:58	SteveB	Re: This Should Be Posted in Every School
20110315-05	19:09	SteveB	"Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-01	05:43	Charis	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-04	15:22	SteveB	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-05	15:32	Charis	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-08	17:45	SteveB	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-02	12:17	Larry	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-03	15:10	SteveB	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus" Japanese Disasters
20110316-06	16:31	Larry	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110316-07	17:30	SteveB	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
20110323-10	12:09	Dennis	"3/4ths of Senate GOP Doesn't Believe in Science—When Did Republicans Go Completely Off the Deep End?"
20110323-11	12:20	Dennis	"Kochs Profit from Canadian Eco-Nightmare"
20110328-08	21:02	Dick	Fw: What Has America Become?
20110329-08	19:35	SteveB	Re: What Has America Become?
20110331-01	13:02	Dennis	"Will Republican Voters Believe Anything? The Right's Hyperbolic, Dysfunctional World"
20110420-01	08:59	SteveB	"The Donald Trumped on Abortion Question?"
20110422-02	17:16	SteveB	"Why Glenn Beck Lost It"
20110503-01	10:45	B. Miller	Friends of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Blog
20110527-02	17:25	Ben	Let's Just Call Them 'Fascists'
20110527-03	18:36	SteveB	Re: Let's Just Call Them 'Fascists'
20110606-16	19:23	SteveB	"New York Congressman: 'The Picture Was of Me, I Sent It.'"
20110701-02	12:39	Dennis	"If Ayn Rand & the Free Market Fetishists Were Right, We'd Be Living in a Golden Age—Does This Look Like a Golden Age to You?"
20110702-02	13:00	Dennis	"New American Socialism" & "An American Tragedy Brewing" & "One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People"
20110702-03	15:26	Dennis	"14 Propaganda Techniques Fox 'News' Uses to Brainwash Americans"
20110704-01	08:02	GaryC	Re: "14 Propaganda Techniques..."
20110723-10	17:55	Dennis	"What Our Declaration Really Said"
20110723-11	18:47	SteveB	Re: "What Our Declaration Really Said"
20110724-01	23:04	Ben	Re: "What Our Declaration Really Said"
20110807-01	09:37	SteveB	"The Question Conservatives Can't Answer"
20110816-02	11:53	Mark	Fw: Quote from Cicero
20110823-02	16:13	Jim	Fw: Now You're Mad?
20110930-02	13:00	Pam	Re: Now You're Mad?
20110930-08	16:06	SteveB	Re: Now You're Mad?
20110930-09	16:14	Pam	Re: Now You're Mad?
20110826-01	09:13	Dennis	Tea Party Republicans
20110916-01	19:54	Dennis	excerpt from <i>Between Race and Reason: Anti-Intellectualism in American Life</i>
20110925-01	17:32	Dennis	Stephen Colbert Quote: A Christian Nation
20110927-01	17:47	Dennis	"Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"
20110930-03	14:58	SteveB	Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"
20110930-04	15:07	GaryC	Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"
20110930-05	15:14	SteveB	Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"
20110930-06	15:39	GaryC	Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"
20110930-07	15:51	SteveB	Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

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20110928-01	19:02	Dennis	Quote: Remember When...
20111004-05	13:02	Dennis	"The Big Picture: A 40-Year Scan of the Right-Wing Corporate Takeover of America"
20111004-06	16:26	SteveB	Re: "The Big Picture..."
20111011-04	12:17	Pam	Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich Exposing 7 GOP Lies?"
20111012-02	06:12	SteveB	Re: Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich..."
20111012-03	06:18	SteveB	Re: Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich..."
20111019-01	07:50	Dick	Fw: Drug Testing Welfare Recipients in Florida
20111020-30	15:03	SteveB	"The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"
20111023-14	17:32	Dennis	"Nine Policies Conservatives Were <i>For</i> Long Before They Were <i>Against</i> Them"
<u>CORRESPONDENCE TO/FROM POLITICIANS, MISC.</u>			
20070711-01	08:30	M. Martinez	Sen. Martinez Newsletter
20070717-01	09:01	M. Martinez	Sen. Martinez Newsletter
20070725-01	08:13	M. Martinez	Sen. Martinez Newsletter
20070801-01	12:50	M. Martinez	Sen. Martinez Newsletter
20070725-02	10:18	S. Smith Jr.	Indiana Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA)
20070917-01	09:47	S. Smith Jr.	Indiana Education Standards
<u>LIBERALISM, DEMOCRATS, ETC.</u>			
20081114-01	13:34	Charlie	"The New Liberal Order"
20100623-02	17:32	SteveG	Fw: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-01	12:12	Bill	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-02	14:39	Ben	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-03	15:19	SteveB	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-04	15:31	SteveB	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-05	15:57	Ben	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-06	16:05	SteveB	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-07	15:15	SteveB	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-08	17:18	Dennis	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20100624-09	17:32	SteveB	Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"
20110216-03	13:35	Dennis	"Sleepwalking Toward Plutocracy"
20110305-01	08:30	SteveB	Coffee Party
20110310-01	19:20	SteveB	"The Greatest Country on Earth?"
20110317-01	15:30	SteveB	<i>"Get Up, Stand Up: Do Americans Have What It Takes to Stand Up to Corporate Power and Does Wisconsin Offer Hope?"</i>
20110407-01	11:20	Dennis	"New American Socialism" & "An American Tragedy Brewing" & "One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People"
20110826-04	19:45	Dennis	"Why Conservatives Should Be Heard at the Enough Rally"
20111017-13	11:15	SteveB	Things Americans Agree On
20111017-17	12:11	Pam	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111017-24	12:54	Art	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111017-14	11:31	SteveG	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111017-19	12:16	Pam	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111017-15	11:33	Charis	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111017-18	12:13	Pam	Re: Things Americans Agree On
20111021-17	14:17	Pam	Diplomacy
20111021-18	14:21	Charis	Re: Diplomacy
20111021-20	14:26	GaryC	Re: Diplomacy
20111021-24	14:54	Pam	Re: Diplomacy
<u>MISC., POLITICS</u>			
20100922-01	07:54	SteveB	"Jimmy Carter Hasn't Been Mincing Many Words of Late"
<u>THE RIGHT'S "LIBERAL" MEDIA SMEAR CAMPAIGN</u>			

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20080523-02	21:36	Dick	Fw: Media, Democrats, 2008 Primaries
20080524-01	10:10	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries
20080716-01	10:27	SteveM	Fw: Navy Petty Officer Mike Monsoor
20080803-01	10:53	SteveM	The John Edwards Story; Media
20080803-04	14:02	SteveB	Re: The John Edwards Story; Edwards & McCain Affairs, Media
20080803-05	14:35	SteveM	Re: Edwards & McCain Affairs, Media
20080803-06	14:42	Trudy	Fw: Bad American; Media
20080803-07	15:00	SteveB	Re: Media, McCain, Obama
20080823-01	08:21	SteveM	Fw: Did You Know About This? Iraq, Media
20080823-02	12:23	SteveB	Re: Did You Know About This? Iraq, Media
20080924-14	19:53	SteveB	Media Bias
20110216-04	17:23	Mark	Fw: A Reminder in History; Viet Nam
<u>BARACK OBAMA, POTUS</u>			
20081105-03	12:54	Charlie	"Living History"
20081110-01	12:45	Ben	Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II
20081111-01	10:31	SteveM	Re: Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II
20081111-03	16:17	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II
20081208-01	12:29	SteveB	"Liberals Voice Concerns About President-Elect Obama"
20090111-01	01:43	Charlie	"Inaugurate This: Waiting for Barack Obama"
20090120-02	14:10	SteveB	"Text of Obama's Speech for His Inauguration as 44th President"
20100827-01	13:02	SteveB	"Obama Will Triumph—So Will America"
20110725-06	15:27	Mark	Americans Deserve Better
20110725-07	16:04	SteveB	"Obama's 5 Big Mistakes"
20110729-01	11:40	Dick	"President Obama Is No Longer Tethered to Reality"
20111003-01	14:00	SteveB	"The Word Obama Won't Dare Say"
20111008-01	08:06	GaryC	"Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-03	09:45	Pam	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-04	10:16	GaryC	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-05	10:58	Pam	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-06	14:11	SteveB	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-07	14:54	Pam	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-08	15:15	SteveB	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-09	15:28	GaryC	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-10	15:34	SteveB	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-11	15:58	GaryC	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-12	16:23	GaryF	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-13	16:31	SteveB	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-14	16:58	Dennis	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111008-16	18:17	SteveG	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111009-02	06:31	SteveB	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111009-03	07:50	SteveG	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111009-04	08:47	Pam	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111009-07	09:36	Mary	Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"
20111011-01	06:26	SteveB	"America Is Getting Soft"
20111013-02	07:45	SteveB	Why Democrats Don't Like Obama
20111021-16	14:04	SteveB	The Defeated Obama?
20111021-19	14:25	Clark	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-23	14:52	Pam	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-25	15:03	Clark	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-27	15:07	Pam	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-29	15:11	Charis	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-30	15:15	Pam	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-37	15:44	Charis	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-38	15:48	GaryC	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-40	15:53	GaryC	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-43	16:02	Charis	Re: The Defeated Obama?

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20111021-44	16:05	Pam	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-45	16:07	Charis	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-46	16:14	SteveB	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-49	16:28	Art	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-50	16:33	Art	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-61	17:53	SteveB	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-62	17:59	GaryC	Re: The Defeated Obama?
20111021-69	18:26	SteveB	Re: The Defeated Obama?
CONGRESS			
20070614-04	20:50	Dick	Fw: Shocking Senatorial Votes
20090116-01	08:07	SteveG	Fw: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-02	08:26	SteveB	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-03	08:46	SteveG	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-04	09:03	SteveB	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-05	09:17	SteveG	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-06	09:46	SteveB	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-07	10:10	SteveG	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20090116-08	10:25	SteveB	Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
20101009-01	07:26	SteveB	Fw: Heaven or Hell?
20110302-01	10:38	Phil	Fw: Letter to Sen. Alan Simpson About Social Security
20110313-02	18:15	SteveB	Re: Letter to Sen. Alan Simpson About Social Security
20110303-01	12:03	Marci	Fw: And God Created Montana
20110425-01	11:37	SteveB	Fw: Photo: Congressmen Playing on the Job
20110510-01	08:54	SteveB	Fw: 'Entitlement' My A*s!
20110605-02	19:53	SteveB	Fw: Corporate Sponsors
20110725-05	14:02	SteveG	Fw: "Why Boehner Cries"
20110726-01	06:58	SteveB	"Congress Continues Debate Over Whether or Not Nation Should Be Economically Ruined"
20110727-01	09:21	SteveB	Republicants
20110727-03	12:10	Dennis	Re: Republicants
20110728-01	10:34	SteveB	Democrats "In Retreat"
20110730-01	12:17	SteveB	"First Thoughts: A Game of Leverage"
20110824-01	11:28	Bob	"Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"
20110911-03	11:03	SteveB	Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"
20110911-04	21:32	Bob	Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"
20110912-01	06:00	SteveB	Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"
20110908-01	11:51	Jim	Fw: A Group of Baboons?
20110912-02	21:03	Dick	Fw: Reportedly Dumb Traveling Congressmen
20110913-01	08:21	SteveB	Re: Reportedly Dumb Traveling Congressmen
20111007-13	18:52	SteveB	"Twisted Government Accounting Behind Postal Service Woes"
20111007-14	20:41	Ben	Re: "Twisted Government Accounting Behind Postal Service Woes"
CORRUPTION, ELECTION REFORM & AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION			
20080813-06	12:24	Dennis	Fw: Lee Iacocca: Throw the Bums Out!
20080824-01	01:04	Dennis	"545 People"
20080824-02	11:41	SteveB	Re: "545 People"
20110808-02	20:47	Dick	Fw: "545 vs. 300,000,000 People"
20080925-01	09:55	SteveB	"Lobbyists in 'Feeding Frenzy'"
20091230-01	07:20	SteveB	Fw: Congressional Reform Act
20100201-01	16:32	SteveB	"Constitutional Amendment Picks Up Speed, Sort Of"
20100308-02	18:40	SteveG	Fw: Un-Elect Congress & Congressional Reform Act
20100310-01	07:14	SteveB	Re: Un-Elect Congress & Congressional Reform Act
20100401-01	08:16	SteveB	How Elections Work in Bolivia
20100401-02	09:55	GaryF	Re: How Elections Work in Bolivia
20100401-05	15:05	SteveB	Re: How Elections Work in Bolivia
20100707-01	09:14	SteveB	Fw: Constitutional Amendment Idea

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20100707-02	13:01	SteveG	Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea
20100707-03	13:23	SteveB	Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea
20100707-04	14:26	SteveG	Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea
20100708-01	16:55	SteveB	Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea
20100919-07	09:06	SteveB	Solutions
20100920-03	16:51	Pam	"Speak, Money"
20100920-04	17:35	GaryC	Re: "Speak, Money"
20100923-03	11:05	SteveB	Re: "Speak, Money"
20100923-04	12:03	SteveB	Re: "Speak, Money"
20100924-01	08:18	SteveB	"Hidden Under Tax-Exempt Cloak, Political Dollars Flow"
20100926-05	23:09	SteveG	Election Reform / Term Limits
20100927-01	08:32	SteveB	Re: Election Reform / Term Limits
20100927-02	13:37	Dennis	Re: Election Reform / Term Limits
20100927-03	16:08	SteveB	Re: Election Reform / Term Limits
20100927-04	16:11	Dennis	Re: Election Reform / Term Limits
20100927-05	16:21	SteveB	Re: Election Reform / Term Limits
20101015-03	12:01	SteveB	"Show Me the Donors"
20101026-01	15:46	Dennis	"The Supreme Court Sold Out Our Democracy—How to Fight the Corporate Takeover of Our Elections"
20101108-01	08:44	Dennis	"Obama's Biggest Mistake: Selling Out to the Bankers"
20101108-02	13:05	SteveG	Re: "Obama's Biggest Mistake: Selling Out to the Bankers"
20101220-03	19:12	Dennis	Excerpt: <i>Make Members of Congress Wear NASCAR Patches</i>
20110829-01	15:03	Mark	Fw: Congressmen Should Wear Uniforms Like NASCAR Drivers
20110309-01	10:42	Ben	Video: Republicans Attack Voters' Rights in 22 States & "Wisconsin Republicans Really Don't Want Me to Vote" & "Texas Attorney General's Wild Goose Chase"
20110327-06	17:02	SteveB	Re: Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110426-02	11:56	Ben	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110426-03	15:28	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110426-04	17:23	Ben	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110426-06	17:41	Ben	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110427-01	07:49	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110427-02	09:54	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110428-01	19:49	Dick	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110509-02	14:26	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110508-01	07:45	SteveB	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110509-01	10:17	Ben	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110509-03	14:32	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110607-01	09:05	SteveG	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110629-02	09:50	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act; Term Limits
20111016-03	08:28	SteveG	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20111018-06	12:39	GaryF	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20111019-02	09:15	GaryF	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20111018-13	20:24	Dick	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20111020-33	20:48	Charis	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20111021-04	07:04	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
20110515-01	18:06	SteveB	To: Fareed Zakaria, CNN; U.S. Corruption
20110518-05	20:09	SteveB	"How Political Corruption Works in the U.S. of A."
20110525-01	18:36	Dennis	"Ways to Stand Up to Bullying and Corruption"
20110526-01	18:29	Dennis	Insider Trading by Corrupt Congressmen
20110806-01	18:06	GaryF	Quotes About Voters
20111013-23	14:11	Dennis	From <i>The Post-Corporate World, Life After Capitalism</i> : Corporations as Persons
20111013-30	16:41	Pam	Re: Corporations as Persons
20111019-04	08:39	SteveG	"The 99% Declaration"
20111019-08	11:33	Pam	Re: "The 99% Declaration"
20111019-09	11:51	Pam	Re: "The 99% Declaration"

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20111019-10	13:40	Art	Re: "The 99% Declaration"
20111019-11	13:57	Clark	Re: "The 99% Declaration"
20111021-11	09:44	SteveB	Un-Elect Congress in 2012
<u>ECONOMICS, FINANCE, BANKING, BUSINESS, MARKETS, BUBBLES, THE DEFICIT, DECLINE & CRASH</u>			
20080516-01	10:35	SteveB	The Decline; Economics, Rich and Poor
20080516-02	10:57	SteveM	Re: The Decline; Illegal Immigration, Defense, The Border
20080516-03	10:58	SteveG	Re: The Decline; Eisenhower's Military-Industrial Complex
20080516-04	11:01	Dennis	Re: The Decline; China, Trade
20080516-07	11:30	SteveB	Re: The Decline; China, Trade
20080516-08	12:26	Dennis	Re: The Decline; China, Trade
20080516-10	13:11	SteveB	Re: The Decline; China, Trade
20080516-05	11:02	SteveG	Re: The Decline; Economics
20080516-06	11:15	SteveB	Re: The Decline; Economics
20080519-01	11:59	David	Re: The Decline; Libertarianism, "Nothing Gold Can Stay"
20080520-01	11:57	SteveB	Re: The Decline; Libertarianism, Weather
20080728-03	13:09	Dennis	"Lovable, Moronic Capitalists" Economics, Greed
20080920-01	09:48	SteveB	Republican Socialists: Bush & McCain
20081010-01	13:29	Dennis	Fw: "How Wall Street Works"
20081011-03	17:47	SteveB	"IMF Warns of Global Financial Meltdown"
20081015-03	10:58	SteveB	Fw: "The Party's Over"
20081202-04	15:32	SteveB	"An Interview with Paul O'Neill"
20081203-02	18:16	Charlie	"Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"
20081204-01	13:00	SteveB	Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"
20081204-02	18:16	SteveG	Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"
20081206-01	09:46	SteveB	Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"
20081212-02	10:51	SteveB	"Financial forecast: 11 bets for '09"
20081212-03	16:14	Ben	Re: "Financial forecast: 11 bets for '09"
20081219-01	12:54	Dennis	"Change You Won't Believe"
20081223-01	18:03	SteveB	To: Pat Buchanan; Free Trade vs. Jobs
20090211-01	14:45	SteveB	"Geithner's First Test Is a Disaster"
20090217-01	09:58	SteveB	"Metrics of National Decline"
20090303-01	11:17	Dennis	Fw: The Current Economic Crisis According to the Three Stooges
20090304-01	10:02	Ben	Video: "Shift Happens"
20090304-02	18:49	SteveB	Re: "Shift Happens"
20090305-01	08:22	Ben	Re: "Shift Happens"
20090305-02	10:44	SteveB	Re: "Shift Happens"
20100528-02	10:38	SteveB	An Economy of Smoke & Mirrors
20100528-03	11:38	Pam	Re: An Economy of Smoke & Mirrors
20100609-02	17:41	SteveB	"Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth & Apple Finally Becomes Microsoft" Infrastructure Decline
20100610-01	08:59	Ben	Re: "Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth"
20100610-04	10:06	SteveB	Re: "Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth"
20100724-01	12:26	SteveB	"22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
20100724-02	12:31	Pam	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
20100724-03	13:06	Dennis	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
20100725-01	07:21	SteveB	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
20100725-02	08:05	SteveB	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption
20100725-03	11:18	Pam	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption, Words
20100727-01	11:07	SteveB	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption, Words

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20100824-01	08:40	SteveB	"China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
20100824-02	09:25	Ben	Re: "China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
20100824-03	12:53	SteveB	Re: "China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
20100908-02	14:57	Dennis	"The Great American Stickup: How the Political Class Mugged America & Handed the Money Over to Wall St."
20100909-02	07:27	SteveB	Re: "The Great American Stickup..."
20100928-03	16:54	SteveB	"Free" Trade
20100928-04	19:02	SteveG	Re: "Free" Trade
20100928-05	19:43	SteveBA	Re: "Free" Trade
20100928-06	20:33	Charis	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-03	07:53	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-01	07:24	Pam	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-02	07:41	Pam	Re: "Free" Trade
20100930-05	08:57	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade
20100930-06	15:55	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-05	09:04	Bill	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-06	09:25	GaryC	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-07	09:44	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade
20100929-09	21:50	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade
20100930-02	01:12	Pam	Re: "Free" Trade, NAFTA
20100930-03	07:38	SteveB	Re: "Free" Trade, NAFTA
20101008-03	19:12	Patti	Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia
20101008-04	19:25	Charis	Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia
20101008-05	22:29	Patti	Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia
20101008-06	23:45	Charis	Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia
20100929-08	20:24	SteveG	House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation
20100930-01	00:58	SteveBA	Re: House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation
20100930-04	07:57	SteveB	Re: House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation
20101002-01	08:45	SteveB	"How Obama Can Fix the U.S. Economy"
20101012-06	15:26	Dennis	"Poor People"
20101012-10	16:40	SteveB	More Lies: 'Housing Bubble Caused by the Poor'
20101012-12	17:18	Dennis	"Axelrod Is Wrong: Obama Must Protect American Families from Wall Street Fraud"
20101014-01	17:25	Dennis	"Why Germany Has It So Good & Why America Is Going Down the Drain"
20101015-01	07:27	Pam	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
20101015-02	09:11	SteveB	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
20101015-04	12:25	SteveB	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
20101015-05	13:27	Pam	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
20101027-01	15:14	Dennis	Excerpt: <i>The Great American Stick-Up: How Reagan Republicans & Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street While Mugging Main Street</i>
20101028-02	13:34	SteveB	Re: <i>The Great American Stick-Up</i>
20101028-01	08:10	SteveB	"The Perils of Privatizing Government" & "The Glenn Beck School of Investing" & "Don't Blame Obama for This Mess"
20101101-01	14:19	Dennis	"The Scary Actual U.S. Government Debt"
20101120-04	14:00	SteveB	"China's Surprise Rate Hike: What It Means"
20101202-02	17:21	Dennis	"The Big Economic Story & Why Obama Isn't Telling It"
20101206-02	15:04	Dennis	"4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
20101206-04	21:16	SteveG	Re: "4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
20101207-01	06:07	SteveB	Re: "4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
20101212-02	14:36	Dennis	"Free Trade Doesn't Work: Interview with Economist Ian Fletcher"
20101214-01	07:29	SteveB	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"
20101214-03	08:52	Charis	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"
20101216-02	10:29	SteveB	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"
20101214-02	07:37	GaryC	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work" Travel
20101214-05	18:45	SteveB	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work" Travel
20110307-05	18:29	Dennis	"This Time We're Taking the Whole World With Us"
20110308-02	08:58	SteveB	Re: "This Time We're Taking the Whole World With Us"

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20110330-01	17:46	SteveB	"5 Can-Do Companies Made in America"
20110413-01	18:44	SteveB	from the "Economic Crisis" topic at Spengler's Forum
20110416-01	09:51	SteveB	"Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-02	11:49	Dale	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-03	12:01	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-04	12:22	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-05	13:26	Dale	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-06	14:18	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-08	15:27	Bill	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-09	16:49	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-10	16:51	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-11	16:54	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-12	16:56	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-13	17:08	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-14	18:07	Charis	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-15	18:45	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110416-16	20:50	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110417-02	16:50	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110418-01	08:35	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110418-02	08:59	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110418-03	11:19	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110419-01	07:56	Dale	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110419-02	08:24	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110419-03	09:17	GaryC	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110419-04	10:47	SteveB	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
20110524-02	19:23	SteveB	"FSC Republicans Vote to Prohibit Implementation of Derivatives Rules Until Late 2012"
20110527-01	15:34	SteveB	"Tax Cuts, Wars Account for Nearly Half of Public Debt by 2019"
20110528-01	09:00	SteveG	Re: "Tax Cuts, Wars Account for Nearly Half of Public Debt by 2019"
20110601-01	20:30	SteveB	U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011
20110602-01	09:59	Ben	Re: U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011
20110602-02	11:27	SteveB	Re: U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011
20110613-01	09:54	SteveB	Fw: We Want Elizabeth Warren
20110712-01	18:12	Dennis	"Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"
20110723-02	15:59	SteveB	Re: "Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"
20110723-07	15:22	RickF	Re: Re: "Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"
20110723-05	16:05	SteveB	A Thought on the National Debt
20110727-02	11:08	Dick	U.S. Debt Visualization
20110808-03	20:49	Dick	Video: Marco Rubio vs. John Kerry on the Debt Crisis
20110825-01	13:14	SteveG	"Big Government? Obama Has 273,000 Fewer Federal Employees Than Reagan"
20110826-03	19:06	Dennis	"The Cost of Corporate Communism"
20110830-01	17:50	Jim	"Three Charts to Email to Your Right-Wing Brother-In-Law"
20110914-01	11:08	Phil	Fw: Why S&P Downgraded the U.S.
20110914-02	13:57	Dennis	Re: Why S&P Downgraded the U.S.
20111010-01	06:41	Pam	"Where's Your \$50,000?"
20111010-05	11:44	SteveG	The Sluggish Economy
20111010-06	11:53	Bill	Re: The Sluggish Economy
20111010-07	12:12	GaryC	Re: The Sluggish Economy
20111010-08	12:48	Dennis	Re: The Sluggish Economy
20111010-10	16:06	Pam	Re: The Sluggish Economy
20111010-12	17:08	SteveG	Re: The Sluggish Economy
20111011-09	18:28	Dennis	<i>The End of Loser Liberalism: Making Markets Progressive</i>
20111012-04	06:26	SteveB	Re: <i>The End of Loser Liberalism...</i>

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20111012-17	15:28	Pam	Re: <i>The End of Loser Liberalism...</i> "
20111012-13	13:19	Dennis	"Something's Happening Here"
20111013-03	08:18	SteveB	"What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-07	09:02	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-05	08:51	Pam	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-08	09:15	Bill	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-11	09:44	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-09	09:21	Charis	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-10	09:40	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-12	09:51	Pam	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-13	10:16	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-14	11:25	Pam	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-15	12:03	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!" & "The Return of Rational Expectations" & "Economists Win Nobel for Focus on Real World"
20111013-16	12:55	Pam	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-17	13:05	Dennis	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-18	13:32	SteveG	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-19	13:33	Dennis	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-20	13:36	GaryC	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-21	13:52	Dennis	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-26	14:36	SteveB	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-27	14:44	SteveB	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-28	14:57	Dennis	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-29	15:59	Pam	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-31	16:49	SteveB	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111013-33	17:24	SteveG	Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
20111022-20	21:17	SteveG	"Is Bank of America Headed for the Glue Factory?"
<u>EDUCATION</u>			
20081111-05	19:19	Charlie	"America the Illiterate"
20100319-01	10:58	Ben	"Texas Textbook Massacre: 'Ultraconservatives' Approve Radical Changes to State Education Curriculum" & "Dear Texas: Please Shut Up. Sincerely, History"
20100321-01	14:01	SteveB	Re: Texas, Texas Education, Etc.
20100322-01	09:42	Ben	Re: Texas, Texas Education, Etc.
20100322-02	11:15	SteveB	Re: Texas, Texas Education, Etc.
20100323-01	09:11	Ben	Re: Texas, Texas Education, New Mexico, Etc.
20110304-03	23:47	Jim	Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-02	12:03	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-03	12:55	AliceMarie	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-04	08:44	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-06	12:25	AliceMarie	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-04	12:56	DaveY	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-05	13:00	Bill	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-06	14:37	SteveBA	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-07	17:53	SteveG	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110305-08	20:23	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-01	06:54	Susette	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-02	08:05	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-03	08:20	Jim	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110306-05	11:05	Bill	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110308-04	09:44	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110307-01	12:40	Dale	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools & "Public vs. Private—Two Entirely Different Animals" & "Time to Restore Voter Control: End the Government-Union Monopoly"
20110307-02	13:46	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110307-03	16:21	GaryC	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

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20110308-03	09:19	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110307-04	17:48	Sandy	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110308-06	12:55	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110312-01	04:32	Sandy	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110312-03	09:32	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
20110314-04	21:22	Dick	"A Speech Every American High School Principal Should Give"
20110315-03	13:44	Phil	Fw: Bill Gates' Rules for Students
20111008-15	17:45	Jim	Collective Bargaining
20111009-01	06:11	SteveB	Re: Collective Bargaining
20111009-05	09:14	Pam	Re: Collective Bargaining
20111009-08	10:22	GaryC	Re: Collective Bargaining
20111009-09	10:50	SteveB	Re: Collective Bargaining
20111021-13	10:16	GaryC	"Charters & Minority Progress"
20111021-21	14:44	Pam	Re: "Charters & Minority Progress" (w/ reply from GaryC)
20111021-33	15:29	GaryC	Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"
20111021-39	15:52	Pam	Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"
20111021-42	15:58	GaryC	Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"
20111021-53	16:44	Pam	Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"
<u>ENERGY, OIL, GASOLINE, TRANSPORTATION & WATER</u>			
20080312-01	19:24	India	Fw: AVAAZ Petition: Stop Using Food for Fuel; Energy
20080519-02	21:39	SteveB, others	Energy, Oil, Water
20080618-01	17:44	India	Fw: Tips on Pumping Gas; Energy
20080708-02	14:43	SteveB	Video: "Who Killed the Electric Car?" Energy
20080710-01	14:33	SteveB	Fw: Stop Energy Market Speculation Now!
20080725-01	10:10	Dennis	Re: Stop Energy Market Speculation Now!
20080722-02	20:24	SteveB	BP: Food for Fuel; Energy
20080725-02	19:02	Dennis	"The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy
20080725-03	21:05	SteveB	Re: "The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy Speculation
20080726-01	09:09	Dennis	Re: "The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy Speculation
20080726-02	09:16	Dennis	"After 20 Years of Ignoring This Investment, It's Finally Time to Buy" Wind Energy
20080728-01	11:01	SteveB	Re: "After 20 Years of Ignoring This Investment, It's Finally Time to Buy"
20080728-02	12:23	Dennis	Re: Energy Speculation
20080728-04	15:37	SteveB	Re: Energy Speculation, Gasoline
20080729-01	11:05	J. Tester	Energy, Gasoline
20080814-02	12:52	SteveB	To: Rush Limbaugh; Oil, Energy
20080817-02	16:13	SteveB	"\$65 Oil Is Coming (Maybe)" Energy, Speculation
20080817-03	16:35	Dennis	Re: "\$65 Oil Is Coming (Maybe)" Energy, Speculation
20080819-04	17:05	Dick	Fw: The Bakken Formation; Oil, Energy
20080903-01	11:50	SteveB	Oil Market Speculation; Energy
20081128-01	21:20	SteveB	"Mysterious Super Battery to Power Electric Cars This Year"
20081206-03	11:09	SteveB	Alternative Energy Sources
20090616-01	15:53	SteveB	"Let's Get Real About Alternative Energy"
20090625-01	11:52	SteveG	Fw: The Bakken Formation: "U. S. Oil Discovery—Largest Reserve in the World!"
20090625-02	12:59	SteveB	Re: The Bakken Formation / Photo: Trapper Peak, Bitterroots, Montana
20090625-03	13:06	SteveG	Re: The Bakken Formation; Electric Cars
20090625-04	13:59	SteveB	Re: The Bakken Formation; Electric Cars
20090701-01	08:21	SteveG	Alternative Energy: Algae
20090701-02	10:35	SteveB	Re: Alternative Energy: Algae
20090703-01	12:02	SteveB	"Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation
20090703-02	13:53	Dennis	Re: "Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation
20090704-01	09:47	SteveB	Re: "Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation
20090709-01	19:08	SteveB	Fw: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now
20090709-02	19:12	Dennis	Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now
20090710-01	08:37	SteveB	Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

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20090710-02	08:50	Bill	Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now
20090710-03	09:10	SteveB	Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now
20090710-04	21:14	Bill	Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now
20090726-01	13:57	SteveB	"Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-01	09:33	Ben	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-02	11:32	SteveB	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-03	11:56	SteveB	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-04	12:32	SteveB	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-05	12:49	Ben	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-06	13:16	SteveB	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-07	13:21	Ben	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090914-08	14:40	SteveB	Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"
20090903-01	11:40	SteveB	"Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"
20090903-02	12:31	SteveG	Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"
20090903-03	12:35	SteveB	Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"
20090903-04	12:43	SteveG	Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"
20100401-03	10:44	Ben	"Burning Salt Water"
20100401-04	12:30	Allan	Re: "Burning Salt Water"
20100403-01	07:08	SteveB	Re: "Burning Salt Water"
20100421-03	12:32	Jim	Re: "Burning Salt Water"
20100505-09	08:41	Mark	Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power
20100507-03	09:36	Ben	Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power
20100507-06	11:01	SteveB	Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power & from the "Manifesto of the Church of Steve"
20100507-16	12:55	BobK	Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power
20100507-17	13:07	SteveB	Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power
20100507-18	13:22	Ben	Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power
20100507-20	18:27	India	"GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster"
20100507-21	19:30	SteveB	Re: "GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster" & "5 Companies Making Fuel from Algae Now"
20100605-01	14:52	SteveB	BP Gulf Oil Spill
20100619-01	08:31	SteveB	"Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
20100620-01	08:39	Mark	Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
20100620-02	13:03	SteveB	Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
20100620-03	21:44	Mark	Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
20100621-01	08:57	SteveB	Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
20101025-04	09:30	SteveB	Fw: How Government Works—The Department of Energy
20101025-07	10:31	Clark	Re: How Government Works
20101025-08	10:42	SteveB	Re: How Government Works
20101124-01	10:35	Pam	"Dirty Coal, Clean Future"
20101126-01	08:08	SteveB	Re: "Dirty Coal, Clean Future"
20110323-01	08:57	Bill	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110323-02	09:04	SteveB	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110323-03	09:19	Bill	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110323-04	10:58	SteveB	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110323-06	11:20	Bill	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110323-07	11:49	SteveB	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
20110328-07	17:14	SteveB	Alternative Vehicle Fuels, Hydrogen
20110401-01	12:43	Dennis	"What's Behind the Oil Spike to \$107 (and Counting...)"
20110403-01	10:28	SteveB	Alternative Vehicle Fuels, Hydrogen
20110411-01	14:41	SteveB	"Tsunami-Hit Towns Forgot Warnings from Ancestors"
20110422-01	08:51	SteveB	To: Ali Velshi; Market Speculation
20110426-01	10:56	SteveB	"Henry Ford, Charles Kettering and the 'Fuel of the Future'" Alcohol
20110426-05	17:30	SteveB	How to Stop Oil Market Speculation
20110510-05	18:23	SteveB	Great Time for a Water Diversion
20110515-02	20:34	Jim	Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?)
20110516-01	15:24	SteveB	Re: Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?)

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20110518-01	09:16	SteveB	Fw: CredoAction Petition: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies
20110519-02	18:42	Pam	Re: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies
20110521-03	09:30	SteveB	Re: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies
20110518-03	19:45	SteveB	Thorium Reactor
20110518-04	20:06	Ben	Frakking
20110518-06	21:15	SteveB	Re: Frakking
20110519-03	21:38	Ben	Re: Frakking
20110711-01	13:49	Dennis	"The 'Fracking' Issue & a Question About Morocco"
20110608-01	11:13	SteveB	"New Battery Design Could Give Electric Vehicles a Jolt"
20110926-01	09:41	Jim	Video: "Recycled Water Bottles Act Like Electricity"
20111014-01	08:49	Pam	Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."
20111014-02	13:52	Dennis	"The Third Industrial Revolution: Leading the Way to a Green Energy Era & a Hydrogen Economy"
20111015-02	17:00	SteveB	Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."
20111016-05	10:02	Pam	Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."
<u>FOREIGN RELATIONS, TRADE, TREATIES & THE WORLD (OTHER THAN WAR)</u>			
20070614-02	14:49	SteveB	"Bush's European Disaster"
20080819-02	16:20	SteveB	"Reality Bites Again"
20080819-03	16:54	SteveM	Re: "Reality Bites Again"
20080819-06	17:27	SteveB	Re: "Reality Bites Again"
20091005-01	19:53	SteveB	2009 UN List of Best Countries to Live In
20100407-03	20:05	SteveB	"Getting Around in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia"
20100531-02	15:39	Pam	Expatriate Life
20100614-01	15:15	SteveB	Re: Expatriate Life
20100601-01	10:21	Ben	"Flotillas and the Wars of Public Opinion"
20100602-01	07:46	SteveB	Re: "Flotillas and the Wars of Public Opinion"
20100908-01	00:49	Dick	Fw: What You <i>Won't</i> Hear from President Obama on Foreign Policy
20100928-02	16:15	SteveB	"10 Signs the U.S. Is Losing Its Influence in the Western Hemisphere"
20110210-01	09:14	SteveB	Arab Spring
20110507-01	03:16	Charis	"We Did Something Wrong"
20110507-02	07:28	SteveB	Re: "We Did Something Wrong"
20110508-02	09:31	SteveB	America is #31, but Happy Day, Moms!
20110520-01	13:27	Dennis	"South Africa's New 'New World'"
20110520-02	17:46	SteveB	Re: "South Africa's New 'New World'"
20110521-02	09:08	SteveB	"Coca-Crazed Concept"
20110521-10	15:58	SteveB	To: President Obama about Israel
20110521-11	15:58	B. Obama	Re: Israel
20110521-12	16:21	GaryF	Re: Israel
20110522-01	09:53	SteveB	Re: Israel
20110618-02	16:41	Dennis	"9 Countries That Do It Better: Why Does Europe Take Better Care of Its People Than America?"
20110723-01	14:47	SteveB	"China vs. U.S.: Who Will Win the 21st Century?" & "China's New Parochialism"
20110723-03	15:30	Charis	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
20110723-04	15:46	SteveB	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
20110723-06	16:12	GaryC	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
20110723-08	17:00	Dennis	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
20111004-01	07:54	SteveB	"Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"
20111004-02	07:59	GaryC	Re: "Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"
20111004-03	08:14	SteveB	Re: "Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"
20111007-03	11:00	GaryC	"Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-04	14:57	SteveB	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-06	15:20	Pam	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-05	15:14	Dennis	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-07	16:02	Dale	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-08	16:32	SteveB	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

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20111007-09	16:50	SteveB	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
20111007-10	18:31	Dale	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive" & "Corporate Profits Surge to Record High in Q2"
20111013-22	14:01	SteveB	"Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went
20111013-35	17:31	SteveG	Re: "Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went
20111013-36	17:53	Pam	Re: "Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went
<u>GEORGE W. BUSH, POTUS</u>			
20080217-02	14:56	GaryF	The Bush Administration
20080217-03	19:48	SteveB	Re: The Bush Administration
20080218-01	07:20	GaryF	Re: The Bush Administration
20080218-02	11:58	SteveB	Re: The Bush Administration
20080218-04	14:27	GaryF	Re: The Bush Administration
20080219-01	16:12	SteveB	Re: The Bush Administration
20080919-07	21:40	SteveB	Fw: George W. Bush's Resume
20080922-04	20:32	SteveB	Fw: "Don't Let Them Know..."
20081202-01	09:47	SteveB	"Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"
20081202-02	14:55	SteveG	Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"
20081202-03	15:17	SteveB	Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"
20081203-01	12:41	SteveG	Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"
20081211-03	10:06	SteveB	"The Truth About Idiot Bush (What a Legacy!)"
<u>GUNS, INSURRECTION, ETC.</u>			
20080704-01	14:55	SteveB	Guns, Deconstucting Firecrackers
20080707-01	15:09	Bill	Re: Deconstucting Firecrackers
20080708-01	11:06	SteveB	Re: Deconstucting Firecrackers
20080716-02	12:01	SteveB	Fw: Guns, as the Right Sees Them
20080819-01	14:41	SteveB	2nd Amendment
20080819-05	17:17	Pat	Re: 2nd Amendment
20080819-09	21:19	SteveB	Re: 2nd Amendment
20081210-01	19:14	SteveM	Gun Rights
20081211-01	09:53	SteveB	Re: Gun Rights
20081211-02	10:03	SteveM	Re: Gun Rights
20081211-04	10:11	SteveB	Re: Gun Rights
20091104-01	10:19	Ben	"Gun Control and the 2nd Amendment, from the Vermont Perspective"
20100216-01	05:22	SteveB	Guns in the Ghetto
20100216-02	10:41	Ben	Re: Guns in the Ghetto
20100216-03	17:54	SteveB	Re: Guns in the Ghetto
20100609-01	17:18	Charlie	Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat
20100610-02	09:42	Ben	Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat
20100610-03	10:00	SteveB	Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat
20100610-05	10:19	Ben	Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat
20100610-06	10:34	SteveB	Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat
20110218-01	19:17	Tom	Fw: Who will Protect You & Your Family?
20110219-01	11:18	SteveB	Re: Who will Protect You & Your Family?
20111006-03	11:03	SteveB	N'ifttt'y!
20111006-04	11:30	Pam	Re: N'ifttt'y!
20111006-05	12:48	SteveB	Re: N'ifttt'y!
20111006-06	13:37	Pam	Re: N'ifttt'y!
20111006-08	17:26	SteveB	Re: N'ifttt'y!
<u>HEALTH CARE</u>			
20081015-04	18:52	SteveB	"The Risk of McCain's Health Plan"
20090723-01	13:44	Phil	Fw: The Health Care Question
20090723-02	14:09	SteveB	Re: The Health Care Question
20101110-02	21:27	SteveB	"Pelosi's Triumph"
20101128-01	08:38	SteveB	Reasonable Cost Health Care

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20101128-02	10:18	GaryC	Re: Reasonable Cost Health Care
20110331-02	18:51	Robert	Fw: Obamacare
20110511-01	18:41	SteveB	Fw: CredoAction Petition: Tell John Boehner to Keep His Hands Off Medicare
20110610-05	10:10	SteveB	Fw: Republican Attacks on Medicare
20110723-09	17:23	SteveB	"Health Care Debate: It's Time to Get Outraged"
20111010-15	18:21	Mark	Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111010-17	21:24	Dennis	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111010-18	22:15	SteveB	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111011-02	06:47	SteveB	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111011-03	12:00	Pam	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111011-05	12:19	Dennis	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy & "Doctors Avoid Penalties in Suits Against Medical Firms"
20111011-06	14:31	Pam	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-01	06:05	SteveB	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-06	08:02	GaryC	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-07	09:26	Clark	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-08	09:50	Pam	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-10	11:32	Mark	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-12	11:44	Clark	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111012-18	17:34	GaryF	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111013-04	08:50	SteveB	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
20111017-35	23:03	Dale	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-01	09:41	Dale	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-02	09:44	GaryC	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-03	11:11	Pam	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-05	12:13	SteveB	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-07	14:22	Clark	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-09	18:17	Art	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111018-11	18:55	Art	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
20111019-20	17:09	SteveB	Obamacare & Obamacracy
IMMIGRATION REFORM			
20070515-01	11:45	SteveB	To: George Bush; Immigration Reform Bill
20070530-01	18:42	G. Bush	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070605-01	02:23	D. Rehberg	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070605-02	20:19	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070607-01	16:19	B. Nelson	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070608-01	13:53	SteveB	To: Senator _____; Immigration Reform Bill
20070608-02	14:19	H. Clinton	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070611-01	09:43	G. Bush	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070611-02	16:09	B. Obama	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070612-01	10:32	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill, Etc.
20070612-02	13:46	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070612-03	14:24	SteveB	"El Hacendado"
20070614-01	14:16	A. Specter	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070614-05	21:00	E. Kennedy	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070618-01	11:59	M. Baucus	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070618-02	15:47	J. Tester	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070620-01	11:36	H. Reid	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070711-02	14:22	J. Lieberman	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20070807-01	12:43	H. Clinton	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
20080201-01	14:17	SteveB	Fw: Illegal Aliens in California
20080326-01	10:18	V. Buchanan	Illegal Immigration Survey
20080522-01	09:10	V. Buchanan	Illegal Immigration
20080703-01	14:49	M. Martinez	Immigration Reform Amendment
20080821-01	11:12	SteveM	Fw: "Just One State" [California]; Illegal Immigration
20080821-04	12:18	SteveM	Fw: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

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20080821-05	13:26	SteveB	Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration
20080821-06	15:06	SteveM	Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration
20080821-08	19:12	SteveB	Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration
20080821-12	23:44	SteveM	Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration
20080822-03	09:58	SteveB	Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration
20081029-06	11:34	SteveM	"Iowa Meatpacker Fined \$10M after Immigration Raid"
20081029-11	14:49	SteveB	Re: "Iowa Meatpacker Fined \$10M after Immigration Raid"
20091229-01	21:36	Dick	Fw: "Salute the Danish Flag—It's a Symbol of Western Freedom"
20100504-01	08:22	SteveB	The U.S. of A.
20100504-04	13:39	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-05	13:58	GaryF	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-06	14:50	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-07	15:22	Charis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-08	16:30	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A. & "Two Arizona City Councils Vote to Sue Over New Law"
20100504-09	17:08	Dick	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-10	17:16	Charis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-11	17:18	Charis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-12	17:43	SteveG	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-13	17:55	Brent R	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-14	18:34	GaryF	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-15	18:35	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-16	19:27	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100504-17	20:00	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A. & Fw: If You Cross the Border Illegally...
20100505-01	00:24	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100505-02	01:06	Marci	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100505-03	07:39	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100505-04	07:45	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A. & "I Want to Explain Why Arizona SB1070 Is Needed"
20100505-05	07:53	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.: "2009 UN 'Human Development' Report"
20100505-06	07:55	Charis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100505-07	08:46	Bill	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100505-08	09:13	Mark	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-01	01:04	Marissa	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-02	02:03	Charis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-04	09:39	Clark	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-05	10:50	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-07	11:06	Clark	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-08	11:27	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-09	11:32	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-10	11:36	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-11	11:46	Clark	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-12	11:52	Ben	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-13	12:41	Dennis	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-14	12:45	SteveB	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-15	12:49	Ben	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-19	13:35	Bill	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100507-22	23:48	BrentR	Re: The U.S. of A.
20100508-02	13:19	Dick	Fw: Illegal Border Crossings
20100527-01	09:04	SteveB	Fw: Mexico's Immigration Laws
20100527-02	13:45	Marci	Re: Mexico's Immigration Laws
20100527-03	14:03	SteveB	Re: Mexico's Immigration Laws
20100530-01	14:15	SteveB	"Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"
20100530-02	18:33	SteveG	Re: "Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"
20100531-01	20:47	SteveB	Re: "Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"
20100618-01	06:59	SteveB	Fw: Legal Joe vs. Illegal José
20100715-01	09:15	SteveB	"'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100715-02	12:54	Pam	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100716-01	08:04	SteveB	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

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20100716-03	08:43	Pam	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100716-04	08:55	SteveB	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100716-05	09:06	SteveB	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100722-01	07:23	Pam	Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
20100728-01	08:05	SteveB	Fw: Let's Say I Break into Your House
20100826-01	16:57	Dick	Fw: Countries with Birthright Citizenship
20100828-01	06:19	SteveB	Re: Countries with Birthright Citizenship
20110224-03	23:08	Tom	"Missouri Ahead of the Game in Dealing with Illegal Immigration"
20110510-03	11:34	Charis	Path to Citizenship
20110510-04	18:19	SteveB	Re: Path to Citizenship
20110511-02	20:12	SteveB	To: President Obama; El Paso Speech on Immigration
20110511-03	10:43	Charis	Re: To: President Obama; El Paso Speech on Immigration
20110512-01	09:02	SteveB	Re: To: President Obama; El Paso Speech on Immigration
20110707-01	07:29	GaryC	Illegal immigration Produces "Two Californias"
20111011-07	16:18	SteveG	Illegal Immigration
20111011-08	16:25	GaryC	Re: Illegal Immigration
20111011-10	19:41	Mary	Re: Illegal Immigration
20111014-05	20:44	Pam	"Prison or Deportation: What Choices Are Immigrants Given?"
20111014-06	22:06	SteveB	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
20111016-04	09:17	Pam	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
20111016-12	14:16	SteveB	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
20111016-13	14:40	Pam	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
20111016-18	20:52	SteveB	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
20111017-06	20:57	Pam	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
<u>JOBS, MANUFACTURING & UNIONS</u>			
20081010-03	20:20	SteveB	"Can General Motors & Ford Survive?"
20081119-01	22:21	Dick	Fw: "A Letter to My Employees"
20081120-01	10:35	Paul	Re: "A Letter to My Employees"
20081121-01	09:22	SteveB	Re: "A Letter to My Employees"
20081121-02	22:41	Dick	Re: "A Letter to My Employees"
20100909-03	07:37	SteveB	"Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"
20100909-04	08:23	SteveB	Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"
20100909-05	18:25	Dennis	Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"
20100909-06	18:40	SteveB	Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"
20100921-04	07:53	SteveB	"For the Unemployed Over 50, Fears of Never Working Again"
20101010-02	10:06	SteveB	"China Emerges as Scapegoat in Campaign Ads"
20101207-02	10:21	Jim	Fw: Changes Are Coming & "19 Facts About the De-industrialization of America That Will Blow Your Mind"
20101216-01	06:26	SteveB	"A Few Things You Should Know About Minimum Wage"
20110308-05	09:51	SteveB	Unions & the Middle Class
20110312-02	07:10	A. Grayson	Did They Die in Vain?
20110313-03	18:21	SteveB	Re: Did They Die in Vain?
20110314-01	17:29	Pam	Re: Did They Die in Vain?
20110314-03	08:47	SteveB	Re: Did They Die in Vain?
20110315-01	07:23	Pam	Re: Did They Die in Vain? Japanese Disasters
20110315-02	11:53	SteveB	Re: Did They Die in Vain? Japanese Disasters, Energy
20110315-04	15:50	SteveB	"Power Concedes Nothing Without a Demand"
20110323-05	11:17	Dennis	"May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"
20110323-08	11:54	SteveB	Fw: "May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"
20110323-09	12:06	SteveB	Re: "May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"
20110417-01	11:37	SteveB	"Governor Walker: Collective-Bargaining Law Doesn't Save Money"
20110607-03	19:51	SteveB	Fw: Buy Americ-CAN!
20110609-01	10:35	Barbara	Re: Buy Americ-CAN!
20110807-02	11:00	SteveG	"30 Years Ago Today: The Day the Middle Class Died"
20111022-06	10:17	Dale	"The Employee Rights Act"

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<u>MISC., THE NATION & GOVERNMENT</u>			
<u>NEWS MEDIA & FREEDOM OF THE PRESS</u>			
20101120-05	14:03	SteveB	"Olbermann, O'Reilly & the Death of Real News"
20101211-01	16:09	Dennis	"Don't Shoot the Messenger for Revealing Uncomfortable Truths"
20101214-04	18:00	SteveB	Re: "Don't Shoot the Messenger for Revealing Uncomfortable Truths"
20111017-34	22:32	SteveG	Censorship
<u>TAXES, RICH & POOR, CLASS WARFARE</u>			
20080821-03	12:12	SteveM	Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton
20080821-07	16:16	SteveB	Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton
20080821-11	22:55	SteveM	Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton
20080822-02	09:56	SteveB	Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton
20081028-05	16:40	SteveM	Redistributing Obama's Wealth
20081029-07	12:43	SteveB	Re: Redistributing Obama's Wealth
20081102-02	08:34	SteveB	"Spread It Around"
20100810-01	21:06	Dick	Fw: Current European Tax Rates
20100813-01	12:53	SteveB	Re: Current European Tax Rates & "Think Your Taxes Are Bad?"
20100919-05	14:25	SteveB	Redistribution of Wealth
20100922-03	17:02	Dennis	"Poverty Is Through the Roof & Billionaires Are Getting Pu*s*y About Not Enough Profits"
20100925-01	12:34	Dennis	"New Rule: Rich People Who Complain About Being Vilified Should Be Vilified"
20100926-02	08:09	SteveB	Re: "New Rule..."
20100926-03	12:55	Mary	Re: "New Rule..."
20100926-04	14:34	SteveB	Re: "New Rule..."
20100927-06	10:31	GaryC	My Income Taxes
20100928-01	07:37	SteveB	Re: My Income Taxes
20101006-01	13:21	Dennis	"The Undeserving Rich: Did Warren Buffet Really Earn His \$50 Billion?"
20101007-01	07:38	SteveB	Re: "The Undeserving Rich" & "The Rich Are Hogging Our Common Inheritance—We Must Take It Back"
20101007-02	09:28	Pam	Re: "The Undeserving Rich"
20101008-01	16:04	SteveB	Re: "The Undeserving Rich"
20101010-01	08:59	SteveB	"Note to Tea Partiers: They Lied—You Don't Live in a Rich Country"
20101012-01	07:26	SteveB	"Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
20101012-02	07:40	GaryC	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
20101012-03	09:55	SteveB	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze" & "Top 10 Facts About Social Security"
20101012-04	10:04	GaryC	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
20101012-09	16:40	SteveB	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze" & "Wall Street to Break Pay Record in This Economy"
20101012-11	16:57	GaryC	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
20101025-02	07:55	SteveB	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
20101012-08	16:37	GaryC	My Experience with Taxes
20101025-01	07:38	SteveB	Re: My Experience with Taxes
20101120-01	08:58	SteveB	"The Poor Is Getting Poorer"
20101120-02	12:55	Bill	Re: "The Poor Is Getting Poorer"
20101120-03	13:47	SteveB	Re: "The Poor Is Getting Poorer"
20101202-01	12:48	Dennis	"Welcome to the Plutocracy!"
20101205-02	18:24	SteveB	Re: "Welcome to the Plutocracy!"
20101203-02	19:30	Dennis	The Bush Tax Cuts
20101205-01	13:51	SteveB	Re: The Bush Tax Cuts
20101206-01	10:50	Ben	Re: The Bush Tax Cuts
20101206-03	16:55	SteveB	Re: The Bush Tax Cuts
20101215-02	17:48	Dennis	"Tax Cuts Simply Do Not Create Jobs"
20101220-02	12:09	Dennis	"Getting to the Truth About Taxes and Public Spending"

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20110215-01	19:17	Tom	15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110216-01	11:23	SteveB	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110216-02	11:46	GaryC	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110222-02	11:04	SteveB	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110223-01	15:18	GaryC	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110222-03	18:50	SteveB	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget; Gasoline Tax
20110222-04	20:06	GaryC	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget; Gasoline Tax
20110223-02	17:17	SteveB	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110224-01	12:08	GaryC	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110224-02	21:40	SteveB	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
20110322-08	18:26	SteveB	"What People Earn—2011"
20110323-12	12:33	Dennis	"Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110325-01	08:31	SteveB	Fw: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110325-02	09:34	GaryC	Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110325-03	11:32	SteveB	Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110325-04	11:39	GaryC	Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110325-05	13:57	SteveB	Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"
20110328-03	11:14	GaryC	"The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110328-04	16:30	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110328-05	16:33	GaryC	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110328-06	17:14	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-01	15:15	Pam	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-02	15:57	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-03	16:14	GaryC	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-05	19:03	GaryC	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-06	20:14	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110329-07	20:20	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
20110403-02	17:38	SteveB	"Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%"
20110403-03	18:10	Charis	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%"
20110403-04	18:32	SteveB	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%"
20110404-01	08:24	SteveB	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America
20110404-02	08:52	Charis	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America
20110404-03	10:19	SteveB	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America
20110506-01	06:13	SteveB	"U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"
20110506-02	14:10	SteveG	Re: "U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"
20110506-03	17:37	SteveB	Re: "U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"
20110506-04	19:17	SteveB	"CEOs See Pay Rise 24% on Average"
20110506-05	22:33	Jim	"Too Many Federal Workers?"
20110507-03	10:46	SteveB	Re: "Too Many Federal Workers?"
20110528-02	14:42	SteveB	Fw: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'
20110529-01	09:36	Pam	Re: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'
20110529-02	16:29	SteveB	Re: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'
20110607-02	09:31	SteveB	Fw: CredoAction Petition: Tell Congress to Tax the Rich
20110629-03	20:38	SteveB	Fw: Balancing the Budget at the Expense of American Jobs
20110726-03	08:05	Dick	Fw: Social Security: An Entitlement?
20110726-04	10:19	SteveB	Re: Social Security: An Entitlement?
20110802-01	11:05	Mark	Fw: Bernie Madoff & Social Security
20110810-01	09:40	Phil	Fw: Social Security 'Information'
20110823-03	18:09	Jim	"Why Is President Obama So Anxious to Cut Social Security?"
20110906-01	18:06	Dennis	How to Think About Taxes
20110907-03	16:45	Mary	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110908-02	11:22	Dennis	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110907-01	10:31	Phil	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110907-02	15:51	Pam	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110907-04	20:45	Mary	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110909-01	13:22	Pam	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110911-02	09:29	SteveB	Re: How to Think About Taxes

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20110911-01	09:00	SteveB	Re: How to Think About Taxes
20110918-01	17:07	Jim	"A Riddle That Brings Joy to Mega-Rich Hearts"
20110920-01	16:46	Dennis	"Misconceptions & Realities About Who Pays Taxes"
20110920-02	17:57	Pam	Re: "Misconceptions & Realities About Who Pays Taxes"
20111006-01	06:31	SteveB	"5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1% of Americans"
20111006-02	09:19	Pam	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111006-09	17:30	Mary	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%" & "The Problem with 'Tax the Rich': It Won't Work"
20111006-10	17:37	Dennis	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111006-11	17:48	SteveB	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111006-12	18:07	SteveB	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111006-13	18:30	Mark	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111007-02	09:43	Pam	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
20111010-14	18:07	SteveB	Quotes: Aristotle & William Shatner
20111010-16	18:47	GaryC	Quotes: Aristotle & William Shatner
20111013-01	07:25	SteveG	Why Republicans Like Cain's 9-9-9 Plan
20111013-06	08:52	Pam	Re: Why Republicans Like Cain's 9-9-9 Plan
20111013-34	17:25	SteveG	Graphics: What 99% Means
20111016-02	06:31	SteveB	"Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-06	12:14	Susette	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-08	12:30	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-07	12:28	GaryC	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-10	13:54	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-09	12:52	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-11	14:15	Dale	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-14	14:57	Mary	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-03	06:38	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-08	09:36	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-12	11:00	Mary	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-21	12:35	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-22	12:36	Art	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-15	15:29	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-16	15:49	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-17	18:27	Art	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111016-19	21:01	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-20	12:17	Art	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-01	06:23	Mark	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-02	06:37	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-11	10:45	Mark	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-16	11:58	Pam	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-30	14:57	Mary	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-05	08:52	SteveG	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-09	10:26	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-10	10:31	SteveB	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-23	12:50	Art	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
20111017-28	14:41	Charis	"First Person: My Biggest Money Secret"
20111018-08	16:46	Jim	"We Are the One Percent"
20111021-22	14:45	GaryC	Responsibility
20111021-26	15:04	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111021-28	15:08	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-31	15:22	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111021-32	15:24	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-34	15:32	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-35	15:41	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-36	15:42	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111021-41	15:57	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-51	16:37	GaryC	Re: Responsibility

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20111021-52	16:42	GaryC	Re: Responsibility
20111021-54	16:45	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-56	16:48	Art	Re: Responsibility
20111021-58	16:55	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111021-60	17:02	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-63	18:05	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-64	18:09	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-65	18:14	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-66	18:16	Charis	Re: Responsibility
20111021-67	18:19	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111021-70	18:32	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111021-72	22:15	GaryC	Re: Responsibility
20111022-03	08:03	SteveB	Re: Responsibility
20111022-11	14:35	Jim	Re: Responsibility
20111022-17	17:06	Pam	Re: Responsibility
20111022-12	14:38	Art	Rich and Poor
20111023-15	20:30	SteveG	"The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
20111024-01	06:34	SteveB	Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
20111024-02	07:33	SteveG	Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
20111024-03	10:55	SteveB	Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
<u>THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA</u>			
20100726-01	08:25	SteveB	"Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
20100726-02	09:24	Ben	Re: "Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
20100726-03	12:13	SteveB	Re: "Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
20100804-01	09:15	SteveB	North & South
20101215-01	06:38	SteveB	Re: U.S. Photos: 1935-1939
20110328-02	11:29	SteveB	"The Best Retirement Places"
20110510-02	9:00	SteveB	Fw: Memorial Day
20110605-03	20:16	SteveB	"U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-04	10:03	Bill	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-05	10:04	DaveY	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-06	11:10	SteveB	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-08	12:06	SteveG	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-09	14:05	Dennis	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-12	18:11	SteveB	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"
20110606-14	19:02	GaryC	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List" Taxes
20110606-15	19:08	SteveB	Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List" Taxes
20110701-01	06:26	SteveB	U.S. Citizenship Test
20110701-04	22:32	PamB	Re: U.S. Citizenship Test
20110702-01	06:00	SteveB	Re: U.S. Citizenship Test
20110805-01	19:11	GaryF	Fw: 1911
<u>WAR ON TERROR, AFGHANISTAN WAR & IRAQ WAR II</u>			
20080813-08	13:39	SteveM	Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)
20120112-01	07:19	SteveB	Re: WMDs—"Yellowcake Uranium Found In Iraq, Bush Was Right! Well, Not So Much."
20070821-01	13:28	E. Bayh	Reclaiming Our Legacy; Iraq War, Afghanistan War
20090130-01	13:42	Dennis	"The Good War" (on Terror)
20100708-02	16:18	SteveG	Corruption in Iraq; TV
20100709-01	06:53	SteveB	Re: Corruption in Iraq; TV
20100709-02	06:56	SteveG	Re: Corruption in Iraq; TV
20100907-01	14:18	Dennis	"America's Empire & Endless Wars Are Destroying the World & Ruining Our Great Country"
20100928-07	21:36	Ben	"Pakistan and the U.S. Exit from Afghanistan"
20100929-04	08:40	SteveB	Re: "Pakistan and the U.S. Exit from Afghanistan"
20110221-01	14:43	Phil	Fw: Joys of a Muslim Woman

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20110221-02	19:29	SteveB	Re: Joys of a Muslim Woman
20110303-02	18:12	Dennis	"Fighting Over Crumbs Left from Military Spending"
20110304-01	09:45	SteveB	Re: "Fighting Over Crumbs Left from Military Spending"
20110629-01	07:39	SteveB	"The Cost of War at Least \$3.7 trillion and Counting"
20110823-01	12:20	Dennis	from <i>The Empire at Dusk</i> & "Has Our Bloated Security Budget Made Us Safer?"
20110913-02	20:39	Dick	Fw: Letter from an Airman About Military Pay
20110930-10	17:24	SteveB	"Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20110930-11	18:17	Pam	Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20111001-01	07:31	SteveB	Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20111001-02	08:39	Pam	Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20111001-03	11:29	SteveB	Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20111001-04	14:40	Bill	Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"
20111005-01	03:11	SteveB	"Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"
20111005-02	08:44	SteveG	Re: "Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"
20111005-03	12:49	SteveB	Re: "Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"
<u>WOMEN'S RIGHTS, ABORTION, BIRTH CONTROL, MASTURBATION & LGBT</u>			
20080814-04	18:08	SteveB	Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists
20080814-05	18:11	SteveM	Re: Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists
20080814-08	19:24	SteveB	Re: Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists
20100918-02	13:10	Dennis	"Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell: Largest Pro-wanking Demonstration in History"
20100919-01	07:37	SteveB	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100919-02	07:56	GaryC	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100919-03	07:59	SteveB	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100919-04	09:23	Pam	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100919-06	20:01	GaryC	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100920-01	13:36	Mary	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20100920-02	13:55	SteveB	Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"
20110219-02	18:17	SteveB	Fw: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?
20110219-03	18:20	Charis	Re: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?
20110219-04	18:51	SteveB	Re: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?
20110425-02	19:10	SteveB	"Five Myths About Planned Parenthood"
<u>CAUSES, PETITIONS, ACTIONS, ETC.</u>			
20111012-19	18:23	SteveG	Fw: DCCC Petition: Call for an Immediate Investigation into Koch Industries' Business Dealings with Iran
<u>FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE</u>			
20080919-04	18:48	Charlie	Hello from Houston; Blogs
20080920-02	11:06	SteveB	Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs
20080921-01	00:37	Charlie	Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs
20080923-02	17:16	SteveB	Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs
20100423-01	05:01	SteveB	Friendship
20100423-05	11:54	SteveG	Re: Friendship
20100423-06	13:06	SteveB	Re: Friendship
20100504-02	10:23	Jim	Curiosity & Reincarnation
20100504-03	11:52	SteveB	Re: Curiosity & Reincarnation
20100918-01	11:20	Pam	So...?
20101011-02	12:32	Pam	Responses
20101101-02	16:15	Pam	Trip to Stanford Reunion
20101119-01	16:42	SteveB	Re: Trip to Stanford Reunion
20101203-01	07:49	Pam	My Blog
20101210-01	17:09	SteveB	Re: My Blog
20101212-01	14:09	Pam	Re: My Blog
20110203-01	06:51	SteveB	Gasparilla

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20110203-02	07:54	Pam	Re: Gasparilla
20110204-01	10:45	SteveB	Re: Gasparilla
20110204-02	11:46	Pam	Re: Gasparilla
20110205-01	10:48	SteveB	Re: Gasparilla
20110205-02	16:14	Pam	Re: Gasparilla
20110205-03	22:48	SteveB	Re: Gasparilla
20110208-01	10:36	Pam	Re: Gasparilla
20110308-01	08:17	Pam	Common Dreams
20110308-07	15:51	SteveB	Re: Common Dreams
20110407-03	15:42	SteveB	Lucky! SteveB and Marci
20110416-07	14:22	SteveB	Friends of the Middle
20110427-03	18:01	Paula	Re: Photos of Trees
20110430-01	11:18	SteveB	Re: Photos of Trees
20110519-01	01:57	SteveG	Boyhood Adventures
20110521-01	06:36	SteveB	Re: Boyhood Adventures
20110521-08	14:05	SteveG	Re: Boyhood Adventures
20110521-09	15:08	SteveB	Re: Boyhood Adventures
20110521-13	18:00	SteveG	Re: Boyhood Adventures
20110521-14	18:08	SteveB	Re: Boyhood Adventures
20110628-01	22:05	Pam	Re: Aging Stars; The Economy, President Obama
20111008-02	09:15	Pam	Our Group
20111009-06	09:21	Lianne	Re: Our Group
20111009-10	10:58	SteveB	Re: Our Group
20111009-11	16:26	Mary	Re: Our Group
20111009-12	23:14	Mary	Re: Our Group
20111010-02	06:45	SteveB	Re: Our Group
20111010-03	07:16	SteveB	Re: Our Group
20111010-04	08:30	GaryC	Re: Our Group
20111010-09	15:37	Pam	Re: Our Group
20111010-11	16:23	Pam	Re: Our Group
20111010-13	17:32	GaryC	Re: Our Group
20111012-05	06:27	Pam	Re: Our Group
20111012-09	11:21	Pam	Re: Our Group
20111012-11	11:35	Pam	Re: Our Group
20111012-14	14:07	Jim	Re: Our Group
20111012-15	14:17	SteveB	Re: Our Group
20111012-16	14:24	Jim	Re: Our Group
20111013-25	14:23	Ben	I Find Myself Reading This Stuff Even When I Don't Have Time
20111013-32	16:51	SteveB	Re: I Find Myself Reading This Stuff...
20111020-31	16:59	Pam	Nation of Change
20111021-55	16:47	DaveY	Good-Bye
20111021-15	13:54	Pam	Re: Good-Bye
20111021-59	17:00	DaveY	Re: Good-Bye
20111021-68	18:23	SteveB	Re: Good-Bye
20111021-71	20:55	SteveB	Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111021-73	22:38	Charis	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111021-74	22:41	Charis	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111021-75	22:45	Charis	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-01	01:45	Ben	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-02	05:23	Pam	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-04	08:48	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-05	09:56	SteveG	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-08	11:31	Pam	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-09	11:39	SteveG	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111022-10	11:58	Pam	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111023-04	09:52	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111023-09	10:59	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

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20111023-10	11:12	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
20111023-11	11:27	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
<u>FUN & DIVERSION</u>			
20080501-02	11:44	SteveB	Fw: Political Science for Dummies
20080521-01	19:07	Dick	Fw: AllMyFaves.com
20080521-02	20:49	SteveB	Re: AllMyFaves.com; Edward Kennedy R.I.P.
20090718-01	20:28	SteveB	Movie: <i>Public Enemies</i>
20100527-04	11:29	Tom	Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-01	10:32	Ben	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-04	11:55	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-05	12:33	Pam	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-06	14:39	Ben	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-07	15:42	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100528-08	15:54	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore
20100602-02	15:30	Pam	Humor, TED, Etc.
20100921-01	06:54	SteveB	Fw: Larry the Cable Guy
20100921-02	07:11	Lianne	Re: Larry the Cable Guy
20100921-03	07:34	SteveB	Re: Larry the Cable Guy
20110220-01	09:57	SteveB	Movie Recommendations
20110220-02	13:16	Pam	Re: Movie Recommendations
20110520-03	18:03	GaryF	Video: "The Scariest Path In The World"
20110521-04	10:10	Bill	Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"
20110521-05	11:00	SteveB	Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"
20110521-06	11:32	Bill	Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"
20110521-07	12:10	SteveB	Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"
20111007-11	18:42	Dale	Trend Hunter
20111007-12	18:46	GaryC	Re: Trend Hunter
<u>MISC., OTHER</u>			
20080316-01	09:55	SteveB	"Drug Trade Tyranny on the Border" Drug Wars
20080425-01	15:04	SteveB	To: Bill O'Reilly; 911 Operators
<u>OCCUPY WALL ST.</u>			
20111002-01	14:49	SteveG	Fw: Occupy Wall St.
20111003-02	06:02	Pam	Re: Occupy Wall St.
20111003-04	06:56	SteveB	Re: Occupy Wall St.
20111003-03	06:04	Dennis	Video: "Occupy Wall Street Protester Lectures Fox News Reporter"
20111004-04	12:53	Pam	Re: Occupy Wall St.
20111004-07	18:14	Dennis	"Top Five Reasons Why the Occupy Wall Street Protests Embody Values of the Real Boston Tea Party"
20111017-04	10:07	SteveG	"The 99%, the 53%, and Distributive Justice"
20111017-25	13:47	SteveB	"Unsettled Times"
20111017-26	13:53	Charis	Re: "Unsettled Times"
20111017-27	14:27	SteveB	Re: "Unsettled Times"
20111017-29	14:42	GaryC	Re: "Unsettled Times"
20111017-31	15:01	Pam	Re: "Unsettled Times"
20111017-32	16:00	Art	Re: "Unsettled Times"
20111017-33	18:26	SteveG	Re: "Unsettled Times" & "Is #OWS the Revolution the Beatles Were Singing About?" (continued under heading: Health Care)
20111018-14	22:23	SteveB	"What Wall St. Protesters Have Right"
20111022-07	10:26	SteveG	Fw: UUSC Action: Sign Letter of Support for OWS
20111022-14	15:30	GaryF	No Wonder People Are Taking to the Streets
20111022-18	18:55	Dale	Re: No Wonder... & "Lawsuit Filed Against FDIC"
20111022-19	19:03	Charis	Re: No Wonder...
20111023-12	11:55	Pam	Re: No Wonder...
20111023-13	12:00	Pam	Re: No Wonder...

DATE-ID	TIME	FROM	SUBJECT/TITLE
20111023-01	07:19	SteveB	"LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
20111023-02	07:54	Charis	Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
20111023-03	09:26	SteveB	Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
20111023-05	10:14	Charis	Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
20111023-06	10:43	SteveB	Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
20111023-07	10:48	SteveG	Fw: UUSC Action: Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement
20111023-08	10:58	Art	Re: UUSC Action: Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement
PHILOSOPHY, LIFE, ADVENTURE & ART			
20070105-01	16:34	SteveB	Philosophy Pages
20070614-03	15:16	SteveB	"What Is the Meaning of Life?" Philosophy, Spirituality
20071003-01	17:17	SteveB	Life 101
20080803-02	11:13	G. Haselhurst	On Truth & Reality; Philosophy, Science
20080803-03	11:50	SteveB	Re: On Truth & Reality; Philosophy, Science
20080816-02	10:36	SteveM	Fw: Instructions for Life
20100419-02	02:36	SteveB	Quotes: Responsibility
20100420-02	15:59	SteveB	Quotes: Mothers
20100513-01	11:00	Phil	Fw: Coming Changes
20100513-02	12:42	SteveB	Re: Coming Changes
20100611-01	11:44	Pam	<i>The Pregnant Widow</i> by Martin Amis
20101110-01	21:07	SteveB	"Please Allow Me to Correct a Few Things"
20110128-01	16:27	SteveB	Cenesthetic Hallucination
20110322-02	15:54	SteveB	Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride
20110322-03	16:47	GaryC	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride; Socialist!
20110322-04	16:51	SteveB	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride; Elitist Fascist!
20110322-05	17:40	SteveB	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride; Not a Socialist!
20110322-06	17:59	GaryC	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride
20110322-09	21:14	GaryC	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride; Not a Fascist!
20110407-02	11:20	SteveB	"Sailor, 85, Crosses Atlantic on Raft with Friends" Let's Go!
20111006-07	14:43	SteveB	"Does Evil Exist? Neuroscientists Say No"
20111014-03	16:37	SteveB	"Steve Jobs, in His Own Words"
20111014-04	17:24	GaryC	Re: "Steve Jobs, in His Own Words"
PHYSICS & COSMOLOGY			
20070529-01	15:09	SteveB	Z Pinch Machine; Sci-Fi, Physics, Energy
20070814-01	11:45	P. Marshall	"Where Did the Universe Come From?" Cosmology
20080814-07	19:12	SteveB	To: Dave Spurgel; The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080815-02	09:07	D. Spurgel	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080818-03	14:35	SteveB	To: Neil deGrasse Tyson; The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080921-03	11:53	KE Saavick Ford	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080921-05	12:55	SteveB	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080922-01	10:21	KE Saavick Ford	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20090920-01	12:50	SteveB	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20091217-01	12:44	KE Saavick Ford	Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
20080909-02	20:11	SteveB	"Super-Smasher Targets Massive Mystery"
20090712-01	19:14	SteveB	Tesseract: 3-Dimensional Projections of Higher Dimensions
20091010-01	09:50	SteveB	"Electron Band Structure In Germanium, My A*s"
20091012-01	10:59	Ben	Re: "Electron Band Structure In Germanium, My A*s"
20100308-01	16:51	SteveB	"The Last Question"
20100621-02	13:09	Ben	"The Higgs Boson May Have 'Five Faces'"
20100621-03	14:31	SteveB	Re: "The Higgs Boson May Have 'Five Faces'"
20110329-04	16:55	SteveB	"Genius at Work: 12-Year-Old is Studying at IUPUI"
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, MISC.			
20070104-01	12:17	SteveB	from <i>Language and Mind</i> ; Linguistics
20080831-01	10:04	SteveB	"Brazil Admits Amazon Deforestation on the Rise" Environment
20081027-06	16:26	SteveB	"Sand Stolen Across Caribbean for Construction" Environment

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20081116-02	06:37	India	First Hologram on CNN
20090722-01	09:20	Ben	Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?
20090722-02	09:34	SteveB	Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?
20090722-03	12:10	Ben	Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?
20090722-04	13:28	SteveB	Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?
20100423-02	09:50	SteveB	Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland
20100423-03	10:37	Bill	Re: Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland
20100423-04	11:21	SteveB	Re: Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland
20100521-01	15:13	SteveB	"A Step to Artificial Life: Manmade DNA Powers Cell"
20110117-01	15:21	Ben	Giant 1956 5MB IBM Hard Drive
20110119-01	09:59	SteveB	Re: Giant 1956 5MB IBM Hard Drive
20110304-02	10:52	SteveB	Apple iPad 2
20110905-01	12:06	Jim	"Humankind's Most Ambitious Science Projects"
SERIES: THE "CHURCH" (CHILD ABUSE)			
20100330-01	08:35	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 1: "Losing Their Religion? Catholicism in Turmoil" & "Abuse Victims to Vatican: 'Stop Attacking Us!'"
20100330-02	08:46	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 2
20100330-03	09:20	Lianne	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 2
20100330-04	09:30	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 2
20100330-05	12:19	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100330-06	12:32	Ben	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100330-07	12:38	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100330-08	22:37	Jim	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100331-01	06:52	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100331-02	11:15	Jim	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100331-03	12:51	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3
20100404-01	07:11	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 4: "Vatican Priest Likens Criticism of Church on Abuse to Anti-Semitism"
20100404-02	08:44	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 5
20100404-03	08:56	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 6: "Cardinal Condemns 'Gossip' at Easter Mass"
20100404-04	09:52	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 7
20100405-01	09:11	Charis	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 7
20100405-02	13:17	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 7
20100406-01	22:00	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 8: "Vatican Says Pope Target of 'Hate' Campaign"
20100406-02	23:24	Larry	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8
20100407-01	09:40	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8
20100407-02	12:48	Larry	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8
20100409-01	14:58	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 9: "Future Pope Stalled Pedophile Case"
20100409-02	16:58	Charis	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 9
20100410-01	18:58	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 9
20100412-01	15:00	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 10: "Vatican to Bishops: Follow Law, Report Sex Abuse"
20100412-02	16:20	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 11: "Vatican Makes Peace with Beatles after 40 Years"
20100413-01	08:58	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 12: "European Abuse Hot Lines Log Jump in Calls"
20100413-02	20:26	Marci	The "Church"—Chpt. 13: "The Pope Should Stand Trial"
20100413-03	22:01	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 14: "The Great Catholic Cover-Up"
20100415-01	14:11	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 15: "Pope Notes Attacks on Church, Urges Repentance"
20100418-01	09:36	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 16: "Pope: Church Will Protect Young from Abuse"
20100419-01	02:25	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 17: "Convento da Arrábida"
20100420-01	10:39	Lianne	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 17
20100421-01	08:00	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 18: "Pope Asleep? Benedict XVI Appears To Sleep During Malta Mass"
20100421-02	11:16	Lianne	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 18
20100421-04	12:48	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 18

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20100508-01	04:22	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 19: "Catholics Sent Predator Priest to Remote Village" & "Pope Accepts Resignation of German Bishop Accused of Abuse"
20100510-01	09:12	Ben	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19
20100510-02	10:47	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19
20100510-03	11:46	Ben	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19
20100510-04	12:15	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19
20100627-01	13:26	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 20: "Pope Deplores Belgian Sex Raids, Stresses Autonomy"
20100627-02	14:16	Ben	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20
20100627-03	14:21	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20
20100715-03	13:05	Pam	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20
20100716-02	08:25	SteveB	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20
20100715-04	15:11	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 21: "Vatican Issues Sex Abuse Guidelines after Crisis" & "UN: Vatican Child Rights Report 13 Years Overdue"
20110516-05	16:01	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 22 (One Chapter Too Many): "Vatican Tells Bishops to Root Out Sexual Abuse"
<u>SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION</u>			
20070111-01	14:54	SteveB	The Bible Is Hard
20070119-01	18:27	SteveB	"Buddha on the Brain"
20070301-01	15:57	SteveB	"Decoding <i>The Secret</i> "
20070524-01	17:57	SteveB	"Gospel According to Judas"
20080522-02	13:01	SteveB	Fw: "Islam Is Not a Religion, Nor Is It a Cult. It Is a Complete System."
20081126-03	20:03	SteveM	Fw: Would You Run?
20081127-02	23:01	SteveB	Re: Would You Run?
20081227-01	11:12	SteveB	Reply to Some Jesus Email
20081229-01	13:01	SteveB	"Happy Birthday, Dear Yeshua, Happy Birthday to You!"
20090109-01	12:09	SteveB	Christmas
20090117-02	14:31	SteveB	The Truth, with Love
20090118-01	09:13	SteveB	"Republicans, Democrats Differ on Creationism"
20090504-01	11:03	SteveB	"Holy Pancakes! Virgin Mary Seen on Griddle"
20090806-01	02:56	Charlie	"Flying Spaghetti Monster"
20090806-02	11:05	SteveB	Re: "Flying Spaghetti Monster"
20100417-01	10:23	India	Buddhist Blog
20100417-02	11:58	SteveB	Re: Buddhist Blog
20101011-01	08:11	SteveB	"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences"
20101103-01	07:16	SteveB	Our Highest Nature
20110313-01	11:53	SteveB	The Church of Steve
20110314-02	06:09	Larry	Re: The Church of Steve
20110322-01	08:49	SteveB	"Meet the Boy Who Says He Visited Heaven and Saw Jesus"
20110326-01	18:08	Larry	Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-01	10:37	SteveB	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-02	10:51	Charis	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-03	10:57	SteveB	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-04	11:09	Charis	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-05	16:13	SteveB	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110327-07	21:09	Larry	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110328-01	21:36	SteveB	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
20110725-01	07:47	SteveB	"Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"
20110725-03	10:52	GaryC	Re: "Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"
20110725-04	16:24	SteveB	Re: "Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"
20110725-02	10:09	SteveG	"Little-Known U.S. Document Signed by President Adams Proclaims America's Government Is Secular"

"Linguistic Contributions to the Study of Mind (Future)" from *Language and Mind*, by Noam Chomsky, 1968

(Source: *Language and Mind* publ. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1968. One of the six lectures is reproduced here. Transcribed: in 1998 by Andy Blunden, proofed and corrected Feb., 2005.)

In discussing the past, I referred to two major traditions that have enriched the study of language in their separate and very different ways; and in my last lecture, I tried to give some indication of the topics that seem on the immediate horizon today, as a kind of synthesis of philosophical grammar and structural linguistics begins to take shape. Each of the major traditions of study and speculation that I have been using as a point of reference was associated with a certain characteristic approach to the problems of mind; we might say, without distortion, that each evolved as a specific branch of the psychology of its time, to which it made a distinctive contribution.

It may seem a bit paradoxical to speak of structural linguistics in this way, given its militant anti-psychologism. But the paradox is lessened when we take note of the fact that this militant anti-psychologism is no less true of much of contemporary psychology itself, particularly of those branches that until a few years ago monopolised the study of use and acquisition of language. We live, after all, in the age of "behavioural science," not of "the science of mind." I do not want to read too much into a terminological innovation, but I think that there is some significance in the ease and willingness with which modern thinking about man and society accepts the designation "behavioural science." No sane person has ever doubted that behaviour provides much of the evidence for this study — all of the evidence, if we interpret "behaviour" in a sufficiently loose sense. But the term "behavioural science" suggests a not-so-subtle shift of emphasis toward the evidence itself and away from the deeper underlying principles and abstract mental structures that might be illuminated by the evidence of behaviour. It is as if natural science were to be designated "the science of meter readings." What, in fact, would we expect of natural science in a culture that was satisfied to accept this designation for its activities?

Behavioural science has been much preoccupied with data and organisation of data, and it has even seen itself as a kind of technology of control of behaviour. Anti-mentalism in linguistics and in philosophy of language conforms to this shift of orientation. As I mentioned in my first lecture, I think that one major indirect contribution of modern structural linguistics results from its success in making explicit the assumptions of an anti-mentalistic, thoroughly operational and behaviourist approach to the phenomena of language. By extending this approach to its natural limits, it laid the groundwork for a fairly conclusive demonstration of the inadequacy of any such approach to the problems of mind.

More generally, I think that the long-range significance of the study of language lies in the fact that in this study it is possible to give a relatively sharp and clear formulation of some of the central questions of psychology and to bring a mass of evidence to bear on them. What is more, the study of language is, for the moment, unique in the combination it affords of richness of data and susceptibility to sharp formulation of basic issues.

It would, of course, be silly to try to predict the future of research, and it will be understood that I do not intend the subtitle of this lecture to be taken very seriously. Nevertheless, it is fair to suppose that the major contribution of the study of language will lie in the understanding it can provide as to the character of mental processes and the structures they form and manipulate. Therefore, instead of speculating on the likely course of research into the problems that are coming into focus today, I will concentrate here on some of the issues that arise when we try to develop the study of linguistic structure as a chapter of human psychology.

It is quite natural to expect that a concern for language will remain central to the study of human nature, as it has been in the past. Anyone concerned with the study of human nature and human capacities must somehow come to grips with the fact that all normal humans acquire language, whereas acquisition of even its barest rudiments is quite beyond the capacities of an otherwise intelligent ape — a fact that was emphasised, quite correctly, in Cartesian philosophy. It is widely thought that the extensive modern studies of animal communication challenge this classical view; and it is almost universally taken for granted that there exists a problem of explaining the "evolution" of human language from systems of animal communication. However, a careful look at recent studies of animal communication seems to me to provide little support for these assumptions. Rather, these studies simply bring out even more clearly the extent to which human language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world. If this is so, it is quite senseless to raise the problem of explaining the evolution of human language from more primitive systems of communication that appear at lower levels of intellectual capacity. The issue is important, and I would like to dwell on it for a moment.

The assumption that human language evolved from more primitive systems is developed in an interesting way by Karl Popper in his recently published Arthur Compton Lecture, "Clouds and Clocks." He tries to show how problems of freedom of will and Cartesian dualism can be solved by the analysis of this "evolution." I am not concerned now with the philosophical conclusions that he draws from this analysis, but with the basic assumption that there is an evolutionary development of language from simpler systems of the sort that one discovers in other organisms. Popper argues that the evolution of language passed through several stages, in particular a "lower stage" in which vocal gestures are used for expression of emotional state, for example, and a "higher stage" in which articulated sound is used for expression of thought — in Popper's terms, for description and critical argument. His discussion of stages of evolution of language suggests a kind of continuity, but in fact he establishes no relation between the lower and higher stages and does not suggest a mechanism whereby transition can take place from one stage to the next. In short, he gives no argument to show that the stages belong to a single evolutionary process. In fact, it is difficult to see what links these stages at all (except for the metaphorical use of the term "language"). There is no reason to suppose that the "gaps" are bridgeable. There is no more of a basis for assuming an evolutionary development of "higher" from "lower" stages, in this case, than there is for assuming an evolutionary development from breathing to walking; the stages have no significant analogy, it appears, and seem to involve entirely different processes and principles.

A more explicit discussion of the relation between human language and animal communication systems appears in a recent discussion by the comparative ethologist W. H. Thorpe. He points out that mammals other than man appear to lack the human ability to imitate sounds, and that one might therefore have expected birds (many of which have this ability to a remarkable extent) to be "the group which ought to have been able to evolve language in the true sense, and not the mammals." Thorpe does not suggest that human language "evolved" in any strict sense from simpler systems, but he does argue that the characteristic properties of human language can be found in animal communication systems, although "we cannot at the moment say definitely that they are all present in one particular animal." The characteristics shared by human and animal language are the properties of being "purposive," "syntactic," and "propositional." Language is purposive "in that there is nearly always in human speech a definite intention of getting something over to somebody else, altering his behaviour, his thoughts, or his general attitude toward a situation." Human language is "Syntactic" in that an utterance is a performance with an internal organisation, with structure and coherence. It is "propositional" in that it transmits information. In this sense, then, both human language and animal communication are purposive, syntactic, and propositional.

All this may be true, but it establishes very little, since when we move to the level of abstraction at which human language and animal communication fall together, almost all other behaviour is included as well. Consider walking: Clearly, walking is purposive behaviour, in the most general sense of "purposive." Walking is also "syntactic" in the sense just defined, as, in fact, Karl Lashley pointed out a long time ago in his important discussion of serial order in behaviour, to which I referred in the first lecture. Furthermore, it can certainly be informative; for example, I can signal my interest in reaching a certain goal by the speed or intensity with which I walk.

It is, incidentally, precisely in this manner that the examples of animal communication that Thorpe presents are "propositional." He cites as an example the song of the European robin, in which the rate of alternation of high and low pitch signals the intention of the bird to defend its territory; the higher the rate of alternation, the greater the intention to defend the territory. The example is interesting, but it seems to me to show very clearly the hopelessness of the attempt to relate human language to animal communication. Every animal communication system that is known (if we disregard some science fiction about dolphins) uses one of two basic principles: Either it consists of a fixed, finite number of signals, each associated with a specific range of behaviour or emotional state, as is illustrated in the extensive primate studies that have been carried out by Japanese scientists for the past several years; or it makes use of a fixed, finite number of linguistic dimensions, each of which is associated with a particular nonlinguistic dimension in such a way that selection of a point along the linguistic dimension determines and signals a certain point along the associated nonlinguistic dimension. The latter is the principle realised in Thorpe's bird-song example. Rate of alternation of high and low pitch is a linguistic dimension correlated with the nonlinguistic dimension of intention to defend a territory. The bird signals its intention to defend a territory by selecting a correlated point along the linguistic dimension of pitch alternation — I use the word "select" loosely, of course. The linguistic dimension is abstract, but the principle is clear. A communication system of the second type has an indefinitely large range of potential signals, as does human language. The mechanism and principle, however, are entirely different from those employed by human language to express indefinitely many new thoughts, intentions, feelings, and so on. It is not correct to speak of a "deficiency" of the animal system, in terms of range of potential signals; rather the opposite, since the animal system admits in principle of continuous variation along the linguistic dimension (insofar as it makes sense to speak of "continuity" in such a case), whereas human language is discrete. Hence, the issue is not one of "more" or "less," but rather of an entirely different principle of organisation. When I make some arbitrary statement in a human language — say, that "the rise of supranational corporations poses new dangers for human freedom" — I am not selecting a point along some linguistic dimension that signals a corresponding

point along an associated nonlinguistic dimension, nor am I selecting a signal from a finite behavioural repertoire, innate or learned.

Furthermore, it is wrong to think of human use of language as characteristically informative, in fact or in intention. Human language can be used to inform or mislead, to clarify one's own thoughts or to display one's cleverness, or simply for play. If I speak with no concern for modifying your behaviour or thoughts, I am not using language any less than if I say exactly the same things with such intention. If we hope to understand human language and the psychological capacities on which it rests, we must first ask what it is, not how or for what purposes it is used. When we ask what human language is, we find no striking similarity to animal communication systems. There is nothing useful to be said about behaviour or thought at the level of abstraction at which animal and human communication fall together. The examples of animal communication that have been examined to date do share many of the properties of human gestural systems, and it might be reasonable to explore the possibility of direct connection in this case. But human language, it appears, is based on entirely different principles. This, I think, is an important point, often overlooked by those who approach human language as a natural, biological phenomenon; in particular, it seems rather pointless, for these reasons, to speculate about the evolution of human language from simpler systems — perhaps as absurd as it would be to speculate about the "evolution" of atoms from clouds of elementary particles.

As far as we know, possession of human language is associated with a specific type of mental organisation, not simply a higher degree of intelligence. There seems to be no substance to the view that human language is simply a more complex instance of something to be found elsewhere in the animal world. This poses a problem for the biologist, since, if true, it is an example of true "emergence" — the appearance of a qualitatively different phenomenon at a specific stage of complexity of organisation. Recognition of this fact, though formulated in entirely different terms, is what motivated much of the classical study of language by those whose primary concern was the nature of mind. And it seems to me that today there is no better or more promising way to explore the essential and distinctive properties of human intelligence than through the detailed investigation of the structure of this unique human possession. A reasonable guess, then, is that if empirically adequate generative grammars can be constructed and the universal principles that govern their structure and organisation determined, then this will be an important contribution to human psychology, in ways to which I will turn directly, in detail.

In the course of these lectures I have mentioned some of the classical ideas regarding language structure and contemporary efforts to deepen and extend them. It seems clear that we must regard linguistic competence — knowledge of a language — as an abstract system underlying behaviour, a system constituted by rules that interact to determine the form and intrinsic meaning of a potentially infinite number of sentences. Such a system — a generative grammar — provides an explication of the Humboldtian idea of "form of language," which in an obscure but suggestive remark in his great posthumous work, *Über die Verschiedenheit des Menschlichen Sprachbaues*, Humboldt defines as "that constant and unvarying system of processes underlying the mental act of raising articulated structurally organised signals to an expression of thought." Such a grammar defines a language in the Humboldtian sense, namely as "a recursively generated system, where the laws of generation are fixed and invariant, but the scope and the specific manner in which they are applied remain entirely unspecified."

In each such grammar there are particular, idiosyncratic elements, selection of which determines one specific human language; and there are general universal elements, conditions on the form and organisation of any human language, that form the subject matter for the study of "universal grammar." Among the principles of universal grammar are those I discussed in the preceding lecture — for example, the principles that distinguish deep and surface structure and that constrain the class of transformational operations that relate them. Notice, incidentally, that the existence of definite principles of universal grammar makes possible the rise of the new field of mathematical linguistics, a field that submits to abstract study the class of generative systems meeting the conditions set forth in universal grammar. This inquiry aims to elaborate the formal properties of any possible human language. The field is in its infancy; it is only in the last decade that the possibility of such an enterprise has been envisioned. It has some promising initial results, and it suggests one possible direction for future research that might prove to be of great importance. Thus, mathematical linguistics seems for the moment to be in a uniquely favourable position, among mathematical approaches in the social and psychological sciences, to develop not simply as a theory of data, but as the study of highly abstract principles and structures that determine the character of human mental processes. In this case, the mental processes in question are those involved in the organisation of one specific domain of human knowledge, namely knowledge of language.

The theory of generative grammar, both particular and universal, points to a conceptual lacuna in psychological theory that I believe is worth mentioning. Psychology conceived as "behavioural science" has been concerned with behaviour and acquisition or control of behaviour. It has no concept corresponding to "competence," in the sense in which competence is characterised by a generative grammar. The theory of learning has limited itself to a narrow and surely

inadequate concept of what is learned — namely a system of stimulus-response connections, a network of associations, a repertoire of behavioural items, a habit hierarchy, or a system of dispositions to respond in a particular way under specifiable stimulus conditions. Insofar as behavioural psychology has been applied to education or therapy, it has correspondingly limited itself to this concept of "what is learned." But a generative grammar cannot be characterised in these terms. What is necessary, in addition to the concept of behaviour and learning, is a concept of what is learned — a notion of competence — that lies beyond the conceptual limits of behaviourist psychological theory. Like much of modern linguistics and modern philosophy of language, behaviourist psychology has quite consciously accepted methodological restrictions that do not permit the study of systems of the necessary complexity and abstractness. One important future contribution of the study of language to general psychology may be to focus attention on this conceptual gap and to demonstrate how it may be filled by the elaboration of a system of underlying competence in one domain of human intelligence.

There is an obvious sense in which any aspect of psychology is based ultimately on the observation of behaviour. But it is not at all obvious that the study of learning should proceed directly to the investigation of factors that control behaviour or of conditions under which a "behavioural repertoire" is established. It is first necessary to determine the significant characteristics of this behavioural repertoire, the principles on which it is organised. A meaningful study of learning can proceed only after this preliminary task has been carried out and has led to a reasonably well-confirmed theory of underlying competence — in the case of language, to the formulation of the generative grammar that underlies the observed use of language. Such a study will concern itself with the relation between the data available to the organism and the competence that it acquires; only to the extent that the abstraction to competence has been successful — in the case of language, to the extent that the postulated grammar is "descriptively adequate" in the sense described in Lecture 2 — can the investigation of learning hope to achieve meaningful results. If, in some domain, the organisation of the behavioural repertoire is quite trivial and elementary, then there will be little harm in avoiding the intermediate stage of theory construction, in which we attempt to characterise accurately the competence that is acquired. But one cannot count on this being the case, and in the study of language it surely is not the case. With a richer and more adequate characterisation of "what is learned" — of the underlying competence that constitutes the "final state" of the organism being studied — it may be possible to approach the task of constructing a theory of learning that will be much less restricted in scope than modern behavioural psychology has proved to be. Surely it is pointless to accept methodological strictures that preclude such an approach to problems of learning.

Are there other areas of human competence where one might hope to develop a fruitful theory, analogous to generative grammar? Although this is a very important question, there is very little that can be said about it today. One might, for example, consider the problem of how a person comes to acquire a certain concept of three-dimensional space, or an implicit "theory of human action," in similar terms. Such a study would begin with the attempt to characterise the implicit theory that underlies actual performance and would then turn to the question of how this theory develops under the given conditions of time and access to data, that is, in what way the resulting system of beliefs is determined by the interplay of available data, "heuristic procedures," and the innate schematism that restricts and conditions the form of the acquired system. At the moment, this is nothing more than a sketch of a program of research.

There have been some attempts to study the structure of other, language-like systems — the study of kinship systems and folk taxonomies comes to mind, for example. But so far, at least, nothing has been discovered that is even roughly comparable to language in these domains. No one, to my knowledge, has devoted more thought to this problem than Lévi-Strauss. For example, his recent book on the categories of primitive mentality is a serious and thoughtful attempt to come to grips with this problem. Nevertheless, I do not see what conclusions can be reached from a study of his materials beyond the fact that the savage mind attempts to impose some organisation on the physical world — that humans classify, if they perform any mental acts at all. Specifically, Lévi-Strauss's well-known critique of totemism seems to reduce to little more than this conclusion.

Lévi-Strauss models his investigations quite consciously on structural linguistics, particularly on the work of Troubetzkoy and Jakobson. He repeatedly and quite correctly emphasises that one cannot simply apply procedures analogous to those of phonemic analysis to subsystems of society and culture. Rather, he is concerned with structures "where they may be found ... in the kinship system, political ideology, mythology, ritual, art," and so on, and he wishes to examine the formal properties of these structures in their own terms. But several reservations are necessary when structural linguistics is used as a model in this way. For one thing, the structure of a phonological system is of very little interest as a formal object; there is nothing of significance to be said, from a formal point of view, about a set of forty-odd elements cross-classified in terms of eight or ten features. The significance of structuralist phonology, as developed by Troubetzkoy, Jakobson, and others, lies not in the formal properties of phonemic systems but in the fact that a fairly small number of features that can be specified in absolute, language-independent terms appear to provide the basis for the organisation of all phonological systems. The achievement of structuralist phonology was to show that the phonological rules of a great

variety of languages apply to classes of elements that can be simply characterised in terms of these features; that historical change affects such classes in a uniform way; and that the organisation of features plays a basic role in the use and acquisition of language. This was a discovery of the greatest importance, and it provides the groundwork for much of contemporary linguistics. But if we abstract away from the specific universal set of features and the rule systems in which they function, little of any significance remains.

Furthermore, to a greater and greater extent, current work in phonology is demonstrating that the real richness of phonological systems lies not in the structural patterns of phonemes but rather in the intricate systems of rules by which these patterns are formed, modified, and elaborated. The structural patterns that arise at various stages of derivation are a kind of epiphenomenon. The system of phonological rules makes use of the universal features in a fundamental way, but it is the properties of the systems of rules, it seems to me, that really shed light on the specific nature of the organisation of language. For example, there appear to be very general conditions, such as the principle of cyclic ordering (discussed in the preceding lecture) and others that are still more abstract, that govern the application of these rules, and there are many interesting and unsolved questions as to how the choice of rules is determined by intrinsic, universal relations among features. Furthermore, the idea of a mathematical investigation of language structures, to which Lévi-Strauss occasionally alludes, becomes meaningful only when one considers systems of rules with infinite generative capacity. There is nothing to be said about the abstract structure of the various patterns that appear at various stages of derivation. If this is correct, then one cannot expect structuralist phonology, in itself, to provide a useful model for investigation of other cultural and social systems.

In general, the problem of extending concepts of linguistic structure to other cognitive systems seems to me, for the moment, in not too promising a state, although it is no doubt too early for pessimism.

Before turning to the general implications of the study of linguistic competence and, more specifically, to the conclusions of universal grammar, it is well to make sure of the status of these conclusions in the light of current knowledge of the possible diversity of language. In my first lecture, I quoted the remarks of William Dwight Whitney about what he referred to as "the infinite diversity of human speech," the boundless variety that, he maintained, undermines the claims of philosophical grammar to psychological relevance.

Philosophical grammarians had typically maintained that languages vary little in their deep structures, though there may be wide variability in surface manifestations. Thus there is, in this view, an underlying structure of grammatical relations and categories, and certain aspects of human thought and mentality are essentially invariant across languages, although languages may differ as to whether they express the grammatical relations formally by inflection or word order, for example. Furthermore, an investigation of their work indicates that the underlying recursive principles that generate deep structure were assumed to be restricted in certain ways — for example, by the condition that new structures are formed only by the insertion of new "propositional content," new structures that themselves correspond to actual simple sentences, in fixed positions in already formed structures. Similarly, the grammatical transformations that form surface structures through reordering, ellipsis, and other formal operations must themselves meet certain fixed general conditions, such as those discussed in the preceding lecture. In short, the theories of philosophical grammar, and the more recent elaborations of these theories, make the assumption that languages will differ very little, despite considerable diversity in superficial realisation, when we discover their deeper structures and unearth their fundamental mechanisms and principles.

It is interesting to observe that this assumption persisted even through the period of German romanticism, which was, of course, much preoccupied with the diversity of cultures and with the many rich possibilities for human intellectual development. Thus, Wilhelm von Humboldt, who is now best remembered for his ideas concerning the variety of languages and the association of diverse language structures with divergent "world-views," nevertheless held firmly that underlying any human language we will find a system that is universal, that simply expresses man's unique intellectual attributes. For this reason, it was possible for him to maintain the rationalist view that language is not really learned — certainly not taught — but rather develops "from within," in an essentially predetermined way, when the appropriate environmental conditions exist. One cannot really teach a first language, he argued, but can only "provide the thread along which it will develop of its own accord," by processes more like maturation than learning. This Platonistic element in Humboldt's thought is a pervasive one; for Humboldt, it was as natural to propose an essentially Platonistic theory of "learning" as it was for Rousseau to found his critique of repressive social institutions on a conception of human freedom that derives from strictly Cartesian assumptions regarding the limitations of mechanical explanation. And in general it seems appropriate to construe both the psychology and the linguistics of the romantic period as in large part a natural outgrowth of rationalist conceptions.

The issue raised by Whitney against Humboldt and philosophical grammar in general is of great significance with respect to the implications of linguistics for general human psychology. Evidently, these implications can be truly far-reaching only if the rationalist view is essentially correct, in which case the structure of language can truly serve as a "mirror of mind," in both its particular and its universal aspects. It is widely believed that modern anthropology has established the falsity of the assumptions of the rationalist universal grammarians by demonstrating through empirical study that languages may, in fact, exhibit the widest diversity. Whitney's claims regarding the diversity of languages are reiterated throughout the modern period; Martin Joos, for example, is simply expressing the conventional wisdom when he takes the basic conclusion of modern anthropological linguistics to be that "languages can differ without limit as to either extent or direction."

The belief that anthropological linguistics has demolished the assumptions of universal grammar seems to me to be quite false in two important respects. First, it misinterprets the views of classical rationalist grammar, which held that languages are similar only at the deeper level, the level at which grammatical relations are expressed and at which the processes that provide for the creative aspect of language use are to be found. Second, this belief seriously misinterprets the findings of anthropological linguistics, which has, in fact, restricted itself almost completely to fairly superficial aspects of language structure.

To say this is not to criticise anthropological linguistics, a field that is faced with compelling problems of its own — in particular, the problem of obtaining at least some record of the rapidly vanishing languages of the primitive world. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind this fundamental limitation on its achievements in considering the light it can shed on the theses of universal grammar. Anthropological studies (like structural linguistic studies in general) do not attempt to reveal the underlying core of generative processes in language — that is, the processes that determine the deeper levels of structure and that constitute the systematic means for creating ever novel sentence types. Therefore, they obviously cannot have any real bearing on the classical assumption that these underlying generative processes vary only slightly from language to language. In fact, what evidence is now available suggests that if universal grammar has serious defects, as indeed it does from a modern point of view, then these defects lie in the failure to recognise the abstract nature of linguistic structure and to impose sufficiently strong and restrictive conditions on the form of any human language. And a characteristic feature of current work in linguistics is its concern for linguistic universals of a sort that can only be detected through a detailed investigation of particular languages, universals governing properties of language that are simply not accessible to investigation within the restricted framework that has been adopted, often for very good reasons, within anthropological linguistics.

I think that if we contemplate the classical problem of psychology, that of accounting for human knowledge, we cannot avoid being struck by the enormous disparity between knowledge and experience — in the case of language, between the generative grammar that expresses the linguistic competence of the native speaker and the meagre and degenerate data on the basis of which he has constructed this grammar for himself. In principle the theory of learning should deal with this problem; but in fact it bypasses the problem, because of the conceptual gap that I mentioned earlier. The problem cannot even be formulated in any sensible way until we develop the concept of competence, alongside the concepts of learning and behaviour, and apply this concept in some domain. The fact is that this concept has so far been extensively developed and applied only in the study of human language. It is only in this domain that we have at least the first steps toward an account of competence, namely the fragmentary generative grammars that have been constructed for particular languages. As the study of language progresses, we can expect with some confidence that these grammars will be extended in scope and depth, although it will hardly come as a surprise if the first proposals are found to be mistaken in fundamental ways.

Insofar as we have a tentative first approximation to a generative grammar for some language, we can for the first time formulate in a useful way the problem of origin of knowledge. In other words, we can ask the question, What initial structure must be attributed to the mind that enables it to construct such a grammar from the data of sense? Some of the empirical conditions that must be met by any such assumption about innate structure are moderately clear. Thus, it appears to be a species-specific capacity that is essentially independent of intelligence, and we can make a fairly good estimate of the amount of data that is necessary for the task to be successfully accomplished. We know that the grammars that are in fact constructed vary only slightly among speakers of the same language, despite wide variations not only in intelligence but also in the conditions under which language is acquired. As participants in a certain culture, we are naturally aware of the great differences in ability to use language, in knowledge of vocabulary, and so on that result from differences in native ability and from differences in conditions of acquisition; we naturally pay much less attention to the similarities and to common knowledge, which we take for granted. But if we manage to establish the requisite psychic distance, if we actually compare the generative grammars that must be postulated for different speakers of the same language, we find that the similarities that we take for granted are quite marked and that the divergences are few and marginal. What is more, it seems that dialects that are superficially quite remote, even barely intelligible on

first contact, share a vast central core of common rules and processes and differ very slightly in underlying structures, which seem to remain invariant through long historical eras. Furthermore, we discover a substantial system of principles that do not vary among languages that are, as far as we know, entirely unrelated.

The central problems in this domain are empirical ones that are, in principle at least, quite straightforward, difficult as they may be to solve in a satisfactory way. We must postulate an innate structure that is rich enough to account for the disparity between experience and knowledge, one that can account for the construction of the empirically justified generative grammars within the given limitations of time and access to data. At the same time, this postulated innate mental structure must not be so rich and restrictive as to exclude certain known languages. There is, in other words, an upper bound and a lower bound on the degree and exact character of the complexity that can be postulated as innate mental structure. The factual situation is obscure enough to leave room for much difference of opinion over the true nature of this innate mental structure that makes acquisition of language possible. However, there seems to me to be no doubt that this is an empirical issue, one that can be resolved by proceeding along the lines that I have just roughly outlined.

My own estimate of the situation is that the real problem for tomorrow is that of discovering an assumption regarding innate structure that is sufficiently rich, not that of finding one that is simple or elementary enough to be "plausible." There is, as far as I can see, no reasonable notion of "plausibility," no a priori insight into what innate structures are permissible, that can guide the search for a "sufficiently elementary assumption." It would be mere dogmatism to maintain without argument or evidence that the mind is simpler in its innate structure than other biological systems, just as it would be mere dogmatism to insist that the mind's organisation must necessarily follow certain set principles, determined in advance of investigation and maintained in defiance of any empirical findings. I think that the study of problems of mind has been very definitely hampered by a kind of apriorism with which these problems are generally approached. In particular, the empiricist assumptions that have dominated the study of acquisition of knowledge for many years seem to me to have been adopted quite without warrant and to have no special status among the many possibilities that one might imagine as to how the mind functions.

In this connection, it is illuminating to follow the debate that has arisen since the views I have just sketched were advanced a few years ago as a program of research — I should say, since this position was resurrected, because to a significant extent it is the traditional rationalist approach, now amplified and sharpened and made far more explicit in terms of the tentative conclusions that have been reached in the recent study of linguistic competence. Two outstanding American philosophers, Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam, have made recent contributions to this discussion — both misconceived, in my opinion, but instructive in the misconceptions that they reveal.

Goodman's treatment of the question suffers first from an historical misunderstanding and second from a failure to formulate correctly the exact nature of the problem of acquisition of knowledge. His historical misunderstanding has to do with the issue between Locke and whomever Locke thought he was criticising in his discussion of innate ideas. According to Goodman, "Locke made ... acutely clear" that the doctrine of innate ideas is "false or meaningless." In fact, however, Locke's critique had little relevance to any familiar doctrine of the seventeenth century. The arguments that Locke gave were considered and dealt with in quite a satisfactory way in the earliest seventeenth-century discussions of innate ideas, for example those of Lord Herbert and Descartes, both of whom took for granted that the system of innate ideas and principles would not function unless appropriate stimulation took place. For this reason, Locke's arguments, none of which took cognisance of this condition, are without force; for some reason, he avoided the issues that had been discussed in the preceding half-century. Furthermore, as Leibnitz observed, Locke's willingness to make use of a principle of "reflection" makes it almost impossible to distinguish his approach from that of the rationalists, except for his failure to take even those steps suggested by his predecessors toward specifying the character of this principle.

But, historical issues aside, I think that Goodman misconstrues the substantive problem as well. He argues that first-language learning poses no real problem, because prior to first-language learning the child has already acquired the rudiments of a symbolic system in his ordinary dealings with the environment. Hence, first-language learning is analogous to second-language learning in that the fundamental step has already been taken, and details can be elaborated within an already existing framework. This argument might have some force if it were possible to show that the specific properties of grammar — say, the distinction of deep and surface structure, the specific properties of grammatical transformations, the principles of rule ordering, and so on — were present in some form in these already acquired prelinguistic "symbolic systems." But since there is not the slightest reason to believe that this is so, the argument collapses. It is based on an equivocation similar to that discussed earlier in connection with the argument that language evolved from animal communication. In that case, as we observed, the argument turned on a metaphorical use of the term "language." In Goodman's case, the argument is based entirely on a vague use of the term "symbolic system," and it collapses as soon as we attempt to give this term a precise meaning. If it were possible to show that these prelinguistic

symbolic systems share certain significant properties with natural language, we could then argue that these properties of natural language are acquired by analogy. Of course, we would then face the problem of explaining how the prelinguistic symbolic systems developed these properties. But since no one has succeeded in showing that the fundamental properties of natural language — those discussed in Lecture 2, for example — appear in prelinguistic symbolic systems or any others, the latter problem does not arise.

According to Goodman, the reason why the problem of second-language learning is different from that of first-language learning is that "once one language is available," it "can be used for giving explanation and instruction." He then goes on to argue that "acquisition of an initial language is acquisition of a secondary symbolic system" and is quite on a par with normal second-language acquisition. The primary symbolic systems to which he refers are "rudimentary-prelinguistic symbolic systems in which gestures and sensory and perceptual occurrences of all sorts function as signs." But evidently these prelinguistic symbolic systems cannot be "used for giving explanation and instruction" in the way a first language can be used in second-language instruction. Therefore, even on his own grounds, Goodman's argument is incoherent.

Goodman maintains that "the claim we are discussing cannot be experimentally tested even when we have an acknowledged example of a 'bad' language" and that "the claim has not even been formulated to the extent of citation of a single general property of 'bad' languages." The first of these conclusions is correct, in his sense of "experimental test," namely a test in which we "take an infant at birth, isolate it from all the influences of our language-bound culture, and attempt to inculcate it with one of the 'bad' artificial languages." Obviously this is not feasible. But there is no reason why we should be dismayed by the impossibility of carrying out such a test as this. There are many other ways, for example, those discussed in Lecture 2 and the references cited there — in which evidence can be obtained concerning the properties of grammars and conclusions regarding the general properties of such grammars can be put to empirical test. Any such conclusion immediately specifies, correctly or incorrectly, certain properties of "bad" languages. Since there are dozens of papers and books that attempt to formulate such properties, his second claim, that not "a single general property of 'bad' languages" has been formulated, is rather surprising. One might try to show that these attempts are misguided or questionable, but one can hardly maintain seriously that they do not exist. Any formulation of a principle of universal grammar makes a strong empirical claim, which can be falsified by finding counter-instances in some human language, along the lines of the discussion in Lecture 2. In linguistics, as in any other field, it is only in such indirect ways as this that one can hope to find evidence bearing on non-trivial hypotheses. Direct experimental tests of the sort that Goodman mentions are rarely possible, a matter that may be unfortunate but is nevertheless characteristic of most research.

At one point Goodman remarks, correctly, that even though "for certain remarkable facts I have no alternative explanation ... that alone does not dictate acceptance of whatever theory may be offered; for the theory might be worse than none. Inability to explain a fact does not condemn me to accept an intrinsically repugnant and incomprehensible theory." But now consider the theory of innate ideas that Goodman regards as "intrinsically repugnant and incomprehensible." Notice, first, that the theory is obviously not "incomprehensible," on his terms. Thus he appears to be willing, in this article, to accept the view that in some sense the mature mind contains ideas; it is obviously not "incomprehensible," then, that some of these ideas are "implanted in the mind as original equipment," to use his phraseology. And if we turn to the actual doctrine as developed in rationalist philosophy, rather than Locke's caricature, the theory becomes even more obviously comprehensible. There is nothing incomprehensible in the view that stimulation provides the occasion for the mind to apply certain innate interpretive principles, certain concepts that proceed from "the power of understanding" itself, from the faculty of thinking rather than from external objects directly. To take an example from Descartes (Reply to Objections, V):

When first in infancy we see a triangular figure depicted on paper, this figure cannot show us how a real triangle ought to be conceived in the way in which geometers consider it, because the true triangle is contained in this figure, just as the statue of Mercury is contained in a rough block of wood. But because we already possess within us the idea of a true triangle, and it can be more easily conceived by our mind than the more complex figure of the triangle drawn on paper, we, therefore, when we see the composite figure, apprehend not it itself, but rather the authentic triangle.

In this sense the idea of a triangle is innate. Surely the notion is comprehensible; there would be no difficulty, for example, in programming a computer to react to stimuli along these lines (though this would not satisfy Descartes, for other reasons). Similarly, there is no difficulty in principle in programming a computer with a schematism that sharply restricts the form of a generative grammar, with an evaluation procedure for grammars of the given form, with a technique for determining whether given data are compatible with a grammar of the given form, with a fixed substructure of entities (such as distinctive features), rules, and principles, and so on — in short, with a universal grammar of the sort that has been proposed in recent years. For reasons that I have already mentioned, I believe that these proposals can be

properly regarded as a further development of classical rationalist doctrine, as an elaboration of some of its main ideas regarding language and mind. Of course, such a theory will be "repugnant" to one who accepts empiricist doctrine and regards it as immune to question or challenge. It seems to me that this is the heart of the matter.

Putnam's paper deals more directly with the points at issue, but it seems to me that his arguments are also inconclusive, because of certain incorrect assumptions that he makes about the nature of the acquired grammars. Putnam assumes that on the level of phonetics the only property proposed in universal grammar is that a language has "a short list of phonemes." This, he argues, is not a similarity among languages that requires elaborate explanatory hypotheses. The conclusion is correct; the assumption is quite wrong. In fact, as I have now pointed out several times, very strong empirical hypotheses have been proposed regarding the specific choice of universal features, conditions on the form and organisation of phonological rules, conditions on rule application, and so on. If these proposals are correct or near correct, then "similarities among languages" at the level of sound structure are indeed remarkable and cannot be accounted for simply by assumptions about memory capacity, as Putnam suggests.

Above the level of sound structure, Putnam assumes that the only significant properties of language are that they have proper names, that the grammar contains a phrase structure component, and that there are rules "abbreviating" sentences generated by the phrase structure component. He argues that the nature of the phrase structure component is determined by the existence of proper names; that the existence of a phrase structure component is explained by the fact that "all the natural measures of complexity of an algorithm — size of the machine table, length of computations, time, and space required for the computation — lead to the ... result"; that phrase structure systems provide the "algorithms which are 'simplest' for virtually any computing system," hence also "for naturally evolved 'computing systems'"; and that there is nothing surprising in the fact that languages contain rules of abbreviation.

Each of the three conclusions involves a false assumption. From the fact that a phrase structure system contains proper names one can conclude almost nothing about its other categories. In fact, there is much dispute at the moment about the general properties of the underlying phrase structure system for natural languages; the dispute is not in the least resolved by the existence of proper names.

As to the second point, it is simply untrue that all measures of complexity and speed of computation lead to phrase structure rules as the "simplest possible algorithm." The only existing results that are even indirectly relevant show that context-free phrase structure grammars (a reasonable model for rules generating deep structures, when we exclude the lexical items and the distributional conditions they meet) receive an automata-theoretic interpretation as non-deterministic push-down storage automata, but the latter is hardly a "natural" notion from the point of view of "simplicity of algorithms" and so forth. In fact, it can be argued that the somewhat similar but not formally related concept of real-time deterministic automation is far more "natural" in terms of time and space conditions on computation.

However, it is pointless to pursue this topic, because what is at stake is not the "simplicity" of phrase structure grammars but rather of transformational grammars with a phrase structure component that plays a role in generating deep structures. And there is absolutely no mathematical concept of "ease of computation" or "simplicity of algorithm" that even vaguely suggests that such systems may have some advantage over the kinds of automata that have been seriously investigated from this point of view — for example, finite state automata, linear bounded automata, and so on. The basic concept of "structure-dependent operation" has never even been considered in a strictly mathematical concept. The source of this confusion is a misconception on Putnam's part as to the nature of grammatical transformations. They are not rules that "abbreviate" sentences; rather, they are operations that form surface structures from underlying deep structures, in such ways as are illustrated in the preceding lecture and the references there cited. Hence, to show that transformational grammars are the "simplest possible" one would have to demonstrate that the "optimal" computing system would take a string of symbols as input and determine its surface structure, its underlying deep structure, and the sequence of transformational operations that relates them. Nothing of the sort has been shown; in fact, the question has never even been raised.

Putnam argues that even if significant uniformities among languages were to be discovered, there would be a simpler explanation than the hypothesis of an innate universal grammar, namely their common origin. But this proposal involves a serious misunderstanding of the problem at issue. The grammar of a language must be discovered by the child from the data presented to him. As noted earlier, the empirical problem is to find a hypothesis about initial structure rich enough to account for the fact that a specific grammar is constructed by the child, but not so rich as to be falsified by the known diversity of language.

Questions of common origin are of potential relevance to this empirical issue in only one respect: If the existing languages are not a "fair sample" of the "possible languages," we may be led mistakenly to propose too narrow a schema

for universal grammar. However, as I mentioned earlier, the empirical problem that we face today is that no one has been able to devise an initial hypothesis rich enough to account for the acquisition by the child of the grammar that we are, apparently, led to attribute to him when we try to account for his ability to use the language in the normal way. The assumption of common origin contributes nothing to explaining how this achievement is possible. In short, the language is "reinvented" each time it is learned, and the empirical problem to be faced by the theory of learning is how this invention of grammar can take place.

Putnam does face this problem and suggests that there might be "general multipurpose learning strategies" that account for this achievement. It is, of course, an empirical question whether the properties of the "language faculty" are specific to language or are merely a particular case of much more general mental faculties (or learning strategies).

This is a problem that has been discussed earlier in this lecture, inconclusively and in a slightly different context. Putnam takes for granted that it is only general "learning strategies" that are innate but suggests no grounds for this empirical assumption. As I have argued earlier, a non-dogmatic approach to this problem can be pursued, without reliance on unargued assumptions of this sort — that is, through the investigation of specific areas of human competence, such as language, followed by the attempt to devise a hypothesis that will account for the development of this competence. If we discover through such investigation that the same "learning strategies" are sufficient to account for the development of competence in various domains, we will have reason to believe that Putnam's assumption is correct. If we discover that the postulated innate structures differ from case to case, the only rational conclusion would be that a model of mind must involve separate "faculties," with unique or partially unique properties. I cannot see how anyone can resolutely insist on one or the other conclusion in the light of the evidence now available to us. But one thing is quite clear: Putnam has no justification for his final conclusion, that "invoking 'Innateness' only postpones the problem of learning; it does not solve it." Invoking an innate representation of universal grammar does solve the problem of learning, if it is true that this is the basis for language acquisition, as it well may be. If, on the other hand, there are general learning strategies that account for the acquisition of grammatical knowledge, then postulation of an innate universal grammar will not "postpone" the problem of learning, but will rather offer an incorrect solution to this problem. The issue is an empirical one of truth or falsity, not a methodological one of states of investigation.

To summarise, it seems to me that neither Goodman nor Putnam offers a serious counter-argument to the proposals concerning innate mental structure that have been advanced (tentatively, of course, as befits empirical hypotheses) or suggests a plausible alternative approach, with empirical content, to the problem of acquisition of knowledge.

Assuming the rough accuracy of conclusions that seem tenable today, it is reasonable to suppose that a generative grammar is a system of many hundreds of rules of several different types, organised in accordance with certain fixed principles of ordering and applicability and containing a certain fixed substructure which, along with the general principles of organisation, is common to all languages. There is no a priori "naturalness" to such a system, any more than there is to the detailed structure of the visual cortex. No one who has given any serious thought to the problem of formalising inductive procedures or "heuristic methods" is likely to set much store by the hope that such a system as a generative grammar can be constructed by methods of any generality.

To my knowledge, the only substantive proposal to deal with the problem of acquisition of knowledge of language is the rationalist conception that I have outlined. To repeat: Suppose that we assign to the mind, as an innate property, the general theory of language that we have called "universal grammar." This theory encompasses the principles that I discussed in the preceding lecture and many others of the same sort, and it specifies a certain subsystem of rules that provides a skeletal structure for any language and a variety of conditions, formal and substantive, that any further elaboration of the grammar must meet. The theory of universal grammar, then, provides a schema to which any particular grammar must conform. Suppose, furthermore, that we can make this schema sufficiently restrictive so that very few possible grammars conforming to the schema will be consistent with the meagre and degenerate data actually available to the language learner. His task, then, is to search among the possible grammars and select one that is not definitely rejected by the data available to him. What faces the language learner, under these assumptions, is not the impossible task of inventing a highly abstract and intricately structured theory on the basis of degenerate data, but rather the much more manageable task of determining whether these data belong to one or another of a fairly restricted set of potential languages.

The tasks of the psychologist, then, divide into several sub-tasks. The first is to discover the innate schema that characterises the class of potential languages — that defines the "essence" of human language. This sub-task falls to that branch of human psychology known as linguistics; it is the problem of traditional universal grammar, of contemporary linguistic theory. The second sub-task is the detailed study of the actual character of the stimulation and the organism-environment interaction that sets the innate cognitive mechanism into operation. This is a study now being undertaken by a few psychologists, and it is particularly active right here in Berkeley. It has already led to interesting and suggestive

conclusions. One might hope that such study will reveal a succession of maturational stages leading finally to a full generative grammar.

A third task is that of determining just what it means for a hypothesis about the generative grammar of a language to be "consistent" with the data of sense. Notice that it is a great oversimplification to suppose that a child must discover a generative grammar that accounts for all the linguistic data that has been presented to him and that "projects" such data to an infinite range of potential sound-meaning relations. In addition to achieving this, he must also differentiate the data of sense into those utterances that give direct evidence as to the character of the underlying grammar and those that must be rejected by the hypothesis he selects as ill-formed, deviant, fragmentary, and so on. Clearly, everyone succeeds in carrying out this task of differentiation — we all know, within tolerable limits of consistency, which sentences are well formed and literally interpretable, and which must be interpreted as metaphorical, fragmentary, and deviant along many possible dimensions. I doubt that it has been fully appreciated to what extent this complicates the problem of accounting for language acquisition. Formally speaking, the learner must select a hypothesis regarding the language to which he is exposed that rejects a good part of the data on which this hypothesis must rest. Again, it is reasonable to suppose this is possible only if the range of tenable hypotheses is quite limited — if the innate schema of universal grammar is highly restrictive. The third sub-task, then, is to study what we might think of as the problem of "confirmation" — in this context, the problem of what relation must hold between a potential grammar and a set of data for this grammar to be confirmed as the actual theory of the language in question.

I have been describing the problem of acquisition of knowledge of language in terms that are more familiar in an epistemological than a psychological context, but I think that this is quite appropriate. Formally speaking, acquisition of "common-sense knowledge" — knowledge of a language, for example — is not unlike theory construction of the most abstract sort. Speculating about the future development of the subject, it seems to me not unlikely, for the reasons I have mentioned, that learning theory will progress by establishing the innately determined set of possible hypotheses, determining the conditions of interaction that lead the mind to put forth hypotheses from this set, and fixing the conditions under which such a hypothesis is confirmed — and, perhaps, under which much of the data is rejected as irrelevant for one reason or another.

Such a way of describing the situation should not be too surprising to those familiar with the history of psychology at Berkeley, where, after all, Edward Tolman has given his name to the psychology building; but I want to stress that the hypotheses I am discussing are qualitatively different in complexity and intricacy from anything that was considered in the classical discussions of learning. As I have now emphasised several times, there seems to be little useful analogy between the theory of grammar that a person has internalised and that provides the basis for his normal, creative use of language, and any other cognitive system that has so far been isolated and described; similarly, there is little useful analogy between the schema of universal grammar that we must, I believe, assign to the mind as an innate character, and any other known system of mental organisation. It is quite possible that the lack of analogy testifies to our ignorance of other aspects of mental function, rather than to the absolute uniqueness of linguistic structure; but the fact is that we have, for the moment, no objective reason for supposing this to be true.

The way in which I have been describing acquisition of knowledge of language calls to mind a very interesting and rather neglected lecture given by Charles Sanders Peirce more than fifty years ago, in which he developed some rather similar notions about acquisition of knowledge in general. Peirce argued that the general limits of human intelligence are much more narrow than might be suggested by romantic assumptions about the limitless perfectibility of man (or, for that matter, than are suggested by his own "pragmatist" conceptions of the course of scientific progress in his better-known philosophical studies). He held that innate limitations on admissible hypotheses are a precondition for successful theory construction, and that the "guessing instinct" that provides hypotheses makes use of inductive procedures only for "corrective action," Peirce maintained in this lecture that the history of early science shows that something approximating a correct theory was discovered with remarkable ease and rapidity, on the basis of highly inadequate data, as soon as certain problems were faced; he noted "how few were the guesses that men of surpassing genius had to make before they rightly guessed the laws of nature." And, he asked, "How was it that man was ever led to entertain that true theory? You cannot say that it happened by chance, because the chances are too overwhelmingly against the single true theory in the twenty or thirty thousand years during which man has been a thinking animal, ever having come into any man's head." A fortiori, the chances are even more overwhelmingly against the true theory of each language ever having come into the head of every four-year-old child. Continuing with Peirce: "Man's mind has a natural adaptation to imagining correct theories of some kinds.... If man had not the gift of a mind adapted to his requirements, he could not have acquired any knowledge." Correspondingly, in our present case, it seems that knowledge of a language's grammar — can be acquired only by an organism that is "preset" with a severe restriction on the form of grammar. This innate restriction is a precondition, in the Kantian sense, for linguistic experience, and it appears to be the critical factor in determining the course and result of language learning. The child cannot know at birth which language he is to learn, but he must know

that its grammar must be of a predetermined form that excludes many imaginable languages. Having selected a permissible hypothesis, he can use inductive evidence for corrective action, confirming or disconfirming his choice. Once the hypothesis is sufficiently well confirmed, the child knows the language defined by this hypothesis; consequently, his knowledge extends enormously beyond his experience and, in fact, leads him to characterise much of the data of experience as defective and deviant.

Peirce regarded inductive processes as rather marginal to the acquisition of knowledge; in his words, "Induction has no originality in it, but only tests a suggestion already made." To understand how knowledge is acquired, in the rationalist view that Peirce outlined, we must penetrate the mysteries of what he called "abduction," and we must discover that which "gives a rule to abduction and so puts a limit upon admissible hypotheses." Peirce maintained that the search for principles of abduction leads us to the study of innate ideas, which provide the instinctive structure of human intelligence. But Peirce was no dualist in the Cartesian sense; he argued (not very persuasively, in my opinion) that there is a significant analogy between human intelligence, with its abductive restrictions, and animal instinct. Thus, he maintained that man discovered certain true theories only because his "instincts must have involved from the beginning certain tendencies to think truly" about certain specific matters; similarly, "You cannot seriously think that every little chicken that is hatched, has to rummage through all possible theories until it lights upon the good idea of picking up something and eating it. On the contrary, you think that the chicken has an innate idea of doing this; that is to say, that it can think of this, but has no faculty of thinking anything else.... But if you are going to think every poor chicken endowed with an innate tendency towards a positive truth, why should you think to man alone this gift is denied?"

No one took up Peirce's challenge to develop a theory of abduction, to determine those principles that limit the admissible hypotheses or present them in a certain order. Even today, this remains a task for the future. It is a task that need not be undertaken if empiricist psychological doctrine can be substantiated; therefore, it is of great importance to subject this doctrine to rational analysis, as has been done, in part, in the study of language. I would like to repeat that it was the great merit of structural linguistics, as of Hullian learning theory in its early stages and of several other modern developments, to have given precise form to certain empiricist assumptions." Where this step has been taken, the inadequacy of the postulated mechanisms has been clearly demonstrated, and, in the case of language at least, we can even begin to see just why any methods of this sort must fail — for example, because they cannot, in principle, provide for the properties of deep structures and the abstract operations of formal grammar. Speculating about the future, I think it is not unlikely that the dogmatic character of the general empiricist framework and its inadequacy to human and animal intelligence will gradually become more evident as specific realisations, such as taxonomic linguistics, behaviourist learning theory, and the perception models," heuristic methods, and "general problem solvers" of the early enthusiasts of "artificial intelligence," are successively rejected on empirical grounds when they are made precise and on grounds of vacuity when they are left vague. And — assuming this projection to be accurate — it will then be possible to undertake a general study of the limits and capacities of human intelligence, to develop a Peircean logic of abduction.

Modern psychology is not devoid of such initiatives. The contemporary study of generative grammar and its universal substructure and governing principles is one such manifestation. Closely related is the study of the biological bases of human language, an investigation to which Eric Lenneberg has made substantial contributions." It is tempting to see a parallel development in the very important work of Piaget and others interested in "genetic epistemology," but I am not sure that this is accurate. It is not clear to me, for example, what Piaget takes to be the basis for the transition from one of the stages that he discusses to the next, higher stage. There is, furthermore, a possibility, suggested by recent work of Mehler and Bever," that the deservedly well-known results on conservation, in particular, may not demonstrate successive stages of intellectual development in the sense discussed by Piaget and his coworkers, but something rather different. If the preliminary results of Mehler and Bever are correct, then it would follow that the "final stage," in which conservation is properly understood, was already realised at a very early period of development. Later, the child develops a heuristic technique that is largely adequate but that fails under the conditions of the conservation experiment. Still later, he adjusts this technique successfully and once again makes the correct judgments in the conservation experiment. If this analysis is correct, then what we are observing is not a succession of stages of intellectual development, in Piaget's sense, but rather slow progress in bringing heuristic techniques into line with general concepts that have always been present. These are interesting alternatives; either way, the results may bear in important ways on the topics we are considering.

Still more clearly to the point, I think, are the developments in comparative ethology over the past thirty years, and certain current work in experimental and physiological psychology. One can cite many examples: for example, in the latter category, the work of Bower, suggesting an innate basis for the perceptual constancies; studies in the Wisconsin primate laboratory on complex innate releasing mechanisms in rhesus monkeys; the work of Hubel, Barlow, and others on highly specific analysing mechanisms in the lower cortical centers of mammals; and a number of comparable studies of lower organisms (for example, the beautiful work of Lettvin and his associates on frog vision). There is now good

evidence from such investigations that perception of line, angle, motion, and other complex properties of the physical world is based on innate organisation of the neural system.

In some cases at least, these built-in structures will degenerate unless appropriate stimulation takes place at an early stage in life, but although such experience is necessary to permit the innate mechanisms to function, there is no reason to believe that it has more than a marginal effect on determining how they function to organise experience. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that what has so far been discovered is anywhere near the limit of complexity of innate structures. The basic techniques for exploring the neural mechanisms are only a few years old, and it is impossible to predict what order of specificity and complexity will be demonstrated when they come to be extensively applied. For the present, it seems that most complex organisms have highly specific forms of sensory and perceptual organisation that are associated with the Umwelt and the manner of life of the organism. There is little reason to doubt that what is true of lower organisms is true of humans as well. Particularly in the case of language, it is natural to expect a close relation between innate properties of the mind and features of linguistic structure; for language, after all, has no existence apart from its mental representation. Whatever properties it has must be those that are given to it by the innate mental processes of the organism that has invented it and that invents it anew with each succeeding generation, along with whatever properties are associated with the conditions of its use. Once again, it seems that language should be, for this reason, a most illuminating probe with which to explore the organisation of mental processes.

Turning to comparative ethology, it is interesting to note that one of its earliest motivations was the hope that through the "investigation of the a priori, of the innate working hypotheses present in subhuman organisms," it would be possible to shed light on the a priori forms of human thought. This formulation of intent is quoted from an early and little-known paper by Konrad Lorenz." Lorenz goes on to express views very much like those Peirce had expressed a generation earlier. He maintains:

One familiar with the innate modes of reaction of subhuman organisms can readily hypothesise that the a priori is due to hereditary differentiations of the central nervous system which have become characteristic of the species, producing hereditary dispositions to think in certain forms.... Most certainly Hume was wrong when he wanted to derive all that is a priori from that which the senses supply to experience, just as wrong as Wundt or Helmholtz who simply explain it as an abstraction from preceding experience. Adaptation of the a priori to the real world has no more originated from "experience" than adaptation of the fin of the fish to the properties of water. just as the form of the fin is given a priori, prior to any individual negotiation of the young fish with the water, and just as it is this form that makes possible this negotiation, so it is also the case with our forms of perception and categories in their relationship to our negotiation with the real external world through experience. In the case of animals, we find limitations specific to the forms of experience possible for them. We believe we can demonstrate the closest functional and probably genetic relationship between these animal a priori's and our human a priori. Contrary to Hume, we believe, just as did Kant, that a "pure" science of innate forms of human thought, independent of all experience, is possible.

Peirce, to my knowledge, is original and unique in stressing the problem of studying the rules that limit the class of possible theories. Of course, his concept of abduction, like Lorenz's biological a priori, has a strongly Kantian flavour, and all derive from the rationalist psychology that concerned itself with the forms, the limits, and the principles that provide "the sinews and connections" for human thought, that underlie "that infinite amount of knowledge of which we are not always conscious," of which Leibnitz spoke. It is therefore quite natural that we should link these developments to the revival of philosophical grammar, which grew from the same soil as an attempt, quite fruitful and legitimate, to explore one basic facet of human intelligence.

In recent discussion, models and observations derived from ethology have frequently been cited as providing biological support, or at least analogue, to new approaches to the study of human intelligence. I cite these comments of Lorenz's mainly in order to show that this reference does not distort the outlook of at least some of the founders of this domain of comparative psychology.

One word of caution is necessary in referring to Lorenz, now that he has been discovered by Robert Ardrey and Joseph Alsop and popularised as a prophet of doom. It seems to me that Lorenz's views on human aggression have been extended to near absurdity by some of his expositors. It is no doubt true that there are innate tendencies in the human psychic constitution that lead to aggressiveness under specific social and cultural conditions. But there is little reason to suppose that these tendencies are so dominant as to leave us forever tottering on the brink of a Hobbesian war of all against all — as, incidentally, Lorenz at least is fully aware, if I read him rightly. Scepticism is certainly in order when a doctrine of man's "inherent aggressiveness" comes to the surface in a society that glorifies competitiveness, in a civilisation that has been distinguished by the brutality of the attack that it has mounted against less fortunate peoples. It

is fair to ask to what extent the enthusiasm for this curious view of man's nature is attributable to fact and logic and to what extent it merely reflects the limited extent to which the general cultural level has advanced since the days when Clive and the Portuguese explorers taught the meaning of true savagery to the inferior races that stood in their way.

In any event, I would not want what I am saying to be confused with other, entirely different attempts to revive a theory of human instinct. What seems to me important in ethology is its attempt to explore the innate properties that determine how knowledge is acquired and the character of this knowledge. Returning to this theme, we must consider a further question: How did the human mind come to acquire the innate structure that we are led to attribute to it? Not too surprisingly, Lorenz takes the position that this is simply a matter of natural selection. Peirce offers a rather different speculation, arguing that "nature fecundates the mind of man with ideas which, when these ideas grow up, will resemble their father, Nature." Man is "provided with certain natural beliefs that are true" because "certain uniformities ... prevail throughout the universe, and the reasoning mind is [it]self a product of this universe. These same laws are thus, by logical necessity, incorporated in his own being." Here, it seems clear that Peirce's argument is entirely without force and that it offers little improvement over the pre-established harmony that it was presumably intended to replace. The fact that the mind is a product of natural laws does not imply that it is equipped to understand these laws or to arrive at them by "abduction." There would be no difficulty in designing a device (say, programming a computer) that is a product of natural law, but that, given data, will arrive at any arbitrary absurd theory to "explain" these data.

In fact, the processes by which the human mind achieved its present stage of complexity and its particular form of innate organisation are a total mystery, as much so as the analogous questions about the physical or mental organisation of any other complex organism. It is perfectly safe to attribute this development to "natural selection," so long as we realise that there is no substance to this assertion, that it amounts to nothing more than a belief that there is some naturalistic explanation for these phenomena. The problem of accounting for evolutionary development is, in some ways, rather like that of explaining successful abduction. The laws that determine possible successful mutation and the nature of complex organisms are as unknown as the laws that determine the choice of hypotheses." With no knowledge of the laws that determine the organisation and structure of complex biological systems, it is just as senseless to ask what the "probability" is for the human mind to have reached its present state as it is to inquire into the "probability" that a particular physical theory will be devised. And, as we have noted, it is idle to speculate about laws of learning until we have some indication of what kind of knowledge is attainable — in the case of language, some indication of the constraints on the set of potential grammars.

In studying the evolution of mind, we cannot guess to what extent there are physically possible alternatives to, say, transformational generative grammar, for an organism meeting certain other physical conditions characteristic of humans. Conceivably, there are none — or very few in which case talk about evolution of the language capacity is beside the point. The vacuity of such speculation, however, has no bearing one way or another on those aspects of the problem of mind that can be sensibly pursued. It seems to me that these aspects are, for the moment, the problems illustrated in the case of language by the study of the nature, the use, and the acquisition of linguistic competence.

There is one final issue that deserves a word of comment. I have been using mentalistic terminology quite freely, but entirely without prejudice as to the question of what may be the physical realisation of the abstract mechanisms postulated to account for the phenomena of behaviour or the acquisition of knowledge. We are not constrained, as was Descartes, to postulate a second substance when we deal with phenomena that are not expressible in terms of matter in motion, in his sense. Nor is there much point in pursuing the question of psychophysical parallelism, in this connection. It is an interesting question whether the functioning and evolution of human mentality can be accommodated within the framework of physical explanation, as presently conceived, or whether there are new principles, now unknown, that must be invoked, perhaps principles that emerge only at higher levels of organisation than can now be submitted to physical investigation. We can, however, be fairly sure that there will be a physical explanation for the phenomena in question, if they can be explained at all, for an uninteresting terminological reason, namely that the concept of "physical explanation" will no doubt be extended to incorporate whatever is discovered in this domain, exactly as it was extended to accommodate gravitational and electromagnetic force, massless particles, and numerous other entities and processes that would have offended the common sense of earlier generations. But it seems clear that this issue need not delay the study of the topics that are now open to investigation, and it seems futile to speculate about matters so remote from present understanding.

I have tried to suggest that the study of language may very well, as was traditionally supposed, provide a remarkably favourable perspective for the study of human mental processes. The creative aspect of language use, when investigated with care and respect for the facts, shows that current notions of habit and generalisation, as determinants of behaviour or knowledge, are quite inadequate. The abstractness of linguistic structure reinforces this conclusion, and it suggests further that in both perception and learning the mind plays an active role in determining the character of the acquired

knowledge. The empirical study of linguistic universals has led to the formulation of highly restrictive and, I believe, quite plausible hypotheses concerning the possible variety of human languages, hypotheses that contribute to the attempt to develop a theory of acquisition of knowledge that gives due place to intrinsic mental activity. It seems to me, then, that the study of language should occupy a central place in general psychology.

Surely the classical questions of language and mind receive no final solution, or even the hint of a final solution, from the work that is being actively pursued today. Nevertheless, these problems can be formulated in new ways and seen in a new light. For the first time in many years, it seems to me, there is some real opportunity for substantial progress in the study of the contribution of the mind to perception and the innate basis for acquisition of knowledge. Still, in many respects, we have not made the first approach to a real answer to the classical problems. For example, the central problems relating to the creative aspect of language use remain as inaccessible as they have always been. And the study of universal semantics, surely crucial to the full investigation of language structure, has barely advanced since the medieval period. Many other critical areas might be mentioned where progress has been slow or nonexistent. Real progress has been made in the study of the mechanisms of language, the formal principles that make possible the creative aspect of language use and that determine the phonetic form and semantic content of utterances. Our understanding of these mechanisms, though only fragmentary, does seem to me to have real implications for the study of human psychology. By pursuing the kinds of research that now seem feasible and by focusing attention on certain problems that are now accessible to study, we may be able to spell out in some detail the elaborate and abstract computations that determine, in part, the nature of percepts and the character of the knowledge that we can acquire the highly specific ways of interpreting phenomena that are, in large measure, beyond our consciousness and control and that may be unique to man.

20070105-01	16:34	SteveB	Philosophy Pages
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Dear Garth Kemerling:

I have greatly enjoyed "going back to college" reading your online materials. They have been most helpful in my research for a novel I am working on. Thank you so much! Good job!

<http://www.philosophypages.com/>

I am an American writer living in Bolivia, where I've found the perfect writing environment, though I am about ready to come back to the States for a while.

I found quite a few errors in your History and have done my best to correct them in the attached Word document (turn on "track changes" to get a better view of them). I have also included questions and comments mainly for my own use, but some are directed to you...if you have time...

I'm especially interested in later twentieth century developments that I believe greatly impact philosophy but don't know of anyone writing philosophically on these subjects. These are: 1) the promise of discovering more about the nature of perception and reality that psychotropic substances seem to offer; 2) the rise of computers and what the implications are of artificial intelligence (Did you see the Matrix?), but more from the perspective of possible A.I entities themselves. Maybe that's what we are!

Take care and, again, thank you very much!

20070111-01	14:54	SteveB	The Bible Is Hard
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Dear Marci,

An interesting Biblical story that illustrates how dangerous it is to take the Bible literally:

The story of the "three kings" or "magi" who visited the Christ child by following the star has some interesting facets.

It turns out that they probably weren't kings at all. I guess "magus" is the ancient Arabic word for astrologer or sorcerer. This is probably what they were, though they may have followed a star. There is no corroborating history of any kings

visiting, and it is pretty unbelievable that a king of that time would travel a large distance, essentially by himself, without his "people". You know?

The word was passed to Hebrew, then to Greek, then to French, and then to English. It is the root of the English words "magic" and "magician".

I think almost every Bible story has at least one hidden and/or symbolic/allegorical side to it.

20070119-01	18:27	SteveB	"Buddha on the Brain"
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"Buddha on the Brain" by Steve Paulson, Salon

Nov. 27, 2006, (http://www.salon.com/2006/11/27/wallace_11/)

(Ex-monk B. Alan Wallace explains what Buddhism can teach Western scientists, why reincarnation should be taken seriously and what it's like to study meditation with the Dalai Lama.)

The debate between science and religion typically gets stuck on the thorny question of God's existence. How do you reconcile an all-powerful God with the mechanistic slog of evolution? Can a rationalist do anything but sneer at the Bible's miracles? But what if another religion — a nontheistic one — offered a way out of this impasse? That's the promise that some people hold out for in Buddhism. The Dalai Lama himself is deeply invested in reconciling science and spirituality. He meets regularly with Western scientists, looking for links between Buddhism and the latest research in physics and neuroscience. In his book *The Universe in a Single Atom*, he wrote, "If scientific analysis were conclusively to demonstrate certain claims in Buddhism to be false, then we must accept the findings of science and abandon those claims."

B. Alan Wallace may be the American Buddhist most committed to finding connections between Buddhism and science. An ex-Buddhist monk who went on to get a doctorate in religious studies at Stanford, he once studied under the Dalai Lama, and has acted as one of the Tibetan leader's translators. Wallace, now president of the Santa Barbara Institute for Consciousness Studies, has written and edited many books, often challenging the conventions of modern science. "The sacred object of its reverence, awe and devotion is not God or spiritual enlightenment but the material universe," he writes. He accuses prominent scientists like E.O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins of practicing "a modern kind of nature religion."

In his new book, *Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and Neuroscience Converge*, Wallace takes on the loaded subject of consciousness. He argues that the long tradition of Buddhist meditation, with its rigorous investigation of the mind, has in effect pioneered a science of consciousness, and that it has much to teach Western scientists. "Subjectivity is the central taboo of scientific materialism," he writes. He considers the Buddhist examination of interior mental states far preferable to what he calls the Western "idolatry of the brain." And he says the modern obsession with brain chemistry has created a false sense of well-being: "It is natural then to view psychopharmaceutical and psychotropic drugs as primary sources of happiness and relief from suffering." Wallace also chastises cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists for assuming the mind is merely the product of the physical mechanics of the brain. And he talks openly about ideas that most scientists would consider laughable, including reincarnation and a transcendent consciousness.

In conversation, Wallace is a fast talker who laughs easily and often gets carried away with his enthusiasm. I spoke with him by phone about the Buddhist theory of consciousness, his critique of both science and Christianity, and why he thinks reincarnation should be studied by scientists.

Why do you think Buddhism has an important perspective to add to the science and religion debate?

Buddhism has a lot to add for a number of reasons. Some are simply historical. Especially since the time of Galileo, there has been a sense of unease, if not outright hot war, between religion and science in the West. And Buddhism is coming in as a complete outsider. It's not theistic, as is Christianity. At the same time, it's not just science, as is physics or biology. And there's another reason why Buddhism may bring a fresh perspective. While there's no question that Buddhism has very religious elements to it — with monks and temples, rituals and prayers — it does have a broad range of empirical methods for investigating the nature of the mind, for raising hypotheses and putting them to the test.

There's a common assumption that science and religion are entirely separate domains. Science covers the empirical realm of facts and theories about the observable world, while religion deals with ultimate meaning and moral value. But you don't accept that dichotomy, do you?

Not at all. In fact, most religious people don't. This is a notion that's been brought up by Stephen Jay Gould with his whole notion of "non-overlapping magisteria." But it's never been true. All of the great pioneers of the scientific revolution — Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and on into the 19th century with Gregor Mendel — they were all Christians. And their whole approach to science was deeply influenced by Christianity. Religion, whether we like it or not, is making many truth claims about the natural world, as well as the transcendent world. And now that science is honing in on the nature of the mind and questions of free will, it is definitely invading the turf that used to belong to religion and philosophy.

Many people would acknowledge that Buddhism has some profound insights into the human mind — why we get depressed, what makes us happy and how we become slaves to our attachments. But what does this have to do with science?

In Buddhism, the very root of suffering and all our mental distress — what Buddhists call mental afflictions — is ignorance. The path to liberation, or enlightenment, is knowledge. It's knowing reality as it is. So despite many differences in methodology, both science and Buddhism are after knowledge of the natural world. But what defines the natural world? In modern science, the natural world is often equated with the physical world, and mental phenomena and subjective experiences are regarded as emergent phenomena or simply functions of the brain. But there are many other domains of reality that the physical instruments of science have not yet been able to detect.

But science is as much about method as anything. The scientific method posits hypotheses and theories that can be tested. Is that something Buddhism does as well?

Not in the same way. I wouldn't want to overplay the case that Buddhism has always been a science, with clear hypotheses and complete skepticism. It's too much of a religion, and so there's a lot of vested interest in the Buddhist community not to challenge the statements made by the Buddha and other great patriarchs in the Buddhist tradition. So there are some fundamental differences. At the same time, science is not just science. This very notion that the mind must simply be an emergent property of the brain — consisting only of physical phenomena and nothing more — is not a testable hypothesis. Science is based upon a very profound metaphysical foundation. Can you test the statement that there is nothing else going on apart from physical phenomena and their emergent properties? The answer is no.

You're saying we don't know for sure that the physical functions of the brain — the neural circuits, the electrochemical surges — are what produce our rich inner lives, what we call the mind?

Cognitive science has plenty of hypotheses that are testable. For instance, is Alzheimer's related to a particular malfunctioning of the brain? More and more, scientists are able to identify the parts and functions of the brain that are necessary to generate specific mental states. So these are scientific issues. But now let's tap into what the philosopher David Chalmers has called "the hard problem" — the relationship between the physical brain and consciousness. What is it about the brain — this mass of chemicals and electromagnetic fields — that enables it to generate any state of subjective experience? If your sole access to the mind is by way of physical phenomena, then you have no way of testing whether all dimensions of the mind are necessarily contingent upon the brain.

But that is certainly the paradigm of the vast majority of neuroscientists and psychologists. The mind is nothing more than the brain, and what happens in the mind is strictly because of the physical mechanics of the brain. I'm sure most of these scientists would say it's absurd to talk about the mind functioning independently of the brain.

Well, when you have no possible means of investigating the mind as it might operate independently of the brain, then to even raise it as an issue is indeed absurd. But there is one avenue of inquiry that's been largely left out or simply repudiated. Right now, you and I have an ability to monitor our own mental states. Can we generate a mental image of an apple? Can we remember our mother's face? Can we recite the opening lines of the Gettysburg Address or some favorite poem? Are these mental images that you generate nothing other than brain states or parts of the brain? At this point, those are not even scientific questions because nobody knows how to tackle them.

You have called for a new field of study, what you call "contemplative science." What would that involve?

Contemplative science must live up to the rigorous standards that neuroscience, cognitive psychology, chemistry and physics have set for us. They've set the bar very high. So I'm a great admirer of the rigor and skepticism of science at its

best. But William James, who's one of my intellectual heroes, suggested we have a triadic approach. We should study the mind by way of behavior and brain studies, but, first and foremost, he said, we should study the mind by observing mental phenomena directly. But what he didn't have, and neither did any of his contemporaries, was a rigorous methodology.

Is that what Buddhism offers — a rigorous methodology?

Yes. I'm not saying we should fuse religion with science. Rather, we should select very specific methodologies from Buddhism and other contemplative traditions where the ability to monitor the mind has been honed over thousands of years — beginning with the training of attention and then using sophisticated methods for investigating the nature of the mind, feelings and the very nature of consciousness itself during the waking state, the dream state, even during deep sleep. Now, because of the great advances in transportation and communications, we have easy access to the Taoist tradition of China, the Sufi tradition of the Near East, the Buddhist tradition of Tibet and Southeast Asia. I'm convinced this would add much greater depth and breadth to the types of questions that are raised in modern cognitive science.

In science, you have a hypothesis that's tested, and it can be disproved. Does that happen in Buddhism?

On its home turf, frequently not. But I'm also waiting for a neuroscientist to tell me how the hypothesis that mental states are nothing more than neural states will be repudiated. I don't see that as a testable hypothesis. So there's a fair amount of dogma, not in science per se but in the minds of scientists. Likewise, there's plenty of dogma in the minds of Buddhists. But Buddhism at its best — and we go right back to the teachings of the Buddha himself — encourages a spirit of skepticism. He said, "Do not take my statements to be true simply out of reverence for me. But rather, put them to the test." Well, if you do that, you should be able to repudiate them as well as confirm them.

Well, let me ask you about that. I know there is a tradition, particularly among advanced contemplatives, that you have your meditative experience, and then you talk about it, you analyze it, and your peers critique it. Does that really happen? When someone comes out of meditation, would someone else say, "Sorry. You didn't do it right"?

Absolutely. You know, Buddhism, like any other tradition, is subject to degeneration. So if you and I headed off to India or Nepal or Tibet, we'd find plenty of Buddhist meditators who are simply going through rote ritual, who are just trying to come up with the right answers at the end of the book. But when Buddhism is really thriving, it's exactly what you described. You go into a three-year retreat, where you are meditating eight to 12 hours a day. You're training the mind. You're investigating the nature of the mind. But you're probably not doing that in entire isolation. You're in consultation with a mentor who's going to review your experience and help you deepen your experience. You'll be questioning your insights. So [your] relationship with your mentor is analogous to working on your Ph.D. with a mentor. If at any point your research becomes flaky or not up to snuff, the mentor is there to say, "No, that's a dead end. This is not good research." This happens frequently in the Buddhist contemplative tradition when it's really robust and healthy.

Has that happened to you? You've meditated for decades. And you were a Buddhist monk for 14 years. Did you have your meditative practice analyzed and critiqued?

Definitely.

I can imagine that might be kind of humiliating.

[Laughs] No. Take the first long retreat I did in 1980. I was a monk at the time. I'd just spent the last 10 years in very rigorous theoretical and practical training in India and in a monastery in Switzerland. And then all I wanted to do was go to the lab — basically, go into a meditation hut and spend eight, 10, 12 hours a day meditating. Well, I had the tremendously good fortune to have the Dalai Lama as my personal mentor. So he guided me in the meditation. I would meet with him every few weeks. I would discuss the practice and he'd give me feedback. I was living in a little hut in the mountains above Dharamsala, India. I went into a five-month solitary retreat. Somebody brought me food once a week. I was meditating 10 hours a day. I was honing my attention skills. And I would consult with the Dalai Lama. I would consult with other yogis up there on the hill about technique and problems that were arising. They would draw from their decades of experience to help me. And I started to adapt some of these methods for myself as a Westerner who grew up in America and Europe, rather than as a nomad at 14,000 [feet] up on the Tibetan plateau.

Did you have profound mystical experiences? Did you have moments of what might be called enlightenment?

Well, the word "enlightenment" has been used in so many different ways, I won't tread on that mine field. Eighteenth century Europe itself went through an Enlightenment, but I'm not sure that would be an enlightenment in my category. So for me to make any claims about enlightenment would be counterproductive. Did I find any transformation of consciousness? Did I find attention skills honed? Did I experience states of consciousness that I'd never experienced before such sustained meditative training? The answer is yes, yes, yes. But what a mature meditator is even more concerned with than those epiphanies — those moments of revelation or breakthrough — is the overall impact on the quality of your life, your way of engaging with other people and dealing with adversity. Is it helpful? Does it give you a clearer sense of reality? If it doesn't, then I say meditation is merely a hobby. If it does, then meditation can be something very central to developing greater mental health and clear engagement with reality itself.

I've heard that your father was a Protestant theologian. It does raise the question of why you became a Buddhist. Why has Buddhism resonated with you in a way that Christianity has not?

Well, it's a personal issue. You're quite right. My father was — and is — a Christian theologian. We have a loving and very trusting relationship. The fact that he is a Christian theologian definitely had a profound impact on the course my life has taken. As I was growing up, from the age of 13, I had a very clear sense that I wanted to dedicate my life to science. And so I immersed myself in chemistry, biology, physics and calculus. At the same time, my religious background had made a very deep impact on my life. But what really struck me very painfully — I would say existentially — was the profound incompatibility between science and the whole worldview of Christianity, with God being the creator, responding to prayer, and human identity being that of an immortal soul. Basically, everything was God saturated in this Judeo-Christian view. On the other hand, in the scientific worldview I was simply a body, an animal. There was no creator. There was no ethics in nature. It was just Darwin. It was a great big machine. And I looked at these two worldviews and said, "Wow, these are incompatible."

So I basically went AWOL from Western civilization for 14 years. I picked up one book on Buddhism when I was 20. It was like a starving man picking up some fragrance of hot baked bread. So I spent a year studying the Tibetan language in Germany, where I was spending a year abroad. And then I bought myself, literally and metaphorically, a one-way ticket to India. I wanted to go live with Tibetans and explore as deeply as I could this Buddhist worldview. It's not just a religion. It's not theistic. It doesn't posit the existence of God as standing outside of creation, governing it, ruling it, punishing the wicked and rewarding the virtuous. It doesn't have any of that. Nor is it materialistic, flattening my very existence to being an epiphenomenon of my brain.

You've suggested that there might be certain functions of the mind, certain aspects of consciousness, that don't have a material foundation.

Yes.

Advanced contemplatives in the Buddhist tradition have talked about tapping into something called the "substrate consciousness." What is that?

Just for a clarification of terms, I've demarcated three whole dimensions of consciousness. There's the psyche. It's the human mind — the functioning of memory, attention, emotions and so forth. The psyche is contingent upon the brain, the nervous system, and our various sensory faculties. It starts sometime at or following conception, certainly during gestation, and it ends at death. So the psyche has pretty clear bookends. This is what cognitive neuroscientists and psychologists study. They don't study anything more. And they quite reasonably assume that that's all there is to it. But as long as you study the mind only by way of brain states and behavior, you're never going to know whether there's any other dimension because of the limitations of your own methodologies. So here's a hypothesis: The psyche does not emerge from the brain. Mental phenomena do not actually emerge from neuronal configurations. Nobody's ever seen that they do.

So your hypothesis is just the reverse from what all the neuroscientists think.

Precisely. The psyche is not emerging from the brain, conditioned by the environment. The human psyche is in fact emerging from an individual continuum of consciousness that is conjoined with the brain during the development of the fetus. It can be very hampered if the brain malfunctions or becomes damaged.

But you're saying there are also two other aspects of consciousness?

Yeah. All I'm presenting here is the Buddhist hypothesis. There's another dimension of consciousness, which is called the substrate consciousness. This is not mystical. It's not transcendent in the sense of being divine. The human psyche is emerging from an ongoing continuum of consciousness — the substrate consciousness — which kind of looks like a soul. But in the Buddhist view, it is more like an ongoing vacuum state of consciousness. Or here's a good metaphor: Just as we speak of a stem cell, which is not differentiated until it comes into the liver and becomes a liver cell, or into bone marrow and becomes a bone marrow cell, the substrate consciousness is stem consciousness. And at death, the human psyche dissolves back into this continuum.

So this consciousness is not made of any stuff. It's not matter. Is it just unattached and floating through the universe?

Well, this raises such interesting questions about the nature of matter. In the 19th century, you could think of matter as something good and chunky out there. You could count on it as having location and specific momentum and mass and all of that. Frankly, I think the backdrop of this whole conversation has to be 21st century physics, not 19th century physics. And virtually all of neuroscience and all of psychology is based on 19th century physics, which is about as up-to-date as the horse and buggy.

So not everything in the universe can be reducible to matter, to particles?

According to quantum field theory, string theory and quantum cosmology — cutting-edge fields of 21st century physics — matter itself is not reducible to matter. And Richard Feynman, the great Nobel laureate in physics, commented very emphatically, "We don't know what energy is." He said it's not stuff out there that has a specific location. It's more like a mathematical abstraction. So matter has been reduced to formations of space. Energy is configurations of space. Space itself is rather mysterious. And so when I introduce this theme of a substrate consciousness, it's not something ethereal that's opposed to matter. Matter is about as ethereal as anything gets. But could there be this continuum of substrate consciousness that's not contingent upon molecules? From the Buddhist perspective, yes. But again, this frankly sounds like one more system of belief.

I have to say, you could put a religious spin on all of this. What you're describing as substrate consciousness sounds a lot like how people talk about God. There is some kind of divine presence that's outside the material world but somehow intervenes in our material lives.

I think we're jumping the gun there. In the Buddhist perspective, the substrate consciousness is individual. It's not some great collective unconscious like Jung talked about. In the Buddhist view, it's an individual continuum of consciousness that carries on from lifetime to lifetime. That's not God. Beyond that is this whole third dimension, the deepest dimension, called "primordial consciousness." This has certain commonalities with Christian mystical notions of God beyond the trinity. It has a thoroughly and deeply transcendent quality to it. And that's way beyond the pale of scientific inquiry. But when I speak of substrate consciousness, I think it would simply be a mistake to say that's God. If you want to relate this to something in Western religions, you might say it's the immortal soul. Christianity really has nothing to say about the existence of your continuum of consciousness prior to your conception. There's nothing in the Bible that says, where was Steve Paulson 70 years ago? Where did your stream of consciousness, your identity, your soul, come from? But Buddhism has a lot to say about this.

Here in the West, we have on the table three large hypotheses about the nature of human consciousness. One of these looks really good from a scientific perspective. Your consciousness is a product of the brain. Damage the brain and your consciousness evaporates into nothing. Now what's the experiment by which you repudiate that hypothesis? Well, all the mental states you're studying are by way of the brain, so the answer is nada. So it's not scientific and it's not testable, at least not yet. We have another major hypothesis. You die and your soul carries on to heaven or hell in the Protestant tradition. You go there and it's forever. Or in the Roman Catholic tradition, you have another couple of options — limbo and purgatory. But these are all one-way tickets. You can't say, I didn't like it in purgatory and then come back. My point here is the Christian hypothesis is not testable scientifically. It may be true, but it's not a scientific hypothesis.

Of course, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition has reincarnation. Is that testable scientifically?

Well, here's the hypothesis. Your psyche emerged some time while you were in your mother's womb. It's continuing to evolve, and eventually it's going to implode back into the substrate, carry on as a disembodied continuum of consciousness and then reincarnate. There's the theory in a nutshell. Is that one testable? My short answer is yes, I think this is a testable hypothesis, and in principle it really should be able to be repudiated. But we're also looking for positive evidence.

There are two types of studies being done at the University of Virginia. One is by Bruce Greyson. He's got a very good track record of doing rigorous, objective scientific studies of alleged — I'm choosing my words carefully here — alleged out-of-body experiences and near-death experiences of patients undergoing surgery. Does it ever happen that a person, while being under general anesthetic, has an out-of-body experience and can actually perceive something, as they hover above, that only the surgeons see? That's an empirically testable question. And Greyson is studying this scientifically.

So basically, the premise here is that consciousness can exist outside the body. I've heard that Greyson has started these tests but so far hasn't come up with any results.

Quite so. As you can imagine, the National Science Foundation is not exactly jumping over itself to fund this type of research. Nor is the NIH [National Institutes of Health]. This is outside the paradigm. They're not interested in providing funding for things that challenge the foundations of materialism. So basically, it's like asking the Catholic Church to pay for research to show that Jesus never lived.

OK, that's one test for out-of-body experiences. What about reincarnation?

Well, lo and behold, at the same university — they have some chutzpah over there — the University of Virginia, Ian Stevenson is now retired from the psych department. He's not a Buddhist, he wasn't a Hindu, and he didn't believe in reincarnation. Forty years ago he heard anecdotes of children maintaining that this wasn't their first life and giving detailed accounts of their alleged memories of past life experiences. So he started studying it. On a shoestring budget, he and a team of researchers did this for about 40 years. And about halfway through, he wrote a book called *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. He scanned thousands of accounts of children, throwing out most of them because they were either false or the child could have heard about it from parents, relatives, television and so forth. He then selected 20 cases where the accounts given by the child wound up being true when they were subjected to objective corroboration. He couldn't see any way the child could have known this information. But he also said in that book, "I don't believe in reincarnation. But I don't know what else to do with these twenty cases because I can't see any other way to explain them."

And then he did another 20 years of research and wrote another book, *Where Biology and Reincarnation Intersect*. It showed the empirical findings of more cases of children giving these very detailed accounts of past life experiences. And usually they were not glorified, like I was Cleopatra or Einstein or somebody spectacular. No, [it was like,] I was a philanderer, and one of the husbands of the wives I had sex with shot me dead because I cuckolded him. So that's not very glamorous, but that was the recollection of one of these children. This is empirical evidence. It should be scrutinized rigorously, but not thrown out dogmatically.

This raises some interesting questions about Buddhism. Is Buddhism a religion or is it something else? Because there are some people in the West who say we should strip Buddhism of any vestiges of the religious or the transcendental. For instance, Stephen Batchelor, in his book "Buddhism Without Beliefs," writes, "The Buddha was not a mystic. His awakening was not a shattering insight into a transcendental truth that revealed to him the mysteries of God. He did not claim to have had an experience that granted him privileged, esoteric knowledge of how the universe ticks." Is Stephen Batchelor right?

[Laughs] I've known Stephen Batchelor for almost 35 years. We were monks together for years, both in India and in Switzerland. To come up with this picture of the Buddha, you have to bring out a carving knife and chop off great sections of the most authentic accounts we have of the Buddha's own teachings. You simply have to ignore and pretend he never said an enormous number of things he did say. I think Stephen, my dear friend, has recast the Buddha in his own image as an English skeptic who was raised in an agnostic background, who really doesn't believe in anything nonphysical.

So we should forget trying to strip Buddhism of its transcendentalism. You haven't quite come out and said it, but you're suggesting we should stop saying Buddhism is not a religion.

Well, we have to be very cautious when we take these Western categories — religion, science, philosophy — which are deeply and inextricably embedded in our Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritage. But I have to add a footnote to our conversation about reincarnation research. The Buddhists have been looking at this critically and empirically for 2,500 years. They're not waiting with bated breath to see what the people at the University of Virginia come up with. They, unlike psychologists and neuroscientists, have been exploring mental phenomena directly. And they have specific strategies for going into a deep meditative state, directing your attention backward beyond the scope of this lifetime, directing it back to past lifetimes and coming up with memories. So you have a template here.

This could be studied, together with skeptics. Train very advanced contemplatives to tap into this substrate consciousness — this storehouse of memories from past lives, if it in fact exists — and do this in conjunction with neuroscientists and psychologists. If I had unlimited funds, I'd say this is one of the most important questions we can ask. Make this a 20-year research project, well funded, with all the skepticism of science. Make sure you have some hardcore atheists involved, but ones who are open-minded and not just knee-jerk dogmatists. And then put it to the test. In 20 years, I think you could come up with something that could repudiate or validate a startling, truly astonishing hypothesis that there is such a substrate consciousness.

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"Decoding *The Secret*" by Jerry Adler, *Newsweek*

Mar. 5, 2007 issue, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2007/03/04/decoding-the-secret.html>)

(Oprah lives by it. Millions are reading it. The latest self-help sensation claims we can change our lives by thinking. But this 'new thought' may just be new marketing.)

If you're a woman trying to lose weight, you had your choice of two pieces of advice last week. One, from the American Heart Association, was to eat more vegetables and exercise an hour a day. The other was from a woman named Rhonda Byrne, a former television producer who has written what could be the fastest-selling book of its kind in the history of publishing with 1.75 million copies projected to be in print by March 2, just over three months since it came out, plus 1.5 million DVDs sold. Byrne's recommendation was to avoid looking at fat people. Based on what she calls the "law of attraction"—that thoughts, good or bad, "attract" more of whatever they're about—she writes: "If you see people who are overweight, do not observe them, but immediately switch your mind to the picture of you in your perfect body and feel it." So if you're having trouble giving up ice cream, maybe you could just cut back on "The Sopranos" instead.

You'd think the last thing Americans need is more excuses for self-absorption and acquisitiveness. But our inexhaustible appetite for "affirmation" and "inspiration" and "motivation" has finally outstripped the combined efforts of Wayne Dyer, Anthony Robbins, Dr. Phil and Mitch Albom. We have actually begun importing self-help—and from Australia, of all places, that citadel of tough-minded individualism, where just a couple of years ago Byrne was a divorced mother in her 50s who had hit a rocky patch in her business and personal lives. It was in that moment of despair, when she "wept and wept and wept" (as she recounted to Oprah on the first of two broadcasts devoted to her work), that she discovered a long-neglected book dating from 1910 called *The Science of Getting Rich*. In it she found how to let your thoughts and feelings get you everything you want, and determined to share it with the world. She called it *The Secret*.

And it was that stroke of marketing genius that turned what might have been a blip on the *Times's* "Advice, How-To, Miscellaneous" best-seller list into a publishing phenomenon that Sara Nelson, editor of *Publishers Weekly*, says "could become this decade's *Tuesdays With Morrie*." "Nobody," she adds, "ever went broke overestimating the desperate unhappiness of the American public." Self-help books roll off the presses with the regularity of politicians' biographies, and sell much better; Wayne Dyer all by himself has written 29 of them with sales estimated at 50 million. But Byrne had something else going for her. "It was an incredibly savvy move to call it *The Secret*," says Donavin Bennes, a buyer who specializes in metaphysics for Borders Books. "We all want to be in on a secret. But to present it as the secret, that was brilliant."

To a tired genre full of earnest bullet points and windy exhortations, *The Secret* brings breathless pizzazz and a market-proven gimmick, an evocation of ancient wisdom and hidden conspiracies that calls to mind *The Da Vinci Code*. Torchlights flicker on the 90-minute DVD and the soundtrack throbs portentously before it gets down to giving you the secret for getting your hands on that new BMW. The book is a miracle of cover art, a jacket suggestive of a medieval manuscript punctuated by a crimson seal. "It evokes the film, with the secret scrolls and all," says Judith Curr, executive vice president of Atria Books, a division of Simon & Schuster that brought out the book in partnership with Portland, Ore.-based Beyond Words Publishing. Its very size, small enough to hide, adds to its aura. "It feels special, like it contains really important information."

What it doesn't contain, though, is a secret. That should be self-evident to anyone who has ever been in an airport bookstore. The film and book are built around 24 "teachers," mostly motivational speakers and writers (dressed up by Byrne with titles like "philosopher" or "visionary") who have been selling the same message for years. Jack Canfield is

probably the best-known of them. Is it really true that a cabal of elites has conspired to keep the rabble from getting their hands on *Chicken Soup for the Soul*?

The "secret" is the law of attraction, which holds that you create your own reality through your thoughts. You can, if you wish, take this figuratively, to mean that by changing your thoughts you can feel better about your situation in life. Or you can view it as a source of inspiration—that by believing you will succeed, you will perform better in the race or the test or your relationships.

But that's not what *The Secret* is saying. Its explicit claim is that you can manipulate objective physical reality—the numbers in a lottery drawing, the actions of other people who may not even know you exist—through your thoughts and feelings. In the words of "author and personal empowerment advocate" Lisa Nichols: "When you think of the things you want, and you focus on them with all of your intention, then the law of attraction will give you exactly what you want, every time." Every time! Byrne emphasizes that this is a law inherent in "the universe," an inexhaustible storehouse of goodies from which you can command whatever you desire from the comfort of your own living room by following three simple steps: Ask, Believe, Receive.

In a dramatized interlude in the film, a young woman ogles a necklace in a window, and the next thing you know, it's around her neck. A child imagines himself with a new bike, and it appears outside his door. No need to do a lot of boring chores or get a newspaper route: the universe provides. Contrariwise, a worrywart who obsessively checks the locks on his bicycle returns to find it stolen; the law of attraction has called down on him just the predicament he hoped to avoid. A financial consultant reliably finds parking, just by visualizing an empty spot—which implies, by another law of the universe, the one about two objects occupying the same space, that he believes his thoughts can induce someone else to leave. Is this someone you'd trust with your investments?

Perhaps this proposition has not been analyzed closely enough by fans of *The Secret*, including Oprah, who exuberantly told her audience that she'd been living her whole life according to the law of attraction, without even knowing it.

On an ethical level, *The Secret* appears deplorable. It concerns itself almost entirely with a narrow range of middle-class concerns—houses, cars and vacations, followed by health and relationships, with the rest of humanity a very distant sixth. Even some of the major figures in the film confess to uneasiness with its relentless materialism. "I love *The Secret* but I also think it's missing a couple things," says "metaphysician" Joe Vitale. "If I were producing it, I would have added something more about serving others." Vitale defends the dream homes and sports cars as baubles to draw people in, in hopes they will employ the law of attraction for higher purposes. Not that the law has any bias toward higher purposes. On the contrary, Byrne writes, it is totally impersonal and "it does not see good things or bad things." In the film, the Rev. Michael Bernard Beckwith compares it to the law of gravity: "If you fall off a building it doesn't matter if you're a good person or a bad person, you're going to hit the ground."

Which is equally true if someone pushes you off a building—or, let's say, beats your brains in with a club during a bout of ethnic cleansing. The law of attraction implies that you brought that fate down on yourself as well. "The law of attraction is that each one of us is determining the frequency that we're on by what we're thinking and feeling," Byrne said in a telephone interview, in response to a question about the massacre in Rwanda. "If we are in fear, if we're feeling in our lives that we're victims and feeling powerless, then we are on a frequency of attracting those things to us ... totally unconsciously, totally innocently, totally all of those words that are so important."

She has seen evidence of this in her own life, she says, where "many tough things" happened to her. *The Secret* devotes several pages to the weight she gained after her pregnancies. Unaware of the law of attraction, she mistakenly believed that eating made her fat. She now recognizes her error: "Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight."

And today, she maintains an ideal weight of 116 while eating anything she wants. A woman in the film claims to cure her breast cancer in three months, without chemotherapy or radiation, by visualizing herself well and watching funny movies on television. Whatever you think of that as medical advice—Byrne insists she's not telling people to avoid doctors—it makes psychologist John Norcross, a professor at the University of Scranton who is an authority on self-help books, wonder: what about the people whose cancers don't get cured? "It's pseudoscientific, psychospiritual babble," says Norcross. "We find about 10 percent of self-help books are rated by mental-health professionals as damaging. This is probably one of them. The problem is the propensity for self-blame when it doesn't work."

On a scientific level, the law of attraction is preposterous. Two of the "teachers" in the film are identified as quantum physicists, which they are, although on the fringes of mainstream science. One, Fred Alan Wolf, is mostly an author of

science books with a quasi-mystical bent, and the other, John Hagelin (who has run for President on the Natural Law ticket), is affiliated with Maharishi University of Management, in Fairfield, Iowa, which does research on transcendental meditation. Both of them, contacted by NEWSWEEK, distanced themselves from the idea of a physical law that attracts necklaces to people who wish for them. "I don't think it works that way," says Wolf dryly. "It hasn't worked that way in my life." Hagelin acknowledges the larger point, that "the coherence and effectiveness of our thinking is crucial to our success in life." But, he adds, "this is not, principally, the result of magic."

Wolf said he used his time in front of the camera to talk about the relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness, but all that evidently wound up on the cutting-room floor. What he might have said is something like this: modern physics says that atomic particles influence one another in ways that violate our ordinary understanding of space and time, a phenomenon called "quantum entanglement." The question is whether quantum signals can be perceived on the scale of something like a neuron, a brain or a human being. Overwhelmingly, physicists dismiss this idea. A minority, very much out of the mainstream, think it's worth investigating, and a few claim to have experimental evidence that thoughts can influence physical objects, such as the circuitry in a random-number generator. But the effects are tiny, on the order of a few hundredths of 1 percent. And there's no evidence you can use it to move a BMW into your driveway.

But modern physics has reinvigorated a long tradition in American philosophy, one in which *The Secret* stands squarely. "I can show you books written 100 years ago that say the exact same thing," says Beryl Satter, a professor of history at Rutgers. Long before there was a "New Age," Satter says, there was "New Thought"—a self-help movement that drew on 19th-century Americans' suspicion of elites and on the Protestant tradition of looking for the "inner light." You don't need doctors to heal you, priests to save you or professors to instruct you: the secrets to health, success and salvation are within you. A best seller in 1869 called *The Mental Cure* unleashed a flood of imitators, which increasingly evoked "science" in their titles, hoping to capitalize on the fascination with inventions like the telephone. "It was a short leap from 'You can use the telephone to send messages' to 'You can use your mind'," Satter says.

It was one of those books, *The Science of Getting Rich*, by the long-forgotten Wallace D. Wattles, that Byrne's daughter handed her one day in 2004, when she was struggling with her various setbacks—the recent death of her father and a budget overrun on a series, "Sensing Murder," she was producing for Australian television. (She was a longtime producer on an Australian version of "The Tonight Show," and her company was behind a reality series about marriage proposals called "Marry Me.") Wattles's book struck such a chord with Byrne that she plunged into a crash course in Western, Eastern, ancient and modern thought, devouring "hundreds" of books and articles in just two and a half weeks. "That was in December," she told NEWSWEEK. "In January I told my team we were going to make the greatest film in history to date. They thought I'd gone mad." Inspired, she flew to the States in July 2005 and began lining up people to interview; the film was finished six months later and she began trying to find an Australian network to air it. The top-rated Nine Network was intrigued by her proposal, but the finished film struck Len Downs, the program manager, as just "a whole range of talking heads giving their basis of the secret of life." (It eventually ran in Australia just a few weeks ago, and, says Downs, it didn't do all that well.)

But armed with the law of attraction, Byrne was confident things would work out. A Web company just blocks from her office in Melbourne had a technology for distributing streaming video over the Internet. Last March, her site (<http://thesecret.tv>) began selling downloads and DVDs, one of which found its way to Cynthia Black, president of the New Age-oriented publishing house Beyond Words. Black, who had recently entered into a relationship with Atria, saw its potential; by late November the book was in the stores and soon after got its first break when Ellen DeGeneres featured it on her show. By the time Oprah ran her first segment on it, on Feb. 8, it was already a huge success.

Byrne herself seems nonplused by her success, and remains a somewhat elusive figure; she is sparing with interviews and didn't even appear on the second of the two hours Oprah devoted to *The Secret*. Her family in Australia said they were told by Rhonda not to talk to reporters, although her mother, Irene Izon, did offer this assessment to NEWSWEEK: "The thing is that Rhonda just wants to bring happiness to everybody. That's the reason it all began. She just wants everybody to be happy."

And to give her her due, she might actually be achieving some of that. There is nothing, in principle, wrong with thinking about what makes you happy. Here is someone she did make happy: Cheryl Cornell-Powers, 59, a Chicago training consultant, who saw Byrne on "Oprah" and then watched the film. She discounted the idea of curing one's own cancer, but liked the segments that emphasize gratitude over resentment. "We look at our money and say, 'What fun it would be to go out to dinner to places that are on our budget,' not, 'We can't do this because we're on a budget.'" Even a serious academic like Harvard psychologist Carol Kauffman is willing to credit the idea that you can change your life by consciously directing your thoughts in a positive direction. "Basically, it's chaos theory," she says. "I don't think you can actually attract things to you. But if you're profoundly open to opportunity, then when ambiguous events occur, you

notice them. I think what positive thinking does is raise your consciousness to possibilities so they can snag your attention. We're starting to see some empirical studies on that now."

Of course, that's a long way from the simple model of Ask-Believe-Receive. In most people's lives, positive thought leads to success only through the transforming medium of action. For obvious reasons, this is a much less popular message. *The Secret* dubiously appropriates a number of historical figures to illustrate the law of attraction. Beethoven was probably bipolar; Newton ruminated obsessively over personal salvation; Einstein derided quantum entanglement as "spooky action at a distance." Martin Luther King Jr. is enlisted as author of an epigram about taking a staircase one step at a time. King certainly could visualize. But he also knew better than to sit back and wait for the law of attraction to send down justice; he went out and worked for it. And there's no secret to that.

(With Matthew Philips in New York, Mary Carmichael in Boston, Karen Springen in Chicago and Kendall Hill in Sydney)

20070515-01	11:45	SteveB	To: George Bush; Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear President Bush:

HOW DISAPPOINTING!!!!

I read this morning that you want to resurrect the defunct Immigration Reform Bill that died in the Senate last week.

Speaking on behalf of myself and absolutely everyone I know, we Americans DO NOT WANT this bill. We want, instead, for our government to enforce existing immigration laws, build the authorized fence along the Mexican border, crack-down on employers who hire illegal aliens and deny government benefits to illegal aliens. If these things are done, the best of all amnesties will occur—the illegals will go back home where they are needed in their own countries.

We are thinking only of the future of our children. We feel you have completely sold-out to special interests.

Please support America...it's history, it's children, and it's future...not your own or your party's short-term financial goals, Mr. President.

Thank you. By the way, I am not prejudiced...my wife is a LEGAL alien from Bolivia and, believe me, that process of becoming legal is not easy, nor should it be. Why should it be easier for the criminals who have come illegally?

—SteveB

20070524-01	17:57	SteveB	"Gospel According to Judas"
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"Gospel According to Judas", by Steve Paulson, Salon

Apr. 2, 2007, (http://www.salon.com/2007/04/02/elaine_pagels/)

(The recently unearthed Gospel of Judas "contradicts everything we know about Christianity," says religious historian Elaine Pagels.)

As almost every child knows, Judas was the disciple who betrayed Jesus, selling his life for 30 pieces of silver. If there's an arch villain in the story of Jesus, it's Judas Iscariot. Or is it? The newly discovered Gospel of Judas suggests that Judas was, in fact, the favorite disciple, the only one Jesus trusted to carry out his final command to hand him over to the Romans.

Rumors about the gospel have circulated for centuries. Early church fathers called it a "very dangerous, blasphemous, horrendous gospel," according to historian Elaine Pagels. We now know that the manuscript was passed around the shadowy world of antiquities dealers, at one point sitting in a safe deposit box in a small town in New York for 17 years. Pagels herself was once asked by a dealer in Cleveland to examine it, but he only showed her the last few pages, which revealed little more than the title page. She assumed there was nothing of significance. Finally, the manuscript was acquired by the National Geographic Society, which hired Pagels as a consultant to study it.

More than any other scholar, Pagels has brought the lost texts of early Christianity to public attention. A Princeton historian of religion, she wrote the 1979 bestseller "The Gnostic Gospels" — the book that launched the popular fascination with the Nag Hammadi manuscripts found by Egyptian peasants in 1945. That book, which won both the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award, was later chosen by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best nonfiction books of the 20th century. Pagels went on to write a series of acclaimed books about early Christianity and, along the way, recounted her own personal tragedies — her young son's death after a long illness and, just a year later, her first husband's death in a hiking accident. It's no surprise that Pagels has felt compelled to wrestle with some of religion's thorniest subjects, like how to make sense of suffering and evil.

For much of her career, Pagels has straddled two worlds — the academic and the popular. She's often the go-to expert when a magazine needs a comment on the latest theory about Mary Magdalene or some other bit of revisionist Christian history. But her standing among the scholars who study early Christianity is more complicated. Conservative scholars tend to dismiss the Gnostic texts as a footnote in Christian history, hardly worth all the hype that's been generated by *The Da Vinci Code* and other racy stories. Not surprisingly, these scholars have questioned Pagels' interpretations of early Christian texts.

With Harvard historian Karen L. King, Pagels has written a new book, *Reading Judas: The Gospel of Judas and the Shaping of Christianity*. The authors argue that this recently discovered gospel offers a new understanding of the death of Jesus. I spoke with Pagels by phone about the bitter quarrels among early Christians, why it's a bad idea to read the Bible literally, and the importance of this new discovery.

When was the Gospel of Judas written?

As far as we can tell, probably at the end of the first or early second century.

So it's clearly not written by Judas himself, or even dictated by Judas.

That's right. And most New Testament scholars would say the gospels in the New Testament — all of them attributed to disciples or followers of disciples — were probably not written by the people whose names are on them. If you say, "the Gospel according to Matthew," you might not be pretending to be Matthew if you wrote it. You might be saying, this is the gospel the way Matthew taught it, and he was my teacher. So these are certain followers of Jesus who collected and transmitted his teaching.

Does this Gospel of Judas reveal something new about early Christianity?

Yes, the Gospel of Judas really has been a surprise in many ways. For one thing, there's no other text that suggests that Judas Iscariot was an intimate, trusted disciple, one to whom Jesus revealed the secrets of the kingdom, and that conversely, the other disciples were misunderstanding what he meant by the gospel. So that's quite startling.

It's shocking to suggest that Judas wasn't just one of the disciples but was actually the favorite disciple of Jesus.

That's right. And also the idea that he handed over Jesus to be arrested at the orders of Jesus himself. This wasn't a betrayal at all. In fact, it was obedience to a command or request that Jesus had made.

But how do we reconcile this with all the other stories we've ever heard about Judas? He's the symbol of treachery and betrayal.

Well, he has become the symbol of treachery and betrayal. But once you start to look at the gospels one by one, you realize that followers of Jesus were trying to understand what had happened after he was arrested and killed. They knew Judas had handed him over to the people who arrested him. The earliest gospel, Mark, says Judas handed him over, but it doesn't give any motive at all. The people who wrote after Mark — Matthew's and Luke's gospels — apparently felt that what was wrong with the Gospel of Mark was that there was no motive. So Matthew adds a motive. Matthew says Judas went to the chief priests who were Jesus' enemies, and said, "What will you give me if I hand him over to you?" And they agree on a certain sum of money. So in Matthew's view, the motive was greed. In Luke's gospel, it's entirely different. It says the power of evil took over Judas. Satan entered into him.

I think Luke is struggling with the question, If Jesus is the son of God, how could he be taken by a mere trick, by a human being? And Luke is trying to show that all evil power was concentrated in Judas. So they are very different stories. However, other gospels, like John's, suggest that Jesus not only anticipated what was going to happen but initiated it.

The Gospel of John says that he told Judas to go out and do what he had to do, which Jesus knew was to betray him. So the Gospel of Judas just takes the suggestion one step further. Jesus not only knew what was going to happen but initiated the action.

There's something else that's striking about the Gospel of Judas. The writer is very angry, and he's especially angry at the other disciples.

Yes, that's where we realized that it's not just a story about Jesus and the disciples. It's a story about this follower of Jesus — the Christian who's writing this story, maybe 60 years after the death of Jesus. Even using the name of Judas is a slap in the face to the tradition. You realize that whoever wrote it was a very angry person. And we were asking, What's going on here? Why is he so angry? And we discovered that it's very dangerous to be a follower of Jesus in the generations after his death. You know, they say his disciple Peter was crucified upside down. And Paul was probably beheaded by the Romans. James was lynched by a crowd, and so were Stephen and other followers. So leaders of this movement were in great danger. And other Christians were also in danger of being arrested and killed because they followed Jesus. The question for many of them was, What do you do if you're arrested?

And to acknowledge that you were a Christian would probably kill you.

Exactly. All you had to do is say no. Or you can try to escape or bribe the people persecuting you. And many did. The only answer that most Christians agreed was right was to say, "Yes, I'm a Christian." You defy them and you go heroically into the lions. So we've always thought of Christianity as a religion that glorifies martyrdom. Now we realize that we've had that impression because the people who weren't in favor of martyrdom had their writings buried and burned and trashed and ridiculed. And they were called cowards and heretics.

So the Gospel of Judas is a kind of protest literature. It's challenging leaders of the church. Here the leaders are personified as disciples who are encouraging people to get killed, to "die for God," as they called martyrdom. This gospel is challenging them and saying, when you encourage young people to die for God, you're really complicit in murder.

Are there also theological issues at stake? This gets at the meaning of suffering, and the nature of evil as well.

It does. This was at a time when all followers of Jesus were struggling with the question, Why did Jesus die? What does it all mean? In the New Testament, the gospels say he died as a sacrifice. Paul says Christ, our Passover lamb, was sacrificed for us. Why? Well, to save us from sin.

But this author is saying, wait a minute. If you think God wants his son to be tortured and killed before he'll forgive people their sins, what kind of God do you have in mind? Is this the God who didn't want animals to be sacrificed in the temple anymore? So this author's asking, isn't God a loving father? Isn't that what Jesus taught? Why are we saying that God requires his son to die for the sins of the world? So it's a challenge to the whole idea of atonement, and the idea that Christians — when they worship — eat bread and drink wine as if it were the body and blood of Christ. This person sees that whole thing as a celebration of violence.

You can see why some early Christians would have attacked this gospel. This is very threatening to other Christian accounts of why Jesus died.

It contradicts everything we know about Christianity. But there's a lot we don't know about Christianity. There are different ways of understanding the death of Jesus that have been buried and suppressed. This author suggests that God does not require sacrifice to forgive sin, and that the message of Jesus is that we come from God and we go back to God, that we all live in God. It's not about bloody sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. It suggests that Jesus' death demonstrates that, essentially and spiritually, we're not our bodies. Even when our bodies die, we go to live in God.

Does this raise questions about how we should think about the Resurrection? In orthodox Christian accounts, this is considered a resurrection of the flesh.

That's right. The idea that Jesus rose in the flesh is very important for a lot of Christians. And certainly for the martyrs. When people were going to get themselves killed, some of them were asked, Do you believe that you're going to be raised from the dead in your body? And many of them said yes, of course we do. That's why we're doing this. So those promises of bodily resurrection and heavenly rewards were very important for many Christians.

Some of the things we're talking about would seem to have great resonance in the Islamic world. Do you see any parallels between this Christian history and what we're seeing among Muslim martyrs today?

I do. The author of the Gospel of Judas wasn't against martyrdom, and he didn't ever insult the martyrs. He said it's one thing to die for God if you have to do that. But it's another thing to say that's what God wants, that this is a glorification of God. I think he would have spoken in the way that an imam might today, saying those who encourage young people to go out and supposedly die for God as martyrs are complicit in murder. The question of the uses of violence is very much at the heart of the Gospel of Judas. If you have to die as a martyr, you do because you don't deny Christ. But you don't go around encouraging people to do it as though they would get higher rewards in heaven.

Can you put the Gospel of Judas in perspective, alongside some of the other Gnostic texts that have come to light in recent decades — the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene? Do these really change our understanding of early Christianity?

Before, we had a puzzle with just a few pieces. Now we have many more pieces. We begin to see that in the early Christian movement, people discussed and struggled with all the issues that we now think of as normative Christianity, like, What does the death of Jesus mean? There wasn't one kind of understanding of Jesus in the early Christian movement. Actually, there were many.

In recent years, there's been a huge debate over what to make of the Gnostic Gospels. And plenty of Christian scholars and theologians say there's good reason they were not admitted into the Christian canon. They say the Bible presents the most reliable story of Jesus based on eyewitness accounts. For instance, Ben Witherington has written, "The four canonical gospels have stood the test of time and other apocryphal gospels and texts have not ... This is because the canonical gospels are our earliest gospels and have actual historical substance, while the later gospels have none."

Well, Witherington has a particular point of view to prove. I would say it's very hard to date these other texts. Some of them are as early as the gospels of the New Testament, like the Gospel of John. But what's different is the emphasis. Let me give you an example. The Gospel of Thomas says that all who recognize that they come from God are also children of God, instead of teaching that Jesus is the only son of God through whom one must be saved. It's a teaching that is akin to what the Quakers and some other Christian groups teach, including some Greek and Russian Orthodox groups. The divine is to be found in everyone, and we can discover, at some level, that we're like Christ. It's not a complete contradiction, but it is somewhat different.

But aren't there crucial doctrinal issues at stake in terms of what it means to be a Christian? For instance, was Jesus the son of God? Was the return of Jesus an actual resurrection of the flesh?

In the fourth century, the Council of Nicaea established certain doctrines about what it means to be orthodox: belief in one God, maker of heaven and earth, and one Jesus Christ, his only son and Lord. So Jesus Christ is the only one who brings salvation to the whole world. There are, of course, Christians who believe in Jesus but also wonder whether people can't find God in other religions — if they're Jews or Muslims or Buddhists and so forth. There's nothing Jesus himself said that contradicts that, as far as I can see. But fourth-century Christian orthodoxy did set out the doctrines you're talking about.

Some people say the historical study of early Christianity really doesn't matter to a person's faith. Being a Christian means you believe in certain things, like the Resurrection, like the Virgin Birth. These are matters of faith, not of historical research. You can choose not to believe those things, but then you're not part of the Christian creed. How do you respond to that argument?

Well, it's absolutely true that the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection can't be verified historically. On the other hand, if you start to look at it historically, you find out that there are plenty of people who call themselves Christians who see those very things differently. There have been Christians from the beginning — St. Paul is one of them — who say the Resurrection is not a matter of this kind of body. Paul talks about resurrection as a matter of being transformed. Yes, it's about the body, he said, but it's more like a body of the stars or the moon or the sun — a body of light. So there are many ways that people have understood themselves to be Christians.

This has huge implications for so many people today, especially those who simply can't accept these kinds of miracles. It does raise the question of whether you can be a Christian if you don't believe any of the Bible's supernatural stories.

I don't think you have to discard all the supernatural stories. The Bible is really about what is beyond the natural. But there are other ways of understanding. For example, the Gospel of Philip, which some people called a heretical text, actually says Jesus had human parents as you and I do. His parents were Mary and Joseph. But when he was born of the spirit, he became the son of the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit. In Syriac and Hebrew, the spirit is spoken of in feminine forms, so metaphorically, one could speak of her as a divine mother, just as one speaks of God as a divine father. So there are Christians who didn't reject the Virgin Birth, but said wait a minute, why would you take it literally? Why don't you take it as an image for spiritual reality?

You have spent decades studying early Christian history. Do you consider yourself a Christian?

Yes, I do. And the reason I can is that I understand that there are countless people who've been Christians for 2,000 years, in many different ways. It's not a matter of one version, you must believe this exactly the way I tell it to you. Christian theologians have always said that the truth of God is beyond our understanding. And so we speak in metaphors. Paul said we see through a glass darkly.

I've heard that you didn't grow up in a religious family.

Well, it was a Protestant family, nominally. We went to church, but my father had rejected the Bible for Darwin. He decided the Bible was a bunch of old fables and that evolution was right. So I was brought up to think the Bible was just kind of irrelevant. I grew up and became deeply and passionately interested in it and went to a church and was born again. I was 14 or 15. It was quite wonderful, and I loved what I found there.

Even though your father was a confirmed atheist.

It did shock him, yes. Of course, that's one way adolescents like to shock their parents. I didn't do it for that reason, but it had that effect. The power and the passion of that kind of evangelical Christianity was very real for me. And it was a discovery of something very important — a spiritual dimension in life that I was not able to ignore. On the other hand, after a year of living in that church, one of my friends in high school was killed in an automobile accident. The people at the church asked, was he born again? And I said, no, he wasn't. And they said, well, then he's in hell. And I thought to myself, I don't believe that. That doesn't match up with what I'd heard about God. So at that point, I decided I had to find out for myself what I could about the early Christian movement, what I believe about it, and what is being said in the name of Jesus that I found not true.

That's fascinating. Basically, it was because you couldn't buy into that fundamentalist version of Christianity that you launched your career as a historian of Christianity.

That's the truth, yes.

Well, this does raise the question of what we mean by God and what we mean by transcendence, and whether there is a transcendent reality out there. Is that discussion of transcendence meaningful to you?

Oh, certainly it is. If we don't understand how important spiritual life is to people, I don't think we're going to understand human beings or the 21st century. There are many people who said religion is essentially over now, and everyone will become rational. They don't understand that the way humans are has a lot to do with religious experience.

Your late husband, the eminent physicist Heinz Pagels, wrote very eloquently about the mysteries of science. Did he influence your thinking about this intersection between science and religion?

Oh yes, he was deeply interested in philosophy and religion and science, and understood how profound and complicated those issues are. When you're dealing with science, for example, you're dealing all the time with metaphors. So to assume that religious language isn't metaphor doesn't make sense to me.

There's a big debate right now over whether religion and science are two totally different domains, as Stephen Jay Gould once said, or whether they overlap. Where do you come down on that?

That's a very tough question. I think religion and science both have a lot to do with understanding and imagination, but they certainly explore the world in very different ways. For example, when the eminent physicist Stephen Weinberg wrote in his book "The First Three Minutes," "the more we know about the universe, the more we know it's pointless and meaningless," my late husband said, "That doesn't make any sense." Einstein thought the more we knew about the

universe, the more we knew about the divine intelligence. There are many ways to make inferences from physics. And inferences like that are not scientific at all; they're philosophic.

Of course, there's still a huge debate about whether Einstein was religious or not. The atheists want to claim him for their camp, but religious people say he was actually quite open to religious ideas.

Part of the problem is that Einstein used the language about God as a metaphor. When he said, "God does not play dice with the universe," he meant the universe is not put together in an accidental way. It does show a kind of intelligent process in it. Einstein was speaking about God in the way that physicists would — aware that language like that is always going to be metaphorical, speaking beyond our understanding. But many people took him literally and said he's a religious man. Scientists said he was just using language carelessly.

Isn't that part of the problem that we get into when we talk about metaphor and the religious imagination? If you don't take scripture literally, how do you take it?

You can take scripture seriously without taking it literally. If you speak about the Resurrection of Christ, all we know historically is that after Jesus died, his followers became convinced that he was alive again. Now, what does that mean? They told many stories. Some of them said, I saw him with my own eyes, I touched him, he actually ate food, he was not a ghost. That's in Luke's gospel. And others said, I saw him for a moment and then he faded — the way many people say they've seen people they knew who died. What I'm saying is there are many ways that people who believe in the Resurrection speak about Christ being alive after his death without meaning that his body got out of the grave and walked.

It sounds like you're saying that it's perfectly possible to take the Bible very seriously, to be a Christian, and yet not to believe in the supernatural miracles that so many people simply cannot accept.

Well, that may be. I don't dismiss all supernatural miracles, like a healing that can't be explained. Those do happen sometimes.

You've been studying these texts for decades. Has your scholarly work deepened your own faith?

Yes. And the scholarly work is part of the spiritual quest. Opening ourselves to exploring as much as we can about this can be, in fact, an act of faith. At Princeton, there's a course in the study of New Testament that some evangelical students were warned not to take. They called it "Faith Busters 101." And some of them come just to flex their muscles and see if they can sit there and stand it while somebody teaches them about how the gospels were written. But what they usually discover is that learning about those things doesn't change the fundamental questions about faith.

Does faith necessarily involve some leap into mystery, into something that can't be explained?

I think it does. Earlier this year, I was asked to do an interview with somebody who had written a book to demonstrate that Jesus had been raised bodily from the dead. And they expected me to say that was impossible. But I can't say it's impossible. From a historical point of view, there's no way you can comment on that. It's just not susceptible to that kind of analysis. So there's a lot that history can't answer and that science can't answer. I mean, there's a lot about all of our lives that we have no rational understanding of. And so faith comes into our relationships with the people we love, and our relationship to our life and our death.

There seems to be a rather vigorous movement among scientists to try to explain the origins of religion. I'm struck by how often these theories come from atheists. And I think the underlying impulse is to demystify the divine. But can religion really be explained from the outside, by people who are not themselves religious?

Probably not. For example, suppose you found the basic brain chemistry that explains religious perceptions. In fact, there are neurologists in New York trying very hard to understand precisely that. And you find that when people who've clinically died say they've had a near-death experience, they've gone into a brilliant light and then they've come back from some place. This is the flashes of light on the brain as it expires. Well, it may be. And it may not be. Is this a trick that our brain plays on us? Or is this intimations of some other kind of reality? I don't think science is going to answer that question.

Isn't there an inherent limitation to any of those brain-imaging studies? Because there's the whole question, Are we just imagining this? Or is there really some contact with the divine?

Exactly. For example, there's a study now at New York University about epilepsy. We know that epileptics often have an experience of seeing an aura. They can have an epileptic convulsion and they have a kind of vision. It was understood in ancient times to be demonic possession. So if people then say, epilepsy has a certain relationship to electrical activity in the brain, and that's what precipitates these experiences, does that mean that they are not real? I don't think that answers the question.

What do you make of the recent claim by the atheist Richard Dawkins that the existence of God is itself a scientific question? If you accept the idea that God intervenes in the physical world, don't there have to be physical mechanisms for that to happen? Therefore, doesn't this become a question for science?

Well, Dawkins loves to play village atheist. He's such a rationalist that the God that he's debunking is not one that most of the people I study would recognize. I mean, is there some great big person up there who made the universe out of dirt? Probably not.

Are you saying that part of the problem here is the notion of a personal God? Has that become an old-fashioned view of religion?

I'm not so sure of that. I think the sense of actual contact with God is one that many people have experienced. But I guess it's a question of what kind of God one has in mind.

So when you think about the God that you believe in, how would you describe that God?

Well, I've learned from the texts I work on that there really aren't words to describe God. You spoke earlier about a transcendent reality. I think it's certainly true that these are not just fictions that we arbitrarily invent.

Certainly many people talk about God as an ineffable presence. But if you try to explain what transcendence is, can you put that into words and explain what it means?

People have put it into words, but the words are usually metaphors or poems or hymns. Even the word "God" is a metaphor, or "the son of God," or "Father." They're all simply images for some other order of reality.

There's one aspect of the Bible that's especially troubling. What do you make of the many passages that condone violence? Killing infidels seems to be what God wants.

You mean in the Hebrew Bible?

Yes, I'm particularly thinking about the Hebrew Bible.

Well, yes. When you read the discussion of holy war in the Hebrew Bible, it's violent, definitely. This was a war god, identified with a particular tribe, with particular kinds of religious war. Christians often don't read that now. But when I talk with Jewish leaders, they say, yes, we remember that very well because we remember the Crusades. And the Muslims of course say the same. They say, why are you talking to us about violence? Christians have done violence in the name of Christ for nearly 2,000 years.

So how should we read those passages that are so violent?

That gets us back to the question, Can you read the Bible seriously without reading it literally? There are parts of the New Testament which encourage slaves to remain slaves. Do we take that literally? Those were fighting words during the Civil War when some Christians said slavery was part of God's plan and some people should live and die as slaves. I think few would agree with that now. But it was a position that one could seriously take on the basis of many biblical passages.

You're saying that we have to understand context.

I think we do. You were saying that some people believe faith has nothing to do with history. The fact is, somebody wrote those texts. They wrote them in a world in which slavery was taken for granted. That's a different world. So if we don't understand that, well, it says, Slaves, obey your masters, for this is right.



Z Pinch Machine: High voltage buildup at the Z Machine at Sandia National Laboratory

Dear SteveB:

On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your correspondence.

We appreciate hearing your views and welcome your suggestions.

Due to the large volume of e-mail received, the White House cannot respond to every message.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

comments@whitehouse.gov

20070605-01	02:23	D. Rehberg	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me regarding immigration. It's good to hear from you.

The vitality and strength of our nation largely comes from its ethnic diversity. The vast majority of today's legal immigrants are no different than the Pilgrims who sailed from England in search of a better life. America has always been a haven for those seeking freedom and economic opportunity.

I believe Americans should encourage legal immigration. Immigrants provide vital labor skills and are often the creators of small businesses. They also enrich our nation culturally.

I also believe government should enforce the law and prosecute illegal immigrants who are in violation of federal law. Because the federal government has not fully enforced immigration statutes, the level of illegal immigration has grown dramatically. This has drastically overburdened the welfare programs and school systems of certain states. In light of this, I support greater resources for the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and for border patrol and police to prosecute violators of immigration laws.

Please be assured that I will keep your views in mind as Congress considers immigration legislation.

Thanks again for contacting me. For more information and to sign up for my e-newsletter, please visit my website at <http://www.house.gov/rehberg>. Keep in touch.

—Congressman Denny Rehberg

20070605-02	20:19	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Senator Martinez recently discussed his hopes for the Border Security and Immigration Reform bill that is currently being debated in the U.S. Senate. The Senate continues debating the bill this week. "First and foremost, the bill we are debating will make our borders more secure. It calls for the completion of several specific border-security measures before any other aspect of the bill is implemented. "...As a nation of immigrants, we must arrive at a humane policy that is aligned with the rule of law. Those who play by the rules are rewarded; those who break our laws will pay penalties."

Monday, Senator Martinez welcomed the announcement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Florida Long-Term Recovery Office that Florida will receive \$386 million in additional funding for the 2005 hurricane season. "This is very good news for Florida. Significant portions of our state are still recovering from the 2005 storms and this funding will enable communities to receive additional assistance," said Martinez.

Senator Martinez condemned the Government of Venezuela for their decision not to renew the broadcast license for Radio Caracas Television. Senator Martinez was an original co-sponsor of Senate Resolution 211, approved by the Senate on Thursday, May 24th, expressing concerns over the transgressions being carried out against freedom of thought and expression in Venezuela.

Upcoming Community Office Hours For Southwest Florida: June 14th & 15th, caseworkers from the Office of Senator Martinez will visit Hendry, Glades, DeSoto, and Highlands counties. Caseworkers will be available to assist constituents

with concerns and issues ranging from Veterans issues to Healthcare, Social Security, Medicare, and other services provided by the federal government. Click here to view the locations and times.

2007 Hurricane Season

Now that the 2007 hurricane season is here, thorough preparation is critical to protecting your family and belongings. Please browse the following links for useful information during this hurricane season:

<http://www.ready.gov/>—Provides helpful information to best prepare you, your family, and businesses in the event of a disaster;

http://www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane/hu_season.shtm—Comprehensive site with helpful links such as applying for disaster assistance, building a safe room in your home, and common weather terms used during hurricane season;

www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes—Key facts about hurricane readiness and recovery including whether ! or not water is safe for drinking, and how best to prevent injuries during and after a storm;

www.floridahurricane.net—Up-to-date maps and projections of hurricanes;

www.weather.gov/alerts/fl.html—County-specific warning and weather alerts (throughout Florida);

www.srh.noaa.gov/mfl/newpage/hurricanes.html—Thorough preparation checklist (i.e. What to know before a storm, and what to know once one hits).

Casework Corner*

Mr. Connors was trying to gain TRICARE certification for his healthcare business. Upon certification, his clinics would be able to provide services for TRICARE beneficiaries. For several months after his application was filed, Mr. Connors received conflicting information as to the status of his company's request.

A caseworker submitted a Congressional inquiry on behalf of Mr. Connors and his business. Shortly thereafter a letter was received from TRICARE confirming that his company's application had been completed and approved. Within one week of the inquiry, his company was able to treat TRICARE beneficiaries.

*Casework Corner is a real account of assistance provided to constituents. The names of those involved are changed to protect the privacy of the constituent.

If you have questions about a federal agency, please contact the Orlando Regional Office by calling (407) 254-2573 to speak with a member of the Casework Department. The toll-free number for Florida residents is (866) 630-7106. To find out more about how my Office can help you, go to <http://martinez.senate.gov> or stop by one of our scheduled Community Office Hours in your area.

—Sen. Mel Martinez

20070607-01	16:19	B. Nelson	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me regarding immigration reform. I appreciate your taking the time to share your thoughts with me.

Like you, I believe our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed. But I'm reserving judgment on a bipartisan deal developing in the Senate. While it's still very uncertain what the final details of the measure will look like, I'm opposed to amnesty, and will insist that the bill strengthens our borders.

Please be assured that I will keep your thoughts in mind during the Senate's debate on immigration reform.

P.S. From time to time, I compile electronic news briefs highlighting key issues and hot topics of particular importance to Floridians. If you'd like to receive these ebriefs, visit my Web site and sign up for them at

<http://billnelson.senate.gov/news/ebriefs.cfm>.

Contact: <http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm#email>

—Sen. Bill Nelson

20070608-01 13:53 SteveB To: Senator _____; Immigration Reform Bill

Dear Senator _____:

I am happy that the proposed Immigration Bill has apparently gone down to defeat. How awful and unfair to our citizens, children, and legal immigrants to attempt to grant amnesty of any kind to law-breaking illegal immigrants—again! And how awful and unfair not to enforce the laws already passed, not to prevent employers from hiring illegal aliens, and not to protect our borders even to the extent of building a fence!

You should be ashamed and not be able to sleep at night for trying to sell our great country down the river in the name of cheap votes or cheap labor or whatever cockeyed reason someone might have.

I beg you, please work to do everything possible to see that our laws are enforced. Deny jobs, rights, and privileges to illegal aliens and they will go back home of their own accord. Please protect our children and their futures!

Thank you.

20070608-02 14:19 H. Clinton Re: Immigration Reform Bill

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for your e-mail. It is very important to me to know the issues that are of concern to you. A growing number of my constituents are now choosing to communicate with me via e-mail. I hope you will understand that, because of the volume and range of e-mails I receive, it can take some time to send a response that specifically addresses the subject raised in your message. I do, however, want to let you know immediately that your message has been received. Hearing from you and others through e-mail helps me to quickly learn the views and interests of New Yorkers and others, which is very helpful to me in my work in the United States Senate.

Sincerely, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton

20070611-01 09:43 G. Bush Re: Immigration Reform Bill

On behalf of President Bush, thank you for your correspondence. We appreciate hearing your views and welcome your suggestions. Due to the large volume of e-mail received, the White House cannot respond to every message. Thank you again for taking the time to write.

—comments@whitehouse.gov

20070611-02 16:09 B. Obama Re: Immigration Reform Bill

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me about the immigration reform debate. I appreciate having the benefit of your perspective and can report that the Senate's failure on June 7 to cut off debate on immigration reform legislation means that the bill is likely dead for the remainder of this Congress.

The Senate immigration reform bill was authored by Senators Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Jon Kyl (R-AZ), and supported by President Bush. This compromise bill attacks the immigration problem in a comprehensive fashion by tightening border security, increasing enforcement against employers who hire illegal workers, and establishes a process by which undocumented workers and their families can earn citizenship after paying fines and learning English. Further, the bill would create a temporary program for foreign workers who must return to their homeland after a specified period. The most contentious elements of the Kennedy/Kyl bill appear to be its path to citizenship, the new point system it proposes for future immigration and its guest worker program. The Senate considered a number of amendments to the bill.

For example, I supported an amendment to reduce the number of temporary workers permitted to enter the country annually from 400,000 to 200,000 as well as an amendment to end the temporary worker program after five years. Both of these amendments passed and became part of the bill. In the final analysis, however, the Senate refused to cut off debate on the bill, thereby likely killing it for the remainder of this Congress.

I fully understand the strong feelings many in Illinois and across the United States hold regarding the adverse effects of illegal immigration. Indeed, illegal immigration causes significant consequences that affect American workers as well as health and education infrastructure. Many people understandably believe that undocumented immigrants should not be rewarded for flouting U.S. law and suggest we should just seal our borders and deport undocumented workers currently living in the country.

On the other hand, it is significant that the Department of Homeland Security recognizes that identifying and deporting 12 million undocumented workers currently working in this country would be both difficult logistically and disruptive to the American economy.

Ultimately, this dilemma about how to treat undocumented aliens currently in the country proved too tough to resolve. Although the Senate has now moved on to consider other legislation, you may be certain that I will remember your perspective should similar legislation come before the Senate in the future. Again, thank you for writing. Please stay in touch in the future.

Sincerely,
Barack Obama, United States Senator

20070612-01	10:32	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill, Etc.
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Dear SteveB:

On Thursday, Senator Martinez called for solutions to the border security and immigration policy problems facing America. Speaking on the Senate floor, Senator Martinez stated, "This is a challenge I will not shrink from and I will continue to do all I can to see that we tackle this very difficult problem that our nation faces. I remain committed because we owe it to the American people," said Martinez.

Senator Martinez met with U.S.F. College of Marine Science graduate students and staff who were attending Capitol Hill Oceans Week in Washington, D.C. Senator Martinez discussed with them their hopes of advancing U.S. ocean policy and the status of legislation pending before Congress.

Wednesday, Senator Martinez spoke on the Senate floor in memory of former NASCAR president and Floridian, Bill France, Jr. Senator Martinez said: "I know I speak for the hundreds of thousands of fans, the drivers, the pit crews, and anyone and everyone who enjoys NASCAR, as well as Floridians and Daytona Beach residents, when I say a well deserved 'thank you' to Bill France, Jr.—for making our weekends a lot more exciting, more enjoyable, and a lot faster. Florida thanks you for your vision, Bill. We will miss you, but you leave behind a legacy that we will never forget."

Reminder: Community Office Hours For Southwest Florida June 14th & 15th, caseworkers from the Office of Senator Martinez will visit Hendry, Glades, DeSoto, and Highlands counties. Caseworkers will be available to assist constituents with concerns and issues ranging from Veterans issues to Healthcare, Social Security, Medicare, and other services provided by the federal government.

Summer Travel Reminder: Passport Rules have changed for U.S. citizens traveling to certain countries.

In the face of record-breaking demand for passports, there have been longer than expected processing times of passport applications. As a result, the United States Government recently announced an accommodation for air travel. U.S. citizens traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda who have applied for, but not yet received, passports can temporarily enter and depart from the United States by air with a government-issued photo identification and Department of State official proof of application for a passport through Sept. 30, 2007.

For more detailed information, do not hesitate to contact our Office or visit the relevant U.S. Department of State Web page at www.travel.state.gov.

Casework Corner*

Mr. West lost medals he earned during WWII and contacted the U.S. Air Force Awards Branch to have them replaced. The Awards Branch was unable to find records of his service in the Air Force during the War. Mr. West contacted the Office of Senator Martinez for assistance in obtaining his medals.

A caseworker contacted the U.S. Air Force, provided specific information which allowed the Awards Branch to perform a more detailed search of the war records, and within thirty days, the Air Force verified Mr. West's eligibility for multiple campaign and service awards. He is currently scheduled to receive those medals that were lost.

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This Newsletter Page is maintained by the Office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

20070612-02	13:46	M. Martinez	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for taking the time to contact me. I appreciate hearing from you regarding comprehensive immigration reform and would like to respond to your concerns.

As you may know, on June 7, 2007, the Senate was unable to reach an agreement on the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (S. 1348) and the Senate Majority Leader has set aside S. 1348, for the time being. Delaying comprehensive reform does a disservice to America. I remain committed to working together with my colleagues to produce a tough but fair and workable piece of legislation that President Bush can sign into law during this Congress.

To do this, we must secure the border first. The first section of S. 1348 mandates that border security and worksite-enforcement benchmarks must be met before other elements of the legislation are implemented. This legislation will direct the Department of Homeland Security to complete construction of hundreds of miles of additional double layered fencing and create 200 miles of vehicle barriers on our border with Mexico. The department will hire and train 18,000 border patrol agents. In addition, this bill provides for surveillance technologies to enhance our ability to monitor the border, such as, 70 ground —based radar and camera towers on the southern border and 4 unmanned aerial vehicles. However, physically securing the border will not solve the entire problem. Employers will be required to verify the work eligibility of all employees using an employment eligibility verification system, while all workers will be required to present stronger and more verifiable identification documents. Tough new anti-fraud measures will be implemented and stiff penalties imposed on employers who break the law.

After the border has been certified secure by the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and the employment verification system is in place, the remaining provisions of the bill will go into effect. To address the labor shortage in industries with a demonstrated need such as, the Florida Citrus and Hospitality Industries, a guest worker program will be implemented. The purpose of this program is to relieve pressure on the border and provide a lawful way to meet the needs of our economy. The proposal creates a temporary worker program to fill jobs Americans are not doing. To ensure this program is truly temporary, workers will be limited to three two-year terms, with at least a year spent outside the

United States between each term. A small percentage of temporary workers will be allowed to bring immediate family members only if they have the financial ability to support them and they are covered by health insurance.

Additionally, this legislation does away with a relative- based immigration system or "Chain Migration" and establishes a new merit-based system to select future immigrants based on the skills and attributes they will bring to the United States. Under the merit-based system, future immigrants applying for permanent residency in the U.S. will be assigned points for skills, education, and other attributes that further our national interest including: ability to speak English; level of schooling, including added points for training in science, math, and technology; employment in a specialty or high-demand field; employer endorsement; and certain family ties to the U.S. This merit- based system will enhance and ensure American competitiveness for the future and put American immigration policies in line with other industrialized nations.

It is my firm belief that addressing border security and cracking down on unscrupulous employers while doing nothing to address those already living here illegally would amount to de facto amnesty for those 12 million. Further, it is in the United States' national security interest to learn the identity of these individuals. Illegal immigrants who come out of the shadows will be given probationary status.

Once the border security and enforcement benchmarks are met, they must pass a background check, remain employed, maintain a clean criminal record, pay an initial fine, determined by the size of their household as well as a state impact fee, and receive a counterfeit-proof biometric card to apply for a work visa or "Z visa." Some years later, these Z visa holders will be eligible to apply for limited permanent residency, but only after paying an additional \$4,000 fine; completing accelerated English requirements and demonstrating knowledge of American civics; going to the back of the line while the current green card backlog clears; returning to their home country to file their application; and demonstrating merit under the merit-based system. It is important to note that a petitioner for or holder of a Z visa can be deported at any time if a disqualifying factor is identified during background checks, such factors include but are not limited to—a criminal conviction, gang affiliation or terrorist activity.

With my full support, this bill declares that English is the national language of the United States and calls on the United States Government to preserve and enhance it, as well as enacting accelerated English requirements for many immigrants.

Please know that I will keep your concerns in mind as the Senate debates S.1348. I am aware that Congress has failed to oversee the enforcement of immigration law in the past. I believe that S. 1348 provides the Executive Branch, American employers and people aspiring to work in America or become Americans with a clear and workable policy that is efficient and fair. This is an important national security, economic, and humanitarian challenge, and I know the American people are looking to Congress for action and oversight.

Again, thank you for sharing your views with me. If you have any additional comments, please contact me. For more information about issues and activities important to Florida, please sign up for my weekly newsletter at <http://martinez.senate.gov>.

Sincerely, Mel Martinez, United States Senator, <http://martinez.senate.gov>.

20070612-03 14:24 SteveB "El Hacendado" Immigration Reform
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"El Hacendado" by Howard Fineman, Newsweek

June 11, 2007, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2007/06/11/the-hacendado.html>)

(Why is President Bush risking a nasty battle within his own party over immigration reform?)

Though I've never heard him use the term, my guess is that George W. Bush sees himself as a *hacendado*, an estate owner in Old Mexico.

That would give him a sense of Southwestern noblesse, duty-bound not just to work "his" people, but to protect them as well.

His advisor, Carl Rove, has explained that a system called "democracy" now gives peasants something called "the vote." It would be shrewd, Rove said, for hacendados to grant their workers' citizenship.

That's the best explanation I have for why Bush is in the midst of what may be a suicide mission on immigration policy—embarrassing for him and ruinous for his party.

An ungrateful base

Long ago, when he was running for governor, Bush told me that he was a "southwestern" Republican, not a "southern" one. As a son of the southwest, he wants employers to have access to all of that cheap labor, but wants to make the system more orderly, at least not cruel. He hopes (as he did as governor) to get credit for wisdom.

It infuriates Bush when people—in his own party, no less—are not grateful for what he sees as an act of heartfelt, enlightened generosity and foresighted management.

So he sounded like the Texas gunslinger he pretended to be as a kid when he squared off against GOP foes of his sweeping immigration proposal. His timing was perfect, as in wrong, just as he was preparing to attend the Senate Republicans' weekly luncheon on the Hill. "I'll see you at the bill signing," he said, chestier than usual.

He might live to regret such playground bravado. If you are president, the only thing worse than issuing a public threat to your own party is failing to make it stick.

It really is quite extraordinary. Here he is, an unpopular leader fighting an unpopular war. His two-term presidency is clattering to a conclusion, besieged on all sides, taking hits on everything from his attorney general to his general incompetence. And so he decides to do what? Climb into the ring for an ultimate fighting bout with the base of the very Republicans who got him to the White House.

Outrage and concern

As always, conservatives, who thrive on alienation, are spoiling for a fight. Now they have found it. Among the branch of conservatism fixed on "Us v Them" thinking, the enemy for decades was Communism. After the fall of The Wall, the "neocons" found a replacement Them in jihadist Islam. The old America-Firsters—what we used to call "isolationists," who distrust foreign commitments—now have a homeland Them, in the form of 12-20 million illegal immigrants, most from Mexico.

The domestic neocons want a fence, a big and real one; they want illegals sent packing to the extent possible. Mostly they want leaders to express outrage and concern. And they aren't a fringe; they form the core of the GOP. That is especially true in the South and parts of the Rustbelt, where the threat of being inundated by immigrants is less immediate, but the sense of estrangement from metropolitan, bi-coastal America great.

Of the more than 100 members of Rep. Tom Tancredo's Immigration Reform Caucus—which favors a tough, enforcement-oriented policy—only six are from the southwestern swing states at political ground zero: Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada.

Overwhelming campaign opposition

Responding to the GOP base as it is, not as Bush hopes it is, nine of the ten Republican presidential contenders are ardently against Bush's plan to give a "path to citizenship" to illegals. The 11th—soon-to-be candidate Fred Dalton Thompson—is almost as adamant as Tancredo on the topic. If there is a 12th GOP candidate, that would be Newt Gingrich. He adds a Churchillian sense of urgency and doom to the debate.

As for Bush, he has the Business Roundtable types (with a smattering of fitful union allies) and party strategists—Rove among them—who argue that the GOP has no choice but to hit the reset button on an immigration "system" that was overwhelmed from the moment it was last "reformed" in 1986. The CEO types are no match, in what amounts to a GOP primary, for angry grassroots activists on a crusade.

And they shouldn't be dismissed as crazies. Bush's own dark view of post 9/11 clashes with his relatively benign attitude toward illegal immigration. Here is the question that clash begs:

Do borders mean anything?

[20070614-01](#) 14:16 A. Specter Re: Immigration Reform Bill

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting my office regarding immigration. Our immigration system is broken and must be reformed. As the Ranking Member on the Senate Judiciary Committee in the 110th Congress, I have worked tirelessly with my fellow Senators and both the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop a "grand compromise" on the subject of comprehensive immigration reform. This compromise will ensure that our borders are secure while providing practical solutions regarding the millions of undocumented immigrants that already reside within the United States .

This legislation makes border security a top priority by providing for 18,000 border patrol agents and requiring 370 miles of new fencing along the border. It will also provide for the resources to detain up to 27,500 aliens per day on an annual basis, effectively ending the old "catch and release" program. Importantly, this bill requires that all of these "triggers" designed to secure our borders be implemented before we begin any other step in this comprehensive legislation. The legislation also mandates the development of an effective electronic employment verification system, which will ensure that employers are able to verify the legal status of those they consider hiring.

In addition to the strong approach this bill will take towards border security, it also includes a firm but reasonable approach towards those individuals who are here illegally. Currently, there are more than 12 million people living in the United States without proper documentation. This legislation requires undocumented immigrants to go on "probationary" status and to go through extensive background checks. Once an individual has passed the necessary security checks, paid substantial fines and demonstrated proficiency in English, the individual may "earn" a right to remain in the United States . In order for an individual to be eligible to earn the right, the individual must return to their home country and apply through a consulate or an embassy. By requiring immigrants to earn their right to permanent legal status, this bill provides a reasonable solution to the country's immigration problems that is both tough and fair.

It is also very important for our economy that we create an effective temporary worker program that allows an employer to find a temporary worker when no willing U.S. worker can be found. Those desiring temporary employment in the United States would be issued a "Y" visa, which would be good for two years. The migrant worker would be required to return to his or her home country for a period of one year before they are allowed to return back to the United States.

Another important aspect of this bill is the creation of a merit based system for allocating green cards. This new system will focus on attracting the immigrants who will make the biggest contribution to our society. The system is designed to reward those who demonstrate a proficiency in English, have received higher forms of education and other training, and have employment opportunities in the United States . Not only will this practice strengthen the economy of the United States , but it will also end the practice of "chain migration," a practice that allows people to immigrate simply by virtue of being related to those who are already here legally.

Again, I thank you for contacting my office. Although the bill has suffered recent setbacks, I am pleased that leaders on both sides of the aisle are determined to produce a viable immigration bill. I believe we will return to this matter shortly and produce a comprehensive bill. I will keep in mind your input as we continue to debate immigration. If you have any additional questions on this or any other issue, please do not hesitate to contact my office or visit my website at www.specter.senate.gov.

Sincerely, Sen. Arlen Specter

[20070614-02](#) 14:49 SteveB "Bush's European Disaster" Trade

"Bush's European Disaster" by Sidney Blumenthal, Salon

June 14, 2007, (http://www.salon.com/2007/06/14/bush_foreign_policy_2/)

(The President's trip was a pageant of disdain, delusion and provocation masquerading as a respite from his troubles at home.)

I returned from Europe a week before President Bush departed for the G8 summit in Germany. In Rome and Paris I met with Cabinet ministers who uniformly said the chief issue in transatlantic relations is somehow making it through the last 18 months of the Bush administration without further major disaster. None of the nonpartisan think tanks in Washington can organize seminars on this overriding reality, but within the European councils of state the trepidation about the last days of Bush is the No. 1 issue in foreign affairs.

One of the ministers with whom I met, who had supported the invasion of Iraq and had been an admirer of outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair's, ruefully cited Blair's remark about Iraq at his joint press conference with Bush on May 17 at the White House: "This is a fight we cannot afford to lose." "Cannot? Cannot lose?" mocked the minister. "Should not have lost."

High officials of European governments describe U.S. influence as squandered and swiftly eroding (one minister went down a list of Bush administration officials, rating them according to their stupidity), the country's moral authority nil. Lethal power vacuums are emerging from Lebanon to Pakistan, and Europeans are incapable on their own of quelling the fires that burn far closer to them than to the United States through their growing Muslim populations and proximity to the Middle East. They have no illusions that they will be treated seriously as real allies or that there will be a sudden about-face by the Bush administration. Their faint hope — and it is only a hope — is that they have already seen the worst and that it is not yet to come. Even worse than Bush, from their perspective, would be another Republican president who continued Bush policies and also appointed neoconservatives. That would toll, if not the end of days, then the decline and fall of the Western alliance except in name only, and an even more rapid acceleration of chaos in the world order.

Bush's procession through Europe was a pageant of contempt, disdain, delusion, provocation and vanity masquerading as a welcome respite from his troubles at home. In Albania he landed at last in a place where he was hailed as a conquering hero. His demolition derby of U.S. influence was presented as a series of bold moves, but it confirmed the fears of the other world leaders at the G8 summit (and elsewhere) that the rest of Bush's presidency will be an erratic series of crashes. His performance ranged from King Nod, issuing proclamations oblivious to and even proud of their negative effect, to King Zog (the last king of Albania). No president has had a more disastrous European trip since President Reagan placed a wreath on the graves of SS soldiers in the Bitburg cemetery. Yet Reagan's mistake was unintentional and symbolic, a temporary and superficial setback, doing no real damage to U.S. foreign relations, while Bush's blunders not only reinforced counterproductive policies but also created a new one with Russia that has the potential of profoundly undermining U.S. national security interests for years to come.

Bush's foreign policy has descended into a fugue state. Dissociated and unaware, the president and his administration are still capable of expressing themselves as if it all makes complete sense, only contributing to their bewilderment. A fugue state should not be confused with cognitive dissonance, the tension produced when irreconcilable ideas are held at the same time and their incompatibility is overcome by denial. In a fugue state, a trauma creates a kind of amnesia in which the sufferer is incapable of connecting to his past. The impairment of judgment comes in great part from a denial of distress. Bush's fugue state involves the reiteration of a failed formula as though nothing has happened. So he proudly reasserts the essence of his Bush doctrine: Our acts are independent of other countries' interests. And he adds new corollaries: Other nations must forgive our unacknowledged mistakes even if we threaten their national security. To this, Bush overlays cognitive dissonance: Our policy is working; it just needs more time. Thus the incoherent becomes coherent.

Bush's amusing gaffes should not divert attention from the gravity of his underlying decline. Though his verbal hilariousness has been present since the beginning, his miscues, misstatements and mistakes now highlight a foreign policy in utter disarray. Upon meeting Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican last weekend, Bush presented him with a gift of a wooden cane carved with English words. When the pope asked the president what they were, Bush told His Holiness, "The Ten Commandments, sir." To *si?* With love?

In Rome, on June 9, a reporter asked Bush about setting a deadline for Kosovo independence. "What? Say that again?" "*Deadline for the Kosovo independence?*" "A decline?" "*Deadline, deadline.*" "Deadline. Beg your pardon. My English isn't very good." Bush then declared, "In terms of the deadline, there needs to be one. This needs to come — this needs to happen." The next day, asked when he would set a deadline, he replied, "I don't think I called for a deadline." Reminded of his previous statement, Bush said: "I did? What exactly did I say? I said, 'Deadline'? OK, yes, then I meant what I said."

Before offering that tongue twister, Bush quite deliberately upset German Chancellor Angela Merkel's proposal for climate change at the G8. She put before the summit a program for carbon limits and an emissions trading system supported by,

among others, Tony Blair, as his final gesture to burnish his reputation before he leaves office on June 27. Bush countered with a proposal for voluntary limits that would have to be approved by China, India and other major industrial countries that would not agree. In short, Bush's program was no program at all, except as a gambit to push aside Merkel's. With that, Bush demolished the possibility of any positive plan emerging from the summit. He also deprived Blair of a last achievement. Were it not for his relationship with Bush and support for his Iraq policy, Blair would not be leaving Downing Street. He has sacrificed his career to Bush's fiasco. His advice on the reconstruction of Iraq ignored, his advocacy grew more passionate. From whom much has been asked, nothing has been given.

While Bush was undermining traditional allies, Russian President Vladimir Putin was making child's play of him. Bush's proposal to put tracking stations for a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic gave Putin his opening. In response, he offered a radar site in Azerbaijan to be jointly operated by the United States and Russia. Bush had deployed the wrong tactic on behalf of the wrong strategy. Bush's missile shield has not been proved to work, has cost hundreds of billions of dollars, and has an uncertain purpose. Is the plan meant to reassure eastern European nations of the former Warsaw Pact, Donald Rumsfeld's "new Europe," against Russia, or is it a short-term ploy to rally support in the one region in the world that still likes Bush because of deep residual pro-Americanism? If Bush intended to persuade Putin to temper his authoritarianism, he only succeeded in antagonizing the Russian leader. As Bush's "freedom" agenda has collapsed, he has reverted to a Plan B for a new ersatz Cold War. His ham-handed move allowed the adroit Putin to change the subject and corner him. Meanwhile, the engagement of Russia in areas of mutual interest — containing Iran — languishes.

In Iraq, Bush's policy is now to arm all sides in the sectarian civil war between Shiites and Sunnis. He claims to be devoted to nation building, which he previously dismissed, while he presides over a mass exodus of 2 million Iraqis, upholds law and order while holding tens of thousands of prisoners without due process, and conducts a "surge" of troops to secure the capital city of Baghdad whose main effect has been to facilitate its ethnic cleansing. The Iraqi government, for its part, has not met any of the benchmarks in reforming its laws demanded by the United States as the sine qua non of continuing support.

And where in the world is Condoleezza Rice? While Bush was in Europe, the secretary of state was at home. Instead of attending the summit, she delivered a speech at the Economic Club of New York, announcing that the new doctrine of the administration henceforth should be called "American realism." Until that moment, we were supposed to refer to it as "transformational diplomacy." Rice, the former realist turned neoconservative fellow traveler, seemed to have come full circle. But what was it exactly that she was doing with her rhetorical adjustment? Rice's frenetic but feckless diplomacy in the Middle East has been fruitless. She is unwilling or unable to break beyond the bounds that Bush establishes, forbidding relations with Syria, for example, and thus guaranteeing her failure.

As she shuttles endlessly and meaninglessly, neoconservatives within the White House undermine her foredoomed initiatives. Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security advisor for policy, in briefing a meeting of Jewish Republicans, said that Rice's "talks are sometimes not more than 'process for the sake of process,'" the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported on May 14. According to *Haaretz*, "Those attending the meeting of Jewish Republicans understood Abrams' comments as an assurance that the peace initiative promoted by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice doesn't have the full backing of President George W. Bush." As she engages in an academic exercise to rebrand empty rhetoric with new empty rhetoric, the neocons continue to create a parallel foreign policy.

Rice contradicts herself but forgets that she has. Bush continues to prattle about "freedom" but cannot remember his benchmarks. Only Dick Cheney remains consistent. The new mission statement is the old mission statement. The new scenarios are the old delusions. Time marches on.

(Sidney Blumenthal, a former assistant and senior advisor to President Clinton, writes a column for Salon and the *Guardian* of London. His new book is titled *How Bush Rules: Chronicles of a Radical Regime*. He is a senior fellow at the New York University Center on Law and Security.)

20070614-03	15:16	SteveB	"What Is the Meaning of Life?" Philosophy, Spirituality
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"What Is the Meaning of Life?" by Laura Miller, Salon

June 14, 2007, (<http://www.salon.com/2007/06/14/eagleton/>)

(Terry Eagleton, the man who introduced millions to literary theory, tells us why George Bush is the ultimate postmodernist, how torture is wrong, and what "meaning" really means.)

The British academic Terry Eagleton has the unusual — possibly unique — distinction of having written a bestselling book about late-20th-century literary theory. The book, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, is reputed to have sold 1 million copies, chiefly on the strength of Eagleton's extraordinarily lucid prose. He may well be the only writer capable of making some of that stuff comprehensible to the intelligent lay reader, and so the news that he has tackled a bigger problem — the meaning of life — in a book of a mere 185 pages shouldn't raise any eyebrows. If anyone can pull it off, it's probably Eagleton.

The Meaning of Life is more a long essay than a full-length book, and its publishers probably hope it'll hit the same sweet spot as Harry G. Frankfurt's surprise success, *On Bullsh*t*, another slim volume of intellectual nonfiction. That's unlikely; *The Meaning of Life* intends to challenge its readers — not, like the Frankfurt, to provide them with the opportunity to sneer at other people (because who reads *On Bullsh*t* thinking it's about them?). Eagleton, unsurprisingly, has written an elegant, literate, cogent consideration of a maddeningly slippery topic, one whose conclusions run contrary to conventional wisdom, especially in this country. To be sure, *The Meaning of Life* is also occasionally waspish, condescending and even a little unfair, though always enjoyably so. It's saucy too; it takes cheek to suggest that George W. Bush is the ultimate postmodernist.

Two primary tributaries feed into the body of Eagleton's thought: Marxism and the tradition of Catholic intellectualism in which he was educated as a boy. Although no longer a member of the church, Eagleton retains much respect for religious ideals, a respect that lies behind his recent, scalding review of Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion* in the London Review of Books. These two influences might seem incompatible today, but in the 1970s, when Eagleton was coming up as a working-class boy turned Oxbridge scholar, liberation theology and other exhilarating currents of social change combining faith with socialism were in the air. However much his work may have changed on the surface since then, Eagleton's underlying values remain much the same.

In essence, *The Meaning of Life* is a brief against postmodernism, a movement Eagleton calls "superficially radical" but "secretly in cahoots with a Western ideology for which what matters is the meanings we stamp on the world and others for our own ends." Them's fightin' words in an academic climate where accusing someone of wanting to oppress anyone (let alone the whole world) is the ultimate insult. But before Eagleton delivers this coup de grâce, he takes his readers on a short, illuminating journey through the knottier aspects of the question "What is the meaning of life?"

Being a literary critic, Eagleton must interrogate nearly every word in that question — beginning with "is," in a manner vaguely reminiscent of Bill Clinton's famous testimony before Ken Starr. A presiding spirit here is Ludwig Wittgenstein, who, as Eagleton explains, was highly suspicious of such questions and many other philosophical preoccupations he dismissed as mere "language games." "I am not myself a philosopher," Eagleton remarks on the first page of *The Meaning of Life*, "a fact of which I am sure some of my reviewers will point out in any case." Not being a philosopher myself, I won't attempt to evaluate his interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas — some of the most difficult and gnomic in an inherently hard-to-crack field. It may not matter much; Wittgenstein mostly just pops in now and then, like the ghosts in "Topper," to offer a few words of advice that might actually be jokes, and vice versa.

The answer to the question "What is the meaning of life?" used to be fairly clear to most Western thinkers: The meaning of life was God, and his will, and his plan for the human beings who lived the lives he gave to them. Only when the bedrock faith in that particular answer began to erode did the question become a source of anxiety and even torment. The movement called modernism followed from, as Eagleton puts it, "the belief that human existence is contingent — that it has no ground, goal, direction or necessity, and that our species might quite easily never have emerged on the planet. This possibility then hollows out our actual presence, casting across it the perpetual shadow of loss and death. ... There is no unimpeachable foundation to what we are and what we do."

For those who don't believe in God, or at least in a God with a plan for the human race, the question "What is the meaning of life?" seethes with puzzles. Can existence mean anything at all without someone (i.e., God) to mean it? Those famous 100 monkeys, pounding away on 100 typewriters for eternity, might eventually produce the exact text of *Hamlet*, but they won't mean *Hamlet* the way that the man who intentionally wrote it did.

Eagleton brings contemporary linguistics-based theory to bear on the idea of "meaning," pointing out that it takes several forms. I might mean (that is, intend) to say the word "poisson" ("fish") to a French waiter, but I might actually say "poison," which in turn means (that is, signifies) something else entirely. ("Poison" has the same meaning in French, actually, as it has in English.) There's what I intend to signify or communicate when I speak, and then there's what my words mean in a larger system, such as a language. For linguists, the first kind of meaning is an "act" and the second is a "structure."

If this distinction is making your eyes cross or is conjuring up ancient, bleary memories of trying to fathom Ferdinand de Saussure at a 3:30 p.m. study section, take heart. Eagleton has more in mind than just a technical discussion of the workings of language. But language is central to any discussion of the meaning of life, because language is what meaning is made of. Meaning is a human artifact, Eagleton points out; material objects — a tomato, a hammer, ink on a page in the shape of the letter "I" — have no meaning in and of themselves, only the meanings we human beings assign to them, and the main tool we use to make those meanings is language.

Here is where the postmodernists come into it, specifically those thinkers (Eagleton doesn't name them) who argue that nothing has a fixed or deep meaning. Meanings, they insist, are the creations of human culture, not properties of reality itself, so things, experiences and people can mean whatever we damned well please. This philosophy is intended to be liberatory; theorists who claim that certain identities — "male," "female," "homosexual," "black," and so on — are culturally "constructed" believe themselves to be freeing people from the straitjacket of social roles that have been falsely presented as bedrock facts of nature.

This "constructivism" is a form of the "relativism" that cultural conservatives in this county love to denounce, so some might be surprised to see the left-wing Eagleton condemning it, too. (In fact, Eagleton has been criticizing deconstructionism and its spinoffs for decades.) Eagleton strenuously objects to the constructivist rejection of absolute or inherent meanings. "Nobody actually believes this," he remarks of constructivism, and he's right about that in more ways than he realizes. Outside of academia, hardly anyone even pretends to believe in this stuff, so seeing it eviscerated isn't as important to the civilian reader as Eagleton seems to think. Of course we all realize that, to use Eagleton's example, "it just would not work for us to 'construct' tigers as coy and cuddly"; that's idiotic. Complicated identities like gender roles are another matter; we know they're at least partly configurable because they've changed in the course of history.

Eagleton goes on to cite the scholar Frank Farrell, who has linked the postmodern insistence on an infinitely malleable reality to roots in early Protestantism. The old Catholic idea that things have "essences" or "determinate natures" could not be reconciled philosophically with the doctrine of an all-powerful God; any given thing's inherent nature would limit what God could do with it. "God's arbitrary will," as Eagleton puts it, cannot be constrained, so things can only be what they are "because of his say-so, not because of themselves." In this belief Eagleton sees the seeds of the 20th century's "cult of the will."

Eagleton never details how the Catholic conception of an all-powerful God handles this dilemma, an omission that makes this particular bit of the book sound suspiciously like special pleading. Nevertheless, he draws a provocative comparison between the anti-essentialist "cult of the will" and some modern political figures. Still not naming names, he writes:

Torture is morally wrong because God's will has determined it to be so, not because it is wrong in itself. In fact, nothing is right or wrong in itself. God could easily have decided to make failing to torture each other a punishable offence. There can be no reason for his decisions, since reasons would hamper his absolute freedom of action. ... He is the source of his own law and reason, which are there to serve his power. Torture could well be permissible if it suited his purposes. It is not difficult to identify the inheritors of these doctrines in our own political world.

To Eagleton, postmodernism, with its repudiation of inherent or "deep" meanings, is, for all its revolutionary rhetoric, a variation on the same theme. To get back to the question driving his book, the motto "Life is what you make it" may sound banal, but it reeks of a similar hubris. It "reflects an individualist bias common to the modern age" by insisting that we all find our own meaning of life in a personal, private realm. But if meaning has its own roots in language, then claiming this, Eagleton argues, is like claiming that everyone gets to make up their own personal meanings for words.

While the words I've used to write this piece reflect a meaning of my own individual making, they'd be nonsense if I decided to make up all their meanings from scratch. I could, like Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass*, insist that "glory" really means "there's a nice knockdown argument for you," but then my words would become useless as a form of communication — in other words, they'd be meaningless. To judge by the way language works, says Eagleton, meaning is always at least partly shared and collaborative. "We are woven through and through with the meanings of others — meanings which we never got to choose, yet which provide the matrix with which we come to make sense of ourselves and the world." While Humpty Dumpty's absurd unilateralism maintains that when it comes to handling words, "the question is, which is to be master, that's all," Eagleton insists that "meaning is in fact the product of a transaction between us and reality."

According to Eagleton, people who cherish the notion of a purely private, interior and individually constructed meaning of life are indulging in a delusion fostered by late capitalism. As long as citizens believe meaning can best be found in, say, studying the kabala or concentrating on nuclear-family relations, they won't demand more from public life than the empty utilitarianism of the free market. Eagleton prefers Aristotle's practical version of the good — that is, the fulfilled — life (even as he registers some caveats about the inequities of ancient Greek society). "The meaning of life is not a solution to a problem," he writes, "but a matter of living in a certain way." It is not an idea but a behavior, "not metaphysical, but ethical." And the ethics involved are not a lot of mystical mumbo jumbo but "an embarrassingly prosaic affair — a matter of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger and visiting the imprisoned." He might add, working to change the social order so that more people have the ability to live according to this ethos.

These are, of course, the classic directives of Christian charity, but Eagleton isn't making a religious argument on their behalf. The need to do these things, to live this life, he says, arises not from God but from the nature of human beings themselves. We can't get away from it; it's our essence. We are social animals who thrive on love; not just love for our kith and kin, but the kind of love, called "agape" — caring for our fellow man — that is "a practice or a way of life, not a state of mind." The more this type of love circulates in our community, the more meaning we find in life itself and the happier we become.

Outside of the academy, essentialism— usually in the form of evolutionary psychology — is almost always used to justify a conservative or libertarian, dog-eat-dog view of human nature, so it's a treat to see it recruited here for the leftist cause. Perhaps, irony of ironies, Eagleton has demonstrated that essentialism is what you make of it? Maybe so, but having seen him make mincemeat out of his ideological opponents in *The Meaning of Life*, I wouldn't want to be the one to tell him that. I'd sooner try to scratch a tiger under the chin.

20070614-04	20:50	Dick	Fw: Shocking Senatorial Votes
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[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says the claims are "mostly false"
(<http://www.snopes.com/politics/immigration/socialsecurity.asp>) —SteveB]

"Never argue with an idiot; they'll drag you down to their level and beat you with experience."—anonymous

The following senators voted against making English the official language of America:

Akaka (D-HI), Bayh (D-IN), Biden (D-DE), Bingaman (D-NM), Boxer (D-CA), Cantwell (D-WA), Clinton (D-NY), Dayton (D-MN), Dodd (D-CT), Domenici (R-NM), Durbin (D-IL), Feingold (D-WI), Feinstein (D-CA), Harkin (D-IA), Inouye (D-HI), Jeffords (I-VT), Kennedy (D-MA), Kerry (D-MA), Kohl (D-WI), Lautenberg (D-NJ), Leahy (D-VT), Levin (D-MI), Lieberman (D-CT), Menendez (D-NJ), Mikulski (D-MD), Murray (D-WA), Obama (D-IL), Reed (D-RI), Reid (D-NV), Salazar (D-CO), Sarbanes (D-MD), Schumer (D-NY), Stabenow (D-MI), Wyden (D-OR).

Now, the following are the senators who voted to give illegal aliens Social Security benefits. They are grouped by home state. If a state is not listed, there was no voting representative.

Alaska: Stevens (R), Arizona: McCain (R), Arkansas: Lincoln (D) Pryor (D), California: Boxer (D) Feinstein (D), Colorado: Salazar (D), Connecticut: Dodd (D) Lieberman, (D), Delaware: Biden (D) Carper (D), Florida: Martinez (R), Hawaii: Akaka (D) Inouye (D), Illinois: Durbin (D) Obama (D), Indiana: Bayh (D) Lugar (R), Iowa: Harkin (D), Kansas: Brownback (R), Louisiana: Landrieu (D), Maryland: Mikulski (D) Sarbanes (D), Massachusetts: Kennedy (D) Kerry (D), Montana: Baucus (D), Nebraska: Hagel (R), Nevada: Reid (D), New Jersey: Lautenberg (D) Menendez (D), New Mexico: Bingaman (D), New York: Clinton (D) Schumer (D), North Dakota: Dorgan (D), Ohio: DeWine (R) Voinovich(R), Oregon: Wyden (D), Pennsylvania: Specter (R), Rhode Island: Chafee (R) Reed (D), South Carolina: Graham (R), South Dakota: Johnson (D), Vermont: Jeffords (I) Leahy (D), Washington: Cantwell (D) Murray (D), West Virginia: Rockefeller (D). By not Voting: Wisconsin: Feingold (D) Kohl (D).

SEND THIS TO ALL YOU KNOW. THE ENTIRE POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES NEEDS TO KNOW THIS INFORMATION, UNLESS THEY DON'T MIND SHARING THEIR SOCIAL SECURITY WITH FOREIGN WORKERS who didn't pay in a dime.

What is this COUNTRY Coming to?????????????????

When senators stand up to defend important programs, they deserve our thanks.

20070614-05 21:00 E. Kennedy Re: Immigration Reform Bill

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me about immigration reform. This is a complex issue, with many important aspects, and it requires a comprehensive solution. 12 million undocumented workers are currently living in the United States. They're working, paying taxes, and raising children who are U.S. citizens. They contribute to our economy, and it is time to bring them out of the shadows and end their unfair exploitation by unscrupulous employers in communities across the country. Funds for border enforcement have increased dramatically over the years. The budget for the Border Patrol has increased from \$263 million in 1990 to \$1.6 billion today—a six-fold increase. Yet during this period, hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants have entered the U.S. each year. Our immigration system is broken, and it is clear that border enforcement alone will not fix it.

After long and thorough negotiations with the White House and fellow Senators, Republican and Democrat, we have developed a comprehensive immigration reform bill. The bill strengthens border security by increasing the number of border agents, building a border fence, using new technologies to monitor and enforce the border, and imposing higher penalties for workplaces that employ undocumented immigrants. The bill also contains a temporary worker program to help American businesses meet their employment. It addresses the millions of undocumented immigrants living in the United States by providing a means to obtain legal status after undergoing background checks, paying a fine, and going to the back of the line for green cards.

The bill is a realistic and comprehensive solution that will not only protect our borders, but also enable needed temporary workers to enter the country legally, and allow workers already here to earn legal status. It has already been discussed in the Senate once, and despite some setbacks, I hope we will be able to bring it back before the Senate for further debate and passage.

By heritage and history, America is a nation of immigrants, and we must preserve this tradition. Making necessary changes in our immigration laws will ensure that immigrant families today, as in the past, can continue to live the American dream and contribute to our prosperity, our security, and our values.

Again, thank you for writing to me about this important issue.

Sincerely, Edward M. Kennedy

20070618-01 11:59 M. Baucus Re: Immigration Reform Bill

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for getting in touch regarding our nation's immigration policies. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue.

Immigration is a complex issue that involves both our national and economic security. Many illegal immigrants come to America to work for businesses that cannot find U.S. workers in sectors of the U.S. economy like agriculture, tourism and landscaping. It is vitally important that we tackle the problem of illegal immigration. At the same time, we must beef up enforcement efforts on the border.

As you may know, on May 26, 2006, the Senate passed S. 2611, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006. I voted for this bill because it strengthens our borders by adding border patrol agents, and also requires immigrants to pay taxes and learn English. S. 2611 isn't perfect, and a lot of compromises were made. However, I support legislation that provides border security, while not giving amnesty to illegal immigrants.

Meanwhile, Montana's vast border with Canada presents a unique challenge for border security. The threat from potential terrorists and drug runners is even more of a concern along Montana's high line precisely because all eyes are on the southern border.

During the 2006 immigration debate, I expressed concern that the Nation's northern border (of which Montana and Canada share 500 miles) was being neglected, since most of the debate was focused on the southern border. I was pleased to see that the Senate included my measure to test unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act. This measure requires the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a one year pilot program for using UAV's to patrol the northern border.

In short, finding a way to help direct a manageable flow of legal migrant workers to the sectors of our economy that can't find willing American workers will benefit our small businesses in Montana and elsewhere. Bringing these migrants into a legal, enforceable system will allow border and law enforcement personnel to turn their attention to stopping individuals who wish to do us harm from crossing our borders.

As you may know, Congress is currently considering legislation which may make major changes to our nation's immigration policies. Please rest assured that I take this immigration debate very seriously. Nothing is more important than our nation's security. I will keep your thoughts in mind should this issue come before me in the United States Senate.

Thanks again for getting in touch, and please don't hesitate to contact me in the future with additional questions or concerns.

With best personal regards, I am,
Senator Max Baucus, <http://baucus.senate.gov>

20070618-02	15:47	J. Tester	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about our nation's immigration policy and the Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation before the Senate in May and June (S. 1348). Your suggestions and opinions are important as we address the complex issues of immigration policy.

Many people come to the United States today with the same dream that our ancestors had—to build a better future for their families. While many wait in line and follow the rules to become legal citizens of the United States, others seeking to immigrate to our country choose to sidestep the processes in place and have entered our country illegally. I'm opposed to amnesty for these people.

From a policy standpoint, securing our ports and borders must be our top priority.

Tougher border and port security will help cut down on the incoming flow of illegal immigrants. We must get serious about enforcing laws on the employers who hire illegal immigrants. We also need to put a stop to unfair trade agreements that reward other countries for treating their workers poorly. These trade agreements create the incentive for people to cross the border, and therefore must be addressed as a part of any comprehensive solution to this issue.

In early June, I voted against proceeding with S. 1348 because it was flawed on a number of levels. I, along with many Montanans, didn't agree with the path to legalization that was a fundamental part of the bill. Additionally, the bill did not focus enough on beefing up border protection or employer-based enforcement. I voted to require that employers certify that they tried to hire Americans first before offering the jobs to any foreign workers and to cap the number of guest worker visas at 200,000 per year instead of the 400,000 cap proposed by the bill.

The bill also included references to REAL ID. As you know, the Montana Legislature overwhelmingly voted against implementation of the REAL ID Act. The REAL ID Act would put a financial burden on the State without offering any real security gains and it would threaten our individual privacy rights. I am proud, along with Senator Baucus, to have introduced an amendment to strike all the REAL ID requirements put forth in S. 1348.

Your input is a critical part of making sure the laws we pass in the Senate reflect Montana priorities. Please don't hesitate to contact me again in the future if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely, Jon Tester, United States Senator, Montana, <http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me to express your views about Senate legislation to reform our immigration system. I appreciate hearing from you, and understand your concerns about this complicated issue.

Our current immigration system is broken and in need of repair. Nearly everyone agrees that immigration is one of the most pressing issues facing our nation, but we are often divided on the most appropriate way to address this problem. In forming my opinions on this issue, I have traveled to the border and had extensive conversations with many of the leading experts in the field. I have also met with state and local officials in Nevada to hear their ideas on the best way to reform our immigration system.

Based upon this work, I believe reform must be comprehensive. It should not only strengthen our borders, but should also make our laws more realistic so that they can be more effectively enforced. Immigration reform must be tough, fair to taxpayers, and practical to implement. Most experts agree that it would be impractical and prohibitively expensive to deport the millions of illegal immigrants who are already in our country. Many immigrants who have come to our country legally have expressed concern that the current bureaucracy, which can lead to delays and backlogs of up to 20 years, presents a serious disincentive to follow legal channels for immigration.

Recently, a group of Senators crafted a bipartisan immigration reform compromise (S. 1348). Their legislation would enhance border security by adding 20,000 new Border Patrol agents, 370 miles of fence and 200 miles of vehicle barriers. It would provide for a reliable and efficient employment verification system, along with tougher penalties for employers who hire illegal workers; a temporary worker program to shift the illegal flow over the border into legal channels; and a path to legalization for those who pay steep fines and penalties, learn English, pay back taxes, work for several years, and pass background checks. I am committed to moving this bill forward, even though I do not support every aspect of this proposal.

After consideration of more than 40 amendments, opponents of the measure blocked the bill from coming up for a vote. Despite this setback, I remain committed to working in a bipartisan fashion to fix our country's broken immigration system. This bill may return to the Senate floor for further consideration soon. If it does, I plan to add \$ 4.4 billion in guaranteed funding for border security, to be funded through the fees and penalties established by the new programs in this bill. I am committed to regaining control of our broken borders and restoring the rule of law.

As I continue my work on this issue, I hope you will continue to share your thoughts with me on how best to address this problem.

Again, thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with me. For more information about my work for Nevada, my role in the United States Senate Leadership, or to subscribe to regular e-mail updates on the issues that interest you, please visit my Web site at:

<http://reid.senate.gov>

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.
Sincerely, Harry Reid

Dear SteveB:

Monday, Senator Martinez addressed the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council in Jacksonville, FL. Topics discussed included Social Security, health care, veterans services, tax policy, as well as the current war in Iraq.

On the Fourth of July, Senator Martinez delivered the keynote address during a naturalization ceremony at Walt Disney World Resort's Magic Kingdom. Senator Martinez spoke to more than 1,000 people before they took their oaths to become naturalized citizens.

Senator Martinez commented on the staff changes at NOAA's National Hurricane Center. "At the end of the day, the Center's mission is about saving lives. I believe we have a very dedicated team of highly qualified forecasters and I remain confident in their abilities," said Martinez.

Senator Martinez announced more than \$600,000 in grants will be distributed to the city of Jacksonville and to two Volunteers of America of Florida groups. The grants will support and enhance job training programs for veterans.

Senator Martinez talked with reporters at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex about his visit to NASA. Senator Martinez met with agency officials regarding the future of NASA's Space Shuttle Program, the transition to the Orion and Ares programs, and ways to prevent potentially severe funding shortages.

July 17th & 18th, caseworkers from the Office of Senator Martinez will visit Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton counties. Caseworkers will be available to assist constituents with concerns and issues ranging from Veterans issues to Healthcare, Social Security, Medicare, and other services provided by the federal government.

Casework Corner*

Mr. Anderson owns a storage company near an Air Force Base, where a majority of his business is with service members stationed at the base. Unfortunately, the Air Force had failed to pay him for multiple invoices, some dating back to 2004. Mr. Anderson contacted the Office of Senator Martinez for assistance.

A caseworker contacted the Air Force and inquired about the status of payment for Mr. Anderson's storage invoices. The Air Force investigated and found the total amount that Mr. Anderson was owed and promptly began payment. They apologized for the inconvenience.

*Casework Corner is a real account of assistance provided to constituents. The names of those involved are changed to protect the privacy of the constituent.

If you have questions about a federal agency, please contact the Orlando Regional Office by calling (407) 254-2573 to speak with a member of the Casework Department. The toll-free number for Florida residents is (866) 630-7106. To find out more about how my Office can help you, go to <http://martinez.senate.gov> or stop by one of our scheduled Community Office Hours in your area.

This Newsletter Page is maintained by the Office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

20070711-02 14:22 J. Lieberman Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the comprehensive immigration reform legislation recently considered in the Senate. I am pleased to hear from you on this issue.

As you may know, I have always supported bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform legislation. This year the Senate considered bipartisan legislation, (S. 1639). The legislation was introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) and was supported by the Administration and many Senators from both parties.

Nevertheless, after weeks of debate, on June 28 an attempt to move to a vote on final passage was defeated 46-53. I voted in favor of moving to a vote on final passage, and I was disappointed that the Senate was blocked from a vote on the merits of the legislation. This year's legislation had some significant differences from the version that passed the Senate last year. For example it moved our current system basing immigration on family ties or employment-sponsored visas in the direction of a merit-based point system that takes into account a variety of factors including employability and education levels. It provided for a temporary worker program, as did last year's bill, but without offering a path to legal permanent residency. And it delayed implementation of the reform provisions until we have achieved border security and immigration enforcement benchmarks.

It is long past time that we reform our immigration system in order to secure our borders, enforce our immigration laws, and provide a path to earned legalization for the millions of immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for years, held jobs,

paid taxes, and contributed to our communities. The bill also promoted economic opportunity, and Connecticut and the nation would have benefited in particular from legislative provisions which would have provided more access for employers to workers who are needed to fuel economic growth.

I hope that the Senate will have the opportunity to again take up and consider comprehensive immigration reform legislation. You may be assured that I will keep your views in mind if any such legislation is considered on the Senate floor. To keep track of future actions on this legislation, you can go to the "Bill Tracking" service at:

<http://lieberman.senate.gov/issues/resources>.

My official Senate web site is designed to be an on-line office that provides access to constituent services, Connecticut-specific information, and an abundance of information about what I am working on in the Senate on behalf of Connecticut and the nation. I am also pleased to let you know that I have launched an email news update service through my web site. You can sign up for that service by visiting <http://lieberman.senate.gov> and clicking on the "Subscribe Email News Updates" button at the bottom of the home page. I hope these are informative and useful. Thank you again for letting me know your views and concerns. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or comments about our work in Congress.

Sincerely, Joseph I. Lieberman

20070717-01 09:01 M. Martinez Sen. Martinez Newsletter
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Dear SteveB:

Senator Martinez is a co-sponsor of the Improved Hurricane Tracking and Forecasting Act of 2007. The legislation would fund a replacement of the QuikSCAT, a satellite used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to better predict and track hurricanes.

Senator Martinez commended the reduction of the federal deficit. "The deficit is going down because of our economy's strength. Our economy is so strong is because we have tax cuts that have provided the nourishment it needs; Americans are keeping more of their money rather than having government take more taxes. That spurs economic growth," said Martinez.

Friday, Senator Martinez announced that more than \$8.35 million has been awarded to the Florida Department of Transportation to fund the engineering development of the Central Florida Commuter Rail Transit. "This funding brings us one step closer to providing better transportation options for the people of Central Florida," Martinez said.

Senator Martinez announced a \$1,030,038 grant for the Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach. The funding will assist with the second phase of the Palm Beach International Airport expansion project.

Senator Martinez announced a \$284,637 grant for the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute in St. Petersburg. "This money will help the Fish & Wildlife Research Institute monitor Florida's waters, collecting the data necessary to maintain the health and supply of our commercial and recreational fisheries," said Martinez.

Reminder: Community Office Hours for North Florida July 17th & 18th, caseworkers from the Office of Senator Martinez will visit Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton counties. Caseworkers will be available to assist constituents with concerns and issues ranging from Veterans issues to Healthcare, Social Security, Medicare, and other services provided by the federal government.

If you have questions about a federal agency, please contact the Orlando Regional Office by calling (407) 254-2573 to speak with a member of the Casework Department. The toll-free number for Florida residents is (866) 630-7106. To find out more about how my Office can help you, go to <http://martinez.senate.gov> or stop by one of our scheduled Community Office Hours in your area.

This Newsletter Page is maintained by the Office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

20070725-01 08:13 M. Martinez Sen. Martinez Newsletter
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Dear SteveB:

This week, Senator Martinez marked the 20th anniversary of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program by calling for expanded emphasis on eradicating homelessness. Originally signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, this program began by providing the homeless with emergency relief provisions for shelter, food, mobile health care, and transitional housing.

Tuesday, Senator Martinez commended Ambassador Jim Nicholson for his service as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Nicholson announced he will step down from his post by October. "I thank Secretary Nicholson for the great service he has provided the Veterans of our nation," said Martinez.

Senator Martinez met with Florida members of the group, "Vets for Freedom" who encouraged the senator to continue supporting efforts in Iraq, and to wait for General David Petraeus' September report to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the new surge strategy.

This week, Senator Martinez made several grant announcements for Florida including:

- Nearly \$85 million as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), a program dedicated to strengthening the security of cities nationally.
- \$7.8 million for Miami-Dade's runway construction and relocation project at Miami International Airport.
- \$2,340,445 for Florida A&M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee to provide financial assistance for research and training in environmental sciences.
- \$814,174 to Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota for research. This funding will be used to research the biology of sharks, skates, and rays that live in the Gulf of Mexico.

Casework Corner*

Last month Mrs. Smith visited her doctor for a routine procedure.

When she went to pay her bill, she was surprised to discover that she was no longer enrolled in traditional Medicare. After some investigation she discovered that she had been switched to a Medicare Advantage Plan with a private insurance company. Without her knowledge, she was fraudulently switched to the other plan by an insurance agent.

A caseworker from Senator Martinez's office contacted the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and they researched the matter. She has now been un-enrolled from the Advantage Plan and has been re-enrolled in traditional Medicare.

*Casework Corner is a real account of assistance provided to constituents. The names of those involved are changed to protect the privacy of the constituent.

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This Newsletter Page is maintained by the Office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

20070725-02	10:18	S. Smith Jr.	Indiana Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA)
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["Help Is Here Express" Bus Tour Coming to East Chicago To Help Patients in Need Access Prescription Medicines](#)

East Chicago, Ind. (July 23, 2007)—The "Help is Here Express" bus tour will be in East Chicago on Monday, July 30, stopping at St. Catherine Hospital to help uninsured Americans find programs that provide prescription medicines for free

or nearly free. The bus tour is part of the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA), a national effort sponsored by America's pharmaceutical research companies.

Lake County residents, and those from surrounding communities, are encouraged to attend the July 30 event scheduled for 9-11 a.m. at St. Catherine Hospital, 4321 Fir Street, East Chicago. The event is free to the community and a Spanish-language translator will be on-site.

Nationally, the PPA has helped nearly 4 million patients, including nearly 200,000 Hoosiers through its Indiana chapter—Rx for Indiana. Since its launch in 2005, the PPA bus tour has visited all 50 states and more than 1,200 cities to raise awareness about patient assistance programs.

The "Help is Here Express" is staffed by trained specialists able to quickly help low-income, uninsured or underinsured patients access more than 475 patient assistance programs, including over 180 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies. When the "Help is Here Express" moves on, patients in need can visit PPA's easy-to-use Web site.

Through the PPA, parents, guardians, healthcare providers and others can learn about public and private patient assistance programs—including the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)—that are available to help children in need. America's pharmaceutical research companies support the reauthorization of SCHIP, and more than 40 of the assistance programs through the PPA focus on the medication and healthcare needs of children. Through SCHIP, more than six million uninsured, low-income children today receive a wide range of health services, including regular checkups, immunizations, prescription drugs, laboratory tests, x-rays, hospital visits and more. To help make it easier for parents to learn about these efforts, including SCHIP, the PPA has dedicated a new Web site:

<http://kids.pparx.org>.

"The Partnership for Prescription Assistance is changing thousands of lives every day," said Ken Johnson, Senior Vice President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). "No one's helped by a medicine that sits on the shelf and is out of reach financially. We will keep coming back to Indiana as long as there are people who need our help."

On a national level, the Partnership for Prescription Assistance is represented by Emmy-winning syndicated talk show host Montel Williams, named PPA's national spokesman in Jan. 2006. In addition, nationally recognized Telemundo talk show host and author Mayte Prida leads the PPA's Hispanic outreach effort. More than 1,300 national, state and local partners, including the Indiana Hospital & Health Association and the Indiana State Medical Association, are working with America's pharmaceutical companies to spread the word about the program. Trained specialists work with doctors, pharmacists, healthcare providers and community groups, educating them on the process and use of the PPA's easy-access Web site and toll-free number.

Over 2,500 different brand-name and generic prescription medicines are available through participating patient assistance programs. In addition, the PPA provides information on nearly 10,000 free healthcare clinics and has connected more than 135,000 patients with clinics and health care providers in their communities. "We're excited that the 'Help is Here Express' is coming to East Chicago," said Kelly Kernagis, manager of marketing and communications at St. Catherine Hospital. "Now even more people will see how easy it is to get help by calling PPA's toll-free number, using the Web site, or by visiting the bus. And that translates to more people getting the help they need."

—Jenny Henderson for Indiana State Senator Samuel Smith, Jr.

20070801-01	12:50	M. Martinez	Sen. Martinez Newsletter
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Dear SteveB:

Thursday, Senator Martinez praised the passage of the "Border Security First Act of 2007" as an amendment to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill. The legislation, which Martinez helped to negotiate, provides \$3 billion in emergency funding in the continued efforts to secure our nation's borders.

Friday, Senator Martinez announced the U.S. Senate approved the creation of an International Registered Traveler program. The program would help the Department of Homeland Security verify the risk level of frequent travelers to the United States.

Senator Martinez joined senators Burr, Coburn, Corker, and Dole in introducing the "Every American Insured Health Act," a bill to provide all Americans access to affordable, high-quality health insurance through the free market. "It's time for a major debate on health care insurance. Not enough people have access to affordable healthcare, and the Congress has not done enough about this crisis," Martinez said.

This week, Senator Martinez announced the Senate's passage of the "Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act." The bill requires the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to better coordinate the care, management, and transition of severely wounded military personnel to the Department of Veterans Affairs or civilian life.

Senator Martinez met with students interning in Florida Congressional offices during the Florida House Summer Intern Series Seminar on Capitol Hill.

Senators Mel Martinez and Bill Nelson called for immediate action by the federal government to find and remove any remaining explosive devices or harmful chemicals from an area surrounding an Orlando middle school. The two senators are working with the Army Corps of Engineers to expedite site cleanup efforts.

Senator Martinez announced that NASA has selected Ivey's Construction Inc. of Merritt Island, Fla., to build a new lightning protection system for Launch Pad 39B at the Kennedy Space Center. The system will support launches of the Constellation Program's Ares I rockets.

Casework Corner*

Ms. King was diagnosed with a unique form of cancer that required specialized care. Her Tricare insurance provider referred her to a doctor with no experience in the field. This doctor referred her to an out-of-state hospital in the Northeast that could treat her form of cancer. After her arrival at the hospital, she was told that her insurance would not cover the chemotherapy treatment.

A caseworker from Senator Martinez's office contacted several Tricare representatives and was assured that Ms. King would receive the care required, but because Ms. King was from a different part of the U.S., her treatment would be delayed until appropriate paperwork could be filed. After a conference call with additional Tricare representatives, they stated Ms. King would receive her chemotherapy and would be able to receive it in the Southeast without delay.

*Casework Corner is a real account of assistance provided to constituents. The names of those involved are changed to protect the privacy of the constituent.

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This Newsletter Page is maintained by the Office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez.

20070807-01	12:43	H. Clinton	Re: Immigration Reform Bill
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Statements & Releases—Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York

Thank you for sharing with me your thoughts and concerns regarding immigration reform. This is an important issue, and I appreciate hearing from my New York constituents on this critical matter.

Our immigration system is in crisis, and we need to find a thoughtful and effective solution that combines a number of reforms. A comprehensive reform to our immigration laws must have, as essential ingredients: a strengthening of our borders, greater cross-cooperation with our neighbors, strict but fair enforcement of our laws, federal assistance to our state and local governments, strict penalties for those who exploit undocumented workers, and a path to earned legal status for those who are here, working hard, paying taxes, respecting the law, and willing to meet a high bar.

Along with these changes, it is imperative that we repair those broken portions of our immigration system that irrevocably damage families and force citizens and lawful immigrants to live apart from their spouses and children overseas. This is

why I introduced an amendment during consideration of the immigration reform bill that would have taken steps to protect the sanctity of families. Our American values demand no less.

I am deeply disappointed that we still have not solved our nation's immigration crisis. We need comprehensive immigration reform, and I hope that we can achieve legislation that secures our borders, respects the rule of law, and honors both our history as a nation of immigrants and our core American values of respect and compassion. Balancing all of these interests is not easy, but it is a debate we must take on. That is why I voted for cloture on the immigration bill, a procedure that would have kept the immigration reform process moving forward in the Senate. Unfortunately, the bill failed to achieve the 60 votes necessary to continue.

The thoughts and concerns of my constituents are very important to me and I thank you for taking the time to write.

—Senator_Clinton@clinton.senate.gov

20070814-01 11:45 P. Marshall "Where Did the Universe Come From?" Cosmology

[Veracity of parts of email questionable, but a starting point for discussion. —SteveB]

from Perry Marshall, Cosmic Fingerprints, 67 East Algonquin Road, S. Barrington IL 60010 U.S.,
<http://www.cosmicfingerprints.com/>:

Part 1: Einstein's Big Blunder

100 years ago this year, Albert Einstein published three papers that rocked the world. These papers proved the existence of the atom, introduced the theory of relativity, and described quantum mechanics.

Pretty good debut for a 26 year old scientist, huh?

His equations for relativity indicated that the universe was expanding. This bothered him, because if it was expanding, it must have had a beginning and a beginner.

Since neither of these appealed to him, Einstein introduced a 'fudge factor' that ensured a 'steady state' universe, one that had no beginning or end.

But in 1929, Edwin Hubble showed that the furthest galaxies were fleeing away from each other, just as the Big Bang model predicted. So in 1931, Einstein embraced what would later be known as the Big Bang theory, saying, "This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened." He referred to the 'fudge factor' to achieve a steady-state universe as the biggest blunder of his career.

As I'll explain during the next couple of days, Einstein's theories have been thoroughly proved and verified by experiments and measurements. But there's an even more important implication of Einstein's discovery. Not only does the universe have a beginning, but time itself, our own dimension of cause and effect, began with the Big Bang.

That's right — time itself does not exist before then. The very line of time begins with that creation event. Matter, energy, time and space were created in an instant by an intelligence outside of space and time.

About this intelligence, Albert Einstein wrote in his book "The World As I See It" that the harmony of natural law "Reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."

Pretty significant statement, wouldn't you say?

Part 2: "Bird Droppings on my Telescope"

The Big Bang theory was totally rejected at first.

But those who supported it had predicted that the ignition of the Big Bang would have left behind a sort of 'hot flash' of radiation.

If a big black wood stove produces heat that you can feel, then in a similar manner, the Big Bang should produce its own kind of heat that would echo throughout the universe.

In 1965, without looking for it, two physicists at Bell Labs in New Jersey found it. At first, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson were bothered because, while trying to refine the world's most sensitive radio antenna, they couldn't eliminate a bothersome source of noise.

They picked up this noise everywhere they pointed the antenna.

At first they thought it was bird droppings. The antenna was so sensitive it could pick up the heat of bird droppings (which certainly are warm when they're brand new) but even after cleaning it off, they still picked up this noise.

This noise had actually been predicted in detail by other astronomers, and after a year of checking and re-checking the data, they arrived at a conclusion: This crazy Big Bang theory really was correct.

In an interview, Penzias was asked why there was so much resistance to the Big Bang theory. He said, "Most physicists would rather attempt to describe the universe in ways which require no explanation.

And since science can't **explain** anything - it can only **describe** things - that's perfectly sensible. If you have a universe which has always been there, you don't explain it, right?

"Somebody asks you, 'How come all the secretaries in your company are women?' You can say, 'Well, it's always been that way.' That's a way of not having to explain it. So in the same way, theories which don't require explanation tend to be the ones accepted by science, which is perfectly acceptable and the best way to make science work."

But on the older theory that the universe was eternal, he explains: "It turned out to be so ugly that people dismissed it. What we find - the simplest theory - is a creation out of nothing, the appearance out of nothing of the universe."

Penzias and his partner, Robert Wilson, won the Nobel Prize for their discovery of this radiation. The Big Bang theory is now one of the most thoroughly validated theories in all of science.

Robert Wilson was asked by journalist Fred Heeren if the Big Bang indicated a creator.

Wilson said, "Certainly there was something that set it all off. Certainly, if you are religious, I can't think of a better theory of the origin of the universe to match with Genesis."

For further reading: "A Day Without Yesterday" - Albert Einstein, Georges Lemaitre and the Big Bang"
<http://clicks.aweber.com/z/ct/?9V5S2V2R2zGgQSulRMVf6Q>.

Part 3: Why the Big Bang was the most precisely planned event in all of history

In your kitchen cabinet, you've probably got a spray bottle with an adjustable nozzle. If you twist the nozzle one way, it sprays a fine mist into the air. You twist the nozzle the other way, it squirts a jet of water in a straight line. You turn that nozzle to the exact position you want so you can wash a mirror, clean up a spill, or whatever.

If the universe had expanded a little faster, the matter would have sprayed out into space like fine mist from a water bottle - so fast that a gazillion particles of dust would speed into infinity and never even form a single star.

If the universe had expanded just a little slower, the material would have dribbled out like big drops of water, then collapsed back where it came from by the force of gravity.

A little too fast, and you get a meaningless spray of fine dust. A little too slow, and the whole universe collapses back into one big black hole.

The surprising thing is just how narrow the difference is. To strike the perfect balance between too fast and too slow, the force, something that physicists call "the Dark Energy Term" had to be accurate to one part in ten with 120 zeros.

If you wrote this as a decimal, the number would look like this:

OK, so what does this have to do with God?

It's very simple. Messages, languages, and coded information ONLY come from a mind. A mind that agrees on an alphabet and a meaning of words and sentences. A mind that expresses both desire and intent. Whether I use the simplest possible explanation, such as the one I'm giving you here, or if we analyze language with advanced mathematics and engineering communication theory, I can say this with total confidence:

Messages, languages and coded information never, ever come from anything else besides a mind. No one has ever produced a single example of a message that did not come from a mind.

Nature can create fascinating patterns - snowflakes, sand dunes, crystals, stalagmites, and stalactites. Tornados and turbulence and cloud formations. But non-living things cannot create language. They *cannot* create codes. Rocks cannot think and they cannot talk. And they cannot create information.

It is believed by some that life on planet earth arose naturally from the "primordial soup," the early ocean which produced enzymes and eventually RNA, DNA, and primitive cells. But there is still a problem with this theory: It fails to answer the question, 'Where did the information come from?'

DNA is not merely a molecule. Nor is it simply a "pattern." Yes, it contains chemicals and proteins, but those chemicals are arranged to form an intricate language, in the exact same way that English and Chinese and HTML are languages. DNA has a four-letter alphabet, and structures very similar to words, sentences and paragraphs. With very precise instructions.

To the person who says that life arose naturally, you need only ask: "Where did the information come from? Show me just ONE example of a language that didn't come from a mind."

As simple as this question is, I've personally presented it to many hundreds of people who say that life arose without the assistance of God. But to a person, none of them have ever been able to explain where the information came from. This riddle is "So simple any child can understand, yet so complex, no atheist can solve."

You can hear or read my full presentation on this topic at <http://www.cosmicfingerprints.com/ifyoucanreadthis.htm>

For a high-school level, layman's version, go here: <http://www.cosmicfingerprints.com/information.htm>.

Matter and energy have to come from somewhere. Everyone can agree on that. But information has to come from somewhere, too! Information is separate entity, fully on par with matter and energy. And information can only come from a mind. If books and poems and TV shows come from human intelligence, then all living things inevitably came from a super intelligence.

Every word you hear, every sentence you speak, every dog that barks, every song you sing, every email you read, every packet of information that zings across the Internet, is proof of the existence of God. Because information and language always originate in a mind.

In the beginning were words and language. In the Beginning was Information.

When we consider the mystery of life - where it came from and how it was possible - do we not at the same time ask the question where it is going, and what its purpose is?

"OK, so then who made God?" and other questions about information and origins:
<http://cosmicfingerprints.com/infotheoryqa.htm>.

20070821-01	13:28	E. Bayh	Reclaiming Our Legacy; Iraq War, Afghanistan War
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Dear SteveB:

Today, as the President continues to confuse the war on terror with a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, I am working with my fellow Democrats and a few courageous Republicans like Senator Richard Lugar to get our eye back on the ball.

As I reminded Chris Wallace recently on Fox News Sunday, Iraq today is not the central front in the war on terror—Afghanistan and Pakistan are. We were attacked from Afghanistan, and Pakistan is where the al Qaeda leadership is reconstituting itself today. Our attention and resources ought to be refocused on capturing Osama bin Laden and rooting out al Qaeda's enclaves across the region.

We also need a tough and smart approach to dealing with Iran, which continues its defiant march to nuclear weapons. According to the State Department, Iran is the No. 1 state sponsor of terror. We cannot afford to allow the world's most dangerous regime to acquire the world's deadliest weapons. But the Bush administration, obsessed with Iraq, has failed to rally our allies to effectively address this menace.

Before the summer recess, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved my nuclear safeguards legislation to prevent countries like Iran from walking up to the atomic threshold under the flimsy pretense of seeking civilian nuclear power. When Congress reconvenes after Labor Day, I will work to see that this crucial bill becomes law.

We also must redouble our efforts to honor the brave Americans who are sacrificing so much to keep us safe. The Senate recently approved comprehensive legislation to make sure our wounded warriors have access to the care they deserve when they return from battle. I was proud of my contribution to that bill—a provision that helps ensure that soldiers with traumatic brain injuries have access to the cutting-edge cognitive therapies that will allow them to recuperate and live full and productive lives.

I will continue to fight for more support for our military personnel, including pressing for enactment of my plan to relieve the financial strain on soldiers with school debt by suspending the accrual of interest on their federal student loans.

My fall agenda will continue to work on refocusing our national security policy as the Senate evaluates two September reports on the political and military outlook in Iraq. I also will continue to pursue an aggressive domestic agenda in the areas of innovation, education, and fiscal responsibility to make America more competitive in the global economy. Earlier this month, I introduced legislation to double research and development funding for small business innovators, and the Senate Judiciary Committee soon will consider my bill to protect U.S. companies that are losing profits and employees as a result of intellectual property theft (*Wall Street Journal* article).

It is well past time for the United States to reassert global leadership and to address the many challenges undermining our strength at home. As we turn the page on the Karl Rove era and the White House loses its Svengali of national security politics, I pledge to continue my work in Washington to insist on smarter domestic and foreign policies to keep America safe, prosperous and strong.

—Sen. Evan Bayh

Paid for by the All America PAC: <http://www.allamericapac.com>, info@allamericapac.com.

20070917-01 09:47 S. Smith Jr. Indiana Education Standards
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New high school diploma requirements will better prepare Indiana's youth

The Indiana State Board of Education adopted new course and credit requirements for earning a high school diploma last year. With these changes, students now have the option of earning four different diploma types: General; Core 40; Core 40 with Academic Honors; or Core 40 with Technical Honors. Core 40 is the academic foundation all students need to succeed in college, apprenticeship programs, military training and the workforce. Students who take strong academic courses in high school are more likely to enroll in college and earn a degree.

The Indiana General Assembly approved legislation two years ago which makes Core 40 a graduation requirement for all students entering high school this year. These students will be expected to complete Core 40 as a graduation requirement. Core 40 will become the minimum college admission requirement for the state's public four-year universities beginning in the fall of 2011. While the Core 40 curriculum is now the preferred standard, an opt-out provision is available that will award a General Diploma.

According to the Indiana Department of Education, on average, college graduates earn more than one million dollars more over a lifetime than those with only a high school education. High school graduates earn 42 percent more than high school dropouts.

In addition, the Core 40 diploma can help students earn money for college. Indiana students who complete a Core 40 diploma and meet other financial aid and grade requirements can receive up to 90 percent of approved tuition and fees at eligible colleges. High school graduates who have earned a Core 40 with Academic Honors diploma can receive up to 100 percent. Some colleges also offer their own scholarships specifically for students who earn this diploma.

— Indiana Senator Samuel Smith, Jr.

20071003-01	17:17	SteveB	Life 101
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Dear Saul,

There are some important principles that I feel we have not discussed enough. Hopefully, by now, we have started to discuss them, but I wanted to remind you of them and how I feel about them one more time, just in case. I hope this doesn't bore you.

1. I am very proud of so many things that I have seen you do (as is your mother). You are doing well in school and getting to know people here in America. That is so very important! You are an honest, intelligent, good-looking, funny (sometimes), sensible young man. You have been willing to pitch-in and give much appreciated help around the house and to your family. I've been proud of the discipline you showed in getting into better shape. Now you have started going out more into the world around you. I think you have a very good future in front of you, if you play your cards right and can defeat the enemies that lie within all of us.
2. One important thing to remember...you are building your life, your future, every single day. The habits you develop now, the things you learn and remember, the times and fun and adventures you have or don't have will all remain with you, probably, for your entire life.
3. You are not really ready for that life yet. If you don't believe me, try to imagine yourself (right now, at fourteen) with a job and an apartment and a car and a life of your own. Wouldn't that really be impossible? Think to yourself as fully as you can, why?
4. The life of an adult is not a simple nor an easy thing. For almost all of us (and it is almost certain that you will become one of "us"), money is very difficult to come-by. And it takes a lot of money to live any kind of decent life. In your lifetime, it will become even more difficult, not easier.
5. So you are building your future life with your real and important life right now. And, the way life works, you only have one chance to do it right! You simply must strive to be the best that you can be and not be defeated in that effort. You must do your best! Nothing less will ultimately do. That is the truth.
6. That is why it is so important to work as hard as you can in school and to learn—truly learn—all you can. It's your life! Many of your classmates will never realize this and they will waste a golden opportunity. While play and relaxation are important, it is more important to skip a lot of play and study, read books, explore your surroundings, get to really know, understand, and even help other people, develop hobbies and interests, formulate lofty goals and strive to reach them, plan what you want to do with your future and with your life's work. These are the tools that help you learn and understand and grow. That is so much more important than play! And the single most important thing to learn is how to learn!
7. There are four powerful enemies that stand in the way of your growth toward the person you were meant to be. I know this because they are the enemies of us all, and death is not among them.
8. Laziness. I don't know why the rules of existence are the way they are, or the way God made them to be. You must realize by now that, though we are certainly something more, we are descended, basically, from animals. Yet we somehow lack their valuable instincts. It seems to us like it would be nice to be able to just lie around and have all our needs taken care of—to be like pets. In fact, this is exactly the way our lives begin, when we are children and all our needs are cared for with no effort on our part. This can easily make it seem like this is the natural order of things, but it is not! We must overcome this beast within ourselves and learn to work, really work, and I mean work hard. Of course, work is easiest if it is something we have come to love, but even this is not inbred. Today, I feel so lucky because I had to work as a child and as an adolescent. I thank my parents for

teaching me the value of hard work and helping me learn how to work hard. That lesson took a long time for me to learn.

9. Fear. You have already learned to overcome some of your fears. The dark is not the problem now that it was to most of us as little children. Scary movies don't give you nightmares the way they used to. Mountains and rollercoasters have become fun, not fearsome. But so many other fears stand in our way. The fear of failure. The fear of what could possibly happen. The fear of death. That fear of what other people think of us. The fear that we might not always be right. The fear of the unknown, what lies ahead but hidden. The fear of pain. Each of these fears requires time, patience, cunning, and experience to defeat. Don't expect to overcome them all at once. But, if you keep growing in the right direction, if you keep trying, you will find that one-by-one the powerful fearful fears will fall away from you, just as the childish ones did. But never forget that all of this takes effort, energy, and mindfulness.

10. Self (selfishness and arrogance). It's funny. We can all more-or-less tolerate people who are smarter than we are, or richer, or more powerful, or better-looking, or know more than we do. But we all have trouble liking people who think they are better than we are. And this is only one of the many ways that the "self" can lead us astray. We never truly know enough to be able to judge what is good, or better, or best. Not really. If we deceive ourselves into thinking we "know it all" or that other people don't know anything, we miss-out on our very lives.

We spend our entire childhoods (at least) creating the "self", our alleged identity, from nothing. It can seem like it's all we have and without it we would return to nothing. But this is not the case. It is good and important for each of us to think that we are someone special, a human being with true worth, but it is easy to carry this too far. It is equally important to remember that we are also truly nothing.

Yet we are more than what we commonly call our "selves." We are our hearts and our souls and our values and whatever there is of God that lies within us, and the "self" is much less than the sum of these parts and so much less than the infinity, the absolute, we can sometimes touch. If you believe that "you" are your thoughts, try this experiment: Mentally, try to sort of stand back and watch yourself do what you are now doing. "Watch" your thoughts march through your brain. "Watch" your breath and your beating heart. Watch your emotions ebb and flow. Try to stop your thoughts. If "you" are simply your thoughts, then who is this "watcher?"

11. Unlove. I use an unusual word here because I do not merely mean "hate." I mean all feelings toward ourselves, others, and even our world that are not loving. Not to develop and hold love and forgiveness in our hearts, for anything, is a poison that can destroy us. Don't be afraid to let yourself love. And I do not, of course, mean simply physical or even romantic love. I mean the feeling that we are part of this world and that it is good and deserving of our best, of our unabiding love. Every human, every mountain, every ocean, every good act, every bug is deserving of our love. Learn to let it flow and learn to recognize and eliminate those negative emotions which are unloving. Love is the very purpose of life and what makes life worthwhile. Forgiveness, as Jesus taught us, is divine...not so much for whom or what we forgive, but for ourselves.

12. One of the most important things I wish for you, my step-son, is to learn and practice respect and appreciation. Of all the people in the world, the one person most deserving of respect is your mother. You would not exist without her. She has sacrificed more for you than you can know. She has cared for you, nurtured you, worried about you, carried you on her back. At all moments and in every way, she deserves and should receive, your unwavering love and respect. Doing this is the very way that you learn respect and appreciation for all things. Do not ever think that this act on your part is not important. No matter what, your mother deserves no less from you. I have lost my own mother and I can't tell you how much I regret each moment in our brief lives together that I has not letting her know how much I loved and appreciated and honored her. Don't wait until your own mother is gone to know this.

13. I would also advise you to continue to do your best to make friends. This is something you already know and know how to do. If we follow the teaching of Jesus to "do unto others as we would have others do unto us," we will be guided to those actions which cultivate friendship and make it flourish. For most of us, friends are one of the most important things in life. Strive to be a good one and you shall have them.

Lastly, remember that your life will be over before you know it. I understand that, right now, it seems to drag a bit. This is an illusion. We never know when the end will come, so we must appreciate the gift of each moment as it comes and not take life for granted. You are really only alive for those moments you can later remember. Cultivate them. Appreciate

them. Love them, because, ultimately, they are what you are and we never ever know for sure that we will not ultimately be judged or judge ourselves on that basis.

[20080121-01](#) 12:19 SteveB Hillary Clinton's Lack of Experience

The biggest mystery to me in this entire political campaign is why no one seems to be willing to challenge Hillary Clinton's BIG LIE about how her vast experience entitles her to be President. One can only guess that she must be referring to her HUSBAND'S experience, which is not her own. She has almost zero executive experience. Let's face it, she's essentially a one-term junior Senator with less actual experience that might be useful to a President than any other candidate.

I've been following the campaigns closely and I have never heard or seen another candidate or, especially, anyone in the press challenge her on this lie. Why don't we start keeping them honest?

[20080128-01](#) 13:05 D. Plouffe Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries & Election

Dear SteveB:

The Biggest Day of the Campaign

Barack Obama won an overwhelming victory in South Carolina on Saturday. People came out in record numbers and voted for change. Now, after four early state contests, Barack has the most votes, the most delegates, and the most diverse coalition of supporters we've seen in a long time.

But this is no time to rest—the stakes will be even higher one week from tomorrow. On Feb. 5th, 22 states will hold primaries and caucuses. We have exactly one week to prepare. Make a donation of \$50 right now to help Barack compete on the biggest day of the campaign:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/page/contribute/o2012-donate-main>

Here are a few details about our victory in South Carolina. According to the official results and CNN exit polls, Barack won:

- 55% of the total vote, more than twice as many votes as any other candidate
- 57% of voters who had never voted in a primary
- 66% of voters who had never voted before at all
- Every type of community—urban, suburban, and rural
- 58% of voters between ages 18 and 64
- 67% of voters between ages 18 and 29

The clear lesson from South Carolina is that voters are ready to bring this country together and solve the problems that matter to ordinary Americans. This election isn't about race or gender, income level or education level. It's about the past and the future. The moment to act is now. We're campaigning from Alaska to Georgia, from California to New York. Your donation right now is more important

—David Plouffe, Campaign Manager, Obama for America

[20080128-02](#) 14:08 SteveB To: Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries & Election

Dear Mr. Obama:

I would certainly like to see someone in the press or Barack's campaign point out what a GIGANTIC evil lie it is for Hillary to keep harping on her vast EXPERIENCE! Does she mean her husband's experience? That is not her own. She's just essentially a do-nothing one-term Senator. She has no business experience. No executive experience to speak of. Her Rose Law Firm experience was so crooked that she certainly doesn't want to speak of it. It was riddled with shady deals and conflict of interest scandals. What about her Health Care Plan experience? What a wonderful opportunity squandered, wasted, and lost because of her vast ambition and ego!

I can't understand why no one, especially in the press, seems to be willing to challenge her BIG LIE. This strategy is so typical of the Clintons...tell a lie and keep telling it and sooner or later, people seem to forget that it is a lie.

Congratulation so far and Good Luck! Take care. Watch your back!

—SteveB

20080201-01 14:17 SteveB Fw: Illegal Aliens in California

[Source of original email unknown. Information unconfirmed. —SteveB]

from the *L.A. Times*:

1. 40% of all workers in L. A. County (L. A. County has 10. 2 million people) are working for cash and not paying taxes. This is because they are predominantly illegal immigrants working without a green card.
2. 95% of warrants for murder in Los Angeles are for illegal aliens.
3. 75% of people on the most wanted list in Los Angeles are illegal aliens.
4. Over 2/3 of all births in Los Angeles County are to illegal alien Mexicans on Medi-Cal , whose births were paid for by taxpayers.
5. Nearly 35% of all inmates in California detention centers are Mexican nationals here illegally.
6. Over 300,000 illegal aliens in Los Angeles County are living in garages.
7. The FBI reports half of all gang members in Los Angeles are most likely illegal aliens from south of the border.
8. Nearly 60% of all occupants of HUD properties are illegal.
9. 21 radio stations in L. A. are Spanish speaking.
10. In L. A. County 5.1 million people speak English, 3.9 million speak Spanish. (There are 10.2 million people in L. A. County.)

Less than 2% of illegal aliens are picking our crops, but 29% are on welfare. Over 70% of the United States ' annual population growth (and over 90% of California , Florida , and New York) results from illegal immigration. 29% of inmates in federal prisons are illegal aliens. We are a bunch of fools for letting this continue.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Send copies of this letter to at least two other people 100 would be even better.

20080207-01 08:32 SteveB 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

I'm so happy today!!! It is snowing like crazy and has been for some time! Plus I won the big Powerball lottery...well only \$3, but that's good, huh?

Plus, Billary had to borrow \$5,000,000 from herself/himself to campaign on. That prompted me to give money to Obama. Plus, we haven't had to listen to Bill flap his big, lying mouth since he lost South Carolina for the double-Presidency. Hey Bill, how are Monica Lewinsky, Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones, Kathleen Willey, and Juanita Broaddrick doing? I'm sure they were all lying and confused about what sex is when they said you had sex with them. Huh, Billy Boy?

How soon we forget. From Wikipedia:

In a separate case, Clinton was disbarred from his Arkansas law license for five years and ordered to pay \$25,000 in fines to that state's bar officials. The agreement came on the condition that Whitewater prosecutors would not

pursue federal perjury charges against him. In October 2001, Clinton was suspended by the Supreme Court and, facing disbarment from the high court as well, Clinton resigned from the Supreme Court bar in November."

On his last day in office (January 20, 2001), Clinton issued 141 pardons and 36 commutations. Most of the controversy surrounded Marc Rich and allegations that Hillary Clinton's brother, Hugh Rodham, accepted payments in return for influencing the president's decision-making regarding the pardons. Some of Clinton's pardons remain a point of controversy.

The 1996 United States campaign finance controversy was an alleged effort by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to influence the domestic policies of the United States, prior to and during the Clinton administration and also involved the fundraising practices of the administration itself.

And this, of course, is just the tippy tip-top of the iceberg.

You know one thing I like a lot about Montana? People still have the old-fashioned Western ethic of being independent, rugged, and doing things for themselves. It's pretty cool really. And nobody even cares about other people's business. If you want to be eccentric, this is the place...just ask Ted Kaczynski.

One of the Montana things I've noticed here is that school NEVER gets out because of snow...no matter how much, no matter what the timing. I guess if those kids can't take it, too bad!

20080207-02 13:53 David Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear SteveB,

It's snowing here...again...still. That, coupled with my lingering Patriots grief, has thrown me into a black and foul mood.

But then I get your Clinton rant and I am suddenly cheery. :-D (Don't you hate these?)

Watching Bubba in SC, standing on stage, clutching the microphone, rambling on while Hillary waited and waited with this rictus of smiling rage on her face, I realized how narcissistic, immature, self-absorbed and unaware he is. Great political theater.

I like Obama just fine. Likable guy, good speaker. But he says stuff like, "We live in the greatest country on earth, the greatest country in history; and I want you to work with me to change that." Or something. Then there's this:

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=jjXyqcx-mYY>.

20080207-03 14:06 Bill Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear SteveB,

He deserved to be disbarred, no question. At the same time, I maintain he wasn't such a bad President. He didn't run the country off the rails into an immensely wasteful foreign adventure with almost zero chance of satisfactory resolution and that has left the populace with an obscene debt. The pardon of Marc Rich was inexcusable and, to add to its outrageousness, was probably bought via a campaign contribution from Rich's ex-wife. Among the list of Clinton concubines, I had forgotten about Kathleen Willey (although she may never have confirmed that she was involved with him) and am not sure I ever knew about Juanita Broaddrick. He was, in any event, a serial womanizer. He even had, when governor in Arkansas, a state policeman occasionally procuring for him and watching his back. He seems in this respect, though, small time in comparison to JFK, who, bad back and all, seems to have had an assignation at least once day.

What is amazing is why Bill and Hillary weren't honest (there's that word) enough to call off the marriage. I assume that their calculation was that they could cop the greatest amount of wealth and power for the long run if they stayed together. Someday, someone will write a book explaining this.

Do you, then, plan to vote for Obama, if he triumphs? The opponent, presumably, would be McCain. I distrust both of them with respect to spending. Give me a politician who has guts enough to balance the budget against all the hue and cry and earmark-connivance of the Congress. I suppose I'll have to hold my nose and vote, but I'm not sure for which one. In some of my prior grumblings I may have mentioned McCain having been the largest single cause of the need for the Resolution Trust Corporation, which bailed out the thrift industry to the tune of \$400 billion. And Obama tends to vote for every handout anyone in Congress contemplates.

20080207-04 14:23 Mark Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear SteveB,

Nice to hear from you in Big Sky country! Hey man, you're preachin' to the choir.....If Billary gets elected I have promised to put an extremely politically incorrect bumper sticker on my truck, with the word c*nt!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.....I have read Bay Buchanan's book about Hillary, but I have hated her ever since her nationalized health care debacle.....and it friggin' feels good to hate her.....I really have to try not to vomit when I watch her talk on the campaign trail.....she talks out the side of her mouth and I can just see the f#*kin' spit flying out her mouth, as she salivates in anticipation of being the "leader of the most powerful country in the world".....I wanna puke!

20080207-05 15:14 SteveB Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear David,

Ya, that was too bad about the Pats! And it couldn't even be Indianapolis, it had to be the Giants!

I don't know about voting for Obama, and I wonder, if nominated, if he would survive until the election. It seems though—and this is weird to me—a light Negra, like Obama, is not as hated as the really dark Negras like Jesse Jackson, ML King, etc. I'm sure I'm being "politically incorrect" to bring something like that up, but don't you think it's true? Still, in this country, if you're just a hair black, you're still black to a lot of people.

Jesus, are we really ready for a woman (surrogate?) or light-brown President? Seems a little weird even to someone as open-minded as myself. I hope we are and I hope we do it. You raise a couple of good points about Billary, though. I dislike those two at least as much as I do/did Nixon.

I guess I'd vote for McCain if he could just waffle a little more on the illegal alien issue (oh my, there I go again, being PI). What are we supposed to be calling these people who are taking all the jobs away from our kids and grandkids...Mexicans who accidentally find themselves in our country? Why is the law enforced on me if I just sneeze, but not on these "accidental" f*ckers or the, dare I say, "illegal" f*ckers who give them jobs?

Take care. Hope you're enjoying your snow as much as I am ours.

20080207-06 15:23 SteveB Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear Bill,

I don't trust any of them enough to vote for them. McCain is awful on immigration and money and, what are even more wars to him, except more glory and not having to live long enough to see the end and pay the price? He is a warrior. And a frustrated one at that. That's good and bad.

What a sorry country we have become. At least it still snows. Do you remember an English-class story you once wrote about Shorty ice-skating on the roof of GHS?

20080207-07 15:33 SteveB Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton

Dear Mark,

I agree completely. It's funny, I've watched a lot of the political cr*p going on and all I've heard Billary talk about is her vast experience that nobody calls her down on. Does she mean Bill's experience? She's just a junior Senator (like Obama), with NO executive experience whatsoever. And, as you so aptly point out, she also constantly talks about her stupendous fantasy of walking into the Whitehouse, sitting in that beloved Oval Office on "Day One", and...well the rest becomes completely vague. She doesn't want to serve the country, she wants to RULE the country. So I guess her next order of business, since she's so turned-on by power, would be to rub herself IN the Oval Office, like she always used to do when Bill and Monica weren't in there.

20080215-01	16:08	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama
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Dear Democratic Super-Delegates:

I am backing Barack Obama's candidacy for President because he seems to be the only candidate focused on the future and solving our problems, instead of the past.

The biggest mystery to me in this entire political campaign is why no one seems to be willing to challenge Hillary Clinton's BIG LIE about how her vast experience entitles her to be President. One can only guess that she must be referring to her HUSBAND'S experience, which is not her own. She has almost zero executive experience.

Let's face it, she's essentially a one-term junior Senator with less actual experience that might be useful to a President than any other candidate.

I've been following the campaigns closely and I have never heard or seen another candidate or, especially, anyone in the press, challenge her on this lie. Why don't we start keeping them honest? Just because Hillary has a strong fantasy of being in the Whitehouse and sitting in the Oval Office on her famous "Day One!", I don't believe for one instant that she has any vision of the future, as does Mr. Obama, or that she has any idea of what to do with the power that she so mightily craves. Her vast ambition is no reason to cast votes for her.

And I, for one, do not want to see Bill Clinton back in the Whitehouse!!!!

Perhaps people should start asking, "Hey Bill, how are Monica Lewinsky, Gennifer Flowers, Paula Jones, Kathleen Willey, and Juanita Broadrick doing? I'm sure they were all lying and confused about what sex is when they said you had sex with them. Huh, Billy Boy?" The Republicans will certainly be asking these questions. And if Hillary could not even keep an eye on her husband, right in front of her, how exactly is she going to keep an eye on our country? Don't you think Americans want to know the answer to that questions the Republicans will ask over and over?

How soon we forget. From Wikipedia:

In a separate case, Clinton was disbarred from his Arkansas law license for five years and ordered to pay \$25,000 in fines to that state's bar officials. The agreement came on the condition that Whitewater prosecutors would not pursue federal perjury charges against him. In Oct., 2001, Clinton was suspended by the Supreme Court and, facing disbarment from the high court as well, Clinton resigned from the Supreme Court bar in November.

On his last day in office (Jan. 20, 2001), Clinton issued 141 pardons and 36 commutations. Most of the controversy surrounded Marc Rich and allegations that Hillary Clinton's brother, Hugh Rodham, accepted payments in return for influencing the president's decision-making regarding the pardons. Some of Clinton's pardons remain a point of controversy.

The 1996 United States campaign finance controversy was an alleged effort by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to influence the domestic policies of the United States, prior to and during the Clinton administration and also involved the fundraising practices of the administration itself.

And this, of course, is just the tippy tip-top of the iceberg. Hillary, of course, was involved in her own set of scandals

I believe Barack Obama will bring a new measure of honesty and responsibility to the office of President of the United States of America. Thank you.

20080215-02 18:06 Dick Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama

Dear SteveB,

I totally agree!

20080215-03 19:11 Marissa Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Barack Obama

Dear SteveB,

I am glad to see that u are on the Obama train...I wanted Kucinich to win but since that was nearly impossible I will happily settle with Obama...I have not opened all of your e-mails yet...but your friend [Dennis. —SteveB] is very talented...does he need an apprentice?

20080217-01 13:57 SteveB "Hillary Hopes You've Forgotten—Have You?"

"Hillary Hopes You've Forgotten—Have You?" by Diane Rigali, Rense.com

Feb. 6, 2008, (<http://www.rense.com/general80/hopes.htm>) (<http://www.illuminati-news.com/0/PoliticalWhoreAlert.htm>)

Hillary hopes you have forgotten. Have you????

Hillary Clinton has been telling America that she is the most qualified candidate for president based on her "record," which she says includes her eight years in the White House as First Lady—or "co-president"—and her seven years in the Senate. Here is a reminder of what that record includes:

1. As First Lady, Hillary assumed authority over Health Care Reform, a process that cost the taxpayers over \$13 million. She told both Bill Bradley and Pat Moynahan, key votes needed to pass her legislation, that she would "demonize" anyone who opposed it. But it was opposed; she couldn't even get it to a vote in a Congress controlled by her own party. (And in the next election, her party lost control of both the House and Senate.)
2. Hillary assumed authority over selecting a female Attorney General. Her first two recommendations (Zoe Baird and Kimba Wood) were forced to withdraw their names from consideration, and then she chose Janet Reno. Janet Reno has since been described by Bill himself as "my worst mistake."
3. Hillary recommended Lani Guanier for head of the Civil Rights Commission. When Guanier's radical views became known, her name had to be withdrawn.
4. Hillary recommended her former law partners, Web Hubbell, Vince Foster, and William Kennedy for positions in the Justice Department, White House staff, and the Treasury, respectively. Hubbell was later imprisoned, Foster committed suicide, and Kennedy was forced to resign.
5. Hillary also recommended a close friend of the Clintons, Craig Livingstone, for the position of director of White House security. When Livingstone was investigated for the improper access of up to 900 FBI files of Clinton enemies (Filegate) and the widespread use of drugs by White House staff, both Hillary and her husband denied knowing him. (FBI agent Dennis Sculimbrene confirmed in a Senate Judiciary Committee in 1996 both the drug use and Hillary's involvement in hiring Livingstone. After that, the FBI closed its White House Liaison Office, after serving seven presidents for over thirty years.)
6. In order to open "slots" in the White House for her friends the Harry Thomasons (to whom millions of dollars in travel contracts could be awarded), Hillary had the entire staff of the White House Travel Office fired; they were reported to the FBI for "gross mismanagement" and their reputations ruined. After a thirty-month investigation, only one, Billy Dale, was charged with a crime—mixing personal money with White House funds when he cashed checks. The jury acquitted him in less than two hours.
7. Another of Hillary's assumed duties was directing the "bimbo eruption squad" and scandal defense:

- a. She urged her husband not to settle the Paula Jones lawsuit.
- b. She refused to release the Whitewater documents, which led to the appointment of Ken Starr as Special Prosecutor. After \$80 million dollars of taxpayer money was spent, Starr's investigation led to Monica Lewinsky, which led to Bill lying about and later admitting his affairs.
- c. Then they had to settle with Paula Jones after all.
- d. And Bill lost his law license for lying to the grand jury.
- e. And Bill was impeached by the House.
- f. And Hillary almost got herself indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice (she avoided it mostly because she repeated, "I do not recall," "I have no recollection," and "I don't know" 56 times under oath).

8. Hillary accepted the traditional First Lady's role of decorator of the White House at Christmas, but in a unique Hillary way. In 1994, for example, The First Lady's Tree in the Blue Room (the focal point each year) was all decorated with drug paraphernalia, sex toys, and pornographic ornaments, all personally approved by Hillary as the invited artists' depictions of the theme, "The Twelve Days of Christmas." [I thought this was kind of funny. What's the matter with bawdy humor? —SteveB]

9. Hillary wrote *It Takes a Village*, demonstrating her Socialist viewpoint. [Boy, that's questionable, Bub. — SteveB]

10. Hillary decided to seek election to the Senate in a state she had never lived in. Her husband pardoned FALN terrorists in order to get Latino support and the New Square Hassidim to get Jewish support. Hillary also had Bill pardon her brother's clients, for a small fee, to get financial support.

11. Then Hillary left the White House, but later had to return \$200,000 in White House furniture, china, and artwork she had stolen.

12. In the campaign for the Senate, Hillary played the "woman card" by portraying her opponent (Lazio) as a bully picking on her.

13. Hillary's husband further protected her by asking the National Archives to withhold from the public until 2012 many records of their time in the White House, including much of Hillary's correspondence and her calendars. (There are ongoing lawsuits to force the release of those records.)

14. As the junior Senator from New York, Hillary has passed no major legislation. She has deferred to the senior Senator (Schumer) to tend to the needs of New Yorkers, even on the hot issue of medical problems of workers involved in the cleanup of Ground Zero after 9/11.

15. Hillary's one notable vote, supporting the plan to invade Iraq, she has since disavowed.

Quite a resume, isn't it? Sounds more like an organized crime family...

20080217-02	14:56	GaryF	The Bush Administration
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Dear SteveB,

Sounds as if it could be almost anyone in the Republican party, at least in this administration. Iraq? \$1,000,000,000,000 and counting, based on fudged and handpicked intelligence, how many indictments should there be, government out of our lives, yeah sure, PATRIOT ACT, what books do you get from the library, no bid contracts HALIBURTON (Dick Chaney's old company) lower taxes yeah right, DEFICITS, every time the f*ckin Right runs they talk smaller government BULLSH*T. The government has grown under every Republican Administration since Dwight Eisenhower, who in my

opinion was the last real Republican that tried to do it right. The Right Wing of this country always runs on the same sh*t LIES, and who gets f*cked, US.

20080217-03 19:48 SteveB Re: The Bush Administration

Dear GaryF,

Well...Bush has been a disappointment...especially fiscally, but he always had a corrupt Congress bought and sold by their campaign contributors, and I think he deserves credit for taking the war to the a*s-holes and for being 100% successful in preventing another attack on our soil, even with our porous borders. This is an achievement that I think we will look back to wistfully if a Democrat is elected, as I expect will happen. But Iraq? No.

20080218-01 07:20 GaryF Re: The Bush Administration

Dear SteveB,

Don't you think Bush and Chaney were also bought by their contributors? Remember the energy summit with Chaney and the heads of the oil companies locked in some basement room in the Whitehouse? They refused to release the minutes, and Lo and Behold, every quarter since then the oil companies have made RECORD PROFITS. And taking the fight to the enemy, yeah we'll fix them. It was Iraqi's who attacked us, OH WAIT, they were SAUDIS! This administration will go down in history as the worst in the last 100 years. It will take at least 2 generations to repair the damage they've done to the U.S.'s reputation in the rest of the world. After 911, the U.S. had the support of basically the entire world to go into Afghanistan, and rightly so, but the personal agendas of Bush and the oil companies came into play to invade Iraq. Anyone who doesn't think this war was about oil and money is a fool. Do you really think 130,000 U.S. troops, 5000 British troops, and between 5 and 50 troops from a half a dozen other insignificant countries is a coalition?

20080218-02 11:58 SteveB Re: The Bush Administration

Dear GaryF,

I'm telling you, they are ALL bought and sold! That's the system the politicians will not fix—least of all the Democrats And I don't care if the war is about oil, it feels good to kick Arab a*s. We are in a war to the death with the f*cking followers of that bastard Mohammed and the sooner we engage them the better. Maybe they will at least learn to leave us alone or suffer the consequences. None of their leaders want to end up like Saddam, no matter how they posture in public. And who cares if there's a coalition. I have no respect for those pu*s*y, lazy Europeans anyway. F*ck them and the horses they rode in on. Next time they all get conquered, we should just look the other way. What a bunch of selfish, self-centered, pu*s*y b*stards! Oh my, am I being politically incorrect?

Yet, ultimately, Iraq was a mistake.

20080218-03 12:08 SteveB "The 'Angry White Man'" 2008 Election

I'll present the explanation first:

"The 'Angry White Man?'" posted by Jeff Musall, Yahoo! Voices

Feb. 13, 2008, (<http://voices.yahoo.com/the-angry-white-man-1374359.html?cat=9>)

I first saw this when someone sent it to me in an email. I sourced it and sure enough it was written as a column back on February 9th in the *Aspen (Colorado) Times Weekly*. But alas, it took Rush Limbaugh to get the ditto-heads all around the country fired up. Those who think FOX really is a news channel and the Republican Party is actually concerned with their interests. The column has taken on a life of its own thanks to remarks by Barack Obama about the bitterness in some.

What the article does (very well) is to highlight just how correct his comments were. As Obama said, he could have phrased it better. But the message is true. It is oh so refreshing to hear a politician speak frankly. The so-called "Angry White Man" as portrayed by Gary Hubbell in the original column is the epitome of the kind of misplaced anger that Obama seeks to address. Below is the original column that is circulating in email land, with my comments following.

"In Election 2008, Don't Forget Angry White Man" by Gary Hubbell, *Aspen Times Weekly*

Feb. 9, 2008, (<http://www.aspentimes.com/article/20080209/ASPENWEEKLY06/198091324>)

There is a great amount of interest in this year's presidential elections, as everybody seems to recognize that our next president has to be a lot better than George Bush. The Democrats are riding high with two groundbreaking candidates - a woman and an African-American - while the conservative Republicans are in a quandary about their party's nod to a quasi-liberal maverick, John McCain.

Each candidate is carefully pandering to a smorgasbord of special-interest groups, ranging from gay, lesbian and transgender people to children of illegal immigrants to working mothers to evangelical Christians.

There is one group no one has recognized, and it is the group that will decide the election: the Angry White Man. The Angry White Man comes from all economic backgrounds, from dirt-poor to filthy rich. He represents all geographic areas in America, from urban sophisticate to rural redneck, deep South to mountain West, left Coast to Eastern Seaboard.

His common traits are that he isn't looking for anything from anyone - just the promise to be able to make his own way on a level playing field. In many cases, he is an independent businessman and employs several people. He pays more than his share of taxes and works hard.

The victimhood syndrome buzzwords - "disenfranchised," "marginalized" and "voiceless" - don't resonate with him. "Press 'one' for English" is a curse-word to him. He's used to picking up the tab, whether it's the company Christmas party, three sets of braces, three college educations or a beautiful wedding.

He believes the Constitution is to be interpreted literally, not as a "living document" open to the whims and vagaries of a panel of judges who have never worked an honest day in their lives.

The Angry White Man owns firearms, and he's willing to pick up a gun to defend his home and his country. He is willing to lay down his life to defend the freedom and safety of others, and the thought of killing someone who needs killing really doesn't bother him.

The Angry White Man is not a metrosexual, a homosexual or a victim. Nobody like him drowned in Hurricane Katrina - he got his people together and got the hell out, then went back in to rescue those too helpless and stupid to help themselves, often as a police officer, a National Guard soldier or a volunteer firefighter.

His last name and religion don't matter. His background might be Italian, English, Polish, German, Slavic, Irish, or Russian, and he might have Cherokee, Mexican, or Puerto Rican mixed in, but he considers himself a white American.

He's a man's man, the kind of guy who likes to play poker, watch football, hunt white-tailed deer, call turkeys, play golf, spend a few bucks at a strip club once in a blue moon, change his own oil and build things. He coaches baseball, soccer and football teams and doesn't ask for a penny. He's the kind of guy who can put an addition on his house with a couple of friends, drill an oil well, weld a new bumper for his truck, design a factory and publish books. He can fill a train with 100,000 tons of coal and get it to the power plant on time so that you keep the lights on and never know what it took to flip that light switch.

Women either love him or hate him, but they know he's a man, not a dishrag. If they're looking for someone to walk all over, they've got the wrong guy. He stands up straight, opens doors for women and says "Yes, sir" and "No, ma'am."

He might be a Republican and he might be a Democrat; he might be a Libertarian or a Green. He knows that his wife is more emotional than rational, and he guides the family in a rational manner.

He's not a racist, but he is annoyed and disappointed when people of certain backgrounds exhibit behavior that typifies the worst stereotypes of their race. He's willing to give everybody a fair chance if they work hard, play by the rules and learn English.

Most important, the Angry White Man is pi*sed off. When his job site becomes flooded with illegal workers who don't pay taxes and his wages drop like a stone, he gets righteously angry. When his job gets shipped overseas, and he has to speak to some incomprehensible idiot in India for tech support, he simmers. When Al Sharpton comes on TV, leading some rally for reparations for slavery or some such nonsense, he bites his tongue and he remembers. When a child gets charged with carrying a concealed weapon for mistakenly bringing a penknife to school, he takes note of who the local idiots are in education and law enforcement.

He also votes, and the Angry White Man loathes Hillary Clinton. Her voice reminds him of a shovel scraping a rock. He recoils at the mere sight of her on television. Her very image disgusts him, and he cannot fathom why anyone would want her as their leader. It's not that she is a woman. It's that she is who she is. It's the liberal victim groups she panders to, the "poor me" attitude that she represents, her inability to give a straight answer to an honest question, his tax dollars that she wants to give to people who refuse to do anything for themselves.

There are many millions of Angry White Men. Four million Angry White Men are members of the National Rifle Association, and all of them will vote against Hillary Clinton, just as the great majority of them voted for George Bush.

He hopes that she will be the Democratic nominee for president in 2008, and he will make sure that she gets beaten like a drum.

Comments by the author (Jeff Musall):

1. John McCain is not a "quasi-liberal maverick." There was a time when he had a slight independent streak, but of late he is right down the neo-conservative line. More war, more deficits, more tax giveaways to the rich...in short, increasing the myriad problems.

2. The "Angry White Man" isn't nearly as widely represented as Hubbell suggests. And he is a racist. But even more so, he is a misogynist. He cannot fathom the thought of a woman as president. That's why the article expressly attacks Hillary Clinton even though Obama has very similar positions. He is right to say that his "Angry White Man" can be from any race. He is from many backgrounds too. But he is always is racist, he always is misogynist, and he is always easy to manipulate along those lines.

3. Most important, he is just plain wrong. He decries welfare (the old "black woman in a Cadillac" that goes back to Reagan) even though welfare is not even close to what is busting the budget. America has over 800 military bases worldwide and a floundering economy as a direct result of the policies put in place in the Reagan years and followed (even under Bill Clinton, to a large degree) ever since. The two Democratic candidates (especially Barack Obama) see the folly and want to reverse it. The "Angry White Man" has seen his real earnings decrease by an average of one percent a year since Reagan. Do the math, that's over 25 percent. And he is duped into blaming the brown man. The Mexicans did it to him, not the economic policies that forced (and allowed) millions to try to feed their families. He is duped into thinking it must be Hillary Clinton's fault, even though the biggest growth in illegals came under Reagan and Bush.

4. Last, I am an angry white man. Not in any way like Hubbell describes, of course. I am white, I am a man, and I am angry. I also like to hunt and hike, and a little sport now and then. But I am able to think for myself and to see the world through an open mind. Why am I angry?

I am angry that some closed-minded individuals choose to allow their insecurities and ignorance to be warped into a political movement. I am angry that thugs masquerading as members of the executive branch are allowed to run amok because they have distracted and scared enough people. It isn't the black person, the brown, the woman, the immigrant - or any of the other imagined threats to the "Angry White Man." It is his own ignorance, his own misguided belief system. He doesn't realize that every time he votes in favor of modern conservatives he is voting against his own self-interests, and those of his family. The "Angry White Man" needs to refocus his anger where it belongs.

Dear SteveB,

Christ! When you moved to Montana did you join a militia?

If you're talking about WWII, don't think the U.S. went to Europe to save Europe, if that was the case we'd have gone in 1939 not after the Jap's attacked Pearl Harbor. Almost sounds like you should have been born in the 1500's, you could have joined the Crusades. And speaking of self-centered bastards, just what in the fuck do you think the majority of the world thinks about the U.S.. Oh, and by the way, we may be better prepared to deal with terrorist threats today than we were pre 911, but you better believe this. GWB and his imperialist policies have created the greatest tool for Al Qaeda recruitment since the Jews declared the state of Israel. So are more secure, sure, but because the assholes in power today, we need to be.

Dear GaryF,

One of the standing jokes Marci and I have is that we often say to each other, 'Just don't pi*s me off!'

So...don't pi*s me off.

Maybe there's too big a gap here to bridge, but I love ya, so I will just try to clarify my thinking, not try to convince you. But, believe me, I refuse to follow any party-generated, media-generated, or Bush-Cheney-generated party line. For me, this goes back much further than that, as I'm sure it does for you.

I don't think we're here as a country to be nice or to please other countries. I believe we are here to do our own thing and to survive and, hopefully, to thrive. So far, I think we've done pretty well at that, maybe better than any country that has ever existed. That argument can certainly be made and is hard to refute.

What has Germany ever done for any other country or to please any other country? What has England ever done for any other country or to please any other country? What has Russia ever done for any other country or to please any other country? What has Spain ever done for any other country or to please any other country? What has France (ha!) ever done for any other country or to please any other country? What have the Arabs ever done for any other country or to please any other country? Why would anyone expect us to be any different? And I think it is especially naive to think that we have to be nice and please any other countries in the world when we have been attacked, and attacked in a very serious and dire manner.

And just like in World Wars I and II, we are always willing to just sit over here and pretty much leave the rest of the world alone if they will just leave us alone. As they say, if you don't want pain, let a sleeping tiger lie. The awoken tiger's actions may not even be logical (but who says they have to be?), and, believe me, you will feel pain.

I don't give a damn if Osama bin MF'er gets converts! Didn't he have plenty already? Do you really think he'd have none if we hadn't fought back? And who says we have to fight back perfectly, with perfect logic? That is not how war works. The only thing these Muslims understand is strength and violence, so I say, for everyone who raises his ugly head, we rain down as much violence as possible and f*ck the alleged consequences. Who cares what France thinks, for instance? The Muslims started this chain of consequences just as Stalin and Hitler did. And much more than our honor or how we might appear to, who?, France?, are at stake here. Surely, it is our very existence and way of life. Do you seriously doubt that? Even if, which I do not agree with, it is only oil, do you seriously doubt that it is our existence and way of life at stake?

Frankly, I'm sick and tired of the bleeding-heart liberals whining that we're the bad guys. You tell me, then, who are these supposed good guys, who don't act in their own self-interest? In my lifetime and during the history that I've witnessed, though we are certainly not perfect (no country is), we are the only country on earth that I have ever seen act in anyone's interest but their own. That's the truth. Illegal immigration and WW II in Europe are perfect examples.

We are at war, and so much of war is will. Vietnam may seem on the surface like a waste, but it was part of the demonstration of our will during the Cold War, even if that war was wrong in many ways. Another part of that will was the vast spending, all of which eventually led to the utter defeat of the Soviet Union. That collapse would maybe never

have happened in a vacuum. Without that demonstration of will, the U.S.S.A. would probably still stand and rule with its evil, stupid iron hand. It didn't fall alone.

So even if, like in Vietnam, our will is a little misdirected or inefficient or imperfect, I say tough f*ckin' luck! It is the demonstration of our will which makes the point and will either eventually prevail or our will will falter and our civilization will be done for. Rome fell not when they became weaker than their enemies, but when their will became weaker.

I say, if the f*ckers want to attack us, we act like the sleeping tiger and attack them back, and I don't expect it to be perfectly. And if the little cry-baby bastards don't like it, they can take their marbles and go back to their stinking deserts and leave us alone. If sissy, effeminate, gay-boy, she-male Europe (see the movies of Spain's Pedro Almodóvar) doesn't like it, tough luck!

I think it is such a shame that the Democrats have forgotten the lessons of history, have forgotten the greatest generation, have lost their appreciation for our way of life, and have no balls. Believe me, America's sworn enemies—who actually have no reason to be our enemies (Israel? What a joke?)—DO HAVE BALLS!

They have sworn to destroy us and to destroy our civilization, and they will, unless we fight for our lives and demonstrate our will to survive. Power is all they (most especially Arabs) understand. This is the truth and surely you know it. All else, any little mistakes, like perhaps (who knows?) Vietnam or Iraq, pale in comparison.

But George Bush did not conduct the wars or security the way he should have. War must be all-out and relentless, or not at all. Not like Viet Nam.

Whew!

from a recent email:

My husband is a liar and a cheat. He has cheated on me from the beginning, and, when I confront him, he denies everything. What's worse, everyone knows that he cheats on me. It is so humiliating.

Also, since he lost his job six years ago, he hasn't even looked for a new one. All he does all day is smoke cigars, cruise around and shoot the breeze with his buddies while I have to work to pay the bills.

Since our daughter went away to college he doesn't even pretend to like me and hints that I may be a lesbian. What should I do?

Signed: Clueless

Dear Clueless:

Grow up and dump him. Good grief, woman. You don't need him anymore! You're a United States Senator from New York running for President of the United States . Act like one!

20080310-01	11:28	SteveB	"Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"
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So I guess, on that now famous "DAY O-N-E!!!" (with reverb.))))) , Hillary will turn to her time-worn staff and say, "OK, guys, run the country for me, while I look and act queenly and important, and figure out ways to say nasty, evil lies about people in such a way that I can deny it or distance myself in some way, or even re-define "is" if I have to."

Gee, you would think that her "vast 35-years of executive political experience" would have taught her a thing or two about managing a mere staff...whoops...no, it's all just EGO!

Or maybe this is just an Obama or McCain-planted article? OK, Slick-Willy, whatever you say!

"Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager" by Adam Nagourney, Patrick Healy and Kate Zernike, *New York Times*

Mar. 10, 2008, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/10/us/politics/10clinton.html?ref=haroldmickes>)

(Feuding between aides shines spotlight on candidate's management style.)

(WASHINGTON) The morning after Senator Barack Obama shook the Clinton campaign by winning five states in one weekend, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's new campaign manager—Maggie Williams, who had taken over in a shake-up the night before— assembled the curious if demoralized staff.

"You may not like the person next to you," Ms. Williams told dozens of aides who ringed the conference room at the campaign's Virginia headquarters last month, according to participants. "But you're going to respect them. And we're going to work together." Ms. Williams's demand was dismissed as wishful thinking by some in her weary audience. But in the view of many Clinton supporters, it accurately reflected the urgent need to overhaul a campaign that at that point had set itself apart for its level of disorder and dysfunction.

The divisions in her campaign over strategy and communications—and the dislike many of her advisers had for one another—poured out into public as Mrs. Clinton struggled in February to hold off Mr. Obama in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. But even as Mrs. Clinton revived her fortunes last week with victories in Ohio, Rhode Island and Texas, the questions lingered about how she managed her campaign, with the internal sniping and second-guessing undermining her well-cultivated image as a steady-at-the-wheel chief executive surrounded by a phalanx of loyal and efficient aides.

"She hasn't managed anything as complex as this before; that's the problem with senators," said James A. Thurber, a professor of government at American University who is an expert on presidential management. "She wasn't as decisive as she should have been. And it's a legitimate question to ask: Under great pressure from two different factions, can she make some hard decisions and move ahead? It seems to just fester. She doesn't seem to know how to stop it or want to stop it."

Insular management style

Over the last month, Mrs. Clinton, of New York, has become much more involved in the day-to-day operation of her campaign. In addition to Ms. Williams, she brought in two experienced political hands from her husband's White House—Doug Sosnik, who was a political director, and Steve Ricchetti, a deputy chief of staff.

And Ms. Williams has sought to calm tensions in the headquarters through steps like opening the morning conference call to more aides to foster a greater sense of teamwork. One of her first acts, aides said, was to instruct Mark Penn—Mrs. Clinton's chief strategist and a polarizing figure in the campaign—to stay off television.

Still, interviews with campaign aides, associates and friends suggest that Mrs. Clinton, at least until February, was a detached manager. Juggling the demands of being a candidate, she paid little attention to detail, delegated decisions large and small and deferred to advisers on critical questions. Mrs. Clinton accepted—or seemed unaware of—the intense factionalism and feuding that often paralyzed her campaign and that prevented her aides from reaching consensus on basic questions like what states to fight in and how to go after Mr. Obama, of Illinois.

Mrs. Clinton showed a tendency toward an insular management style, relying on a coterie of aides who have worked for her for years, her aides and associates said. Her choice of lieutenants—and her insistence on staying with them even when friends urged her to shake things up—was blamed by some associates for the campaign's woes. Again and again, the senator was portrayed as a manager who valued loyalty and familiarity over experience and expertise.

Mrs. Clinton stood by Mr. Penn and Patti Solis Doyle, who was until last month her campaign manager, even as her campaign was at risk of letting Mr. Obama sew up the nomination. When some of her closest supporters pressed her to replace them—arguing that the two were clearly struggling with their jobs and had become divisive figures in the campaign—she responded by saying she would "think about it."

From one friend to another

When Mrs. Clinton finally pushed out Ms. Solis Doyle, she chose Ms. Williams—like Ms. Solis Doyle, an old friend who had never before managed a presidential campaign. Mrs. Clinton's ability to manage the one person with whom she spoke most often, former President Bill Clinton, was also questioned by some of her advisers and supporters.

Mr. Clinton moved in his own orbit—he heatedly argued with his wife's advisers who wanted to write off South Carolina, defying them to campaign there—and took no direction from the campaign about what to say or where to go, some of them said. (Mr. Obama defeated Mrs. Clinton in the South Carolina Democratic primary by nearly 29 percentage points.)

Several aides, donors and supporters, who requested anonymity to recount private conversations with the candidate, said they had warned Mrs. Clinton that her husband's attacks on Mr. Obama were demeaning to her and hurting her campaign. Mrs. Clinton replied that her husband became "carried away" at times but that she did not see any real harm from his approach, they said.

Mrs. Clinton's top advisers said that while her management style might be untidy, it showed her to be comfortable with conflicting ideas among her aides. They said she had pronounced herself "ready to learn" from her mistakes and was resistant to placing too much power in the hands of a single political adviser in the mold of Karl Rove in President Bush's two campaigns for the White House.

"She thinks the way to manage effectively is to get a lot of smart people around who don't agree and let them work out their differences creatively," said Howard Wolfson, her communications director. "Let them hash through things, and as a result, you come up with the best process."

Hesitant to change personnel

A senior adviser, Harold Ickes, joined the campaign full-time in January as Mrs. Clinton's aides began to realize that the contest was not going the way they had planned. Mr. Ickes cautioned about drawing firm conclusions about her from this period, when she faced the demands of being a candidate.

"It's hard to draw conclusions about her management style," he said, "because she is, in fact, not the manager of her campaign." [WHAT?]

Still, some of her senior advisers said Mrs. Clinton was left with little option but to become more assertive in getting her campaign back on track—a shift highlighted by her decision to push out Ms. Solis Doyle, one of her closest and longest-serving aides. Her husband changed his advisers at regular intervals as he faced various troubles and shifting political demands while president; Mrs. Clinton, in contrast, has relied on a relatively unchanging cast since she was first lady.

Caught off-guard

For all her years on the public stage, Mrs. Clinton has never come close to assembling and running an enterprise like the 700-person, \$170 million-and-counting campaign organization that she has created. At times, her aides made assumptions about tactics and voters that turned out to be wrong. They nearly ran out of money at all the wrong times, like just after Mrs. Clinton's victory in the New Hampshire primary and right before the 22 state nominating contests on Feb. 5.

The day after her loss in the Iowa caucuses, Mrs. Clinton took command of a long meeting in New Hampshire. "I'll do whatever you guys need me to do," she said, a participant recalled. "I get the message."

But a month later, she described herself as stunned to learn the campaign was nearly broke—notwithstanding financial reports sent to her every week by e-mail—and was all but conceding the 11 contests that were to come over the next month.

Unlike Mr. Bush, Mrs. Clinton has shown no interest in having one strong person running all aspects of the campaign operation. And unlike her husband during the early part of his 1992 bid for the presidency, she does not try to keep a hand in everything, with lines of communications all through the campaign.

Instead, she talked daily to a few people—Mr. Penn, Ms. Solis Doyle and, now, Ms. Williams. Even Mr. Ickes, her longtime friend and adviser, says he speaks with her infrequently.

This approach, many of her associates said, had the effect of breeding resentment at campaign headquarters. Since there was no one person in charge, they said, it was hard to make decisions, and Mr. Penn would frequently use his personal connection with Mrs. Clinton to block the campaign from moving in directions he opposed, like putting an increased emphasis on trying to present a human side of Mrs. Clinton.

Ms. Williams had been among those who lobbied Mrs. Clinton to remove Ms. Solis Doyle, arguing that the campaign lacked a plan or a message despite starting out with an overwhelming advantage in money and name recognition, campaign officials said. After resisting for much of the winter, Mrs. Clinton, before the vote in Iowa, told aides that she would replace Ms. Solis Doyle but that she wanted to wait until after New Hampshire. But when Mrs. Clinton won the New Hampshire contest, the decision was pulled back. Ms. Williams was brought in to work alongside Ms. Solis Doyle, but without an obvious portfolio. The move was widely seen at campaign headquarters as a slap at Ms. Solis Doyle.

Offended, she threatened to leave and had to be courted to return, agreeing to do so only on the condition that she would be in charge. She was finally dismissed after more losses and the news that the campaign was running out of money.

(Adam Nagourney reported from Washington, and Patrick Healy and Kate Zernike from New York.)

20080310-02 11:35 Bill Re: "Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"

Dear SteveB,

If Obama wins the nomination, he'd better not pick her to run with him. That might make the D ticket unbeatable, but she'd be plotting all the time. He would have to seriously distance himself from her and keep an eye on her, allowing her to go to state funerals and ribbon-cuttings and not much else.

20080310-03 12:10 SteveB Re: "Sniping by Aides Hurts Clinton's Image as Manager"

Dear Bill,

And think about Bill Clinton and his SEPARATE sphere of influence...whether Obama were at the top or second. It's all too weird and Othellian for me. [Note: not "Orwellian", Othello was...never mind. —SteveB]

20080311-01 10:47 B. Obama Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton

Dear SteveB:

It's tough to think of two states more different than Wyoming and Mississippi. But we won Wyoming on Saturday, and we just learned that we won Mississippi by a large margin tonight.

Between those two states, we picked up enough delegates to erase the gains by Senator Clinton last Tuesday and add to our substantial lead in earned delegates. And in doing so we showed the strength and breadth of this movement.

But just turn on the news and you'll see that Senator Clinton continues to run an expensive, negative campaign against us. Each day her campaign launches a new set of desperate attacks.

They're not just attacking me; they're attacking you.

Over the weekend, an aide to Senator Clinton attempted to diminish the overwhelming number of contests we've won by referring to places we've prevailed as "boutique" states and our supporters as the "latte-sipping crowd." I'm not sure how those terms apply to Mississippi and Wyoming—or Virginia, Iowa, Louisiana, or Idaho for that matter. I know that our victories in all of these states demonstrate a rejection of this kind of petty, divisive campaigning.

But the fact remains that Senator Clinton's campaign will continue to attack us using the same old Washington playbook. And now that John McCain is the Republican nominee, we are forced to campaign on two fronts.

Thank you, Barack

20080312-01	19:24	India	Fw: AVAAZ Petition: Stop Using Food for Fuel; Energy
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"Increased demand for biofuels is driving up food prices and accelerating climate change, as rainforests are destroyed to grow fuel. But with strong global sustainability standards, we can ensure that biofuels help, rather than hurt."

http://www.avaaz.org/en/biofuel_standards_now/9.php?cl=60466009

20080312-02	23:51	SteveM	Fw: "Say What, Barrack?"
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[Source of original email unknown. Largely debunked by Snopes.com:
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/saywhat.asp> —SteveB]

"Say What, Barrack?" by Paul R. Hollrah

Tuning in to C-Span recently, I found myself listening to a speech by Senator Barack Hussein Obama, Jr. He was standing in the pulpit of a black church in Selma, Alabama, and as I studied the body language of the dozen or so black ministers standing behind the senator, I couldn't help but be reminded of the little head-bobbing dolls that people used to place in the rear windows of their 1957 Chevrolets. If their reactions are any indication, the new "Schlickmeister" of the Democrat Party is actually a pretty accomplished public speaker.

However, as he spoke, I found my b.s. alarm going off, repeatedly. But I couldn't quite figure out why until I actually read excerpts of his speech several days later. Here's part of what he said:

...something happened back here in Selma, Alabama. Something happened in Birmingham that sent out what Bobby Kennedy called, "ripples of hope all around the world." Something happened when a bunch of women decided they were going to walk instead of ride the bus after a long day of doing somebody else's laundry, looking after somebody else's children.

When (black) men who had PhD's decided 'that's enough' and 'we're going to stand up for our dignity,' that sent a shout across oceans so that my grandfather began to imagine something different for his son. His son, who grew up herding goats in a small village in Africa could suddenly set his sights a little higher and believe that maybe a black man in this world had a chance.

So the Kennedy's decided we're going to do an airlift. We're going to go to Africa and start bringing young Africans over to this country and give them scholarships to study so they can learn what a wonderful country America is.

This young man named Barack Obama got one of those tickets and came over to this country. He met this woman whose great great-great-great- grandfather had owned slaves; but she had a good idea there was some craziness going on because they looked at each other and they decided that we know that, (in) the world as it has been, it might not be possible for us to get together and have a child. There was something stirring across the country because of what happened in Selma, Alabama, because some folks are willing to march across a bridge. So they got together and Barack Obama Jr. Was born. So don't tell me I don't have a claim on Selma, Alabama. Don't tell me I'm not coming home to Selma, Alabama.

Okay, so what's wrong with that? It all sounds good. But is it?

Obama told his audience that, because some folks had the courage to "march across a bridge" in Selma, Alabama, his mother, a white woman from Kansas, and his father, a black Muslim from Africa, took heart. It gave them the courage to get married and have a child. The problem with that characterization is that Barrack Obama, Jr., was born on Aug. 4, 1961, while the first of three marches across that bridge in Selma didn't occur until Mar. 7, 1965, at least five years after Obama's parents met.

Obama went on to tell his audience that the Kennedys, Jack and Bobby, decided to do an airlift. They would bring some young Africans over so that they could be educated and learn all about America. His grandfather heard that call and sent his son, Barack Obama, Sr., to America.

The problem with that scenario is that, having been born in Aug., 1961, the future senator was not conceived until sometime in Nov., 1960. So if this African grandfather heard words that "sent a shout across oceans," inspiring him to send his goat-herder son to America, it was not a Democrat Jack Kennedy he heard, nor his brother Bobby, it was a Republican President, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Obama's speech is reminiscent of Al Gore's claim of having invented the Internet, Hillary Clinton's claim of having been named after the first man to climb Mt. Everest, even though she was born five years and seven months before Sir Edmund climbed the mountain, and John Kerry's imaginary trip to Cambodia.

As one of my black friends, Eddie Huff, has said, "We need to ask some very serious questions of the senator from Illinois. It's not enough to be black, it's not enough to be articulate, and it's not enough to be eloquent and a media darling. The only question will be how deaf an ear, or how blind an eye, will people turn in order to turn a frog into a prince."

"Life's tough.....it's even tougher if you're stupid."—John Wayne

20080312-03	17:52	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton
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Dear SteveB:

When we won Iowa, the Clinton campaign said it's not the number of states you win, it's "a contest for delegates." When we won a significant lead in delegates, they said it's really about which states you win. When we won South Carolina, they discounted the votes of African-Americans. When we won predominantly white, rural states like Idaho, Utah, and Nebraska, they said those didn't count because they won't be competitive in the general election. When we won in Washington State, Wisconsin, and Missouri—general election battlegrounds where polls show Barack is a stronger candidate against John McCain—the Clinton campaign attacked those voters as "latte-sipping" elitists.

And now that we've won more than twice as many states, the Clinton spin is that only certain states really count. But the facts are clear. For all their attempts to discount, distract, and distort, we have won more delegates, more states, and more votes.

Meanwhile, more than half of the votes that Senator Clinton has won so far have come from just five states. And in four of these five states, polls show that Barack would be a stronger general election candidate against McCain than Clinton.

We're ready to take on John McCain. But we also need to build operations in places like Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, and Oregon that will hold their primaries in April and May. Barack Obama needs your support to fight this two-front battle. Please make a donation of \$25 right now.

With our overwhelming victory in the Mississippi primary yesterday, our lead in earned delegates is now wider than it was on Mar. 3rd, before the contests in Ohio and Texas. And thanks to your help, we have dramatically increased our support among so-called "superdelegates"—Governors, Members of Congress, and party officials who have a vote at the Democratic National Convention in August. As the number of remaining delegates dwindles, Hillary Clinton's path to the nomination seems less and less plausible.

Now that Mississippi is behind us, we move on to the next ten contests. The Clinton campaign would like to focus your attention only on Pennsylvania—a state in which they have already declared that they are "unbeatable." But Pennsylvania is only one of those 10 remaining contests, each important in terms of allocating delegates and ultimately deciding who our nominee will be.

We have activated our volunteer networks in each of these upcoming battlegrounds. We're putting staff on the ground and building our organization everywhere. The key to victory is not who wins the states that the Clinton campaign thinks are important. The key to victory is realizing that every vote and every voter matters. Throughout this entire process, the Clinton campaign has cherry-picked states, diminished caucuses, and moved the goal posts to create a shifting, twisted

rationale for why they should win the nomination despite winning fewer primaries, fewer states, fewer delegates, and fewer votes.

We must stand up to the same-old Washington politics. Barack has won twice as many states, large and small, in every region of the country—many by landslide margins. And this movement is expanding the base of the Democratic Party by attracting new voters in record numbers and bringing those who had lost hope back into the political process. Push back against the spin and help build the operation to win more delegates in these upcoming contests.

Thank you for your support and for everything you've done to build a movement that is engaging voters and winning contests in every part of this country.

David Plouffe, Campaign Manager, Obama for America
Paid for by Obama for America [Not "America for Obama"?—SteveB

20080316-01	09:55	SteveB	"Drug Trade Tyranny on the Border" Drug Wars
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"Drug Trade Tyranny on the Border" by Manuel Roig-Franzia, the *Washington Post*

Mar. 16, 2008, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/15/AR2008031501013.html?hpid=topnews>)

(Mexican cartels maintain grasp with weapons, cash and savagery.)

(TIJUANA, Mexico) The killers prowled through Loma Bonita in the pre-dawn chill. In silence, they navigated a labyrinth of wood shacks at the crest of a dirt lane in the blighted Tijuana neighborhood, police say. They were looking for Margarito Saldaña, an easygoing 43-year-old district police commander. They found a house full of sleeping people.

Neighbors quivered at the crack of AK-47 assault rifles blasting inside Saldaña's tiny home. Rafael García, an unemployed laborer who lives nearby, recalled thinking it was "a fireworks show," then sliding under his bed in fear.

In murdering not only Saldaña, but also his wife, Sandra, and their 12-year-old daughter, Valeria, the Loma Bonita killers violated a rarely broken rule of Mexico's drug cartel underworld: Family should remain free from harm. The slayings capped five harrowing hours during which the assassins methodically hunted down and murdered two other police officers and mistakenly killed a 3-year-old boy and his mother.

The brutality of what unfolded here in the overnight hours of Jan. 14 and early Jan. 15 is a grim hallmark of a crisis that has cast a pall over the United States' southern neighbor. Events in three border cities over the past three months illustrate the military and financial power of Mexico's cartels and the extent of their reach into a society shaken by fear.

More than 20,000 Mexican troops and federal police are engaged in a multi-front war with the private armies of rival drug lords, a conflict that is being waged most fiercely along the 2,000-mile length of the U.S.-Mexico border. The proximity of the violence has drawn in the Bush administration, which has proposed a \$500 million annual aid package to help President Felipe Calderón combat what a Government Accountability Office report estimates is Mexico's \$23 billion a year drug trade.

A total of more than 4,800 Mexicans were slain in 2006 and 2007, making the murder rate in each of those years twice that of 2005. Law enforcement officials and journalists, politicians and peasants have been gunned down in the wave of violence, which includes mass executions, such as the killings of five people whose bodies were found on a ranch outside Tijuana this month.

Like the increasing number of Mexicans heading over the border in fear, the violence itself is spilling into the United States, where a Border Patrol agent was recently killed while trying to stop suspected traffickers.

Drawing on firepower, savage intimidation and cash, the cartels have come to control key parts of the border, securing smuggling routes for 90 percent of the cocaine flowing into the United States, according to the State Department. At the same time, Mexican soldiers roam streets in armored personnel carriers, attack helicopters patrol the skies, and boats ply the coastal waters.

"The situation is deteriorating," Victor Clark, a Tijuana human rights activist and drug expert, said in an interview. "Drug traffickers are waging a terror campaign. The security of the nation is at stake."

Dominated by a private army

More than 1,900 miles southeast of Tijuana, the city of Reynosa stretches along the Rio Grande, across from south Texas. This is Gulf cartel country, a region dominated by the cartel's private army, Los Zetas. Their arsenal befits a military brigade, exceeding those of some Mexican army units.

Led by Heriberto Lazcano Lazcano, Los Zetas are a highly disciplined mercenary squad composed of former elite Mexican troops, including officers trained by the U.S. military before they deserted. The group has become an obsession of Calderón's administration, which has sent more than a thousand troops to Reynosa and neighboring cities. Soldiers crowd the slender canal bridges that crisscross Reynosa, stopping drivers at random and staring across the cityscape with their fingers on the triggers of heavy weapons. The tense atmosphere has led to mistakes.

On Feb. 16, soldiers fatally shot Sergio Meza Varela, a 28-year-old with no apparent ties to the drug trade, when the car he was riding in didn't stop at a checkpoint. "You're scared to leave your house," Alejandra Salinas, Meza's cousin, said in an interview outside the family tire shop. "We're just in the way."

In Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez and Nuevo Laredo, the growing Sinaloa cartel is fighting rivals over smuggling routes. But in Reynosa, police say, only Mexican soldiers threaten the Gulf cartel's control. To prepare for battle, Los Zetas have stocked safe houses with antitank weapons, assault rifles, grenades and other heavy weapons, including some that Mexican law enforcement authorities believe once belonged to the U.S. Army.

"How can I fight them?" said Juan Jose Muñoz Salinas, Reynosa's police chief. "It's impossible." On Feb. 7, soldiers stormed the dusty "El Mezquito" ranch outside Miguel Aleman, west of Reynosa, and found one of the largest illegal arsenals in recent memory: 89 assault rifles, 83,355 rounds of ammunition, and plastic explosives capable of demolishing buildings. Two days later in nearby Nuevo Laredo, soldiers found a weapons cache that included eight military uniforms to be used as disguises. The mounting evidence that cartels have infiltrated many border police forces has prompted drastic action.

In Reynosa, soldiers disarmed the entire police force in January, leaving them without weapons for 19 days while ballistics tests were conducted. Police officers, who make \$625 a month, were also forced to provide voice samples for comparison with recordings of threats made over police radios, Mayor Oscar Luebbert Gutiérrez said in an interview.

"It wasn't worth it," said Muñoz Salinas, the police chief. "They come after us, but it's other authorities that are really involved. Look at the state police, the federal police and the military."

The enemy is in the house

It was New Year's Day in Tijuana, the hilly city at America's busiest border crossing. City workers prepped for celebrations, but Jesus Alberto Rodriguez Meraz and Saul Ovalle Guerrero, both veteran police officers, had other plans. They were going to get rich.

The officers stole one ton of marijuana from the Arellano Felix drug cartel. But before they could sell the load they were kidnapped. Four days later their bodies were found, Tijuana's new police chief, Jesus Alberto Capella, said in an interview. The killings barely registered in Mexico, numbed by an avalanche of at least 30 police officer murders in the past three months and dozens more in the past year. Their case illuminates the pervasive police corruption created by drug money. One of every two police officers murdered in Mexico today is directly involved with drug gangs, according to estimates by police officials, prosecutors and drug experts.

Capella, nicknamed "Tijuana Rambo" because he fought his way out of an assassination attempt shortly before taking office, estimates that 15 percent of the city's 2,300 police officers work for drug cartels, earning a monthly stipend as body guards, kidnapers or assassins. In Baja California alone, Mexican justice officials estimate that 30 percent of the local and federal police force is on a cartel payroll. "We have the enemy in our house," Capella said.

The killings in Loma Bonita here were related to a police corruption case, Capella and other police officials said. A few days earlier, Tijuana police had killed an officer working as a bodyguard for a drug gang that tried to rob an armored car.

Cartel assassins, using police radios, vowed revenge. Within a week, Saldaña, his family, and two other officers had been murdered.

Some of the killings have come with specific messages taunting Mexican authorities. During one week in mid-February, six bodies were found with signs lashed to them that included information such as the phone number and address of the Mexican army office set up to receive tips about organized crime. According to analysts, such "narco-messages," some of which are carved into the bodies, are intended to keep residents from reporting tips.

The decline of the Arellano Felix cartel's dominance of Tijuana has had the unexpected effect of deepening police corruption. After one brother was assassinated and two others were arrested, a war erupted because the cartel's new leadership—including a sister, Enedina—refused to share territory with the Sinaloa cartel, a police official said on condition of anonymity. Once loyal to the Arellano Felix cartel, some police officers switched sides.

"The police became armed wings of the warring cartels," the police official said.

At the same time, tighter border enforcement following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks has made it harder for cartels to smuggle drugs into the United States. So the cartels developed a local market by giving out free samples of drugs, according to Clark, the Tijuana-based drug expert and human rights activist.

The estimated number of addicts in Tijuana doubled from 100,000 in 2004 to 200,000 in 2007, Clark said. The number of small stores or houses where drugs are sold increased fivefold—to 20,000 outlets—over that time. Each outlet pays protection money to police, so their proliferation meant more payoffs.

In response, authorities in Baja California and several other border states have begun giving police lie detector tests. The questions range from the innocuous to queries such as "Have you ever worked with a drug trafficker?"

Rommel Moreno Manjarrez, Baja California's attorney general, said in an interview that out of every 1,000 officers tested, 700 fail.

"It's impossible for the narco to succeed without the help of the police," he said. "The success that the narco has been having is because of the police."

Transformed by drug money

About 20 minutes south of Tijuana, high-rise condominiums line the coast near Rosarito Beach. Once a sleepy hideaway for Hollywood stars, the town had over time exploded into a gaudy party magnet, drawing tourists to the beach and the studio where the movies *Titanic* and *Master and Commander* were filmed. Rosarito's further transformation has been propelled by drug money and culture, turning the surfer's haven into a key transshipment point for cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamines.

City hall is now an armed encampment. Soldiers in armored personnel carriers guard the front entrance. The new police chief, Jorge Eduardo Montero Alvarez, now occupies an office inside the cordon. His headquarters was rendered uninhabitable by a December attack. Investigators believe Rosarito Beach police—working on behalf of the drug gangs—were behind the attack, which killed one of Montero Alvarez's bodyguards. Days later, Mexican soldiers disarmed the entire 149-officer Rosarito police force.

"I'm more afraid of the police than the narcos," said Jorge Luis Quiñones, a Rosarito Beach physician and businessman, reflecting a feeling that has built for years among many of the surrounding area's 150,000 residents.

In June 2006, three Rosarito Beach police officers were beheaded. For Hugo Torres Chabert, scion of the wealthy family that founded the famed Rosarito Beach Hotel, it was a grim wakeup call. Convinced that almost every level of the city's government had become tainted with drug money, Torres Chabert ran for mayor and won. Soon after taking office last December, he fired 80 of the city's 500 employees. But he says he hasn't been able to press for arrests for lack of evidence.

'Corrupt, but not stupid'

"They were corrupt, but not stupid," he said.

To the children of Rosarito Beach, narco gunmen had already become local heroes because they drove the fanciest cars, wore the latest styles and acted like they owned the town. "Black commandos," the drug cartel hit men, began openly flashing their weapons, snorting cocaine and strutting through the beach town.

"It became impossible to avoid drug dealers—your kids go to school with their kids," Aurelio Castañeda, a Rosarito Beach bar owner and merchants association official, said in an interview. "You'd go to a bathroom in a bar, and they'd be selling cocaine. They don't even try to hide it, and there was nothing you could do about it, nobody you could turn to."

Castañeda's once-busy bar, El Torito, is often empty. He says his business is down 80 percent since 2001, when Rosarito Beach's drug violence spiked, scaring off most surfers and other tourists. Beyond the flash of the bars and hotels, Rosarito Beach is a warren of impoverished neighborhoods where developers, after paying off city officials, did not bother to install water lines or electrical connections. The dismal living conditions created fertile recruiting grounds for drug traffickers, who have found many willing to "mule" their product across the border for \$500 a trip.

But great quantities of drugs stay in Rosarito and are sold at hundreds of convenience stores or private homes that thrive under police protection. Not long ago, a Baja California journalist began digging into the problem. The cartels found out and, in a series of phone calls, threatened to kill him. It wasn't the first time. He'd had enough. Terrified, the journalist left the business.

"I was saying to myself, 'This is an important subject,'" the journalist said on condition of anonymity, fearing for his safety. "But I wasn't willing to lose my life over it."

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20080318-01	18:00	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Video of Speech
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Dear SteveB:

Barack Obama just finished a major speech on race in America and building a more perfect union. You should see it and read it for yourself:

<http://my.barackobama.com/hisownwords>.

Please forward this message to everyone you know.

Thank you, David Plouffe

Paid for by Obama for America

20080318-02	18:24	SteveM	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
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Dear SteveB,

Look what I just found on Excite.com:

<http://apnews.excite.com/article/20080318/D8VG3O600.html> [Bad link. —SteveB]

Now you'll find out just how little she [Hillary Clinton. —SteveB] did as First Lady, a modest legacy of 35 years of experience!

20080319-01	09:19	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
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Dear SteveM,

Definitely, the Clintons don't want this stuff to get out. Finally, lately, I've been hearing newspeople start to talk about Hillary's lack of experience. They'll say like, "What was it she did? Oh, ya, the health

care debacle." Which, other than "day one", is all the woman can talk about. So her vast experience takes the actual form of one enormous failure.

And that's exactly how devious the Clintons are. They thought, "Hey, we could get attacked over this lack of experience thing. Maybe we'd better just go on the offensive and make the pillar of our campaign be that you are the most experienced candidate." Brilliant, and it has largely worked—that's how stupid we are—but totally dishonest and corrupt!

Hey, look out, Hillary! It looks like that pillar may be crumbling down on top of you. (Standing O)

Don't discriminate...hire an illegal!

20080319-02	20:18	B. Obama	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Iraq War
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Dear SteveB:

Five years ago today, President George W. Bush launched a war that should never have been authorized based on faulty premises and bad intelligence.

This war has now lasted longer than World War I, World War II, or the Civil War. Nearly four thousand Americans have given their lives. Thousands more have been wounded. Even under the best-case scenarios, this war will cost American taxpayers well over a trillion dollars.

And where are we for all of this sacrifice?

We are less safe and less able to shape events abroad. We are divided at home, and our alliances around the world have been strained. The threats of a new century have roiled the waters of peace and stability, and yet America remains anchored in Iraq. I am running for President because it's time to turn the page on a failed ideology and a fundamentally flawed political strategy, so that we can make pragmatic judgments to keep our country safe.

That's what I did when I stood up and opposed this war from the start and said that we needed to finish the fight against al Qaeda. And that's what I'll do as President of the United States.

Senator Clinton says that she and Senator McCain have passed a "Commander-in-Chief test"—not because of the judgments they've made, but because of the years they've spent in Washington.

She made a similar argument when she said her vote for war was based on her experience at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

But here is the stark reality: there is a security gap in this country—a gap between the rhetoric of those who claim to be tough on national security, and the reality of growing insecurity caused by their decisions.

It is time to have a debate with Senator McCain about the future of our national security. And the way to win that debate and keep America safe is to offer a clear contrast—a clean break from the failed policies and politics of the past.

Nowhere is that break more badly needed than in Iraq.

The judgment that matters most on Iraq—and on any decision to deploy military force—is the judgment made first.

If you believe we are fighting the right war, then the problems we face are purely tactical in nature. That is what Senator McCain wants to discuss—tactics. What he and the Administration have failed to present is an overarching strategy: how the war in Iraq enhances our long-term security, or will in the future.

That's why this Administration cannot answer the simple question posed by Senator John Warner in hearings last year: Are we safer because of this war? And that is why Senator McCain can argue—as he did last year—that we couldn't leave Iraq because violence was up, and then argue this year that we can't leave Iraq because violence is down.

When you have no overarching strategy, there is no clear definition of success.

Success comes to be defined as the ability to maintain a flawed policy indefinitely. Here is the truth: fighting a war without end will not force the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. And fighting in a war without end will not make the American people safer.

When I am Commander-in-Chief, I will set a new goal on Day One: I will end this war. Not because politics compels it. Not because our troops cannot bear the burden—as heavy as it is. But because it is the right thing to do for our national security, and it will ultimately make us safer.

Here are the core elements of my strategy to address our critical national security challenges in the 21st century:

1. End the war in Iraq, removing our troops at a pace of 1 to 2 combat brigades per month;
2. Finally finish the fight against the Taliban, root out al Qaeda and invest in the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, while making aid to the Pakistani government conditional;
3. Act aggressively to stop nuclear proliferation and to secure all loose nuclear materials around the world;
4. Double our foreign assistance to cut extreme poverty in half;
5. Invest in a clean energy future to wean the U.S. off of foreign oil and to lead the world against the threat of global climate change;
6. Rebuild our military capability by increasing the number of soldiers, marines, and special forces troops, and insist on adequate training and time off between deployments;
7. Renew American diplomacy by talking to our adversaries as well as our friends; increasing the size of the Foreign Service and the Peace Corps; and creating an America's Voice Corps.

Please take a minute to show your support for this plan:

<http://my.barackobama.com/fiveyearslater>.

We are at a defining moment in our history.

This must be the election when America comes together behind a common purpose on behalf of our security and our values.

That is what we do as Americans. It's how we founded a republic based on freedom, and faced down fascism. It's how we defended democracy through a Cold War, and shined a light of hope bright enough to be seen in the darkest corners of the world. When America leads with principle and pragmatism, hope can triumph over fear. It is time, once again, for America to lead.

Thank you, Barack Obama

20080320-01	18:31	D. Plouffe	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Hillary Clinton
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Dear SteveB:

Senator Clinton and Senator McCain are reading from the same political playbook as they attack Barack on foreign policy. They have both criticized Barack's commitment to act against top al Qaeda terrorists if others can't or won't act. And they have both dismissed his call for renewed diplomacy as naïve while mistakenly standing behind George Bush's policy of non-engagement that just isn't working.

But most of all—after five years of overwhelming evidence that we are less safe, less able to shape events abroad, and more divided at home—Senator Clinton and Senator McCain are failing to address the consequences of a war they both supported that should have never been authorized and never been waged.

We need a leader who had the judgment to oppose this war before it began and who has a clear plan to end it. But Barack is facing a two-front battle against Senator Clinton and Senator McCain. We knew at the beginning of this campaign that we'd be up against the full force of the conventional thinking that grips Washington. But no one could have imagined it would go on this long, or that we'd have to fight this battle on two fronts at the same time.

Senator Clinton's campaign, with her chances of winning dwindling and our delegate lead even larger than it was before her so-called comeback on Mar. 4th, has adopted a "kitchen-sink" strategy to throw everything they can at us. Her campaign has made it clear they will do and say anything to win this nomination.

Senator McCain, now the presumptive Republican nominee, is already running his general election campaign. He's so eager to justify another 100 years of war in Iraq and drum up conflict with Iran that he and his campaign have been making sloppy and woefully false assertions about links between Iran and al Qaeda in Iraq.

We've got to take on both Senator Clinton and Senator McCain at the same time.

Yesterday, Barack laid out a clear plan to make America more secure and end the war in Iraq. Today, he laid out the economic costs of the war that Senator Clinton and Senator McCain supported. In both speeches—and in his speech on race in America earlier this week—Barack Obama demonstrated that he is the candidate with the courage and judgment to tackle the challenges we face.

The choice Americans have in this election is clear—and your support right now sends a message to those who support the status quo that it is time for a new kind of leadership.

Thank you,
David Plouffe, Campaign Manager, Obama for America
Paid for by Obama for America

20080324-01	21:00	SteveM	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
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Dear SteveB,

The experience that she she's always speaking of, is "exaggeration" and "lying". Which serves a politician of her ilk.

20080324-02	17:46	G. Cohen	Barack Obama; 2008 Montana Primary
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Dear SteveB:

My name is Gabe Cohen, and I'm the State Director for the Obama campaign in Montana.

I'm writing to remind you that the Montana primary is coming up soon—on June 3rd—and to let you know how you can get involved in our campaign in the Big Sky State.

Organization is crucial here in Montana, and now's the time to start building the grassroots network that will help Barack succeed on Primary Day.

Sign up to organize for Barack in your community: <http://mt.barackobama.com/mtvolunteer>.

After more than 40 contests all across the country, Barack has won more than twice as many states, the most delegates, and the most votes. But this race is still close, and the Montana primary is one of only ten remaining contests.

Supporters across the state are needed to reach out to potential voters, organize their communities, and make sure as many supporters as possible are ready and excited for Primary Day.

No prior political experience is necessary. All you need is a hunger for change—and a willingness to turn your enthusiasm into action.

Our campaign is just getting started here in Montana, and you'll be hearing a lot more from us as the primary approaches.

We're looking forward to working with you and getting to know you in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, Gabe Cohen, Montana State Director, Obama for America

P.S.—Absentee balloting is now available in Montana. Download a ballot now. Any registered voter may vote by absentee ballot, even if he or she is able to vote in person on Election Day. Paid for by Obama for America.

20080326-01	10:18	V. Buchanan	Illegal Immigration Survey
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Dear SteveB:

The U.S. House of Representatives may soon consider an immigration enforcement bill that would add 8,000 new border patrol agents, improve border security and require that employers verify that their workers are legally in the United States.

Do you support or oppose this legislation to secure our borders and prevent illegal immigration?

Congressman Vern Buchanan, Representing the 13th District of Florida:

<http://buchanan.house.gov/>.

Sarasota District Office, 235 N. Orange Avenue, Suite 201, Sarasota, FL 34236, ph: (941) 951-6643, fx: (941) 951-2972

20080401-01	19:50	SteveB	"The Tall Tale of Tuzla" Hillary Clinton
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"The Tall Tale of Tuzla" by Christopher Hitchens, Slate

Mar. 31, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/fighting_words/2008/03/the_tall_tale_of_tuzla.html)

(Hillary Clinton's Bosnian misadventure should disqualify her from the presidency, but the airport landing is the least of it.)

The punishment visited on Sen. Hillary Clinton for her flagrant, hysterical, repetitive, pathological lying about her visit to Bosnia should be much heavier than it has yet been and should be exacted for much more than just the lying itself. There are two kinds of deliberate and premeditated deceit, commonly known as *suggestio falsi* and *suppressio veri*. (Neither of them is covered by the additionally lying claim of having "misspoken.") The first involves what seems to be most obvious in the present case: the putting forward of a bogus or misleading account of events. But the second, and often the more serious, means that the liar in question has also attempted to bury or to obscure something that actually is true. Let us examine how Sen. Clinton has managed to commit both of these offenses to veracity and decency and how in doing so she has rivaled, if not indeed surpassed, the disbarred and perjured hack who is her husband and tutor.

I remember disembarking at the Sarajevo airport in the summer of 1992 after an agonizing flight on a U.N. relief plane that had had to "corkscrew" its downward approach in order to avoid Serbian flak and ground fire. As I hunched over to scuttle the distance to the terminal, a mortar shell fell as close to me as I ever want any mortar shell to fall. The vicious noise it made is with me still. And so is the shock I felt at seeing a civilized and multicultural European city bombarded round the clock by an ethnoreligious militia under the command of fascistic barbarians. I didn't like the Clinton candidacy even then, but I have to report that many Bosnians were enthused by Bill Clinton's pledge, during that ghastly summer, to abandon the hypocritical and sordid neutrality of the George H.W. Bush/James Baker regime and to come to the defense of the victims of ethnic cleansing.

I am recalling these two things for a reason. First, and even though I admit that I did once later misidentify a building in Sarajevo from a set of photographs, I can tell you for an absolute certainty that it would be quite impossible to imagine that one had undergone that experience at the airport if one actually had not. Yet Sen. Clinton, given repeated chances to modify her absurd claim to have operated under fire while in the company of her then-16-year-old daughter and a

U.S.O. entertainment troupe, kept up a stone-faced and self-loving insistence that, yes, she had exposed herself to sniper fire in the cause of gaining moral credit and, perhaps to be banked for the future, national-security "experience." This must mean either a) that she lies without conscience or reflection; or b) that she is subject to fantasies of an illusory past; or c) both of the above. Any of the foregoing would constitute a disqualification for the presidency of the United States.

Yet this is only to underline the YouTube version of events and the farcical or stupid or Howard Wolfson (take your pick) aspects of the story. But here is the historical rather than personal aspect, which is what you should keep your eye on. Note the date of Sen. Clinton's visit to Tuzla. She went there in Mar., 1996. By that time, the critical and tragic phase of the Bosnia war was effectively over, as was the greater part of her husband's first term. What had happened in the interim? In particular, what had happened to the 1992 promise, four years earlier, that genocide in Bosnia would be opposed by a Clinton administration?

In the event, President Bill Clinton had not found it convenient to keep this promise. Let me quote from Sally Bedell Smith's admirable book on the happy couple, *For Love of Politics: Taking the advice of Al Gore and National Security Advisor Tony Lake*, Bill agreed to a proposal to bomb Serbian military positions while helping the Muslims acquire weapons to defend themselves—the fulfillment of a pledge he had made during the 1992 campaign.

But instead of pushing European leaders, he directed Secretary of State Warren Christopher merely to consult with them. When they balked at the plan, Bill quickly retreated, creating a "perception of drift." The key factor in Bill's policy reversal was Hillary, who was said to have "deep misgivings" and viewed the situation as "a Vietnam that would compromise health-care reform." The United States took no further action in Bosnia, and the "ethnic cleansing" by the Serbs was to continue for four more years, resulting in the deaths of more than 250,000 people.

I can personally witness to the truth of this, too. I can remember, first, one of the Clintons' closest personal advisers—Sidney Blumenthal—referring with acid contempt to Warren Christopher as "a blend of Pontius Pilate with Ichabod Crane." I can remember, second, a meeting with Clinton's then-Secretary of Defense Les Aspin at the British Embassy. When I challenged him on the sellout of the Bosnians, he drew me aside and told me that he had asked the White House for permission to land his own plane at Sarajevo airport, if only as a gesture of reassurance that the United States had not forgotten its commitments. The response from the happy couple was unambiguous: He was to do no such thing, lest it distract attention from the first lady's health care "initiative."

It's hardly necessary for me to point out that the United States did not receive national health care in return for its acquiescence in the murder of tens of thousands of European civilians. But perhaps that is the least of it. Were I to be asked if Sen. Clinton has ever lost any sleep over those heaps of casualties, I have the distinct feeling that I could guess the answer. She has no tears for anyone but herself. In the end, and over her strenuous objections, the United States and its allies did rescue our honor and did put an end to Slobodan Milosevic and his state-supported terrorism. Yet instead of preserving a polite reticence about this, or at least an appropriate reserve, Sen. Clinton now has the obscene urge to claim the raped and slaughtered people of Bosnia as if their misery and death were somehow to be credited to her account! Words begin to fail one at this point. Is there no such thing as shame? Is there no decency at last? Let the memory of the truth, and the exposure of the lie, at least make us resolve that no Clinton ever sees the inside of the White House again.

<u>20080402-01</u>	09:21	Ben	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Bolivia
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Dear SteveB,

That was pretty good. Too bad it wasn't published in the *Washington Post*. I knew about this, and found it pretty appalling. Remember, I was a big fan of Bill. I still think Bill was the best, and best-equipped, leader for America we've had since Kennedy. I liked Jimmy, too, but he was unfortunately not as powerful a speaker as he was a thinker. (Please don't flame at me about all this. I still AM a big fan of Bill.) And to be honest, I was a minor fan of Hillary's, as a First Lady.

I LIKED the health care proposal she made then—better than her current one—and believe that a strong First Lady makes a better White House. But as I watched Hillary buff herself up as a New York Senator, and aim herself at the presidency, my feelings began to become mixed. Personally, I'd be delighted to elect a woman to the White House. But I don't think she's the one I want to see there, first. She's certainly smart, and she's a fine speaker. But I've seen rough edges, and

shortcomings, and I will not tolerate bold-faced mine's-bigger-than-yours tall tales and lying. Big negative points on this deal.

I wish it had mainstream national coverage. Obama, despite his relative inexperience, is still seeming like a genuinely honest man, with ideals (if not fully refined ideas) and energy. Even if he's a little off base on some things, his energy and idealism, coupled with the [admittedly weaker than in days past] checks and balances of the rest of the system, give me at least some hope. He's not ideal. He could be a disaster. But he might work out really well, too.

Now, if only we can get the courts un-padded, restore the Bill of Rights, restore the economy to something that encourages innovation and manufacturing once again, recreate a representative governmental system devoid of the corrupting influences of business, industry and the military, and prosecute the criminal element among our elected officials, maybe—just maybe—America can become strong again, and gradually regain the world's respect so quickly sold away over the last eight years. Maybe.

Tell me more about Bolivia some day. What's the corruption level like there...?

20080403-01 14:58 SteveB Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary & Bill Clinton, Bolivia

Dear Ben,

Some other good info: <http://www.northstarwriters.com/dc163.htm>.

Flame you? I'll only say you are comically gentle on the Clintons. I enjoy it.

Bolivian corruption? Haha. Americans are Puritans, Ben. The Latins are so much more corrupt period, in the shallow sense. The Governor of Puerto Rico was just arrested. Look at the lawlessness at the Mexican border, look at Chavez, and in Bolivia Evo Morales is as stupid, uneducated, and corrupt as any communist to ever come along. Yet this corruption is minor compared to American political corruption via campaign financing, lobbying, regulatory swinging doors, etc.

Yet the country is still doing better than the dollar. Go figure. We aren't so corrupt as we are sold-out.

Take care. Go Barack! Go Johnnie Boy!

20080413-01 09:02 SteveB "The Hillary Deathwatch: Bill Clinton Opens the Old Bosnia Wound"

"The Hillary Deathwatch: Bill Clinton Opens the Old Bosnia Wound" by Christopher Beam, *Slate*

Apr. 11, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/deathwatch/2008/04/the_hillary_deathwatch_13.html)

Bill Clinton turns the conversation back to his wife's biggest weakness, Obama ticks off the grass roots, and Hillary laughs again—always bad news—sinking her back down 0.5 points to 9.7 percent.

Hillary Clinton's Bosnia wound was this close to healing—the cast was off, the skin had closed, she was just starting to walk again unassisted— when Bill decided to rip it open again. Twice! At a stop Thursday in Boonville, Ind., Clinton defended his wife (unprompted, mind you) by saying, "There was a lot of fulminating because Hillary, one time late at night when she was exhausted, misstated and immediately apologized for it, what happened to her in Bosnia in 1995."

Never mind that she repeated the story several times, that the attention-getting Mar. 17 speech occurred in the morning, and that she by no means "immediately apologized"—quite the opposite, it was a full week before she acknowledged that she "misspoke," which is not the same as apologizing. Oh, and the trip was in 1996, not 1995.

Damage control, go! The Clinton camp hastened to explain Friday that it was "her mistake and she takes responsibility for it." But the toothpaste was out of the tube. Bill has demonstrated an uncanny ability to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. A quick review: He compared Obama to Jesse Jackson; he called Obama's opposition to the war a "fairy tale"; he exploded over Bill Richardson's Obama endorsement in a meeting with California superdelegates; and now he resurrects the most damaging story of the post-Feb. 5 race, if not the entire cycle. At this rate, he'll be caught in a janitor's closet with Geraldine Ferraro the day before Pennsylvania.

Luckily, Barack Obama is p*ssing off supporters, too. As California prepares its slate of delegates, both candidates are doing their best to weed out potential defectors. (Even pledged delegates can switch sides, remember?) Over the weekend, Clinton disqualified 40 people from the list. Obama, however, cut 900, angering a whole lot of Democrats. The campaign is now "revising" its list. In Pennsylvania, meanwhile, Obama has decided not to hand out "street money" to local party bosses. Apparently, it's a tradition in Philadelphia politics to furnish your campaign workers with small contributions. There's a word for this practice in other parts of the country—bribery—but, hey, when in Rome... Obama's refusal could rankle supporters in a place in which he desperately needs their help.

Meanwhile, another YouTube moment (read: televised humiliation) for Hillary. When a reporter asked her whether Bill Clinton's \$800,000 in speaking fees from the Colombian government might constitute a conflict of interest, she let loose the longest, most mirthful guffaw we've ever heard out of her. Because conflict of interest is comedy gold. She finally managed to answer the question: "I am against the trade deal. It doesn't matter who talks to me." She should really stick to crying.

And because no omen goes unnoted at Deathwatch, we're obligated to mention that a Clinton campaign office in Terre Haute, Ind., caught fire last night. Who needs tea leaves when we have flaming headquarters?

20080413-02	09:12	SteveB	"Do They Want Us to Hate Them?" Hillary & Bill Clinton
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["Do They Want Us to Hate Them?" by Emily Yoffe, Slate](#)

Apr. 11, 2008, (<http://img.slate.com/blogs/blogs/xxfactor/archive/2008/04/11/do-they-want-us-to-hate-them.aspx>)

Two items today that should go to the top of the "Clinton fatigue" greatest hits:

First is Hillary laughing at a reporter's question about Bill getting paid \$800,000 to speak at a group that supports the Colombia free-trade agreement (that the Democrats have taken a ridiculous anti-free-trade stand is another issue). The reporter asks if there is a conflict since Hillary has made a personal loan to her campaign, money that might be tainted by Bill's pro-free trade payments. She hoots at the question as if she's never heard anything more ludicrous. What's so funny? This is an issue at the heart of a potential third Clinton administration. It's vital to find out both where Bill's personal and presidential library money is from, and to have Hillary explain how her administration would keep him from going around the world getting paid for speeches (or even raising money for his charities) from groups or governments whose policies are in opposition to hers. That's not about perception of conflict of interest, that's about actual conflict of interest.

The second item is Bill's defense (now that the issue is finally dying down) of Hillary's description of the landing in Tuzla. He says her characterization of it was essentially correct—which is odd since she was forced to say she "misspoke." Then he says she may not have been completely accurate because she spoke late at night (wrong) and she's 60 years old and was exhausted. That's the way to get your wife elected president! (His behavior is consistent with my view that he doesn't want there to be another President Clinton.) The "she's old and tired" argument is perhaps not the strongest one to make especially since she's released two recent ads showing that a President Hillary Clinton will constantly be up at 3 a.m. taking calls about national security and home foreclosures.

20080413-03	09:14	SteveB	Video: Hillary Clinton Laughs Off Question
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<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/politics/2008/04/11/sot.clinton.laughs.off.pool>

20080415-01	18:20	B. Obama	Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries
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Dear SteveB:

In the last 24 hours we saw renewed attacks from Senator McCain and Senator Clinton.

The same John McCain who voted to extend the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest few said I was "out of touch" when I spoke about the frustrations that working people in this country are feeling.

Maybe that's to be expected from John McCain. But I was disappointed to hear the exact same talking points from my Democratic colleague, Hillary Clinton. When a candidate who believes lobbyists represent "real people" says that I'm out of touch, that's when you know politics is being played.

But in the last 24 hours we've also heard from people like you.

We asked some of the 1.3 million people who have already donated to this movement for change to share their story and promise to match your first donation to the campaign.

Here are some of the people waiting to match your donation:

Rick from Florida matched a donation of \$25, writing:

"I am a typical American just like you. I've served in the military, I work hard for a living and I want what's best for my country, not just me. I've seen what's happened over the last years and I am deeply saddened, worried and, yes, even bitter. But I see something in Barack Obama I have never seen in a presidential candidate in my own 45 years and the hope and inspiration I feel right now brings tears even as I write this to you. We don't get many chances like this. I don't have much to give but I give what I can because it's important and I ask that you please consider joining me with a few dollars that, added to the small contributions from millions of people like you and I, can be what it takes to really change things. Thanks in advance!"

Eve from Oregon matched a donation of \$50, writing:

"I'm thrilled that Barack recognizes how frustrated so many of us are by the politics of fear and cynicism we've seen these past seven years! But what really sets him apart is that he's not afraid to speak the truth and say what's not supposed to be spoken—that yes, we can love our country but also be frustrated with its direction and leadership.

When we started this campaign, we said we were going to do something different. We said we weren't going to take money from Washington lobbyists and PACs. And the cynics said we would never be able to compete against the status quo.

But what the cynics didn't anticipate was you.

They didn't understand that people like Rick, Eve, and you were tired of a politics that was about tearing each other down instead of lifting this country up.

And they didn't understand that you were going to finance this campaign with contributions of \$5, \$25 and \$50 at a time.

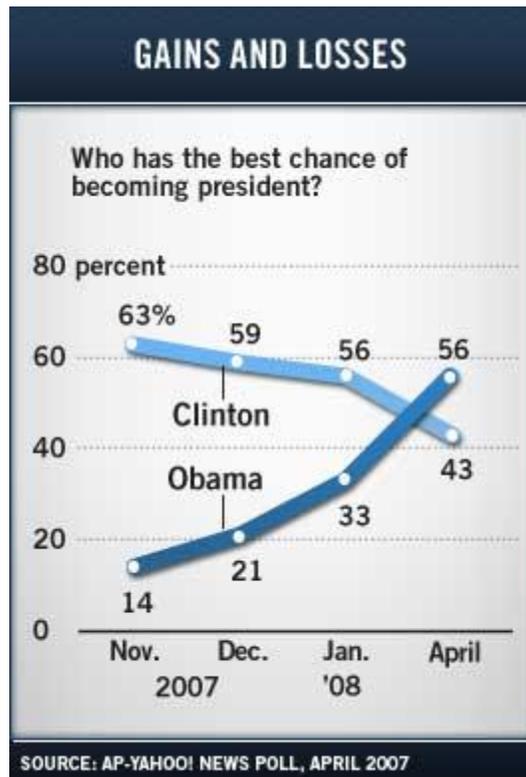
There's nothing elitist about the largest grassroots campaign in the history of our country—and you can prove that right now.

Make a matching donation of \$25:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/match>.

Thank you for all that you're doing to change our country.
Barack

Paid for by Obama for America.



[20080422-01](#) 09:38 SteveM Fw: Election? 2008 Primaries

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

From out there:

We in Denmark cannot figure out why you are even bothering to hold an election.

On one side, you have a b*tch who is a lawyer, married to a lawyer, and a lawyer who is married to a b*tch who is a lawyer.

On the other side, you have a true war hero married to a woman with a huge chest who owns a beer distributorship.

Is there a contest here?"

[20080423-01](#) 10:00 SteveB Re: Election? 2008 Primaries

Dear SteveM,

My goodness gracious sakes! I thought you had learned the lessons about political correctness by now, but this certainly does not show it! I understand that people in Arizona (and New Mexico...hell, Texas too) have trouble seeing things the way the rest of us do, but you should still probably be ashamed of yourself and take some classes in sensitivity training, if they have such a thing down there. I expect your next email will be a little more in line with the 21st Century, OK? Have a nice day.

[20080425-01](#) 15:04 SteveB To: Bill O'Reilly; 911 Operators

Dear Bill O'Reilly:

I know there are more important things happening, but I was very pleased to hear you speak out on your show last night on FOX against the 911 operator who thought she had to give the lady with the alligator in her kitchen the third-degree.

Many times recently, I have heard on TV even worse behavior on the part of these operators. Many times they are giving a lot of grief to the poor person calling. I do not understand why these people are not better trained to just get the facts and send help. They should act like the guy in the Brinks commercial. "What's the problem? Where are you? Help is on the way. Goodbye."

I for one am sick and tired of hearing them endanger lives by acting like suspicious cops or something. They all need nationwide sensitivity training. Who the heck do they think they are anyway?

Thanks again and keep up the good work.

PS: I tried to send this message through your billorielly.com website, but you wanted to charge me money. Shame on you!

—SteveB

20080426-01	12:20	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
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Dear Lianne,

Just wondering....are you as utterly sickened by the behavior, lies, and unbridled ambitions of the Clinton trailer-trash as I am?

20080501-01	09:56	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Evan Bayh & Hillary Clinton
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I am so disappointed in our Evan Bayh backing that lying, deceitful, do-anything-to-get-elected, full of "testicular fortitude", non-gas-pumping, not-able-to-get-her-own-coffee-at-a-gas-station, stupid policies megalomaniac—Hillary "Day One" Clinton and, of course, her cheating, so-close-to-impeached, lying, worthless husband—Bill "Monica Loving" Clinton.

Shame on you, Evan Bayh!

20080501-02	11:44	SteveB	Fw: Political Science for Dummies
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Political Science for Dummies

DEMOCRAT:

You have two cows. Your neighbor has none. You feel guilty for being successful. You push for higher taxes so the government can provide cows for everyone.

REPUBLICAN:

You have two cows. Your neighbor has none. So?

SOCIALIST:

You have two cows. The government takes one and gives it to your neighbor. You form a cooperative to tell him how to manage his cow.

COMMUNIST:

You have two cows. The government seizes both and provides you with milk. You wait in line for hours to get it. It is expensive and sour.

CAPITALISM, AMERICAN STYLE:

You have two cows. You sell one, buy a bull, and build a herd of cows.

BUREAUCRACY, AMERICAN STYLE:

You have two cows. Under the new farm program the government pays you to shoot one, milk the other, and then pours the milk down the drain.

AMERICAN CORPORATION:

You have two cows. You sell one, lease it back to yourself and do an IPO on the 2nd one. You force the two cows to produce the milk of four cows. You are surprised when one cow drops dead. You spin an announcement to the analysts stating you have downsized and are reducing expenses. Your stock goes up.

FRENCH CORPORATION:

You have two cows. You go on strike because you want three cows. You go to lunch and drink wine. Life is good.

JAPANESE CORPORATION:

You have two cows. You redesign them so they are one tenth the size of an ordinary cow and produce twenty times the milk. They learn to travel on unbelievably crowded trains. Most are at the top of their class at cow school.

GERMAN CORPORATION:

You have two cows. You engineer them so they are all blond, drink lots of beer, give excellent quality milk, and run a hundred miles an hour. Unfortunately they also demand 13 weeks of vacation per year.

ITALIAN CORPORATION:

You have two cows, but you don't know where they are. You break for lunch. Life is good.

RUSSIAN CORPORATION:

You have two cows. You have some vodka. You count them and learn you have five cows. You have some more vodka. You count them again and learn you have 42 cows. The Mafia shows up and takes over however many cows you really have.

TALIBAN CORPORATION:

You have all the cows in Afghanistan , which are two. You don't milk them because you cannot touch any creature's private parts. You get a \$40 million grant from the U.S. government to find alternatives to milk production but use the money to buy weapons.

IRAQI CORPORATION:

You have two cows. They go into hiding. They send radio tapes of their mooing [to an Arab radio station].

POLISH CORPORATION:

You have two bulls. Employees are regularly maimed and killed attempting to milk them. [It's even worse for the ones who try to mate them. —SteveB]

BELGIAN CORPORATION:

You have one cow. The cow is schizophrenic. Sometimes the cow thinks he's French, other times he's Flemish. The Flemish cow won't share with the French cow. The French cow wants control of the Flemish cow's milk. The cow asks permission to be cut in half. The cow dies happy.

FLORIDA CORPORATION:

You have a black cow and a brown cow. Everyone votes for the best looking one. Some of the people who actually like the brown one best accidentally vote for the black one. Some people vote for both. Some people vote for neither. Some people can't figure out how to vote at all. Finally, a bunch of guys from out-of state tell you which one you think is the best looking cow.

CALIFORNIA CORPORATION:

You have millions of cows. They make real California cheese. Only five speak English. Most are illegal. Arnold likes the ones with the big udders.

20080507-01	11:16	SteveB	2008 Indiana Democratic Primary
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I'm a little disappointed in Indiana, but considering how very prejudiced so many people there are, I guess Obama did OK. Too bad though, because it was a chance for Hoosiers to prove how smart they are, and maybe a chance to get that awful lying b*tch and her lying bastard husband out of the race and off our screens. But of course, this may also give her the chance to prove how utterly insane with ambition she really is, as if she hasn't already. Thank God that the people of North Carolina are a little smarter, much as I hate to admit it.

20080507-02	18:50	C. Glenn	2008 Montana Democratic Primary
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Dear SteveB:

Last night, Barack won a decisive victory in North Carolina and finished closer than anyone expected in Indiana.

Today, the spotlight turns to the 6 remaining contests—and with less than one month to go before Primary Day, Montana is playing an increasingly vital role in this election.

Together, we can finish this race off and secure the nomination, but we need your help. And the best place for you to make a difference is at the Obama office nearest you.

There are lots of ways you can help out at your local Obama office, so find yours today and sign up to volunteer before the primary.

Like you, I've seen the excitement on the ground here for Barack's message of change.

It's because of this excitement—and the amazing work of grassroots supporters like you across the country—that we've won the most states, the most votes, and the most delegates with only 6 contests remaining.

You've helped create a movement that will compete in all 50 states in November, but we need to finish primary season strongly. And as the last state to vote, Montana can make a powerful statement that change is coming to our country.

We have just four weeks to make this happen, so sign up to volunteer at your local office:

<http://www.barackobama.com/>.

Thank you, Carrie Glenn, Montana Field Director, Obama for America

20080510-01	18:04	H. Clinton	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton
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[The original email to Sen. Clinton appears to be missing. —SteveB]

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for your message. I have received thousands of emails from people all over the country. Your comments are very important to me and I am excited that so many people are joining our conversation about how to change the direction of the country. Unfortunately, due to the high volume of comments, I am unable to respond to each email individually.

Please visit www.hillaryclinton.com to learn more about my views on the issues and to read the latest information about my campaign.

Register to vote. Make sure you are registered to vote: <http://www.govote.org>.

Thank you again for your interest.

Sincerely, Hillary

20080516-01	10:35	SteveB	The Decline; Economics, Rich and Poor
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As our founding fathers knew, a strong central government is essential in a perilous world, but is inherently dangerous in itself.

I don't want the money earned by the sweat of my brow or the earnings of any citizen confiscated by the government to enable big corporations to enslave us or give our jobs and our children's jobs to China and illegal immigrants. I don't want the wealth of the people wasted on government bureaucracy which never fulfills its promise, or wasted on wars which serve no purpose. But I also don't want a nation of cowards afraid to deliver swift, forceful vengeance and justice to Islamic thugs.

I want women to be able to make their own decisions concerning their own bodies, not the stupid government or some religious fanatics, no matter how conveniently they may define terms for themselves. But I also want my guns and my rights to them protected. A car or a truck is at least as dangerous a weapon, and I don't see anyone advocating to take them away. Not that I really give a damn about guns...it's just that all this cr*p from the Right and from the Left is just, well, cr*p! I DEMAND MY PRIVACY! I WANT FREEDOM!

I think every citizen has an equal right to affordable healthcare, even though I don't know how to achieve that. I want more of the nation's resources devoted to education and to the reform of education. (The latter would be so much easier than the former.)

I think we need to stop talking and do more to solve the energy problem. We need a man-in-space type of focus and to hell with space. We need fewer, if any, 4000 sq.ft. homes and less waste, but to hell with the landfills. Make them into energy producing ski slopes. Where's our Yankee ingenuity? We need to care for our world. This is what the American Indians taught us. What a sin and a shame that Jesus, the Bible, and the Church taught us the opposite.

The future is upon us and it is not pretty. I've been saying that for years.

During my lifetime I have seen America in a state of decline from what our parents, the Great Generation, handed to us, the "me" generation. Perhaps you have heard me talk before about how, in the small Indiana town of my youth, a barber or a man who worked in a shoe store could support a family, have a decent if modest house, an OK if used car, and send his children to college—often without his wife working. If you disagree with me and feel this past is still reality, we need to talk.

We can achieve nothing as long as our politicians are bought and sold by "special interests" whether they be giant corporations, powerful unions, racially divided constituencies, or foreign governments. The totality of the American people must come first for a change.

I have watched our politicians sell our great nation and its people down the creek, and I am sick of it! I have become absolutely convinced that there are four particular individuals, who have run our country or who want to run our country, who are complete and total morons.

Assume that all politicians have sold us out for selfish reasons. All mean us harm. All must be kept from power. There are many more, but these are the worst. Again, if you disagree, we need to talk. I would be happy to engage in discussions with anyone concerning my reasons for seeking to condemn these idiots to obscurity where they belong.

Thank you for your patience, your support, and, hopefully, for your vigilance and votes. (And not that I necessarily support Barack Obama or Ron Paul or Mike Huckabee or Dennis Kucinich or anyone else, but I think we need to do everything we can to shake things up, even if that means dismissing every single currently elected politician.)

As we used to say in the 60's but seem to have forgotten so long ago, POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

20080516-02 10:57 SteveM Re: The Decline; Illegal Immigration, Defense, The Border

Dear Dennis & SteveB,

OK Gentlemen let me bottom line this for you. You both bring up issues that sorely need addresses, complex as they may be. Thought Dennis you are misinformed as to the impact of the illegals. Please to refer to the recent Harvard study that points to a NEGATIVE \$1.8 BILLION dollar impact on Arizona alone.

And the Liberal California is now waking up to the problem trying to address the impact also. There were four families live next door to me in Whittier, in a two bed, 1 bath, two car garage. Moved the Washer and Dryer out of the garage in to the yard and did laundry in a bucket, with a concrete block!

But the bottom line is that without strong National Defense worldwide and at the border, all other issues are mute.

None of the current candidates thrill me, but given only the experience levels of the three, with respect to their past stances on Security, and willingness the work "across the isle" to get something done, as the saying goes I'd rather dance with the devil that I know, then the one that I don't!

Flame suit on, Now then boys don't shoot the messenger! LOL

I've got the key to the highway, Yes I'm billed out and bound to go
I'm gonna leave here runnin', because Walkin' is much to slow.
I'm goin' back to the border, Where I'm better known,
Because you haven't done nothing, But drive a good man from home.
—from "Key To The Highway" by Big Bill Broonzy & Chas. Segar

20080516-03 10:58 SteveG Re: The Decline; Eisenhower's Military-Industrial Complex

Dear SteveB,

I don't know about the labels, but a lot of what is wrong now started with Eisenhower and has progressed: Interstate system & use of fuel to move things/people around, demise of trains, sprawling communities because of individual transportation, loss of public transportation. And then you have the start of the military industrial complex that has made egomaniacs out of some people. I like your rants and agree whole heartedly.

20080516-04 11:01 Dennis Re: The Decline; China, Trade

from SteveB:

I would be happy to engage in discussions with anyone concerning my reasons for seeking to condemn these idiots to obscurity where they belong.

Dear SteveB,

Whoa, the evil four are already destined for the dust bin of history.

I'd start a debate with you on a couple of your points—jobs going to China is mostly a myth (most have been lost to technological innovation and even China has lost 250,000 manufacturing jobs in the last ten years for the same reason) and we're going to need immigrants to pay for our Social Security—but otherwise, as an independent, I'm in tune with what you say. Stopping the decline of America will take a massive effort on the part of the next generation. Maybe the Big O can inspire that. On the other hand, let's hope our miserable baby boomer generation doesn't suck the hope out of any chance for a renewal by continuing all of the divisive cr*p.

Would love to hear from others about this. I'm off tonight for Croatia and Turkey for a month, but will try to check my e-mail for comments.

"Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." —Mark Twain

[20080516-05](#) 11:02 SteveG Re: The Decline; Economics

Dear SteveB,

My mother did not work until I was in junior high and then she went to work at DePauw because as a benefit my brother and I got free tuition. We had a family basis in the formative years. When Dad passed away I went through tax returns of \$2,500—\$4,000 per year for a family of 4. As a child I had no idea or concern if we were rich, poor, middle class or what. I was a kid enjoying being a kid and learned a few things along the way.

[20080516-06](#) 11:15 SteveB Re: The Decline; Economics

Dear SteveG,

I know what you mean. I too was surprise by how little my parents made, yet how well they did...even saving money. What a wonderful time and community and schools and parents we had!!!

[20080516-07](#) 11:30 SteveB Re: The Decline; China, Trade

Dear Dennis,

I hear what you're saying, but the manufacturing has gone somewhere! I worked in China helping to automate a new Amway factory because China would no longer let the company import goods from their American factory in Grand Rapids, MI. How can they be losing manufacturing when their growth is so phenomenal? Are you sure you can trust the government's numbers? Every time I try to buy something that was manufactured, I have to struggle to find anything not imported from China. The only exception is clothes, which seem to come from Indonesia, India, or Honduras, etc.—not from North or South Carolina. I say, TAX the imports! To hell with free trade that is not free or fair at all. Illegals don't pay nearly as much as they demand. Let's keep the illegals the hell out and give our citizens, our children, and our hard-fought, hard-working LEGAL immigrants (2,000,000 per year, which seems like enough to me) a chance to work.

P.S.—You guys are all so much smarter than our politicians and almost all of the news media.

[20080516-08](#) 12:26 Dennis Re: The Decline; China, Trade

from SteveB:

I say, TAX the imports! To hell with free trade that is not free or fair at all.

Dear SteveB,

Free trade should, absolutely, mean fair trade. This seems to get confused by politicians exploiting the issue, especially when trying to fool blue collar workers into voting based on xenophobia. But not even fair trade will bring back the old manufacturing jobs to the U.S. The Germans, who pay even higher wages for manufacturing than the U.S., seem to be adding jobs through stimulating innovations in alternative energy, the so-called new green jobs. Meanwhile the U.S. Congress keeps funneling subsidies to industries in decline and not investing in the next energy revolution. Nor is there enough being invested in educating Americans to play a leading role in the world for this revolution.

Thus the need for immigrants. Yet our punitive immigration policy discourages high tech immigrants because it lumps all immigrants together. You only need to spend a few hours in an INS office to see how screwed up this country has become.

"Illegals don't pay nearly as much as they demand." —SteveB

Another myth. They demand very little since they lay low and seldom complain out of fear of being caught.

"Let's keep the illegals the hell out and give our citizens, our children, and our hard-working LEGAL immigrants (2,000,000 per year, which seems like enough to me) a chance to work." —SteveB

Illegals wouldn't come if no one was hiring them to do jobs Americans refuse to do (jobs with poor working conditions, no health care, and under the table wages). I don't think it's any accident that we have porous borders. The corporations that exploit illegals are the same ones buying the politicians who scream and yell about illegals to get elected, but do nothing constructive to solve the problem.

P.S.

"You guys are all so much smarter than our politicians and almost all of the news media." —SteveB

There are actually some very smart politicians and news media. Unfortunately, there so many people who have been dumbed down by the majority of politicians and media that intelligent voices don't count for much. It's all about entertaining the fools for fun and profit.

"More than any other time in history, mankind faces a crossroads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly." —Woody Allen

20080516-09	12:32	SteveM	John McCain
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Dear SteveB,

I'll say it one last time McCain is the lesser of the three evils, And Cindy is far more accomplished and compassionate than you know. I believe if you do some research you'll be impressed.

Obama is disingenuous when he states he was against the war since he wasn't in congress at the time and didn't have access to the flawed intel that everyone else had to make the choices from.

Obama did not grow up on the south side of Chicago, but in Indonesia and Hawaii and I believe that he's only joined Rev Wrights Church for political gain, so that's political baggage we don't know about. I don't think he shares my mid western values or sense of individual responsibility.

Unfortunately world politics won't let us annihilate at will, and speaking of world politics, they eat Obama alive, he so naive. Hell Hillary is better suited for foreigner policy!

20080516-10	13:11	SteveB	Re: The Decline; China, Trade
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from Dennis:

Illegals wouldn't come if no one was hiring them to do jobs Americans refuse to do (jobs with poor working conditions, no health care, and under the table wages). I don't think it's any accident that we have porous

borders. The corporations that exploit illegals are the same ones buying the politicians who scream and yell about illegals to get elected, but do nothing constructive to solve the problem.

Dear Dennis,

Of course! We just have to enforce the law! But I don't believe the line that these are jobs Americans won't do—it's simply a matter of wages too low to live on—which needs to change. Immigration is fine. Illegal immigration is awful. I disagree that illegals "lay low" and don't cost society. Look up the estimated medical, public school, and crime/gang costs (like from the Latin Kings or MS13...really nice people).

These costs are astronomical. Illegals do seem to "lay low" though when it comes to paying for these things or paying taxes. Not to mention the lowering of wage scales and standards of living. Even here in Montana I've heard of 5 families in one house. Hardly the American dream. And, funny but not haha, some people are trying to tell me that I can't even call them "illegals" because it might offend someone!!!!

Legal immigrants do tend to be educated or highly educated because their immigration is legally regulated, hopefully, to benefit society (such as my wife, who is a lawyer from Bolivia). Many illegals are uneducated and don't feel they need to learn English. We Americans even seem to have doubts as to whether English should be our official language, even though it has become so, ipso facto, in much of the rest of the world.

[20080516-11](#) 14:38 SteveB Re: John McCain

Dear SteveM,

Are you sure McCain is the devil that you know? First, he was for amnesty for illegals, then not. He was for negotiating with Hamas, then against. He must become "pro-life" if he has a chance of being elected, but that isn't how he sounded before. He was against tax cuts, then for them. He doesn't seem to favor election finance reform and employs a boatload of powerful lobbyists, though, in all fairness, who doesn't? He seemed to back every Iraq decision, right or wrong, but now seems to be backpedaling...at least in his support for the Bush policies, if not in his support for the wars. He used to be 42, but now he will be 72 by the time he could serve, and he looks so damn old and acts so damn old that I can't believe it. I'm pretty sure I can tell from the video that his mind is starting to slip. Sometimes he doesn't know what state he is campaigning in. This is just too reminiscent of Bush for me!

Do you really think this geezer can take on the establishment? LOL

What are his real positions and who is he, really? I don't think we know a damn thing more about McCain than we do about Obama. At least Obama seems honest, is willing to listen, think, and maybe work for our common interests. At this point, I'm willing to give any outsider a shot at it, except maybe Ralph "the Wrecker" Nader. I don't believe experience matters nearly as much as character and brains.

[20080516-12](#) 14:58 SteveB John McCain; War

Dear SteveM,

I'm afraid that all we know about McCain is that he's part of the problem, not part of the solution. Well...and that Cindy is kinda dumb but, as you say, has big boobs and owns a beer distributorship. Oh, and he fought in another unnecessary war that cost way too many American lives because of the stupid way it was fought by the pu*sy President Bush...though I don't hold that against McCain.

I don't know when we will finally learn that if you are going to go to war, you go to annihilate. If a President can't stand the thought of that, he has no business attacking other nations.

And I think we can annihilate if we are attacked first. We are the only country in the world that cares what other countries think of us. What the hell? Let 'em think what they want...it is respect we are after, not praise. Power and its application are the only things that have ever kept the peace in the history of man. I think it's a bunch of pu*sy cr*p to think we have to be liked or something. (Not that I think you're a pu*sy by any means. I know better.) I say, let's be respected and feared, but let us be fair and just, so that we can respect ourselves.

[20080516-13](#) 15:46 SteveB Re: John McCain; Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton

Dear SteveM,

Hillary ain't suited for anything except her ugly-a*s PANTS suits and her big fat a*s ain't suited for that (she should try tents)! Her only foreign policy experience was learned from Monica, and she blew that! Look at the way she has run her campaign to be the ordained President. What a crock! Obama's campaign has run like a well-oiled machine because he's obviously a good administrator.

No one can be trained to be President. It takes OJT. Even unknown character (which I don't think is now the case) is better than known bad character. I don't care if Mac was a Vet. Big deal. He couldn't even stay out of prison camp. (Haha, just kidding, kinda.) What has he ever administered?

Since when is Hawaii not the U.S.? And come on, half the people here in my little Montana town go to the church they go to "network". I see no crime in that.

That doesn't make anyone indebted. Watch BO, listen to him, give him a fair chance, I think you might be impressed. At least he ain't confused.

[20080519-01](#) 11:59 David Re: The Decline; Libertarianism, "Nothing Gold Can Stay"

Dear SteveB,

Ah, a Libertarian just like me.

The sights of spring remind me of something you used to quote.

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf,
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day
Nothing gold can stay.
—Robert Frost

[20080519-02](#) 21:39 SteveB, others Energy, Oil, Water

Below is a combination of thee separate emails back and forth:

SteveB: I've been thinking about the energy problem lately and I agree with you that the Islamic problem will not improve, though I hope their oil doesn't run out—it comes in too handy to make chemicals, drugs, and plastics and to power a few high performance vehicles and planes and maybe always will.

SteveM: If we can build some new refinery's the Saudis have plenty of 50 dollar oil as well as the Russians and Mexicans. High Sulfur content but it can still be refined out.

SteveB: Any old oil is fine for making chemicals, even recycled oil.

SteveB: I think our solution will come in the form of purely electric cars

SteveM: The only down side here is the disposal of said battery, based on current construct. I still contend that nuclear waste would be an easier problem.

SteveB: I think the environmentalists — of which I am one, otherwise — greatly exaggerate the landfill problem, etc. Nothing is more recyclable than lead-acid or ni-cad or even lithium batteries, especially if they were to start being used on a really large scale.

SteveB: ..our entire civilization seems to be built around it.

SteveM: DUH? the car?

SteveB: silly???

SteveB: Trucks must go. Everything possible needs to be electric, powered by coal with emissions pumped into chemically sequestered CO2, bio-mass ethanol, wind and water, even solar

SteveM: If it was up to me every new house would have to be built with solar or wind, be the limousine liberals like Teddy K would complain about the view.

SteveB: I'm not sure all that local power-generation is as efficient as large central generating plants like we already have the power-grid all constructed for.

SteveB: We can't use food or farm land to produce energy. We have too great a need for food. Cities need to spread up not out in order to recover farm land.

SteveM: He said as he moved to Big Sky Country, LOL!

SteveB: Have you been to Indianapolis lately? What an ugly sprawling, wasteful mess. I'd really rather live in a large city and leave the entire state of Montana to wilderness, ranches, and farms.

SteveB: Giant water pipelines need to be constructed so that all that fresh water going into the ocean from, say, the Mississippi, the Columbia, and Niagara Falls can get to where it is needed most. Why not?...we do it efficiently enough with oil.

SteveM: Nuclear desalination plants off the California coast, There has been and will continue to be a water war here in the west. it's time for them to take one for the team.

SteveB: No need for a water war. Cheap abundant electricity from the grid can desalinate, but I still think it would be cheaper to bring water from the Mississippi or Columbia rivers in giant pipelines...maybe even trains? Look what Perrier has been able to do with transporting bottled water. LOL

SteveB: But if we are constantly bogged down in f*cking jihad, it could go either way.

SteveM: Maybe Michelle Obama could talk the bad Islamo-fascists into being nicer human beings, that way for the first in our adult lives America could be proud of her. NAAAAH, just gonna have to k*ll 'em.

SteveB: Ya! Just gonna have to k*ll 'em and the camels they rode in on! ^_^

from SteveB:

Did I mention "fission" before? That would be conventional "dirty" nuclear power. I meant "fusion" as in the sun and the H-bomb.

Alcohol as a fuel causes problems for vehicles and bigger problems for food prices.

We already have the technology to sequester the CO₂ emissions from coal-fired power plants, and/or we could also use what you suggest.

"First Successful Demonstration of Carbon Dioxide Air Capture Technology Achieved" from PhysOrg.com
Apr. 25, 2007, (<http://www.physorg.com/news96732819.html>)

"Synthetic Fuel Concept to Steal CO2 From Air" from PhysOrg.com
Feb. 13, 2008, (<http://www.physorg.com/news122136045.html>)

20080520-01 11:57 SteveB Re: The Decline; Libertarianism, Weather

Dear David,

And I thought a Libertarian was someone who ran around with their clothes off and had orgies!

Happy to hear spring has come...though you still have the month of fog and drizzle ahead, don't you? Here it is suddenly summer and the Bitterroot is swollen from melting snows. Will be canoeing it as soon as possible, but first we have to move to another house across town...yuk! Then back to Bolivia in two more years. Wish you could see the mountains here.

20080521-01 19:07 Dick Fw: AllMyFaves.com

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

ALL YOUR WEBSITES ON ONE PAGE What A Handy Tool! WOW!!!!!!! THIS IS THE COOLEST THING SINCE THE INVENTION OF THE TV REMOTE CONTROL. [I'm unconvinced.—SteveB]

<http://www.allmyfaves.com/>

20080521-02 20:49 SteveB Re: AllMyFaves.com; Edward Kennedy R.I.P.

Dear Dick,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Was very sorry to hear about Ted Kennedy. Our political views are very different on many issues, but I think he is one of the last great men. Wishing him well and thinking of him in my prayers. Take care, old friend.

20080522-01 09:10 V. Buchanan Illegal Immigration

[Newsletter from the Office of Rep. Buchanan. —SteveB]

(SARASOTA, Fla.) Congressman Vern Buchanan, just back from a visit to the U.S. border with Mexico, said more agents and additional resources are needed to stop illegal immigration and drug smuggling. Buchanan was in El Paso, Texas on Friday to meet with border patrol and customs agents, inspect the border and view the technology they use in their efforts to secure the southern border.

"It's clear we are making progress but more needs to be done," Buchanan said. "Illegal immigration is one of the biggest challenges facing our country, costing us billions of dollars each year and putting an unacceptable burden on our hospitals, our schools, our jails and our communities."

Buchanan toured detention facilities, examined security technology—including night vision technology, met with border patrol agents and K-9 units and visited several sections of the border where security needs differ. During his visit he

witnessed the apprehension of individuals attempting to enter the country illegally and drug smugglers as well as the confiscation of illegal drugs.

"I was very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the men and women patrolling the border," said Buchanan. "They deal every day with the challenges of illegal immigration and I am grateful for their service."

The 13th District Congressman noted that in Florida alone, we have more than half a million illegal immigrants costing the state's taxpayers more than \$1.7 billion a year for education, emergency medical care, and incarceration when they break the law.

"We need to secure the borders first if we are ever going to stop the flow of illegals into our country," said Buchanan. "That is why I went to the border and saw first-hand what we're doing. I talked to the agents to find out what is and isn't working."

The El Paso border patrol oversaw approximately 22,760,000 northbound crossings in fiscal year 2007. Additional fencing and agents have helped reduce apprehensions in there by 38% from fiscal years 2006 to 2007.

"This proves that if given the necessary resources we can reduce illegal immigration and smuggling," said Buchanan. "I am even more convinced now than before that with more agents, secure fencing and new technologies we can secure the border."

Specifically, Buchanan called for the following to help solve the problem of illegal immigration: Add more border patrol agents to monitor the crossings along the 2000 mile-long southern border; Require employers to verify workers are legal and take away the economic incentive for illegals to come here; and, Appropriate the necessary funding to finish building 365 miles of the 700-mile long security fence authorized in 2006 along the southern border.

The Congressman is a cosponsor of the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act. The bill would enhance border security, provide employers with the tools they need to ensure that their employees are here legally, and enhance the government's ability to enforce existing federal laws and penalize offenders.

Washington, D.C. —Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) yesterday received the "A in English" award from U.S. English, Inc. for his support of legislation making English the official language of the United States.

"Theodore Roosevelt once said, 'we have room for but one language, the language of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, the language of the Declaration of Independence—the English language,'" Buchanan said. "I strongly support making English our official language because it is a common language helps us live and work together. Learning English will open doors for legal immigrants working to build a better life in this country."

Congressman Buchanan is a cosponsor of H.R. 769, legislation that would make English our official language and end federal bilingual programs.

"I am pleased to present this award to Congressman Buchanan for his efforts to unite our diverse nation under the common language of English," said Mauro E. Mujica, Chairman of the Board of U.S. English, Inc. "Rep. Buchanan has actively reflected the viewpoints of his constituents regarding official English legislation. At a time when there is renewed interest toward preserving what unites us as a nation, we are grateful to the Congressman for his dedicated and enthusiastic support of this issue."

Vern Buchanan is a member of the House Immigration Reform Caucus.

20080522-02	13:01	SteveB	Fw: "Islam Is Not a Religion, Nor Is It a Cult. It Is a Complete System."
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I have seen the effects of war...which is why I believe in peace. But...for some time there has been a "holy war" going on against western civilization and I have come to believe that it is a fight to the death. If there is a way out of it, I have yet to hear anyone proclaim it, other than total surrender. I will never do that, and I would think women would be even more reluctant. I don't know what is wrong with these people, but the only things they seem to understand are strength and violence and death. I agree that it is such a shame. The world has enough problems without the constant suicide attacks from Islamic extremists, who have taken over Islam and subjugated it to their evil purposes. But if it is suicide they

want...I am inclined to oblige them. Sorry. In the history of Portugal and Spain, did you ever find a way to peace with these idiots that did not involve violence or surrender? I defend the right of Israel to exist...therefore I must die. Fun!

"Islam Is Not a Religion, Nor Is It a Cult. It Is a Complete System." posted by avideditor

Mar. 16, 2008, (<http://avideditor.wordpress.com/2008/03/16/islam-is-not-a-religion-nor-is-it-a-cult-it-is-a-complete-system/>)

Islam has religious, legal, political, economic and military components. The religious component is a beard for all the other components.

Islamization occurs when there are sufficient Muslims in a country to agitate for their so-called 'religious rights.'

When politically correct and culturally diverse societies agree to 'the reasonable' Muslim demands for their 'religious rights,' they also get the other components under the table. Here's how it works (percentages source CIA: The World Fact Book (2007)).

As long as the Muslim population remains around or under 2% in any given country, they will be for the most part be regarded as a peace-loving minority, and not as a threat to other citizens. This is the case in:

- United States—Muslim 0.6%
- Australia—Muslim 1.5%
- Canada—Muslim 1.9%
- China—Muslim 1.8%
- Italy—Muslim 1.5%
- Norway—Muslim 1.8%

At 2% to 5%, they begin to proselytize from other ethnic minorities and disaffected groups, often with major recruiting from the jails and among street gangs. This is happening in:

- Denmark—Muslim 2%
- Germany—Muslim 3.7%
- United Kingdom—Muslim 2.7%
- Spain—Muslim 4%
- Thailand—Muslim 4.6%

From 5% on, they exercise an inordinate influence in proportion to their percentage of the population. For example, they will push for the introduction of halal (clean by Islamic standards) food, thereby securing food preparation jobs for Muslims. They will increase pressure on supermarket chains to feature halal on their shelves—along with threats for failure to comply. This is occurring in:

- France—Muslim 8%
- Philippines—Muslim 5%
- Sweden—Muslim 5%
- Switzerland—Muslim 4.3%
- The Netherlands—Muslim 5.5%
- Trinidad & Tobago—Muslim 5.8%

At this point, they will work to get the ruling government to allow them to rule themselves (within their ghettos) under Sharia, the Islamic Law. The ultimate goal of Islamists is to establish Sharia law over the entire world.

When Muslims approach 10% of the population, they tend to increase lawlessness as a means of complaint about their conditions. In Paris, we are already seeing car-burnings. Any non-Muslim action offends Islam, and results in uprisings and threats, such as in Amsterdam, with opposition to Mohammed cartoons and films about Islam. Such tensions are seen daily, particularly in Muslim sections, in:

- Guyana—Muslim 10%
- India—Muslim 13.4%

Israel—Muslim 16%
Kenya—Muslim 10%
Russia—Muslim 15%

After reaching 20%, nations can expect hair-trigger rioting, jihad militia formations, sporadic killings, and the burnings of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, such as in:

Ethiopia—Muslim 32.8%

At 40%, nations experience widespread massacres, chronic terror attacks, and ongoing militia warfare, such as in:

Bosnia—Muslim 40%
Chad—Muslim 53.1%
Lebanon—Muslim 59.7%

From 60%, nations experience unfettered persecution of non-believers of all other religions (including non-conforming Muslims), sporadic ethnic cleansing (genocide), use of Sharia Law as a weapon, and Jizya, the tax placed on infidels, such as in:

Albania—Muslim 70%
Malaysia—Muslim 60.4%
Qatar—Muslim 77.5%
Sudan—Muslim 70%

After 80%, expect daily intimidation and violent jihad, some State-run ethnic cleansing, and even some genocide, as these nations drive out the infidels, and move toward 100% Muslim, such as has been experienced, and in some ways is on-going, in:

Bangladesh—Muslim 83%
Egypt—Muslim 90%
Gaza—Muslim 98.7%
Indonesia—Muslim 86.1%
Iran—Muslim 98%
Iraq—Muslim 97%
Jordan—Muslim 92%
Morocco—Muslim 98.7%
Pakistan—Muslim 97%
Palestine—Muslim 99%
Syria—Muslim 90%
Tajikistan—Muslim 90%
Turkey—Muslim 99.8%
United Arab Emirates—Muslim 96%

100% will usher in the peace of 'Dar-es-Salaam'—the Islamic House of Peace. Here there's supposed to be peace, because everybody is a Muslim, the Madrasses are the only schools, and the Koran is the only word, such as in:

Afghanistan—Muslim 100%
Saudi Arabia—Muslim 100%
Somalia—Muslim 100%
Yemen—Muslim 100%

Unfortunately, peace is never achieved, as in these 100% states the most radical Muslims intimidate and spew hatred, and satisfy their blood lust by killing less radical Muslims, for a variety of reasons.

'Before I was nine I had learned the basic canon of Arab life. It was me against my brother; me and my brother against our father; my family against my cousins and the clan; the clan against the tribe; the tribe against the world, and all of us against the infidel.—Leon Uris, 'The Haj'

It is important to understand that in some countries, with well under 100% Muslim populations, such as France, the minority Muslim populations live in ghettos, within which they are 100% Muslim, and within which they live by Sharia Law. The national police do not even enter these ghettos. There are no national courts nor schools nor non-Muslim religious facilities. In such situations, Muslims do not integrate into the community at large. The children attend madrasses. They learn only the Koran. To even associate with an infidel is a crime punishable with death. Therefore, in some areas of certain nations, Muslim Imams and extremists exercise more power than the national average would indicate.

Today's 1.5 billion Muslims make up 22% of the world's population. But their birth rates dwarf the birth rates of Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews, and all other believers. Muslims will exceed 50% of the world's population by the end of this century.

20080523-01 13:56 SteveB John McCain; VP Pick Pointers

You know...McCain needs a VP candidate with vast experience, who could step up to the plate on day one, given McCain's advanced age...just in case he couldn't finish his term in office.

He is also weak with Catholics, liberals, Hispanics, independents, women, and "swing state" voters. Maybe he should pick Hillary as his VP candidate, and save Barack a whole world of trouble with both Hillary and Bill.

Then McCain could run as Bush's surrogate, Hillary could talk about her vast Bosnian combat experience, and maybe then and only then, the Republicans could win!

20080523-02 21:36 Dick Fw: Media, Democrats, 2008 Primaries

Another side to this ongoing controversy:

[Source of original email unknown. Robert Pillow? —SteveB]

I have a question that is not being addressed by most of the NEWS stations.

Are the delegates afraid to pick Hillary Clinton? The reason I ask this question is it seems OBAMA most of the time is playing the race card. WHY IS THIS PERMITTED? Do you forget he is half white? It seems the delegates are afraid to consider Hillary because of possible riots that could happen like the ones in the 1960's! Is this the reason they are responding in Obama's favor?

Another question a lot of Americans have is: Why do reporters report only their own slanted one-sided political beliefs? Wake up reporters and just report all the facts and let us the citizens of U. S. A. make our own decisions.

THAT IS WHY FOX AND FRIENDS AND THEIR NEWS STATION IS HIGHLY RESPECTED—THEY REPORT THE TRUTH BOTH SIDES AND LET US DECIDE. [This is a classic statement! I thought Fox was rightfully considered to be sleazy and unprofessional? Now they're "highly respected". By whom? Someone who is anonymous and thinks Fox News "reports both sides and let us decide [sic]". —SteveB]

Obama is too young and inexperienced to run this country. He could not even discern his Pastor's motives and ways. He and his wife stayed in that church for 20 years. Not only stayed but were or are still involved. How can he discern the ways of our country? "Our past behavior predicts our future behavior" He and his wife have 20 years of Wright's influences. "Birds of a feather flock together."

I am not for Hillary or Obama but I do feel the press is very unfair to Hillary. WHAT ARE THE NEWS REPORTERS HIDING BEHIND? DO YOU REPORTERS HAVE YOUR OWN AGENDA? NOT TO MENTION: 4, 5, & 7 HAVE BEEN UNFAIR TO MCCAIN. WHY IS THAT PERMITTED?

P. S. Please pass this note on to all the news stations and radio talk shows all over our country, even if you think they already have heard this. Be sure you do that today. It is a message that needs to be delivered to all reporters ASAP.

Dear Dick,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I read the email from, indirectly?, Robert Pillow, and I think the person who wrote it is completely wrong. FOX is totally Republican, MSNBC and NBC are totally Democratic, and CNN is fairly neutral with a liberal bias. It is not Obama who plays the race card, but Hillary and Bill. Notice that Hillary has also been playing the "assassination card". Her fanatical, nearly insane quest for power at any cost is beginning to take its toll on her. She is nothing but a lying, evil b*tch! Period!

She has run a terrible, terrible campaign...proving that she has no experience and is not fit to be President. Obama, on the other hand, has run an excellent campaign, and if he were not black, would have stomped Hillary into the ground long ago. He has proven that he can run a large organization, that he is of high moral character, and that he is fit to be President.

McCain is way too ancient, represents nothing but a continuation of Bush's failed policies and has flip-flopped on the major issues so often that no one knows what he really stands for. His campaign has had one debacle after another, largely ignored by the press because he and the Republicans are SO DAMN BORING! I mean, he was for amnesty for illegal aliens, then not, against lower taxes, then not, and who knows where he stands on abortion, etc. I don't trust him as far as I could throw him. "Straight talk" indeed!

The only reason people seem to have for being against Obama is that he is black, whether they will admit that to others or themselves or not. The "inexperience" thing is a red herring. How much experience did Lincoln or Kennedy have when they became President? No more than Obama! Bush, Carter, and Nixon, were not good Presidents, even though they had prior experience in government.

Dear Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign:

Hillary talks a lot about her vast experience and how she is ready to lead the country on her famous "day one" in the Oval Office. I don't want to rain on your parade, but I feel I must share the following with someone in her campaign:

1. I can't seem to remember any executive experience. She tried to ramrod national healthcare down the throats of Congress and failed miserably. What else did she ever do except vote with Bush for the Iraq war?
2. Her comments concerning being under sniper fire in Bosnia are inexplicable and crazy, considering that it was all a big lie. I have never heard any explanation, just weak excuses.
3. Bill Clinton was the worst, most dishonest, cheatingest President ever. The Monica, Paula, Kathleen, Whitewater things, travel-gate, pardons, etc. were ugly and appalling. He should have been impeached.
4. Hillary has run the worst campaign in recorded history, going from a shoe-in to having to try to climb an impossible mountain. How does she think she could run the country if she can't even run a campaign? Look how many people have quit, been fired, or simply gone over to the Obama camp. Even many people who served under Bill and would seem to owe the Clintons some allegiance have gone over to the other side.
5. Her insistence on seating all the Florida and Michigan delegations is unfair to the rest of the country and to Obama. She evidently has no sense of fair play, simply an overwhelming greed for the office.
6. For me, her comments yesterday about the Robert Kennedy assassination were the last straw. Don't try to tell me they were taken out of context. Even her assertion that Bill's campaign didn't wrap-up till June was a lie or a mistake. Her remarks were terrible, stupid, almost crazy, and I condemn her for them. If she can make such a terrible mistake and then not even apologize for it (I saw her feeble attempt), she has no business being President.

I have tried to stay with her, but I cannot. She must be a worse person than her awful husband. I am now 100% for Obama. I believe him to be a man of honor, even if I don't agree with all of his positions. Not enough experience? Neither Lincoln nor Kennedy had much experience when they took office, and I think they did quite well. Compare them with Nixon, Clinton, Bush, or Johnson, who had plenty of experience but were quite lacking in character.

20080602-01	12:05	SteveB	2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, Bill Clinton in Stevensville, MT
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The low, dark clouds were hemmed in by the mountains on both sides as a crowd gathered in Stevensville, MT, to hear Bill Clinton tell people why they should vote for his wife's Presidential candidacy, even though she had already lost the race, by the Democrat's own rules, rules she had agreed to at the beginning. This is akin to telling everyone that there is still tons of gold up in these mountains where it was mined-out a century ago and everyone knows it

I had read about the event—call it a political rally—a couple of days previously, and saw it as my golden opportunity...just what I had been hoping for.

Stevensville is only about 20 miles from where we live, just down the Bitterroot Valley. It is actually the first white community founded in Montana (18xx). The population is listed at just 1000, but I heard crowd estimates of 500 and 2000, so many of the ranchers, etc. from the surrounding valley and communities, like me, had decided to risk the cold Montana rain to see the only past, present, or future President ever to visit the little town. Most were ardent or semi-ardent Hillary supporters, though I did see an old truck with prominent Obama signage. I was surprised that security was so lax. There were no metal detectors or pat-downs, but I guess they were searching bags, etc. One cop was announcing loudly that "atomic bombs are not allowed." I hope they do a better job for Obama.

During the time that I heard Slick Willie with his red face (from embarrassment?) ramble on in his hoarse southern drawl, I was the only heckler. I had no actually heckling experience before this, but it ain't that hard. I don't know if anyone took over the job after I left—I kinda hope so—but heckle the b*stard, I did!

I got to yell, "You were disbarred and impeached for lying!" I was there to inquire, "How's Monica?" I wanted to include Jennifer, Paula, and Kathleen, but you only have a few moments between sentences blasted through the PA to get your words heard. To this last, Bill actually replied. "Don't pay any attention to him."

When he talked about how Hillary was the most qualified candidate and had actually won the popular vote, I yelled, "What about the rules?"

I think my best shot was, "You cheated on your wife. Why should we believe you?" By then, I was getting booted by the crowd, but I had expected that. To me, this meant that I was being heard above the crowd noise. Isn't true communication sweet?

An older woman standing next to me admonished, "Don't do that!" So I got to ask her, "But what about the truth?" She answered, "It's not about that, it's about respect." To which I got to reply, "It's always about the truth, lady. I have no respect for any President who looks the American people in the eyes and lies to them, be it Nixon, Bush, or Clinton!"

I didn't think there would be a question and answer period, and though I was hoping to hurl one last zinger at Bill when he walked by, I wasn't positioned for any direct confrontation, though I would have relished one. I had heard enough of Bill's BS lies. It was time for me to go.

So I didn't get to ask why the Clintons think it's fair for the Florida and Michigan primaries to count, even though Hillary agreed that they wouldn't, and was the only person on the ballot in Michigan. Why do they think they can change the rules just because they have lost?

I didn't get to shout, "What about Hillary's Bosnian sniper lies?" or "What about Hillary's Kennedy assassination comments and subsequent lame-*ss apology?" or "What experience?" or "Hillary has more unbridled ambition than vast experience as she claims!" or "You stink-up our entire state!" I guess one can only do so much.

I only hope I made Bill's life a little less pleasant and his face a little redder. I hope that, at every Clinton rally, at least one person stands up, tells, and demands the truth. The simple truth. Something the Clintons have proven they have absolutely no respect for.

[But they sure have a lot more respect for the truth than most Republicans.]

20080605-01	14:58	SteveB	"Five Reasons Why Clinton Lost"
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"Five Reasons Why Clinton Lost" *Newsweek*

June 5, 2008, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2008/06/04/let-the-second-guessing-begin.html>)

1. No Respect for the Voters

The flipside of Obama's respect for voters was Clinton's disrespect. It began with her announcement of her candidacy in early 2007, when she said she was "in it to win it."

Why else would someone run? The not-so-secret assumption behind her entire campaign was that she was the inevitable nominee. But voters don't like to be told how they will vote by politicians (or pundits). It's disrespectful. And primary voters, particularly the well-educated ones who helped power Obama's campaign, don't like to be pandered to, on the gas tax or anything else. Well-informed, college-educated voters are no longer a sliver of arugula-eating elites; they are the backbone of the Democratic Party. Most of all, voters don't like to be played for fools. When Clinton ran ads in South Carolina claiming that Obama admired Ronald Reagan and must be some crypto-conservative, she wasn't just wasting her money. She was offending people in a state that proved pivotal.

The main reason South Carolina was so important, of course, was that it marked the total loss of the black vote for Clinton. Early on, she was expected to split African-American women 50-50 with Obama. This was rightly seen as critical to her success. A series of comments by Bill Clinton about Obama (starting with his inaccurate depiction of Obama's Iraq war opposition as a "fairy tale") weren't racist, but they were disrespectful to Obama, especially coming from a former president, and thus disrespectful to voters who supported him, especially blacks. While Bill was also a huge asset to Hillary, especially in later primaries where he won her lots of rural votes, the defection of 90 percent of African-American voters to Obama presented the Clinton campaign with an insurmountable problem.

2. Poor Strategy

Clinton's failure to organize in the caucus states will go down as one of the worst tactical decisions in modern political history. But it was only part of a larger strategic error. The campaign was based on the idea that Obama would be eliminated on Super Tuesday. This might have made sense in 2006, when she was first planning her run. But by early 2007 it was clear that Obama would actually outraise Clinton, with the Internet as an inexhaustible supply of small donations. This meant that the traditional reason that candidates drop out—lack of funds—wouldn't apply to Obama in 2008. Clinton had plenty of time to recognize this reality and design a plan B for what would happen if she didn't wipe Obama out early. But even the most elementary planning for contingencies—like filing delegate slates in post-Super Tuesday states—was neglected.

By some accounts, Clinton would have been better off skipping the Iowa caucuses, which Obama won big. But this wouldn't have worked for her any better than it did for Rudy Giuliani. She might have helped herself there, however, had she avoided harsh Christmastime attacks on Obama in a state that is famous for punishing candidates who aren't nice.

A more supple strategy would have also led to adjustment of Clinton's message. Had she switched from inevitable and experienced to working-girl-tribune-of-the-forgotten-middle-class on Feb. 1 instead of Apr. 1, she might have won the nomination.

3. Weak Management

The failed strategy is the product of having the wrong people in charge. Mark Penn, the chief strategist, wrote a book in which he describes the country as a series of tiny distinct constituencies—exactly the wrong analysis in a year when the public has a thirst for unity and commonality. As a veteran of President Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign, he naturally and fatally used the old game plan, positioning Hillary as a cautious quasi-incumbent who couldn't possibly be seen as admitting error on her Iraq vote because that might weaken her in a general election. And a pollster in charge of a campaign is always a bad idea.

Patti Solis Doyle, the campaign manager, was in over her head, and communications director Howard Wolfson convinced himself that being rude to reporters (or complaining to their bosses) would somehow improve the tone of the coverage. His subordinates followed this approach to press relations, sometimes verbally abusing TV bookers and others in the media. The problem with "working the refs" (a basketball term for riding referees in hopes of a good call later on) is that, while it can sometimes succeed in the short term, it's always a long-term loser. Reporters wait in the weeds.

Clinton is responsible for personnel decisions; her poor judgment of people, overemphasis on loyalty and testy reaction to anyone delivering bad news made her slow to recognize the need for a management shakeup. On the morning after Ronald Reagan won the New Hampshire primary in 1980, he fired his campaign manager, John Sears, who was responsible for his loss in the Iowa caucuses and for a lot of bad blood with supporters. Had Clinton done the same after her New Hampshire win, she might have stabilized earlier.

4. Arrogance

The reason Clinton didn't adjust more quickly, alienated many potential donors, antagonized the press and had so much trouble winning over uncommitted superdelegates, is that from start to finish her campaign gave off a distinct whiff of arrogance. Campaign staffers, internalizing that victory was inevitable, felt that Clinton's stature in the party gave them license to play rough with anyone who wouldn't come along. So early on donors coughed up money, superdelegates pledged their support, and media outlets bought into meaningless national polls showing her way ahead, but few were happy about it. Unlike the diehard Clinton lovers, they felt intimidated. So later, when she desperately needed their support, they weren't there for her.

5. Entitlement

While Hillary turned out to be a much stronger candidate as time went on, one thing never changed: the sense that the Clintons felt they were owed the nomination. By repeatedly moving the goal posts on party rules, sideswiping Obama at every turn, whining about rampant sexism on the basis of two or three anecdotes, and claiming that the Florida primary resembled the 2000 fiasco and a rigged Zimbabwe election, Clinton continued to reinforce the impression that she considered the title hers no matter what. Her reported plan to concede this Saturday will have to be carried off with extreme graciousness—and no apparent demands being made in return—if she wants to lessen the sour impression she has left in many voters' minds.

Both Clintons were so far inside their own narcissistic bubble that longtime friends didn't dare tell her to quit in recent weeks because they knew she would never speak to them again. Hillary was surprised on the day after the last primary that even her most ardent supporters weren't standing by her anymore. This was a mark of the sense of entitlement that corroded her support among Democrats and helped seal her fate.

20080605-02	12:39	David	"How We Haven't Seen the Back of the Clintons Yet"
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"On How We Haven't Seen the Back of the Clintons Yet" by Christopher Hitchens, *London Mirror*

May 6, 2008, (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/topstories/2008/06/05/christopher-hitchens-on-how-we-haven-t-seenthe-back-of-the-clintons-yet-89520-20595523/>)

I have detested the Clintons ever since I covered the New Hampshire primary in 1992. The man I saw was not the silver-tongued charmer who seems to have bewitched so many people.

Up close, he seemed like a red-cheeked, piggy-eyed bully with a mean streak a mile wide.

And when he lied — which he more or less did for a living — he had a hard-faced little spouse to step into the TV studios to cover up for him.

This woman put up with A LOT from Bill over the years but could always tell herself it was worth it because in the long run the experience would give her the presidency she so obviously deserved.

Over the years I watched this gruesome drama — the Clintons using and abusing the democratic process as marital therapy — until, the morning after this year's Iowa caucuses, it finally seemed to be over.

A good friend of mine wrote an exultant article saying Barack Obama had done us the huge favour of moving America into a "post-Clinton" era.

No more would the happy couple be able to inflict themselves on us. We were free from Lanny Davis and Harold Ickes and Howard Wolfson and Hillary's ghastly brothers and all the easy money riff-raff who had benefited from Clinton's last minute pardons.

As I read it I was hit with the queasy realisation I didn't believe a word of it. My friend Congressman Steve Cohen was forced to apologise the other day for comparing the former First Lady to Glenn Close rising from the bathtub in Fatal Attraction.

It's actually been more like a movie about an unkillable swamp creature or lagoon dweller.

And the morning after the last two primaries Lanny Davis was circulating a petition in the Democratic party to attach her to the Obama ticket.

"Good grief," I found myself muttering. "Is there no end to this woman and her overweening ambition?"

Well, THAT was a dumb question and no mistake.

Her performance in New York on Tuesday night was positively flabbergasting. Having won South Dakota, she congratulated that state on having "the last word" — while Montana's results were still being counted.

She congratulated Mr. Obama all right but not for having won by securing the majority of delegates.

She let it be known that she would accept the vice presidential nomination without ceasing to count herself a candidate for the Presidential one.

And she demanded — wait for it — "respect" for the 18 million people who had voted for her. In other words, unless she gets a great deal of care and feeding and pampering, 18 million Americans will have been dissed.

The nerve. The nerve is really quite something.

In Washington yesterday, at the same pro-Israel podium at which Mr. Obama spoke earlier, Mrs. Clinton spoke of the man who has unprecedentedly won the nomination as if he was just another Senator, like her, just another friend of Israel, like her.

There was a time one might have expected a Jewish audience to be asked to applaud the choice of the first black American nominee but Mrs. Clinton couldn't find it in herself to be quite that gracious.

Indeed, if any one thing has exposed the hollowness and rottenness of the Clintons it is the almost casual way they have ignored their old black friends and allies to pursue a Clintonian version of a white backlash "southern strategy". Nothing is excluded if it serves the cause of the great entitlement.

From 16 years of polemics against this dynasty, I had acquired a huge shelf of anti-Clinton books and even written one myself in an effort to get the poison out of my system. For about 10 seconds after Iowa I thought of tossing them out. But now I think I'll have to hold on to my arsenal. I shall be needing it again.

Perhaps it's a *Jaws*-type movie I'm trying to think of. Like a Great White Shark, Mrs. Clinton will never stop her relentless predations until the very end.

20080605-03	13:05	SteveB	Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, John McCain
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Dear David,

Yep! They are the slimiest pair of trailer-trash to come down the pike in a long, long time. I am just constantly amazed that more people don't recognize them for the lying pieces of cr*p that they are.

Hopefully, Obama will. If Hillary makes it to the ticket, he has lost my vote.

McCain I don't trust (Is he pro-choice or pro-life? Anti-illegal immigration or not? Oh great, pro-warwarwar!), and he is so fricking old I'm not sure he's even going to make it to November. And this is the best the Republicans can do?

[20080605-04](#) 13:10 SteveM Re: 2008 Primaries; Hillary Clinton, John McCain

Dear SteveB,

Your point? [Hitchens piece. —SteveB]

Did you expect anything else from Hillary? It ain't over UNTIL SHE says it's Over!

Woo Hoo I can't get enough of this street fight! LOL! I hope keeps going until Inaugural Day , like Gore. And one can only hope this splits the party into several smaller, less annoying groups, that present less of a threat to my wallet and national security.

And when McCain wins in a land slide, let's hope the liberal press knows where to place the blame for the loss, and not in racism. Though that may also be to much to ask for! Since I'm sure Bill and Hillary will be the first to raise the issue in an "I told you so moment".

Flame suit on!

[20080605-05](#) 14:29 SteveB Re: John McCain Can't Win

Dear SteveM,

I really don't think that nearly-senile, can-hardly-walk old fart stands a chance in hell! That's my prediction. It's amazing to me that he's the best the Republicans can come-up with. Any black or woman off the street could beat him. He does one stupid thing after another. Truth.

[20080605-06](#) 15:03 SteveM Re: John McCain (defense)

Dear SteveB,

Why the hateful, personal attack on McCain? He can hardly walk or raise his arms above his shoulders due to the beatings he took at the hands of the communists. Next are you going to kick the crutches out from under a cripple?

Besides I would think that you would identify with his moderate to liberal social views. Along with his push for change for the last 25 years, long before BHO got a clue. No Steve, McCain would not be my first choice, but I wouldn't attack a man's age, handicaps or injury's, just his views and policies and those that would influence them! As stated before I'll dance with the devil that I do know, and in this case the lesser of the evils.

Mark my words now the Dem's are going to split and many will either not vote or vote for McCain out of spit AND your liberal media friends will cry racism was the cause not the Clintons.

I'll wager a coke on it! you on?

[20080605-07](#) 19:04 SteveB Re: John McCain, Energy

Dear SteveM,

You're on, hot dog! McCain is an old fart and I don't care what made him old. War "hero" was not something he chose or that shows his merits. He was just shot-down and held prisoner for heaven's sake. I don't see exactly how being a prisoner makes one a hero. Better to fight and avoid being a prisoner, right? His fake smile seems senile too. I don't trust him to change anything, especially with his coterie of lobbyists.

No war monger will be elected this year! Mark my words. I like Obama's ideas about actually going after Bin Laden and being more effective in Afghanistan. And what's wrong with talking to people on your terms? It can't make us weaker...only stronger.

Important: McCain's not consistently pro-choice, nor does he take a strong stand against illegal immigration. He sponsored a bill to give them amnesty. The government has no business telling anyone what they can do with their own bodies, least of all pregnant women in a world with too many people.

By the way, on our ongoing energy conversation...98% of our lead comes from recycled batteries, so that seems to be going pretty well. Also, big power plants can eliminate CO₂ and other bad waste products pretty effectively. Internal (or even external) combustion engines can't, unless they burn hydrogen, and having been witness and nearly caught up in a horrendous industrial hydrogen explosion, I'm not sure people can safely handle it. Electric cars are much simpler and will ultimately be just as cheap and perform as well as conventional cars. Sorry Teamsters, big trucks need to be eliminated as much as possible in favor of electric trains. I hope there will always be a place for motorcycles...they and chemicals are good reasons for preserving oil for those uses.

20080606-01	13:47	Mark	Fw: "Obama Explains National Anthem Stance" Debunked
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[Source of original email unknown. Totally debunked by Snopes.com: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/stance.asp>. If this isn't disgusting, then I don't know what is!!!! —SteveB]

"Obama Explains National Anthem Stance" (Mar. 22, 2008)

(<http://policelink.monster.com/topics/15571-obama-explains-the-national-anthem/posts>)

If this isn't disgusting, then I don't know what is!!!! To give this kind of an explanation tells me he thinks most Americans can't read, see, or comprehend what this man is about... The comment really nails it!

"LTG Bill Ginn" U.S.A.F. ret forwarded:

Hot on the heels of his explanation for why he no longer wears a flag pin, presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama was forced to explain why he doesn't follow protocol when the National Anthem is played.

According to the United States Code, Title 36, Chapter 10, Sec. 171, During rendition of the national anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform are expected to stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart.

"As I've said about the flag pin, I don't want to be perceived as taking sides,"

Obama said. "There are a lot of people in the world to whom the American flag is a symbol of oppression. And the anthem itself conveys a war-like message. You know, the bombs bursting in air and all. It should be swapped for something less parochial and less bellicose. I like the song 'I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing.' If that were our anthem, then I might salute it."

"I don't think my church is actually particularly controversial." - Barack Obama.

If someone had told me 64 years ago, as I was roaring down the runway in the most beautiful airplane in the world, that I would see our country subjected to one of the most disgusting Presidential elections imaginable, I would have told them they were crazy as hell.... What in the world have we come to? And, Obama wants to be the leader of the American Military!!

"Obama and McCain" by Thomas Sowell, TownHall

June 5, 2008, (http://townhall.com/columnists/thomassowell/2008/06/05/obama_and_mccain/page/full/)

Now that the two parties have finally selected their presidential candidates, it is time for a sober—if not grim—assessment of where we are.

Not since 1972 have we been presented with two such painfully inadequate candidates. When election day came that year, I could not bring myself to vote for either George McGovern or Richard Nixon. I stayed home.

This year, none of us has that luxury. While all sorts of gushing is going on in the media, and posturing is going on in politics, the biggest national sponsor of terrorism in the world—Iran—is moving step by step toward building a nuclear bomb.

The point when they get that bomb will be the point of no return. Iran's nuclear bomb will be the terrorists' nuclear bomb—and they can make 9/11 look like child's play. All the options that are on the table right now will be swept off the table forever. Our choices will be to give in to whatever the terrorists demand—however outrageous those demands might be—or to risk seeing American cities start disappearing in radioactive mushroom clouds. All the things we are preoccupied with today, from the price of gasoline to health care to global warming, will suddenly no longer matter.

Just as the Nazis did not find it enough to simply kill people in their concentration camps, but had to humiliate and dehumanize them first, so we can expect terrorists with nuclear weapons to both humiliate us and force us to humiliate ourselves, before they finally start killing us. They have already telegraphed their punches with their sadistic beheadings of innocent civilians, and with the popularity of videotapes of those beheadings in the Middle East. They have already telegraphed their intention to dictate to us with such things as Osama bin Laden's threats to target those places in America that did not vote the way he prescribed in the 2004 elections. He could not back up those threats then, but he may be able to in a very few years.

The terrorists have given us as clear a picture of what they are all about as Adolf Hitler and the Nazis did during the 1930's—and our "leaders" and intelligentsia have ignored the warning signs as resolutely as the "leaders" and intelligentsia of the 1930s downplayed the dangers of Hitler. We are much like people drifting down the Niagara River, oblivious to the waterfalls up ahead. Once we go over those falls, we cannot come back up again.

What does this have to do with today's presidential candidates? It has everything to do with them. One of these candidates will determine what we are going to do to stop Iran from going nuclear—or whether we are going to do anything other than talk, as Western leaders talked in the 1930's.

There is one big difference between now and the 1930's. Although the West's lack of military preparedness and its political irresolution led to three solid years of devastating losses to Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, nevertheless when all the West's industrial and military forces were finally mobilized, the democracies were able to turn the tide and win decisively.

But you cannot lose a nuclear war for three years and then come back. You cannot even sustain the will to resist for three years when you are first broken down morally by threats and then devastated by nuclear bombs. Our one window of opportunity to prevent this will occur within the term of whoever becomes President of the United States next January.

At a time like this, we do not have the luxury of waiting for our ideal candidate or of indulging our emotions by voting for some third party candidate to show our displeasure—at the cost of putting someone in the White House who is not up to the job. Senator John McCain has been criticized in this column many times. But, when all is said and done, Senator McCain has not spent decades aiding and abetting people who hate America. On the contrary, he has paid a huge price for resisting our enemies, even when they held him prisoner and tortured him. The choice between him and Barack Obama should be a no-brainer.

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"Any man who is under 30, and is not a liberal, has no heart; any man who is over 30, and is not a conservative, has no brains." ...Sir Winston Churchill

"The Comeback Id" by Todd S. Purdum, *Vanity Fair*

July, 2008, (<http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/07/clinton200807>)

(Old friends and longtime aides are wringing their hands over Bill Clinton's post—White House escapades, from the dubious (and secretive) business associations to the media blowups that have bruised his wife's campaign, to the private-jetting around with a skirt-chasing, scandal-tinged posse. Some point to Clinton's medical traumas; others blame sheer selfishness and the absence of anyone who can say "no." Exploring Clintonworld, the author asks if the former president will be consumed by his own worst self.)

It was a wedding straight out of *Sex and the City*: a rehearsal dinner looking out over the Eiffel Tower from the Trocadero, a garden ceremony and dancing reception in a grand chateau outside Paris, topped off by a private fireworks display. The groom was a thirtysomething American lawyer with friends in high places, the bride a dark-eyed designer with social sheen, and the guest list a mix of family and what Noël Coward once called Nescafé Society.

But the real cynosure of the occasion last August was the smiling, snowy-haired man who is the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral he attends, the 42nd president of the United States, Bill Clinton. He had come to the City of Light with the motley crew that constitutes some of the postpresidential rat pack to celebrate the marriage of Douglas Band, the man who for the last decade has been his personal aide, gatekeeper, enforcer, and—more recently—counselor in the multifarious business, philanthropic, and political dealings that keep Clinton restlessly circling the globe.

Also in attendance was Ron Burkle, the California supermarket billionaire and investor who is Clinton's bachelor buddy, fund-raiser, and business partner. Burkle had come with an attractive blonde, described by a fellow guest as "not much older than 19, if she was that."

Burkle's usual means of transport is the custom-converted Boeing 757 that Clinton calls "Ron Air" and that Burkle's own circle of young aides privately refer to as "Air F*ck One." Clinton himself had arrived on the private plane of another California friend, the real-estate heir, Democratic donor, liberal activist, and sometime movie and music producer Steve Bing, whose colorful private life includes fathering a child out of wedlock with the actress Elizabeth Hurley and suing the billionaire investor Kirk Kerkorian for invasion of privacy, alleging that private investigators for Kerkorian swiped Bing's dental floss out of his trash in a successful effort to prove that Bing's DNA matched that of a child delivered by Kerkorian's ex-wife, the former tennis pro Lisa Bonder. (The suit was later settled out of court.)

In fairness, it should be said that Clinton's entourage that weekend also included his daughter, Chelsea, and her boyfriend, Marc Mezvinsky, and no one who was there has adduced the slightest evidence that Clinton's behavior was anything other than proper. Nor, indeed, is there any proof of post-presidential sexual indiscretions on Clinton's part, despite a steady stream of tabloid speculation and Internet intimations that the Big Dog might be up to his old tricks. On any given visit to London, for example, Clinton is as apt to dine with Tony Blair or Kevin Spacey as with anyone who might raise an eyebrow. Todd S. Purdum takes the measure of America's leading political figures, from George W. Bush and John McCain to Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Read a compendium of stories from *Vanity Fair's* national editor.

But among the not-so-small cadre of Clinton friends and former aides, concern about the company the boss keeps is persistent, palpable, and pained. No former president of the United States has ever traveled with such a fast crowd, and most 61-year-old American men of Clinton's generation don't, either. "I just think those guys are radioactive," one former aide to Clinton who is still in occasional affectionate touch with him told me recently, referring to Burkle and (to a lesser extent) Bing. "I stay far away from them."

Another former aide, trusted by Clinton for his good judgment, said, "On the sort of money, women, all that stuff ... I'm the bad guy. All this stuff is kept away from me. Whatever they're doing, they definitely view me as somebody you cannot confide in."

A longtime Clinton-watcher, who has had ties to the former president since his first campaign for governor of Arkansas, said of Clinton's sometimes questionable associations, "I don't know what to make of any of that, if it's a voyeuristic experience, or if he's participating in it."

Yet another long-serving Clinton aide said simply, "If you figure it out, would you let me know?" Bill Clinton's relevance—and his presence in public life—is as close to permanent as any politician's can be. Before touching off a string of controversies in his wife's campaign this year, he was among the most popular figures on the planet, one of only three Democratic presidents in the 20th century to serve two full terms. His looming presence will make him a factor in the Democratic vice-presidential sweepstakes, the fall campaign, and every future presidential election of his lifetime, whatever his wife's fate.

I have covered Clinton on and off for 16 years, since his 1992 presidential campaign. I first really met him on New Year's Eve 1994, when he shook my hand on the beach at Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, and let his eyes travel ever so subtly to the newly issued White House press pass hanging around my neck, so that he could know to say, "I'm glad you're here, Todd." As a White House correspondent for The New York Times for more than two years, I spent some part of almost every day watching, thinking about, worrying about, or writing about Clinton and his never-a-dull-moment presidency. I found it hard not to admire his roving intellect, his protean political talents, his outsize personality, and the tactical skill with which he eventually confronted the Republican congressional majority that bedeviled so much of his tenure. Clinton had no use for the string of pure and noble losers that had come to define the Democratic Party's presidential prospects for so long. He wanted to win, and he knew how. (I should add, by way of disclosure, that my wife, Dee Dee Myers, was Clinton's first press secretary. They have not been in regular contact since she left the White House, and she has not been a source for this article.)

To know Clinton is, sooner or later, to be exasperated by his indiscipline and disappointed by his shortcomings. But through it all, it has been easy enough to retain an enduring admiration—even affection—for a president whose sins against decorum and the dignity of his office seemed venial in contrast to the systemic indifference, incompetence, corruption, and constitutional predations of his successor's administration. That is, easy enough until now.

This winter, as Clinton moved with seeming abandon to stain his wife's presidential campaign in the name of saving it, as disclosures about his dubious associates piled up, as his refusal to disclose the names of donors to his presidential library and foundation and his and his wife's reluctance to release their income-tax returns created crippling and completely avoidable distractions for Hillary Clinton's own long-suffering ambition, I found myself asking again and again, What's the matter with him?

As I sought to answer that question for myself, in conversations with dozens of current and onetime Clinton aides, many of whom I have known all these years (Clinton himself declined to be interviewed), I realized just how much about the former president is not known, and not knowable, at the moment, mostly because of his unapologetic stonewalling. Virtually no one, except Ron Burkle, knows just what Clinton put into Burkle's investment business, or just what he has done since to earn millions of dollars, with the prospect of reaping millions more. Most of the names of the donors who have contributed some \$500 million to Clinton's library and foundation over the past decade are not known, either.

Virtually no one, except his doctors and family, knows the precise state of Clinton's health. Virtually no one really knows what strategic role he has played in his wife's campaign.

A Cavernous Narcissism

So what can be known, or fairly inferred, from the available record?

There is reason to believe that Clinton, who never made more than \$35,000 a year as governor of Arkansas and left the White House about \$12 million in debt, has had his head turned by his ability to enjoy his post-presidential status; that the world of rich friends, adoring fans, and borrowed jets in which he travels has skewed his judgment or, at a minimum, created uncomfortable appearances of impropriety. There is ample evidence that his eight-year absence from a political workplace that has changed radically in the interim has left him conspicuously rusty at the craft of which he was once a master. There are those friends who worry that Clinton has never been the same since his quadruple bypass surgery, in 2004, and the unexpected follow-up operation six months later to remove accumulated scar tissue on his lung.

"There's an anger in him that I find surprising," one senior aide, who has known and served both Clintons for years, told me this spring. "There seems to be an abiding anger in him, and not just the summer thunderstorms of old. He has been called into question repeatedly by top staff. The fact is, you can only weigh in so often on this stuff. It's just a huge force of nature."

It may well have been Clinton's displaced anger (at the media, the Obama campaign, or both) on his wife's behalf that led to his charged performance in the South Carolina primary, where he campaigned extensively against the wishes of

Hillary's high command in the mistaken belief that he could help her among black voters. He not only failed to do so but damaged his own relations with many prominent blacks, just as black voters were flocking to Barack Obama for the first time in large numbers. Hillary's campaign was arguably never the same again.

It is also possible that all these influences have combined to make the cavernous narcissism that has always driven Clinton, for better and worse, at last consume the man almost completely. It was Clinton's political genius to position the Democratic Party, for the first time in a generation, as the champion of those who "work hard and play by the rules." In his own life, he has always followed only the first half of that dictum, and has never been fastidious about appearances, in ways charming and not. At a private meeting in New York City in 1992, aids activists, who were lobbying Clinton to include a speaker with aids at the Democratic convention that summer, presented him with a big batch of condoms, and a participant told me at the time that Clinton instantly replied, "My staff thinks this is the last thing I need." Less amusingly, in the run-up to the 1996 re-election campaign, when Clinton took one of his many fund-raising trips to California, I teasingly asked his press secretary, Mike McCurry, whether the president intended to go jogging with Eleanor Mondale, the daughter of the former vice president—as he had on a previous trip—after he was spotted with her (and Barbra Streisand) in the wee hours of the morning. The next day, as we boarded the plane at Andrews Air Force Base en route to Los Angeles, McCurry, whose effectiveness as Clinton's spokesman was aided by the fact that he never fell in love with him, sidled up to me and told me that he had passed my question on to the president, and that Clinton had responded, in vivid terms he knew I could not print, that I should not confuse exercise with extracurricular activity.

Only much later would the world learn that no less an informed observer than Monica Lewinsky, whose judgment, in hindsight, has often seemed sounder than the president's, had taken note of Mondale's presence at his side. According to Andrew Morton's authorized account *Monica's Story*, Lewinsky flew into a swivet when she was once stopped at the White House gate on her way to a hoped-for meeting to deliver Christmas gifts to the president. While waiting, she learned that Mondale was with him in the White House.

"Do you think I would be stupid enough to go running with someone I was foolin' with?," Clinton later asked Lewinsky. Without missing a beat, she replied, "Do you want me to answer that?"

The "Butt Boy"

By most accounts, including his own, Clinton struggled to find his footing in the early days of his postpresidency. "I was lost for three weeks after I left the White House," he said on the campaign trail this winter. "Nobody ever played a song anymore. I had no idea where I was." He had ended his administration in a firestorm of criticism over his eleventh-hour pardon of a raft of assorted miscreants, including the fugitive financier Marc Rich, whose ex-wife, Denise, contributed \$450,000 to Clinton's presidential-library fund, approximately \$1 million to Democratic causes, including \$70,000 to a fund supporting Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign, and \$7,000 worth of furniture for the Clintons' new home in Chappaqua, in suburban Westchester County.

"When he first started transitioning, it was hard," one former longtime aide told me. "But then he said to me, 'I've always been a guy who could bloom where I was planted.' I've been impressed by how truly happy he's been as an ex-president. He's much more focused than I would ever think he would be." Soon enough, Clinton was busy with plans for his library, and for the foundation that would not only build it but would undertake philanthropic and policy projects around the world; with paid speeches at \$150,000 to \$250,000 apiece; and with the writing of what would become his best-selling memoir, *My Life*, published in 2004. Deeply in debt with Whitewater- and impeachment-related legal bills, he set about earning an income that would "support a senator," as he put it. He more than succeeded. This spring, when the Clintons—under intense pressure from Barack Obama and the news media—at last released their income-tax returns for the years since they left the White House, the total haul amounted to a staggering \$109 million. Included in that total, besides Hillary Clinton's Senate salary and Bill Clinton's presidential pension, were \$10 million in book income for Hillary and \$29 million in book income for Bill, along with \$51 million in speaking fees for the former president.

The command center for Bill Clinton Inc. is the former president's penthouse office on 125th Street, in Harlem, and the go-to guy in the operation is a figure barely known to the public but a center of controversy in Clintonworld: Doug Band. Band, 35, joined the White House as an intern in the counsel's office in 1995 and by the end of the administration was the president's personal aide, or "butt boy," the person responsible for making sure the president wakes up on time in the morning and stays on schedule during the day, and for peering around the corner of the president's existence 24-7, at home and on the road, to make sure he has everything he needs (lunch, tie, speech, hat, golf clubs, a handy bathroom) and avoids everything unnecessary, unwanted, and undesirable (you get the drift). Band was the fourth young person to hold that job in Clinton's White House tenure, and he holds some vestigial elements of it but has also moved far beyond. In Clinton's post-presidential years, Band, who earned a master's and a law degree by studying nights at Georgetown,

has expanded his duties. His official title is "counselor," and Clinton credits him with helping to conceive the Clinton Global Initiative, the annual conference on venture philanthropy that brings together movers and shakers from the worlds of business, charity, and academia to tackle problems ranging from poverty to climate change.

Band can be brusque and aggressive for a person whose job it is not to be noticed. In 2001, when I wrote about Chelsea Clinton's graduation from Stanford for The New York Times and noted that a number of former White House staffers, including Band's predecessor, Kris Engskov, a bright young Arkansan, were on hand in Palo Alto to help out with logistics, I got a call the next morning from Band, curtly reminding me that he, not Engskov, was now the man who managed the former president's cell phone.

Last fall, Band fired off a stern letter to Nino Selimaj, owner of the Osso Buco restaurant, on University Place in Manhattan, demanding that a photograph of Selimaj with Chelsea Clinton that had hung in the restaurant's window for five years (in the time-honored tradition of publicizing celebrity patronage, but to Chelsea's apparent annoyance) be taken down forthwith. "Ms. Clinton, a private citizen, was not consulted prior to this picture being displayed, and thus, her permission was not given for you to do so," Band wrote. Selimaj, a Hillary Clinton supporter, was crushed but left the picture up until this April when he removed it to make room for a new batch of photos.

A former Clinton aide acknowledged, "He's a real point of animus from Hillaryland." In 2004, Maggie Williams, Hillary Clinton's former White House chief of staff, who had gone on to help establish Clinton's foundation as his post-presidential chief of staff, left her job after two and a half years at least partly, she told friends, because Band rubbed too many people the wrong way, perhaps unintentionally, and made too much work for her. Williams, who took over Hillary Clinton's struggling campaign in a staff shake-up this spring, has told intimates that while Band is not one of her favorites she had other, more personal, reasons for moving on. But one of Williams's former colleagues and friends told me, "Maggie said, 'That's it. I'm done,' because Doug does not show good judgment all the time."

A range of Clinton loyalists complain privately that Band does not keep Clinton away from people like Burkle and Bing, who attended Band's wedding to Lily Rafii, a glamorous designer of high-end handbags, belts, and other accessories.

A Classic Clinton Vacuum

The most pointed criticism of Band is precisely this: that he does not possess what Clinton has always needed in a string of strong-willed aides, such as his gubernatorial chief of staff Betsey Wright, or his director of Oval Office operations, Nancy Hernreich—the judgment to save him from himself. The origins of such criticism may lie in the fact that one of his predecessors as personal aide, Stephen Goodin, was cited, together with Hernreich, in the Starr Report as having tried to keep Monica Lewinsky away from the president, while Band, then only an intern, escorted her to a White House party, at her request.

"It's a classic Clinton vacuum, in my opinion," one former aide told me, referring to the inability of Band—or perhaps anyone—to monitor the company Clinton keeps. "He surrounds himself with people sometimes who are really good or really bad, and there's rarely any in-between."

Band's supporters among Clinton's longtime circle say most of the criticism means he is doing his job. "In my experience, he's pretty good at protecting a guy who, you know, everybody wants to grab his sleeve," former Clinton chief of staff John Podesta told me. "He pushes back hard." Even some who do not always admire his hard-charging style say he kept conscientious, worried vigil during Clinton's 2004 heart surgery and that Hillary relied on him greatly.

Band's defenders say that complaints about his judgment are misplaced, and are really complaints about Clinton's judgment. Band himself declined to be interviewed. But someone who knows him well said that he was sure Band was unhappy and surprised by the presence of Burkle's young date at his wedding, and that to the degree that Band has ruffled feathers or made enemies by saying "no" to various supplicants, friends, and favor seekers who believe Clinton should acquiesce to them, he has done so with the president's and his family's best interests at heart.

Over the last few years, aides have winced at repeated tabloid reports about Clinton's episodic friendship and occasional dinners out with Belinda Stronach, a twice-divorced billionaire auto-parts heiress and member of the Canadian Parliament 20 years his junior, or at more recent high-end Hollywood dinner-party gossip that Clinton has been seen visiting with the actress Gina Gershon in California. There has been talk of a female friend in Chappaqua, a woman in a bar at a meeting of the Aspen Institute, and a public sighting of Clinton, Bing, and a ravishing entourage in a New York elevator that, a former Clinton aide told me, led a business leader who saw them to say: I don't know what the guy was doing, but it was so clear that it was just no good.

None of these wisps of smoke have produced a public fire. But four former Clinton aides told me that, about 18 months ago, one of the president's former assistants, who still advises him on political matters, had heard so many complaints about such reports from Clinton supporters around the country that he felt compelled to try to conduct what one of these aides called an "intervention," because, the aide believed, "Clinton was apparently seeing a lot of women on the road." The would-be intercessor was rebuffed by people around Clinton before ever getting an audience with the former president, and another aide told me that the effort was not well received by either Bill or Hillary Clinton and that some Hillarylanders, in particular, were in denial about the continuing political risks that Bill's behavior might pose.

The sensitivity among Clinton's staff to these questions is such that, after I posed some queries about Clinton's relationship with Burkle and Co., a spokesman, Jay Carson, e-mailed me this comment: "The ills of the Democratic Party can be seen perfectly in the willingness of fellow Democrats to say bad things about President Clinton. If you ask any Republican about Reagan they will say he still makes the sun rise in the morning, but if you ask Democrats about their only two-term president in 80 years, a man who took the party from the wilderness of loserdom to the White House and created the strongest economy in American history, they'd rather be quoted saying what a reporter wants to hear than protect a strong brand for the party. Republicans look at this behavior and laugh at us."

Whatever the facts of Clinton's personal life, it is beyond dispute that he has associated with some decidedly unpresidential company. In 2002, Clinton flew to Africa with the New York investor Jeffrey Epstein on his private Boeing 727 on an anti-aids and economic-development mission. (Others on the mission included Kevin Spacey and the comedian Chris Tucker.) In 2006, Epstein was indicted on state charges of soliciting prostitution in Palm Beach, Florida, and he later came under investigation by federal authorities amid allegations that he hired under-age girls for massages and more in a house stocked with sex toys and genitalia-shaped soaps. He remains the subject of at least four pending civil lawsuits from young women and is reportedly expected to accept a plea deal on a state charge that would give him 18 months in prison, followed by house arrest, in lieu of a trial now set to begin this month.

When I asked several Clinton aides and friends why the boss hung around with people like Burkle and Bing, they suggested various reasons. Bing, 43, who helped finance *Shine a Light*, the recent Martin Scorsese documentary about the Rolling Stones, and who has given tens of millions to environmental and other causes dear to Clinton's heart in recent years, is described as very well read, thoughtful, interesting—and willing to stay up long into the night indulging Clinton's craving for conversational companionship. (A spokesman for Bing said he would have no comment.)

Burkle, 55, a onetime supermarket boxboy who eventually parlayed ownership of several grocery chains into a fortune that *Forbes* magazine estimates to be at least \$3.5 billion, is said to have bonded with Clinton over their shared origins as outsiders who rose to the very biggest leagues. They met during Clinton's 1992 campaign, after the Los Angeles riots, and Burkle's union-friendly stance and support for a range of Democratic causes quickly endeared him to Clinton. A former Burkle associate told me that Burkle has always been careful to conduct his own social life discreetly in Clinton's presence, but would not deny that the divorced Burkle leads what he euphemistically called a "European lifestyle." And, the former associate added, "how many older guys wouldn't want to hang out with younger girls, if they could? Would you rather hang out with a smart, good-looking 20-year-old, or a 45-year-old?"

One person, who has worked at the highest levels for both Clintons, told me that Clinton's association with such people "just shows poor judgment, for someone who understands political calculations the way he does, and the subtleties as he does, that he puts himself in that position." Business with Burkle

In his book *Giving*, an extended Hallmark hymn to the virtues of venture philanthropy, Clinton writes that Burkle's provision of post—White House work was the "only private sector offer I accepted" upon leaving office. In fact, that is not true: Clinton has also collected more than \$3 million in consulting fees from InfoUSA, a data-mining company headed by a longtime contributor, Vinod Gupta, a Nebraska multi-millionaire who has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Clintons' campaigns. The company has drawn media scrutiny for allegedly selling consumer data about vulnerable senior citizens to unscrupulous telemarketers, and some shareholders once sued InfoUSA, charging that Gupta wasted nearly \$1 million in company funds flying the Clintons around the world. (InfoUSA did not respond to a request for comment.)

But Clinton's business relationship with Burkle is far and away his largest source of income after books and speeches: \$15.4 million between 2003 and 2007, according to the Clintons' recently released tax returns. That amounts to about 20 percent of all the income that Clinton earned in those years. Until the release of the tax returns this year, Hillary Clinton's Senate financial-disclosure forms had revealed only that Clinton earned "more than \$1,000" a year from his partnerships with Burkle.

Burkle is perhaps the single best example of the self-reinforcing network of rich personal, charitable, political, and business supporters Clinton has built since his White House years. For Clinton's re-election campaign Burkle held regular fund-raisers at Green Acres, his sprawling estate in Beverly Hills, which once belonged to the silent-film star Harold Lloyd, and Burkle has also raised millions of dollars for Hillary Clinton's campaigns. What has Clinton done in return? Burkle himself has said that Clinton has provided invaluable introductions and entrée to potential investors, including the Teamsters union. (A spokesman for Burkle's companies did not return repeated telephone calls seeking comment.) When the tax returns were made public this spring, Jay Carson issued a statement saying that "the president provides his best advice on potential investments, advocates generally on behalf of the funds, and seeks to create opportunities for investors to consider investing in these funds or in the investments the funds make."

The Burkle partnership carries ample potential for conflicts—real and perceived—whether or not Hillary Clinton is ever president. For one thing, she lent her campaign \$11.4 million this year, and because the Clintons' finances are commingled, it would be difficult to discern whether money from Burkle-related ventures (or other potentially controversial sources of income) made its way into Clinton campaign coffers. Burkle's other investors include an entity connected to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al- Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, whose regime has been cited for human-rights violations by the State Department. (Two years ago, Senator Clinton nevertheless opposed a Dubai-based company's efforts to acquire control over the management of six United States ports.)

Over the years, Clinton has had three main business involvements with Burkle. The first is a broad advisory capacity, for which Clinton has been paid flat fees for work as a rainmaker and liaison between Burkle and various potential investors. In fact, a Clinton aide says, this accounts for all the money that Burkle has paid Clinton to date. As part of the advisory arrangement, Clinton received a stake—of unknown size—in two Burkle domestic investment funds, for which Clinton will see a profit only if annual returns exceed a certain threshold. They appear on track to do so, the aide says, but have so far not produced a payout for Clinton. The third strand is an international investment fund (which has also yet to generate cash returns for Clinton) in which the former president invested an undisclosed amount of his own money, along with Burkle and the same entity connected to Sheikh Mohammed. Clinton has the right to opt out of any controversial investments by this fund, as he recently did with an investment in China.

Doug Band, though not Clinton himself, was involved in another Burkle investment that produced embarrassment. As *The Wall Street Journal* reported last fall, Band helped introduce Burkle to Raffaello Follieri (an Italian entrepreneur and the boyfriend of the actress Anne Hathaway), who had a proposal to buy and develop properties being sold off by the Catholic Church. Band received a \$400,000 finder's fee for the transaction (which he has said he passed on to others involved). Burkle later sued Follieri for allegedly misappropriating funds to pay expenses. (The dispute was settled out of court.) A Clinton adviser told me that Follieri (who was recently charged with attempting to pass a bad check for \$215,000 in New York; the charge was later dropped) had come with good references. (Attempts to reach Follieri were unsuccessful.)

This winter a Clinton spokesman announced that Clinton was moving to sever his ties with Burkle to avoid potential conflicts should Hillary Clinton become the Democratic nominee. But in fact, one Clinton aide told me, severing the ties is complicated because putting a value on the partnerships is difficult.

On the Stump

In the middle of the so-called Potomac primary this winter—simultaneous elections in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia—I went to watch Clinton campaign for Hillary one Sunday in Baltimore County: at a senior-living complex in Catonsville and a gritty Democratic club in blue-collar Dundalk. Much of what I saw felt instantly recognizable: the fluid, conversational, extemporaneous style; the succinct statement of the case ("You ought to be for her because she's spent a lifetime making the only kind of change that matters: making changes in other people's lives"); the frequent pronouncements that something or other was "a big deal" (a favorite phrase in his presidency); and the genial stretchings of the truth.

"Now, when I got elected, I had the lowest net worth of any president of the 20th century," Clinton told his appreciative audience at the Charlestown Retirement Community, blithely ignoring poor Harry Truman, who so struggled to make ends meet as a senator in Washington that he put his wife, Bess, on his office payroll at a higher salary than any other employee there. A moment later, Clinton invoked Truman to make a point about Hillary's courage in fighting for universal health-insurance coverage, saying, "A lot of you remember that Harry Truman was the first president who tried to get universal health care for everybody. They beat his brains out and nearly destroyed his presidency, and he was a very great president." Truman's greatness is now in little dispute, but the contemporary criticism of his presidency had less to do with his drive for health care than with the Korean War.

But if much about Clinton is familiar to one who covered him in his prime, other aspects of his appearance and demeanor are unsettling. He is visibly older and thinner. His hair is whiter and his countenance paler. At times, as the day wears on, he makes an odd cotton-mouth sound, his tongue sticking to the roof of his mouth as he talks. "At some point in your life, which most of us in this room have reached," he tells the seniors, "you realize that even if you live to be 100—and I hope you all do, and a bunch of you will, by the way—you have more yesterdays than tomorrows."

That, too, was a line Clinton liked to use in the White House, but it rings differently at 61 than it did at 46 or 50. By the standards of the males in his family, Clinton is a very old man indeed. His father died at 28, three months before his son was born, and his maternal grandfather, who helped raise him, died at 58, so Clinton has long faced atypical intimations of his own mortality. Many of those who know him well say he now tires more easily, and loses energy.

Post-Op Complications

That is hardly surprising: not quite four years ago, Clinton underwent quadruple-bypass surgery to relieve blocked arteries in his heart, a procedure whose comparative commonness in the modern medical world belies the range of subtle, complex, and not always obvious complications that can follow it. "He's recovered much, much more slowly from the heart surgery than anybody thought," one former aide told me. "He still has energy, but not stamina. He can recover, but he used to do that nonstop, with three hours' sleep."

Just weeks after his triumphal encore appearance at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, in Boston, Clinton, who has suffered for years from esophageal reflux, the symptoms of which can sometimes mimic signs of cardiac trouble, complained of chest pains and shortness of breath, and an angiogram showed severely blocked arteries that doctors said meant he was doubtless headed for a major heart attack. On Sept. 6, 2004, in surgery at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center, Clinton's breastbone was cut open, his chest pulled apart. His heart was stopped for 73 minutes while a heart-lung machine maintained his body's flow of blood and breathing, and surgeons took blood vessels from his chest and his left leg to create detours around the segments of arteries in his heart that were severely clogged with plaque—more than 90 percent blocked in some cases.

Six months later, as the result of a rare and unexpected complication, Clinton had a second surgery to remove a rubbery rind of scar tissue caused by the accumulation of bloody fluid in the lower lobe of his left lung; the tissue had cut his breathing capacity by more than 25 percent. In this operation, known as a thoracotomy, an incision was made between a pair of Clinton's ribs, and doctors spread them apart to make room for the insertion of surgical instruments that peeled off tissue surrounding the scar tissue and then the hard, rubbery rind. Experts describe the aftermath of such surgery as typically quite painful, much more painful than that of bypass surgery.

As a private citizen—albeit a very prominent one—Clinton has not received anything like the postsurgical media attention he would have if he were still president, and many details of his treatment in recent years are not known. After his first surgery, The New York Times reported that he would take a range of medications, including a beta-blocker to maintain regular heartbeats, a statin to lower his cholesterol, an ace inhibitor to control high blood pressure, and aspirin to thin his blood. These medications may cause a range of side effects, including fatigue, muscle pain, dehydration, depression, and impotence. Coronary bypass can also cause subtle changes in cognition, which may, or may not, be temporary. There is further medical disagreement about whether such changes are caused in part by small particles of plaque that are discharged by the heart-lung machine and sent to the brain, or by the underlying artery disease itself. If a patient has arterial disease in his heart, he could have it in his brain too.

"I would think mood changes would be a big issue in his life from that bypass surgery, especially having to go back a second time," says Dr. Thomas Traill, a prominent cardiologist at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, in Baltimore, who is not involved in Clinton's care. Many people who have bypass surgery get depressed afterward, while others suffer from increased irritability. "It's very similar to postpartum depression. You deliver a child and then a week later it's a dismal anticlimax. The same thing happens with heart surgery: you wonder if you're going to make it, and then you wake up in the intensive-care unit and you're the center of the universe, and a week later you're exhausted and sore and about to be sent home."

"It's also true," Traill adds, "that a lot of people are never really the same again, that their mood is not right. Some of that may have been triggered by the original illness and some by surgery. Then there's a persistent problem: you're taking medications, you're under doctors' care, and every day when you shave you know you're not going to live forever. So whether or not he's, as they like to say, clinically depressed, his mood cannot be the same as before this happened."

The Guilt Factor

Whatever the explanation, much of Clinton's behavior on the campaign trail this year has been so maladroit as to constitute malpractice: his blowups at television reporters, his derisive dismissal of Obama's unwavering anti-war stance as a "fairy tale," and most of all his denigrating comparison of Obama's performance in the South Carolina primary to Jesse Jackson's victories there two decades ago (which even one of his closest former aides described to me as insensitive at best). Perhaps no figure in modern American politics has less standing to say "Shame on you!" than Bill Clinton, but he said just that—twice—to a hapless reporter who asked him in January about comments by a former South Carolina Democratic Party chairman comparing Clinton's tactics to those of the late Lee Atwater, the take-no-prisoners Republican strategist known for racially charged campaigns.

As the days wore on, the former Senate Democratic majority leader Tom Daschle said Clinton's behavior was "not keeping with the image of a former president." His former labor secretary and onetime friend turned critic, Robert Reich, called Clinton's attacks on Obama "ill-tempered and ill-founded." No less a loquacious commentator than the Reverend Al Sharpton said that it was time for Clinton to just "shut up." His old flame Gennifer Flowers, who has endorsed Hillary, referred to him as an "idiot husband."

Congressman James E. Clyburn of South Carolina, the highest-ranking black member of the House of Representatives, who pointedly had remained neutral in the primary, finally called Clinton's behavior "bizarre." And on more than one occasion, in one way or another, Senator Clinton herself had to tell him—as she did after he revived controversy over her imagined landing in Bosnia under sniper fire by unleashing a string of new inaccuracies to defend her—"Let me handle this." There is little doubt that Clinton's own intensity has fueled his wife's. One senior aide told me bluntly that Bill's anger "has not served her well. That side of him feeds the worst side of Hillary. He does stoke her up."

Aides to both Clintons say part of the problem was that, until Maggie Williams came on board, no one from Hillary's campaign was even tasked with routinely keeping Bill abreast of developments, so long-simmering tensions between her people and his were allowed to worsen. After Williams's arrival, Clinton participated in a daily conference call with her and other top campaign advisers to review the state of the race that one aide said sometimes turned into a virtual monologue. "There's not a detail that escapes his notice and commentary," the aide said, "and as usual with Clinton, much of what he says is worth listening to." Aides explain the depth of Bill Clinton's involvement by invoking what one of them called "the guilt factor."

"There's this piece of him really wanting this desperately for her, for all of the reasons you can imagine," this aide told me. "She put her career on hold to be with him I mean, it's her time, and he feels that." Clinton was also never cut out to be a supporting player. He is Gladys Knight and not a Pip, as his former aide Jamal Simmons, who now backs Obama, put it this spring.

The way Clinton handled the courtship of Senator Ted Kennedy in the run-up to Kennedy's eventual endorsement of Obama is instructive. "Barack pursued Kennedy with a soft touch," a person close to Kennedy told me. "He checked in every once in a while Counter that with the way the Clintons were handling him. There was nothing soft about the Clintons' requests. Hillary would call and make a formal request. Clinton, as he felt Kennedy slipping away, would get more and more insistent, and he would make the whole conversation about how bad Obama was, not how good his wife was."

Losing a Step

Clinton's temper has continued to get the better of him. By the eve of the Pennsylvania primary, he was reduced, in a Philadelphia radio phone interview, to denying that his comments in South Carolina had been in any way racially charged, and instead insisted that the Obama camp "played the race card on me." He sputtered, "I mean, this is just, you know ... You really gotta go something to play the race card with me—my office is in Harlem." At the end of the interview, apparently unaware that he was still on the air, Clinton was heard to say, "I don't think I should take any sh*t from anybody on that, do you?" Asked the next day by another reporter what he had meant by saying the Obama campaign "was playing the race card," Clinton would have none of it. "No, no, no, that's not what I said," he erupted, as if he did not know that his earlier comments had been recorded and were all over the Internet. He added, "You always follow me around and play these little games, and I'm not going to play your games today." It's a nice question, just who was playing the games. When I asked a Clinton campaign official how the former president could have issued such a flat denial, the aide immediately responded, with no trace of irony, that the offending reporter had used the word "playing," while in the radio interview Clinton had used the word "played." I'm not sure whether that makes Clinton's outburst better or worse, but it's of a piece with the parser the public knows so well.

As the primaries ground on, the campaign deployed Clinton more strategically (and, perhaps, more effectively) in the kinds of smaller towns presidents never visit—47 stops in Pennsylvania, 39 in Indiana, 50 in North Carolina—where he stumped in largely white, working-class areas but, poignantly for a man once dubbed the nation’s “first black president,” not in African-American ones. That sea change in Clinton’s standing among blacks will remain a consideration in how to use him, or not use him, in the general-election campaign, no matter who the Democratic nominee.

I saw Clinton at two of his nine stops on the day before the North Carolina primary in May. He was himself, for good and bad. In Zebulon, population 4,329, he arrived one hour and seven minutes late to speak to a crowd of 500 or so, talked for 40 minutes on topics from the Iraq war to hybrid cars, adoption and foster-care policy, and mortgage foreclosures, and concluded, in a repeated refrain that took on the insistence of a preacher’s call, that Hillary’s campaign had been carried along by “people like you in places like this.” Minutes later, after a front-porch rally in nearby Louisburg, population 3,726, a woman in the crowd approached him, tears streaming down her face. I could not get close enough to hear what was said, but Clinton listened, then cupped her face in his big hands, in that way that only he can. It was classic Clinton, but not enough to prevent an Obama blowout in the state the next day.

Perhaps more than anything, Clinton, whose audiences in recent years have tended to be adoring crowds who hang on every word of what those who have heard his standard speech say is a rambling tour d’horizon of world problems, has simply lost a step.

“Look, the game has changed,” said Mike McCurry. “He ran his last national campaign in 1996, and remember, we kind of ran unopposed. It’s been a while since he did that, and the way you summon people up and get them to do things has changed. All of this stuff, the blogging and the YouTubing and the way in which everything is instantaneously available: I tell you, until you get out there and are actually dealing with the consequences—having what you just said as you were walking out the door [all over the Internet], that’s brand-new to him.”

A Dictator’s Embrace

When Clinton left the White House, aides say, he made a list of all the world problems he cared most about and might yet do something to help solve. At the top of his list was Mideast peace, but Clinton quickly realized that that was an endeavor in which uninvited meddling was inappropriate, so he concentrated on a range of other issues, from H.I.V./aids to clean water, childhood obesity, global warming, and—after the South Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina—disaster relief. Some aides have said they see a clear effort to redress problems that he let fester as president, whether aids or the Rwandan genocide. It is beyond dispute that Clinton’s foundation has done worthy work around the world, funneling low-cost anti-retroviral drugs to more than a million aids patients, shining the singular power of a presidential spotlight on the good work of others, and raising millions of dollars for practical programs in places much of the world’s power establishment never bothers with.

But it is also beyond dispute that Clinton has blended the altruistic efforts of his philanthropy with the private business interests of some of his biggest donors in ways that are surpassingly sloppy, if not unseemly, for any former president. A case in point is Clinton’s relationship with Ukraine’s Victor Pinchuk, a billionaire and philanthropist who has donated millions to the ex-president’s foundation. According to Newsweek, in 2007, at a Pinchuk-sponsored international conference in Yalta, Clinton wowed the crowd with a presentation on Ukraine but also sparked controversy when he was embraced by Pinchuk’s father-in-law, the country’s former president Leonid Kuchma. Kuchma’s repressive regime has been linked by a government investigation to the 2000 murder of a dissident Ukrainian journalist.

The man was found decapitated—one of scores of journalists who have been killed or have disappeared in Ukraine since the country achieved independence, in 1991.

Even more troubling is Clinton’s relationship with the Canadian mining magnate Frank Giustra. This winter, a lengthy investigative report in *The New York Times* disclosed that, in 2005, Clinton flew to the Central Asian country of Kazakhstan on Giustra’s MD-87 jet for what was billed as a philanthropic three-country tour. The two men had dinner with President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has held the country in a vise-like grip for nearly two decades. At their meeting, Clinton expressed support for Nazarbayev’s bid to head the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which monitors elections and promotes democracy. That position was sharply at odds with official American foreign policy and came in the face of stinging criticism of Kazakhstan’s record on human rights from many sources, including the junior senator from New York, Hillary Rodham Clinton. Within two days, Giustra’s company signed preliminary agreements allowing it to buy into three uranium projects controlled by Kazakhstan’s state-owned uranium agency. And months after that the Clinton Foundation received a \$31.3 million donation from Giustra that remained

secret until a Giustra representative acknowledged it late last year. (Giustra has separately pledged another \$100 million to the foundation.)

A Clinton spokesperson and Giustra have both said that Clinton was unaware of the specifics of the uranium deal. But critics of Clinton's judgment say that misses the point.

"There's no way in the world that President Clinton didn't understand what was going on there, and no way in the world that he didn't understand what his role was supposed to be in that visit: to lay the hands of the former president of the United States on the individual he was traveling with and thereby bring credibility to whatever reason that individual was there for," says Fred Wertheimer, the president of Democracy 21, a Washington watchdog group that monitors money and politics. "To deny that is to, basically, take the position that you can fool all of the people all of the time."

The Public Pensioner

It is for just such reasons that Clinton's refusal to make public the names of donors to his foundation has drawn withering fire. (Some donors—including the Saudi royal family and the governments of Dubai, Kuwait, and Qatar—were made public by The New York Sun when a list of them was discovered on a public computer monitor at the opening of the Clinton library, in Little Rock, and others have since become known as the result of interviews and journalistic digging through the tax records of known Clinton friends and supporters.) Clinton aides say that donors were promised confidentiality, but they have also pledged to make public the names of future donors—though not past ones—should Hillary Clinton become president.

"I think there's also a kind of sentiment that if somebody's given us money to save the lives of tens of thousands of kids who have H.I.V., let somebody f*cking b*tch about it," one senior Clinton adviser told me. "If they don't want us to take that money, or if it offends some sensibility of Fred Wertheimer, so be it."

Clinton is under no legal obligation to disclose such donors—or, for that matter, to disclose much of anything about his personal financial dealings. No one knows the details of the earnings—almost certainly many millions of dollars—that the first President Bush has made from his investment in the Carlyle Group, for example. Gerald Ford quietly raked in big director's fees from companies such as American Express, and Ronald Reagan briefly scandalized late-80s Washington by taking \$2 million for a single speaking trip to Japan. But their wives never ran for president.

Throughout our history there has been a strong presumption that former presidents should conduct their affairs in ways that do not seem to cheapen, degrade, or exploit the high office they held. Hillary Clinton's own service as senator, and her presidential campaign, reinforce that imperative in Bill Clinton's case. Harry Truman was so reluctant to accept any business or commercial offer, however high-minded, that might be seen as capitalizing on the presidency that he nearly went broke in retirement. A few years after leaving office, he had seen a \$600,000 advance from Life magazine for his memoirs whittled away by expenses and 67 percent income taxes to a net gain of about \$37,000. Only the sale of his family farm for a shopping center saved him from real embarrassment. Finally, he took his case to Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn and Senate majority leader Lyndon Johnson, and the first bill stipulating an annual presidential pension (initially \$25,000) and money for offices and staff was passed.

Clinton benefits handsomely from Truman's foresight. His presidential pension has totaled more than \$1.2 million since he left office, and despite his fantastic private-sector income, an analysis this spring by the Web site Politico showed that he has taken almost as much in taxpayer dollars for his postpresidential existence as the other two living ex-presidents—Jimmy Carter and George H. W. Bush—combined. Since 2001, Clinton has received more in almost every category—pension, staff salaries, supplies—than any of his colleagues in that smallest of clubs. Before Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford died, Clinton's telephone and rent expenses came close to exceeding the comparable expenses for all four then living former presidents combined. Part of the difference is that Clinton served eight years in office, entitling him to a federal health-insurance plan and a higher pension than Ford, Carter, or Bush, and part is that his office space in Manhattan is more expensive than space in Atlanta or Houston.

Still, there is a repellent grandiosity about Clinton's post-presidential style. Before he settled on more modest space in Harlem, Clinton had intended to rent the entire 56th floor of Carnegie Hall Tower, in Midtown, for roughly \$738,000 a year. He changed course after a rash of sharp congressional and public criticism. Each year at Christmastime, Clinton sends out to supporters a slim, paperbound volume of his Selected Remarks, with a gold-embossed "Happy Holidays" greeting card replete with the requisite "bug" showing it was printed in a union shop. Last year's number ran 25 pages and featured three thoroughly ordinary efforts: a commencement speech at Knox College, in Illinois; remarks to the Nelson Mandela Foundation, in South Africa; and comments at the 50th-anniversary commemoration of the desegregation

of Little Rock Central High School. "Since leaving office," the first page of the booklet states, "President Clinton has devoted his time and energy to causes of both personal concern and global significance."

A Solitary Man

Throughout his career, Bill Clinton has justified acts of extraordinary selfishness in the name of idealism—he's always in it for the people, the plain folks who tell pollsters they trust him to look out for their interests, even if they don't trust him. He has been forgiven colossal egotism, even cruelty, by those closest to him because of his superlative political talents, and because of the overreaching of his enemies. As president, Clinton often could not show grace in the smallest ways. He dithered about where and when to go on vacation, so that aides and Secret Service agents could not plan their own. He declined to release aides and reporters who had waited around all through a pointless Saturday of duty while he made up his mind whether to play golf (a game at which he has been known to cheat).

He was never, ever, on time. In Joe Klein's *roman à clef* about the Clintons, *Primary Colors*, the Betsey Wright character accuses the Bill Clinton character of always skating by on charm and talent and need. "You have never paid the bill," she tells him. "Never. And no one ever calls you on it. Because you're so completely f*cking special. Everyone was always so proud of you. And me, too. Me the worst."

In the end, this is Clinton's most grievous sin, his steady refusal to take grown-up responsibility for the consequences of his own actions. In the White House, on the day of his last sexual encounter with Monica Lewinsky, Clinton told her that he was worried that a foreign embassy might be listening in on their calls, and that if she were ever questioned, she should say they were just friends. Then he looked into her eyes and sang, "Try a Little Tenderness," a song that goes: "She may be weary, women do get weary, wearing the same shabby dress." On the day this winter that he accused Barack Obama of spinning a "fairy tale" about Obama's anti-war stance, Clinton went on to whine about an Obama campaign research sheet criticizing his business dealings and insisting, "Ken Starr spent \$70 million and indicted innocent people to find out that I wouldn't take a nickel to see the cow jump over the moon."

So, yes, let us stipulate: Ken Starr was a prurient, partisan zealot. Yes, other ex-presidents have made a lot of money and it is hard to begrudge Clinton his earnings (even if he did take six million nickels for a speech to the Australian Council for the Peaceful Reunification of China). Yes, Obama is a daring opponent who thinks he is hot sh*t and has benefited from the same enthusiasm, energy, and fresh-faced appeal that a fella named Bill Clinton once elicited (but he has suffered from some of the same skepticism, too). It is Clinton's invariable insistence that his problems are someone else's fault, and that questions or criticisms of him, his methods, motives, or means are invariably unfair, that is his unforgivable flaw.

He has told friends that he is not worried that his aggressive performance this year has done lasting damage to his reputation (some of them are not so sure). Whatever the future holds for Hillary Clinton, her husband is not fading away. He will remain a presence, a force to be reckoned with, as long as he draws breath.

But for a politician with so many admirers, allies, acquaintances, faithful retainers, and hangers-on, Clinton remains a profoundly solitary man, associates say, without any real peers, intellectual equals, or genuine friends with whom he can share the sweetest things in life. (The one who has always come closest, for better and worse, for richer and poorer, is simply too busy these days.)

So he spends his time veering between feeling sorry for himself and working to help others, between doing good and giving his enemies fresh ammunition, between vindicating his legacy and vitiating it.

"So much of modern culture is characterized by stories of self-indulgence and self-destruction," Clinton writes near the end of *Giving*, from which he earned \$6.3 million and gave away \$1 million (or 16 percent) to charity. "So much of modern politics is focused not on honest differences of policy but on personal attacks. So much of modern media is dominated by people who earn fortunes by demeaning others, defining them by their worst moments, exploiting their agonies. Who's happier? The uniters or the dividers? The builders or the breakers? The givers or the takers? I think you know the answer."

I used to think he did, too. But substitute the words "my life" for the words "modern culture" and "modern politics" in the passage above, and you'll have a pretty succinct summary of what Bill Clinton has, at last, become.

(Todd S. Purdum is *Vanity Fair's* national editor.)

20080607-03 14:57 SteveB Re: "Obama Explains National Anthem Stance" McCain

Dear Mark,

Not only did Obama get this far, he'll get even farther because...

I really don't think that nearly-senile, can-hardly-walk old fart stands a chance in hell! That's my prediction. It's amazing to me that he's the best the Republicans can come-up with. Any black or woman off the street could beat him. He does one stupid thing after another. Truth.

McCain is an old fart and I don't care what made him old. War "hero" was not something he chose or that shows his merits. He was just shot-down and held prisoner for heaven's sake. I don't see exactly how being a prisoner makes one a hero. Better to fight and avoid being a prisoner, right? His fake smile seems senile too. I don't trust him to change anything, especially with his coterie of lobbyists.

No war monger will be elected this year! Mark my words. I like Obama's ideas about actually going after Bin Laden and being more effective in Afghanistan. And what's wrong with talking to people on your terms? It can't make us weaker...only stronger.

Important: McCain's not consistently pro-choice or for taking a strong stand against illegal immigration. He sponsored a bill to give them frigging amnesty. I want the government OUT of our lives except for national defense and illegal immigration is that kind of issue. The government has no business telling anyone what they can do with their own bodies, least of all pregnant women in a world with too many people.

20080607-04 16:53 SteveB Re: "Obama and McCain"

Dear SteveM,

Too bad McCain will die of old age or have a debilitating stroke before he has a chance to do anything against Iran. Israel has already announced that they're going to take care of Iran's nuclear threat...as well they should.

Frankly, I'm tired of all this fear mongering from the Right. They've had almost 8 years and they have failed utterly to make us any safer. Not a very good argument for McCain and his 95% Bush-lackey voting record.

20080611-01 09:56 J. Carson Barack Obama; 2008 Primaries, Are you up to the challenge?

Dear SteveB,

This has been a 50-state campaign from the very beginning. A year ago this week, our grassroots supporters organized a nationwide canvass in more than 1,000 cities to introduce people to Barack Obama.

Since then, we've had an unprecedented primary season that built a grassroots infrastructure in all 50 states—not just for Barack, but for all of the Democratic candidates.

Now it's time to bring all of that energy together for our common cause of change.

All across the country, Democrats, Independents, and even Republicans are tired of the politics of the past and are looking for new solutions to the challenges we're facing.

That's why we're launching a nationwide day of action on June 28th called "Unite for Change"—and asking you to host a Unite for Change meeting in your neighborhood.

In all 50 states, supporters like you—seasoned veterans and first-time volunteers alike—will host house meetings to reach out and bring together folks who supported all of the Democratic candidates (and those who are just tuning into the process now).

The goal is to come together and use the common values we share to build a united volunteer organization in your neighborhood that will register new voters and build support locally.

It's going to be an amazing time, and hosting your own event is easy. We'll provide all the tools and resources you'll need. Here are the details:

Unite for Change Meetings, June 28th

We're heading into a battle against John McCain, and the stakes are higher than ever before. But the path to victory is as simple as talking to your friends and neighbors.

From the beginning, this campaign has been about ordinary people reaching out and building the bonds of community—empowering one another by coming together to make change.

With the general election approaching, it's more important than ever to keep this momentum going. And there's no better way to make this happen in your community than hosting a Unite for Change event.

You'll gather—not just with Obama supporters, but with anyone who's tired of the politics of the past and ready for something new—to share your stories and lay the plans for how to build this movement locally in the weeks and months ahead.

It requires some responsibility, but don't worry—our team will be here with all the support and resources you need to make your Unite for Change event a big success.

Learn more and sign up to host a meeting in your community:

<http://my.barackobama.com/unite>

Yesterday, our deputy campaign manager, Steve Hildebrand, announced that this will be the first campaign in a generation to put staff in all 50 states.

It says a lot about our movement—and about the enthusiasm and resources people like you have supplied—that this is possible.

But being in every state will not be enough.

In order to succeed in every community in America, it's going to be up to you to take the lead. Everyone who hopes for real change after November is counting on you.

Thank you,
Jon Carson, National Voter Contact Director, Obama for America

20080611-02 13:59 SteveM Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election

Dear SteveB,

Could you be specific about the lies and misstatements. I rarely hear anything about McCain from the media since they seem to be focused on Obama and his pillaging advisers whom he let go today after stating that they didn't work for him because they weren't paid? What's that all about?

Don't get me wrong, SteveB, McCain ain't no prize but he's still far and above Obama. Now roll you yourself a joint and go sit on the porch until you blood pressure goes down.....

20080611-03 16:20 SteveB Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election

Dear SteveM,

Ya know...I'm fed up with McCain's pugnacious lying, misstatements, and senility already...and he doesn't even really have the nomination yet. Can't the guy just chill-out a little and be a little more clear and consistent in his pronouncements? How can he possibly handle the Presidency like this...always having to explain away his misstatements in an angry fashion? I wonder if there is any kind of impeachment process for a prospective nominee that could get him out and get someone a little more level-headed in?

And you have issues with Obama? He seems like an island of calm sanity in a stormy, conflicted sea of John McCain.

20080611-04 21:00 SteveB Re: John McCain; 2008 Primaries & Election, Barack Obama

Dear SteveM,

See today's news on his comments about how it's not important whether our soldiers come home from Iraq and Sen. Lieberman's inexcusable defense of this hypocrisy. McCain's senile misunderstandings of Iraq are now legendary. This guy and his holier-than-thou war hero cr*p are sickening.

I'll take Obama and his intelligence any day. Like Kennedy...his politics are too far left, but his heart and mind are sound.

20080618-01 17:44 India Fw: Tips on Pumping Gas; Energy

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

My line of work is in petroleum for about 31 years now, so here are some tricks to get more of your money's worth for every gallon:

Here at the Kinder Morgan Pipeline where I work in San Jose, CA we deliver about 4 million gallons in a 24-hour period thru the pipeline.. One day is diesel the next day is jet fuel, and gasoline, regular and premium grades. We have 34-storage tanks here with a total capacity of 16,800,000 gallons.

Only buy or fill up your car or truck in the early morning when the ground temperature is still cold. Remember that all service stations have their storage tanks buried below ground. The colder the ground the more dense the gasoline, when it gets warmer gasoline expands, so buying in the afternoon or in the evening....your gallon is not exactly a gallon. In the petroleum business, the specific gravity and the temperature of the gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, ethanol and other petroleum products plays an important role.

A 1-degree rise in temperature is a big deal for this business. But the service stations do not have temperature compensation at the pumps. When you're filling up do not squeeze the trigger of the nozzle to a fast mode. If you look you will see that the trigger has three (3) stages: low, middle, and high. You should be pumping on low mode, thereby minimizing the vapors that are created while you are pumping. All hoses at the pump have a vapor return. If you are pumping on the fast rate, some of the liquid that goes to your tank becomes vapor. Those vapors are being sucked up and back into the underground storage tank so you're getting less worth for your money.

One of the most important tips is to fill up when your gas tank is HALF FULL. The reason for this is the more gas you have in your tank the less air occupying its empty space. Gasoline evaporates faster than you can imagine. Gasoline storage tanks have an internal floating roof. This roof serves as zero clearance between the gas and the atmosphere, so it minimizes the evaporation. Unlike service stations, here where I work, every truck that we load is temperature compensated so that every gallon is actually the exact amount.

Another reminder, if there is a gasoline truck pumping into the storage tanks when you stop to buy gas, DO NOT fill up; most likely the gasoline is being stirred up as the gas is being delivered, and you might pick up some of the dirt that normally settles on the bottom.

20080620-01 16:47 B. Obama Declaring Our Independence

Dear SteveB:

Since we announced our decision not to accept taxpayer funds for the general election, tens of thousands of people like you have come forward to declare their independence from a broken system. This decision frees us to build a movement of millions of people giving whatever they can afford to a campaign that is truly reforming the way our political process works.

It also frees us to take our campaign for change to parts of the country where Democratic presidential candidates haven't spent too much time in the past. Our first television ad of the general election season goes on the air today.

Sure, we're on the air in places like Ohio and Florida, the typical battleground states. But we're also on the air in North Dakota, Montana, and Alaska—places that have emerged as competitive because of the unprecedented grassroots energy supporting our campaign.

These ads are supporting a 50-state ground operation that is being built right now by staff, volunteers, and thousands of Obama Organizing Fellows.

But we have our work cut out for us, and we need to grow this movement. Right now, you can declare your independence and help us run a campaign that is funded by the people and for the people.

If you make your first donation today, a fellow supporter is standing by to match your gift and double your impact. You can even choose to exchange a note with them and share why you are supporting this campaign.

Choosing not to accept these taxpayer funds was not an easy decision. I remain committed to fundamental campaign finance reform, and as president I will work to fix this broken system.

But we're facing opponents who have become masters at gaming the broken system as it stands today—collecting money from Washington lobbyists, special interest PACs, and relying on so-called 527 groups that can take unlimited contributions to peddle lies and smears.

We have chosen to do things differently. You can see for yourself what kind of people own our campaign—each of these folks have made a donation in the last 24 hours:

Sandra from Tennessee:

"I'm on disability and can't afford to give much but I figure the \$10 is worth it. This is the first time in a long time that even the ones who can't afford it are giving, and are excited about a candidate and excited about the process."

Monica from South Carolina:

"The way that this primary and now this general election campaign have been funded truly gives the power to the citizens that are voting. This administration will owe the American people, not lobbyists and special interests groups."

Mauve from Iowa:

"THIS is true public financing. Getting average Americans from all backgrounds and tax brackets to care enough and to believe enough and to hope enough to give what they can."

Tim from Texas:

"Today, for the first time in my life, I contributed to a political campaign. I did so because I have always believed that true power rests with the people, if only those people could be organized. We have the power to take back our country from the special interest groups. There are more of us and when we act together, we are the force that can dictate the direction our country will take."

Join Sandra, Monica, Mauve, and Tim in declaring your independence. Make a matching donation today:

<https://donate.barackobama.com/match>.

Our fellow Americans are counting on us, and the stakes couldn't be higher—we can't afford another term of George Bush's disastrous policies.

We have a responsibility to win this election and deliver for them.

But with Washington lobbyists and special interest PACs declaring that they will spend hundreds of millions to tear us down, it's up to us to stand up for the change we need.

More than 50,000 people declared their independence since our announcement. Support our campaign for change and declare your independence today to help reach

Thank you for everything, Barack

[20080628-01](#) 21:29 SteveM Fw: Can Obama Legally Serve?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Can Obama legally serve as President? Really doesn't matter because the media have already anointed him and a Democratic majority in Congress would simply change the law if necessary.

Here's a question for you: SOME TIME AGO HILARY SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING ON OBAMA THAT WOULD CHANGE THE ELECTION AND THAT'S WHY SHE ONLY SUSPENDED HER QUEST FOR THE PRESIDENCY; WELL HERE IT IS. This came from a U.S.N.A. alumnus. It'll be interesting to see how the media handles this...

Barack Obama is not a legal U.S. natural-born citizen according to the law on the books at the time of his birth, which falls between Dec. 24, 1952, to Nov. 13, 1986. Federal Law requires that the office of President requires a natural-born citizen if the child was not born to two U.S. Citizen parents. This is what exempts John McCain, though he was born in the U.S. Panama Canal Zone.

U.S. Law very clearly states: 'If only one parent is a U.S. Citizen at the time of one's birth, that parent must have resided in the United States for a minimum ten years, five of which must be after the age of 16.' Barack Obama's father was not a U.S. Citizen is a fact. Obama's mother was only 18 when Obama was born. This means even though she had been a U.S. Citizen for 10 years, (or citizen of Hawaii, being a territory), his mother fails the test for at least 5 years prior to Barack Obama's birth, but after age 16.

In essence, Mother alone is not old enough to qualify her son for automatic U.S. Citizenship. At most, 2 years elapsed from the time his mother turned 16 until the time of Barack Obama's birth when she was 18. His mother would have needed to have been 16 + 5 = 21 years old at the time of Barack Obama's birth for him to be a natural-born citizen. Barack Obama was already 3 years old at the time his mother would have needed to be to allow him natural citizenship from his only U.S. Citizen parent. Obama should have been naturalized as a citizen, but that would disqualify him from holding the office. [And they somehow KNEW the dude was destined to be the fake President of the United States of America? Mind-blowing! How exactly did they do that? Time machine? UFO? Jesus—SteveB]

The Constitution clearly declares: Naturalized citizens are ineligible to hold the office of President. Though Barack Obama was sent back to Hawaii at age 10, any other information does not matter because his mother is the one who must fulfill the requirement to be a U.S. Citizen for 10 years prior to his birth on Aug. 4, 1961, with 5 of those years being after age 16. Further, Obama may have had to have remained in the USA for some time frame to protect any citizenship he might have had, rather than living in Indonesia.

This is very clear cut and a glaring violation of U.S. Election law. I think Governor Schwarzenegger of California should be very interested in discovering if Obama is allowed to be elected President without being a natural-born U.S. Citizen, since this would set a precedent. Stay tuned to your TV sets because I suspect some of this information will be leaking through over the next several days.

[20080629-01](#) 09:20 SteveB Re: Can Obama Legally Serve?

Dear SteveM,

LOL! It's all very clear.

Lie: Obama Is Not a Natural Born Citizen.

Truth: Senator Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961, after it became a state on Aug. 21st, 1959. Obama became a citizen at birth under the first section of the 14th Amendment:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

[20080630-01](#) 18:33 SteveM John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveB,

Let's bottom line this, McCain was a squadron commander, "Leadership"! Flew aircraft in to enemy fire, "Courage"! Can think and do at 600 miles per hour, all facts also. Desirable traits for Presidents. Fact!

What does BHO's back ground have to match or exceed? Listening to Rev. Wright "follower"! And stating " he (Barrack) could not confront the Reverend about his views", spineless worm, empty suit! Fact!

Always come to me first when you're confused, SteveB, LOL!

[20080630-02](#) 20:08 SteveB Re: John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveM,

I agree completely with Gen. Wesley Clark's comment yesterday that "flying in an airplane and getting shot down does not qualify one to be President."

Nor does it make one an expert in foreign policy.

This is joke to think McCain is somehow more qualified because he was in the military or was a POW. This is not to question his service or his patriotism.

It's just that these experience don't make one any more of an expert of foreign affairs or the military than being a plumber or a truck driver does. Fact.

[20080701-01](#) 15:45 SteveM Re: John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveB,

Being a prisoner of war does qualify Mac for president, and more than being part black qualifies BHO. But 22 years as a Senator is a better start then 2 years! And Barrack is know better than the rest with regard to his past stances.

[20080701-02](#) 17:52 SteveB Re: John McCain's Military Experience & Other Problems

Dear SteveM,

His service, though honorable and praiseworthy, has no relationship to being President. If it means that his judgment is so fine, please explain the following concerning Johnny Boy:

1. Abortion—he's pro-life (now).

2. Immigration—he's gone back and forth, but seems to be for amnesty for illegals.
3. Iraq—he wants to stay 100 years.
4. Afghanistan—he has no judgment different than Bush's failed policy.
5. Fairness to Veterans—he just voted against the bill.
6. The Economy—he admits he doesn't know anything about economics.
7. Business as usual—he wants to continue the big Republican sell-out of the American people to big business.
8. His war leadership was on a small, even tiny, scale. Obama just successfully led a giant campaign against supposedly insurmountable odds. That also shows leadership and courage.
9. Maybe McCain used to be able to think at 600 miles an hour (or faster), but now he thinks at about 1 mile per hour and not very well at that speed.

Given all this, I think it is unbelievable for Republicans to talk as if McCain is qualified to be President, but Obama is not. This is pure, unadulterated CR*P! And it should stop right now so that we can seriously discuss the vast problems facing this country that McCain's buddy, Bush, has led us into.

And I'm sick of the knee-jerk backlash against anyone who tries to talk seriously about McCain's qualifications. As I said, his service is appreciated, but it has nothing to do with Presidential-type experience, cunning, leadership, or temperament.

And, as even the Republicans say, the McCain who ran in 2000 would not vote for the McCain running in 2008.

[20080701-03](#) 18:37 SteveB Re: John McCain's Other Problems

Dear SteveM,

He's also for NAFTA and more free-trade and for privatization of Social Security—the first has been a failure for the U.S., the second is an impossibility in either party. His judgments sure go against mine, in so many many areas.

[20080701-04](#) 18:59 SteveB Re: John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveM,

Then they should say that (about the Senatorial experience) and stop the veteran cr*p. Obama has more experience than Kennedy when he was elected and history has shown JFK to have been a damn good President, despite being a liberal Democrat. I think the same would be true of Obama. WE NEED A DAMN CHANGE FROM WASHINGTON BUSINESS-AS-USUAL.

[20080701-05](#) 19:14 SteveB Re: John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveM,

Besides, none of the stuff you're talking about matters anyway, and it's probably about as true as the non-citizen thing.

The Republicans don't stand a chance in hell with McCain. Unless one or both of the candidates die before the election, get ready to have a "Muslim" in the White House! I predict it will be a landslide, maybe the biggest in American history.

The people are fed-up with the Republicans. The GOP had a golden opportunity (especially during idiot Bush's first term) and blew it terribly. It's time to try something else, anything else.

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me regarding border security. I appreciate hearing from you and would like to respond to your concerns.

Like you, I believe that securing the border is a critical first step in combating illegal immigration. Illegal immigration is a national problem that has been left unaddressed for far too long. You will be pleased to know that I supported an amendment to the Senate Budget Act of 2008 that will provide additional funds for border security, immigration enforcement, and criminal alien removal programs. This amendment was passed by the Senate on Mar. 14, 2008.

Specifically, this amendment will expand the zero tolerance prosecution policy for illegal entry to the United States to all 20 border sectors. The amendment directs the Department of Homeland Security to complete the 700 miles of fencing required under previously passed legislation and deploys 6,000 National Guard members to the southern border of the United States. Finally, the amendment calls for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to train and reimburse State and local law enforcement officers for the evaluation of the 27% of the prison population who are noncitizens in order to identify removable criminal aliens.

Again, thank you for taking the time to contact me. My highest priority is to safeguard our homeland, and I will keep your thoughtful comments in mind as we continue work on this issue. Do not hesitate to contact me with any additional questions or comments. For more information about issues and activities important to Florida, please sign up for my weekly newsletter at <http://martinez.senate.gov>.

Sincerely, Mel Martinez, United States Senator, <http://martinez.senate.gov>.

Here in Montana, though almost anyone can carry a gun, kids start legally driving at 14, there were no speed limits on many roads until recently, and there are no laws concerning at what age it is legal for kids to camp-out in state parks without adult supervision, surprisingly, there are fairly restrictive fireworks laws—especially compared to Indiana. Small firecrackers and sparklers are allowed, but rockets, roman candles, and most really fun stuff cannot be sold. Fortunately, I was able to order and have delivered various major bomb making supplies and chemicals, and rockets are not much of a challenge to a determined pyrotechnician.

Lately, though, I have spent a lot of time working at taking apart the packs of 100 small firecrackers they sell here only in June and July, so that I can have individual firecrackers. The fireworks manufacturers (and maybe the state of Montana) don't really want you to do this, of course. They would rather you blow 100 at once, imitating machine gun fire, in a blaze of small glory. Also, they would rather that you not ignite individual firecrackers in your hand and throw them, but, naturally, that's what I want to do.

What I'm doing (with my son-in-law, Saul, and his friends) is teaching them how to have 'firecracker wars' like we used to do down by Big Walnut Creek when we were kids. This activity is not only great fun, I'm also writing about it and taking pictures for my boys' website, ThitherAndYon.com[™].

What you do is have two to four guys build two to four sand 'forts' several feet apart on a sand bar. These can be as simple as a single 'wall' facing the other fort(s) or something more elaborate. These forts are then 'manned' by the standard 2' tall plastic army men that can still be purchased cheaply if you find the right source. When all is ready, each person stands behind their fort and tosses lit firecrackers at opposing plastic soldiers. When your soldiers are all knocked down (dead) your army has lost. For safety's sake, we now wear one leather glove for the igniting/throwing hand and sunglasses. In the old days, we didn't bother with any of that crap and sometimes paid the price when a firecracker would go off too soon or get sand from an explosion in the eye. Ouch!

Unfortunately, the Chinese have made it more difficult to deconstruct the firecracker packs. I can remember from the old days having to unwind a thread which bound all the individual firecracker fuses together with a long 'master' fuse. Now the manufacturers wind a red thread around all the fuses in one direction (say, clockwise) and a white thread around in the opposite direction. This makes it pretty tedious to do the separation required to play firecracker war. The operation

always has to be done very carefully, because you don't want to pull the individual fuses out of the firecrackers and you want to preserve the master fuse as best you can because it is, after all, very useful for long time-delay explosions.

Have you discovered if the firecracker packs where you buy fireworks are also now complicated in this way? Let me know and I'll send you pictures when I get them completed.

20080707-01 15:09 Bill Re: Deconstucting Firecrackers

Dear SteveB,

I do remember a thread being integrated into the braid of a package of firecrackers, but the ones I've disaggregated in the last couple of years didn't have a thread—let alone two. May be a matter of brands.

What a I do remember is being careless as hell with firecrackers and having several blow up in my hand or face. I always looked at my hand after such a mishap to see if my finger(s) were intact.

My only selfish pyrotechnic regret these days is not being able to buy a good cherry bomb. You just can't get the powerful, dangerous ones these days. My favorite activity with them, besides lifting cans and other hollow things, was shooting them into trees full of starlings with a slingshot. You could light a cigar and then pull back the slingshot, cherry bomb in the pouch with the fuse up, and light the green fuse. The cherry bombs had enough mass that they could be propelled a couple of hundred feet to birds or other victims.

20080708-01 11:06 SteveB Re: Deconstucting Firecrackers

Dear Bill,

Don't remember ever firing cherry bombs with a slingshot, but that's a good idea—except for the inherent danger of maybe drawing it back near your face. Those things would take half your face off if you got very unlucky.

I do remember shooting a lot of the colored cracker balls with a slingshot, at all kinds of things. Gooch and I were just reminiscing about this.

Cherry bombs may be a thing of the past (though they must still be available somewhere), but if you want big explosions you can still make your own M-80's, M-100's, and even M-200's, like I do with stuff from:

<http://www.skylighter.com>.

<http://www.pyrocreations.com>.

Cool, huh?

20080708-02 14:43 SteveB Video: "Who Killed the Electric Car?" Energy

Worth watching if you haven't already seen it...

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7202740060236675590>

20080710-01 14:33 SteveB Fw: Stop Energy Market Speculation Now!

from StopOilSpeculationNow.com:

Visit this Website to learn more about how Congress can dramatically reduce the price of oil and gas. With your help, Congress will take action now on this important issue.

<http://www.stopoilspeculationnow.com/>

"Finding His Faith" by Lisa Miller and Richard Wolffe, NEWSWEEK

July 12, 2008, (<http://www.newsweek.com/id/145971>)

(So much has been made about Barack Obama's religion. But what does he believe, and how did he arrive at those beliefs?)

In 1981 Barack Obama was 20 years old, a Columbia University student in search of the meaning of life. He was torn a million different ways: between youth and maturity, black and white, coasts and continents, wonder and tragedy. He enrolled at Columbia in part to get far away from his past; he'd gone to high school in Hawaii and had just spent two years "enjoying myself," as he puts it, at Occidental College in Los Angeles. In New York City, "I lived an ascetic existence," Obama told *NEWSWEEK* in an interview on his campaign plane last week. "I did a lot of spiritual exploration. I withdrew from the world in a fairly deliberate way." He fasted. Often, he'd go days without speaking to another person.

For company, he had books. There was Saint Augustine, the fourth-century North African bishop who wrote the West's first spiritual memoir and built the theological foundations of the Christian Church. There was Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th-century German philosopher and father of existentialism. There was Graham Greene, the Roman Catholic Englishman whose short novels are full of compromise, ambivalence and pain. Obama meditated on these men and argued with them in his mind.

When he felt restless on a Sunday morning, he would wander into an African-American congregation such as Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. "I'd just sit in the back and I'd listen to the choir and I'd listen to the sermon," he says, smiling a little as he remembers those early days in the wilderness. "There were times that I would just start tearing up listening to the choir and share that sense of release."

Obama has spoken often and eloquently about the importance of religion in public life. But like many political leaders wary of offending potential backers, he has been less revealing about what he believes—about God, about prayer, about the connection between salvation and personal responsibility. In some respects, his reticence is understandable. Obama's religious biography is unconventional and politically problematic. Born to a Christian-turned-secular mother and a Muslim-turned-atheist African father, Obama grew up living all across the world with plenty of spiritual influences, but without any particular religion. He is now a Christian, having been baptized in the early 1990s at Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago. But rumors about Obama's religion persist. In the new *NEWSWEEK* Poll, 12 percent of voters incorrectly believe he's Muslim; more than a quarter believe he was raised in a Muslim home.

His baptism presents its own problems. The senior pastor at Trinity at the time of Obama's baptism was the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr., the preacher who was seen damning America on cable TV for weeks last spring—and will doubtless be seen again this fall. In the *NEWSWEEK* Poll, almost half of the respondents say Obama shares at least some of Wright's views; nearly a third say Wright might prevent them from voting for the presumptive Democratic nominee.

The story of Obama's religious journey is a uniquely American tale. It's one of a seeker, an intellectually curious young man trying to cobble together a religious identity out of myriad influences. Always drawn to life's Big Questions, Obama embarked on a spiritual quest in which he tried to reconcile his rational side with his yearning for transcendence. He found Christ—but that hasn't stopped him from asking questions. "I'm on my own faith journey and I'm searching," he says. "I leave open the possibility that I'm entirely wrong."

The story of Obama's faith begins with his mother, Ann. Raised in the Midwest by two lapsed Christians, she lived and traveled throughout the world appreciating all religions but confessing to none. One of Ann's favorite spiritual texts was "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth," a set of PBS interviews with Bill Moyers that traces the common themes of religion and mythology, Obama's half sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng, tells *NEWSWEEK*. When the family lived in Indonesia, Ann, on occasion, would take the children to Catholic mass; after returning to Hawaii, they would celebrate Easter and Christmas at United Church of Christ congregations. Ann later went back to Indonesia with Maya, and when Obama visited, they would take him to Borobudur, one of the largest Buddhist temples in the world. Later, while working in India, Ann lived for a time in a Buddhist monastery.

Visiting temples was not just tourism for Ann. "These kinds of experiences were a regular part of our childhood and our upbringing, and were important to [our mother] because they involved ritual," says Maya. "She thought that ritual was very beautiful. The idea of human beings' striving to be better, having the curiosity and questions about all these things, [was] perpetual and constant inside her."

Did Ann believe in God? Obama calls his mother "an agnostic." "I think she believed in a higher power," he says. "She believed in the fundamental order and goodness of the universe. She would have been very comfortable with Einstein's idea that God doesn't play dice. But I think she was very suspicious of the notion that one particular organized religion offered one truth."

Obama's father, raised Muslim in Kenya, was, by the time he met Ann, "a confirmed atheist" who considered religion "mumbo jumbo," writes Obama in "The Audacity of Hope." (Barack Obama Sr. left the family when Obama was 2.) During his years in Indonesia, Obama went first to a Catholic school—and then to a public elementary school with a weekly class of religious education that reflected the dominant Muslim culture. He was raised, in part, by his stepfather, a man named Lolo, who "like many Indonesians ... followed a brand of Islam that could make room for the remnants of more ancient animist and Hindu faiths," Obama wrote in "Dreams From My Father." "He explained that a man took on the powers of whatever he ate." Lolo introduced young Obama to the taste of dog meat, snake meat and roasted grasshopper. In Indonesia, Obama has said, he saw women with and without head coverings and Muslims living comfortably next to Christians. He has said that his life among Muslims in Indonesia showed him that "Islam can be compatible with the modern world."

Though Obama was a serious student in Hawaii—and, even then, a seeker—"Dreams" describes an adolescence there of predictable teenage drinking and smoking (and basketball). During his first two years of college at Occidental, he says, he was "not taking anything particularly seriously, or at least, on the surface, not taking anything particularly seriously." After transferring to Columbia, though, the spiritual quest began in earnest.

People who knew him around that time describe a reserved, monkish man, uninterested in the extracurriculars of New York student life: bars, socializing, gossiping. William Araiza was in a political science seminar with Obama their senior year, and what he remembers most is Obama's detachment. "I don't want to imply he was intentionally aloof, he just seemed like he wasn't part of the college gang," Araiza says. "He was the kind of guy who didn't live in the dorms, didn't hang out on campus." Obama's first job out of college was at Business International, a research service in New York. "There was a lot of socializing," says Beth Noymer Levine, one of Obama's colleagues. "Here you had a hotbed of young singles—from the socializing there would be some storytelling—but [Obama] pretty much stayed out of that stuff ... He was very together, very mature, and I was 23 and felt like a train wreck next to him."

Obama says his spiritual quest was driven by two main impulses. He was looking for a community that he could call home—a sense of rootedness and belonging he missed from his biracial, peripatetic childhood. The visits to the black churches uptown helped fulfill that desire. "There's a side very particular to the African-American church tradition that was powerful to me," he says. The exuberant worship, the family atmosphere and the prophetic preaching at a church such as Abyssinian would have appealed to a young man who lived so in his head. And he became obsessed with the civil-rights movement. He'd become convinced, through his reading, of the transforming power of social activism, especially when paired with religion. This is not an uncommon revelation among the spiritually and progressively minded. ("There's no more dramatic story in American life" than the story of the civil rights movement, says North Carolina Rep. David Price, who knows Obama professionally and writes about politics and religion. "You could not continue to be kind and gentle in your personal life and also be denying other people's humanity.") When Gerald Kellman recruited Obama to go to Chicago as a community organizer, he remembers, the young man was "very much caught up in the world of ideas." He was devouring Taylor Branch's "Parting the Waters," which is part history of the civil-rights movement, part biography of Martin Luther King Jr.

In Chicago, Obama found that organizers and activists there (and elsewhere) were employing a progressive theology to motivate faith groups to action. Using the writings of Paul Tillich and, especially, Reinhold Niebuhr—and also King, African-American and Roman Catholic liberation theologians, and Christian fathers like Saint Augustine—local religious leaders emphasized original sin and human imperfection. Christ's gift of salvation was to the community of believers, not to individual people in isolation. It was therefore the responsibility of the faithful to help each other—through deeds—to respond to the call of perfection that will be fully realized only at the end of time. Adherents of this particular theology frequently refer to Matthew 25: "Whatever you neglected to do unto the least of these, you neglected to do unto me." Everyone, in other words, is in this salvation thing together.

Obama's organizing days helped clarify his sense of faith and social action as intertwined. "It's hard for me to imagine being true to my faith—and not thinking beyond myself, and not thinking about what's good for other people, and not acting in a moral and ethical way," he says. When these ideas merged with his more emotional search for belonging, he was able to arrive at the foot of the cross. He "felt God's spirit beckoning me," he writes in "Audacity." "I submitted myself to His will, and dedicated myself to discovering His truth."

Was it a conversion in the sense that he heard Jesus speaking to him in a moment after which nothing was the same? No. "It wasn't an epiphany," he says. "A bolt of lightning didn't strike me and suddenly I said, 'Aha!' It was a more gradual process that traced back to those times that I had spent in New York wandering the streets or reading books, where I decided that the meaning I found in my life, the values that were most important to me, the sense of wonder that I had, the sense of tragedy that I had—all these things were captured in the Christian story." And how much of the decision was pragmatic, motivated by Obama's desire, as he says in "Dreams," to get closer to the people he was trying to help? "I thought being part of a community and affirming my faith in a public fashion was important," Obama says.

The cross under which Obama went to Jesus was at the controversial Trinity United Church of Christ. It was a good fit. "That community of faith suited me," Obama says. For one thing, Trinity insisted on social activism as a part of Christian life. It was also a family place. Members refer to the sections in the massive sanctuary as neighborhoods; churchgoers go to the same neighborhood each Sunday and they get to know the people who sit near them. They know when someone's sick or got a promotion at work. Jeremiah Wright, whom Obama met in the context of organizing, became a friend; after he married, Obama says, the two men would sometimes get together "after church to have chicken with the family—and we would have talked stories about our families." In his preaching, Wright often emphasized the importance of family, of staying married and taking good care of children. (Obama's recent Father's Day speech, in which he said that "responsibility does not end at conception," was not cribbed from Wright—but the premise could have been.) At the point of his decision to accept Christ, Obama says, "what was intellectual and what was emotional joined, and the belief in the redemptive power of Jesus Christ, that he died for our sins, that through him we could achieve eternal life—but also that, through good works we could find order and meaning here on Earth and transcend our limits and our flaws and our foibles—I found that powerful."

Maya says their mother would not have made the same choice—but that Ann understood and approved of Obama's decision: "She didn't feel the same need, because for her, she felt like we can still be good to one another and serve, but we don't have to choose. She was, of course, always a wanderer, and I think he was more inclined to be rooted and make the choice to set down his commitments more firmly."

After his stint as an organizer, Obama went to Harvard Law School. He didn't officially join Trinity until several years later, when he returned to Chicago as a promising young lawyer intent on becoming a husband, a father and a professional success. Around the time Obama was baptized, he says he studied the Bible with gifted teachers who would "gently poke me about my faith." As young marrieds, Barack and Michelle (who also didn't go to church regularly as a child) went to church fairly often—two or three times a month. But after their first child, Malia, was born, they found making the effort more difficult. "I don't know if you've had the experience of taking young, squirming children to church, but it's not easy," he says. "Trinity was always packed, and so you had to get there early. And if you went to the morning service, you were looking at—it just was difficult. So that would cut back on our involvement." After he began his run for the U.S. Senate, he says, the family sometimes didn't go to Trinity for months at a time. The girls have not attended Sunday school. The family says grace at mealtime, and he talks to the children about God whenever they have questions. "I'm a big believer in a faith that is not imposed but taps into what's already there, their curiosity or their spirit," he says.

Amid the hubbub, Obama continued to try to work out for himself what it meant to be a person of faith. In 1999, while still in the Illinois State Senate, he shared an office suite with Ira Silverstein, an Orthodox Jew. Obama peppered Silverstein with questions about Orthodox restrictions on daily life: the kosher laws and the sanctions against certain kinds of behavior on the Sabbath. "On the Sabbath, if I ever needed anything, Barack would always offer," remembers Silverstein. "Some of the doors are electric, so he would offer to open them ... I didn't expect that."

Since severing ties with Wright and Trinity, Obama is a little spiritually rootless again. He lost a friend in Wright—and he lost a home, however tenuous those ties may have been toward the end, in Trinity. He has not found a new church, and he doesn't plan to look for one until after the election. "There's an aspect of the campaign process that would not make it a good time to figure out whether a particular church community worked for us," he says. "Because of what happened at Trinity, we'd be under a spotlight."

Nevertheless, his spiritual life on the campaign trail survives. He says he prays every day, typically for "forgiveness for my sins and flaws, which are many, the protection of my family, and that I'm carrying out God's will, not in a grandiose way,

but simply that there is an alignment between my actions and what he would want." He sometimes reads his Bible in the evenings, a ritual that "takes me out of the immediacy of my day and gives me a point of reflection." Thanks to the efforts of his religious outreach team, he has an army of clerics and friends praying for him and e-mailing him snippets of Scripture or Midrash to think about during the day.

The Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell—who gave the invocations at both of George W. Bush's inaugurals and presided over the wedding of the president's daughter Jenna—is among those on Obama's prayer team. When Caldwell talks about Obama, he can barely keep the emotion out of his voice. The thing that impresses him most, he says, is that when he asks Obama, "What can I pray for?" Obama always says, "Michelle and the girls." "He never says, 'Pray for me, pray for my campaign, pray that folks will quit bashing me.' He always says, 'Pray for Michelle and my girls'."

But Obama's faith is not without its critics. Some on the right say his particular brand of Christianity is a modern amalgam—unorthodox, undisciplined, even insincere. Last month Dr. James Dobson accused Obama of "deliberately distorting the traditional understanding of the Bible to fit his own world view, his own confused theology." The campaign responded that Obama was reaching out to people of faith and standing up for families.

When Franklin Graham asked Obama recently how, as a Christian, he could reconcile New Testament claims that salvation was attainable only through Christ with a campaign that embraces pluralism and diversity, Obama tells NEWSWEEK he said: "It is a precept of my Christian faith that my redemption comes through Christ, but I am also a big believer in the Golden Rule, which I think is an essential pillar not only of my faith but of my values and my ideals and my experience here on Earth. I've said this before, and I know this raises questions in the minds of some evangelicals. I do not believe that my mother, who never formally embraced Christianity as far as I know ... I do not believe she went to hell." Graham, he said, was very gracious in reply. Should Obama beat John McCain, he has history on his side. Presidents such as Lincoln and Jefferson were unorthodox Christians; and, according to a Pew Forum survey, 70 percent of Americans agree with the statement that "many religions can lead to eternal life." "My particular set of beliefs," Obama says, "may not be perfectly consistent with the beliefs of other Christians."

Last March, when video clips of Wright damning America blitzed the airwaves, Obama wrote a speech about race that he hoped would save his campaign. But it was, to some, also a speech about faith. Obama tried to explain his relationship with his pastor, to appeal to Americans' sense of the best in themselves. He spoke of racial divides in America as "a part of ourselves we have yet to perfect," and of his pastor as a flawed, human creature. "That speech," says Paul Elie, the Catholic author of "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," "is steeped in Christianity. We have relationships, they're all flawed, we're all broken. You can't renounce your history with a person at a stroke, we have to fare forward with other imperfect people and resist the claims to perfection coming from both sides." After Wright's performance a month later at the National Press Club, Elie says, Obama was right—and Christian—to repudiate him.

Did Obama see the race speech as a religion speech? Last week, aboard the campaign plane, he said: "Race is a central test of our belief that we're our brother's keeper, our sister's keeper ... There's a sense that if we are to get beyond our racial divides, that it should be neat and pretty, whereas part of my argument was that it's going to be hard and messy—and that's where faith comes in." As the general election wears on, Obama will have to summon all of his faith, in all of its complexity. Few things in life are harder, or messier, than the last months of a presidential campaign.

20080713-02	17:52	SteveM	Obama Says No to English as National Language
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Dear SteveB,

The polls show that 83% of Americans want English as the National language, only 15% opposed! Let's get a mitt and get in the game politicians!

Press 1 for McCain in English; Press 2 *por Obama en Español*

What dumb a*s point was he trying to get across? Was the idea that we should teach our kids Spanish just so we can order a sandwich at an American restaurant. Thanks, Obama, for looking out for me! (Sarcasm!!)

Barack Obama continues to show that he is not ready for the presidency, and more important, America is not ready for him. Our kids should not be told to learn Spanish. Our kids should be told to learn! English and math and science, engineering, so they can become contributing citizens.

Obama's example in his speech is that Americans sound silly when they go to France because they can only say a simple phrase. What's his elitist point?

English is the language of international business, commerce, science, engineering and technology. Even Formula One drivers must be fluent in English and they don't even race in the U.S., (England, Australia and Canada though).

What's Spanish the international language of? Drug running and illegal immigration? Tin Horn South American dictators? The Japanese and Germans have built car plants here in the U.S. and along with the Ford and GM they also have test tracks here in AZ. What learned language(s) do you think would better serve commerce?

Only in America would left-wing, pandering, Barack Obama tell Americans that their kids should learn Spanish.

20080714-01 12:04 SteveB Re: Obama Says No to English as National Language

Dear SteveM,

Now you're talkin' my language! Actually, every kid in America should start learning a foreign language in kindergarten and continue through high school or college. And the preferred language should be Spanish because, as the Miss Universe pageant just proved, the best-looking, sexiest women in the world are Hispanic. But it would be good if our school kids learned English too, so they can teach it to all those beautiful Hispanic woman flocking to our shores.

20080716-01 10:27 SteveM Fw: Navy Petty Officer Mike Monsoor

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com has verified the part of the email about the funeral: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/military/monsoor.asp>. But the big, insidious lie in this email is the accusation that "the media won't make this news." It appears that this story was covered extensively in the news media, so what we have here is yet another attempt to stir-up distrust of the media. The opportunity is also taken for a little patriotic saber rattling. —SteveB]

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of GOD."—Matthew 5:9

Navy Petty Officer Mike Monsoor, a Navy EOD Technician, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for jumping on a grenade in Iraq, giving his life to save his fellow SEALs.

During Mike Monsoor's funeral in San Diego, as his coffin was being moved from the hearse to the grave site at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery, SEALs were lined up on both sides of the pallbearers route forming a column of twos, with the coffin moving up the center. As Mike's coffin passed, each SEAL, having removed his gold Trident from his uniform, slapped it down embedding the Trident in the wooden coffin.

The slaps were audible from across the cemetery; by the time the coffin arrived grave side, it looked as though it had a gold inlay from all the Tridents pinned to it. This was a fitting send-off for a warrior hero.

This should be front-page news instead of the cr*p we see every day.

Since the media won't make this news, I choose to make it news by forwarding it onto you guys. I am proud of our military and the men and women who serve in it. They represent the highest and finest values of this country.

The liberal media never reports this type thing please forward it to a few of your friends... God bless the men and women in our Military.

20080716-02 12:01 SteveB Fw: Guns, as the Right Sees Them

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

1. An armed man is a citizen. An unarmed man is a subject.
2. A gun in the hand is better than a cop on the phone.

3. Colt: The original point and click interface.
4. Gun control is not about guns; it's about control.
5. If guns are outlawed, can we use swords?
6. If guns cause crime, then pencils cause misspelled words.
7. Free men do not ask permission to bear arms.
8. If you don't know your rights, you don't have any.
9. Those who trade liberty for security have neither.
10. The United States Constitution ©1791. All Rights Reserved.
11. What part of 'shall not be infringed' do you not understand?
12. The Second Amendment is in place in case the politicians ignore the others.
13. 64,999,987 firearms owners killed no one yesterday.
14. Guns only have two enemies; rust and politicians.
15. Know guns, know peace, know safety. No guns, no peace, no safety.
16. You don't shoot to kill; you shoot to stay alive.
17. 911: Government sponsored Dial-a-Prayer.
18. Assault is a behavior, not a device.
19. Criminals love gun control, it makes their jobs safer.
20. If guns cause crime, then matches cause arson.
21. Only a government that is afraid of its citizens tries to control them.
22. You have only the rights you are willing to fight for.
23. Enforce the gun control laws we ALREADY have, don't make more.
24. When you remove the people's right to bear arms, you create slaves.
25. The American Revolution would never have happened with gun control.

20080721-01 12:28 SteveB Re: John McCain's Military Experience

Dear SteveM,

I had forgotten that McCain was one of the famous Keating-5 back in the 80's until I saw a biography on CNN this weekend.

I guess he said that it was worse than when he was a prisoner of war. I guess so...he was caught red-handed being crooked as hell. Amazing he was ever able to recover from that embarrassment! About the worst corruption scandal in Senate history.

This guy is a crook and a liar and will take any political position to get ahead. He will sell his soul on any issue and has repeatedly.

And this was after he informed the audience that he had been so depressed in Hanoi that he attempted suicide. What a hero! And what could these experiences possibly have taught him about running a country? What exactly did he do that was heroic anyway? Try to kill himself? A hero has to save somebody, not totally fail in his mission. Who did he save? They didn't find anybody he saved for the bio. War hero? How? I guess I'm a war hero too then. I even succeeded at my mission (at the Ft. _____ radio station) and even managed to stay out of prison camp I Hanoi.

What a crock of sh*t McCain's stuff is! What an ordinary loser! And that would be bad enough, but this guy also should be in a nursing home somewhere. I suppose he would claim he a nursing home hero too...for trying to hang himself with his Depends.

I think we need to try something new. I don't think anything can be worse than dummy Bush. Just calling a spade a spade.

20080721-02 09:19 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

I love the way McCain was talking today or yesterday about all the "trouble on the Iraq-Pakistan border". LOL

Ya, he's such an expert on foreign affairs! He ain't senile at all!

If Obama had done that, the press would have been all over him like flies on a dead skunk. When McCain does it, it gets buried and attributed, I guess, to his age and excused, I take it, because he's a "war hero."

The guy scares the hell out of me, though nothing has ever scared me more than that awful fake smile of his. Creepy!

I guess we just gotta pray that he dies before the convention so a live, rational human being can become the Republican candidate.

20080721-03	09:29	SteveM	Fw: Obama's Gaffes
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

In one of his more egregious and easily demonstrated lies, made even more so by the day he decided to let it loose on, Obama has rewritten WWII history such that the allies liberated Auschwitz. Obama also spoke about his uncle, who was part of the American brigade that helped to liberate Auschwitz...

Auschwitz of course is in Poland. It was liberated by the Red Army on Jan 27 1945. Poland, on most maps is usually placed to the east of Germany, although we may need to investigate the geography textbooks the Messiah used as a child...

All it takes is one gaffe to taint a Republican for life. The political establishment never let Dan Quayle live down his fateful misspelling of "potatoe." *The New York Times* distorted and misreported the first President Bush's questions about new scanner technology at a grocers' convention to brand him permanently as out of touch.

But what about Barack Obama? The guy's a perpetual gaffe machine. Let us count the ways, large and small, that his tongue has betrayed him throughout the campaign:

1. Last May, he claimed that tornadoes in Kansas killed a whopping 10,000 people: "In case you missed it, this week, there was a tragedy in Kansas. Ten thousand people died—an entire town destroyed." The actual death toll: 12.
2. Earlier this month in Oregon, he redrew the map of the United States: "Over the last 15 months, we've traveled to every corner of the United States. I've now been in 57 states? I think one left to go." [Wasn't this a joke? —SteveB]
3. Last week, in front of a roaring Sioux Falls, S.D., audience, Obama exulted: "Thank you, Sioux City... I said it wrong. I've been in Iowa for too long. I'm sorry."
4. Explaining last week why he was trailing Hillary Clinton in Kentucky, Obama again botched basic geography: "Sen. Clinton, I think, is much better known, coming from a nearby state of Arkansas. So it's not surprising that she would have an advantage in some of those states in the middle." On what map is Arkansas closer to Kentucky than Illinois?
5. Obama has as much trouble with numbers as he has with maps. Last March, on the anniversary of the Bloody Sunday march in Selma, Ala., he claimed his parents united as a direct result of the civil rights movement: "There was something stirring across the country because of what happened in Selma, Ala., because some folks are willing to march across a bridge. So they got together and Barack Obama Jr. was born." Obama was born in 1961. The Selma march took place in 1965. His spokesman, Bill Burton, later explained that Obama was "speaking metaphorically about the civil rights movement as a whole."
6. Earlier this month in Cape Girardeau, Mo., Obama showed off his knowledge of the war in Afghanistan by homing in on a lack of translators: "We only have a certain number of them, and if they are all in Iraq, then it's harder for us to use them in Afghanistan." The real reason it's "harder for us to use them" in Afghanistan: Iraqis speak Arabic or Kurdish. The Afghans speak Pashto, Farsi or other non-Arabic languages.

7. Over the weekend in Oregon, Obama pleaded ignorance of the decades-old, multi-billion-dollar massive Hanford nuclear waste cleanup. [I'm drawing a blank too. —SteveB]

8. On Memorial day Barack Obama told a beautiful lie about his uncle on his mother's side (his mother does not have a brother) who helped liberate Auschwitz (Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet Army). [We got this one, above, already. —SteveB]

9. While Obama DOES make many, many "gaffes"—the dumb "oops!" things like 57 states, etc.—he also makes statements revealing HIS HORRENDOUS JUDGEMENT—e.g. SUNDAY: "Iran is tiny...not a problem," MONDAY: "Iran is a grave threat" (among many others).

My concern is that the latter will be "excused" as merely gaffes, rather than seen as disqualifying core features of Obama.

For more see: http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2008/05/john_fund_on_the_obama_gaffe_m.html.

20080722-01 10:21 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08

Dear SteveM,

But Obama's "gaffes" are usually just small things misspoken and often immediately corrected...such as the Sioux Falls thing...or jokes, such as the 57 states thing.

So what if he confused Auschwitz and Buchenwald telling an apparently true story?

<http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/05/obamas-uncle-and-the-liberatio.html>

McCain's gaffs usually involve muddled, confused understanding of important facts, such as when he misspoke in Iraq about Sunny and Sh*t Muslims and some statements he has made concerning Iran. I just learned this morning how rabidly pro-free-trade McCain is. I wonder who is paying him to take that stupid anti-American stand?

Give me youth! Give me integrity! Give me hip cool blackness and soul! Give me jazz and boogaloo in the White House, not Glenn Miller, I.V.'s and Depends™!

20080722-02 20:24 SteveB BP: Food for Fuel; Energy

Dear BP:

I just saw your TV commercial concerning your alternative energy efforts.

While I applaud such efforts, I feel that you make a grave mistake if you think that, as the commercial states, using America's and the world's food supply to make fuel is a "no brainer."

Have you taken a look at the price of corn and meat lately?

BIG MISTAKE! Let's use our food for food, find a way to burn coal cheaply and cleanly to make electricity, and develop good electric cars and trains. Thank you.

20080723-01 17:22 SteveM Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08

Dear SteveB,

I'm counting on his ole lady to keep him in check. I see BHO can even answer questions from his own handpicked traveling press corp. Too lame for me!

20080723-02 20:11 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08

Dear SteveM,

McCain is turning nasty from a lack of attention. What a big baby! All he does is react to Obama. He never leads.

He is way, way too confused about recent Iraq history to begin to be commander-in-chief. He acts as dumb as Hillary.

I'm worried that he may still think the Cold War is still going on and decide to nuke Russia. Who knows what his senility is capable of.

[20080723-03](#) 08:11 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/23/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

McCain is turning nasty from a lack of attention. What a big baby! All he does is react to Obama. He never leads.

He is way, way too confused about recent Iraq history to begin to be commander-in-chief. He acts as dumb as Hillary.

I'm worried that he may still think the Cold War is still going on and decide to nuke Russia. Who knows what his senility is capable of.

[20080724-01](#) 10:27 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/21/08

Dear SteveM,

Yes, he (Barack) "CAN"!

Bottom line: Watch the candidates. Barack is a smart, nice, honest guy. (The points in your other email have all been debunked.) McCain is a senile curmudgeon with a bad temper, a bad memory, and a proven history of corruption. He is on the wrong side of every issue I care about or that the American people care about. Beside all that, liberal and conservative mean almost nothing. It will be a landslide.

[20080724-02](#) 20:53 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—07/24/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

What an amazing contrast today!

McCain continues to confuse everything about the "surge", speaks of Iraq as if it were Viet Nam and as if there will ever be a clear-cut victory or defeat—no matter who is President or what the strategy, continues to call his honorable opponent a traitor, and confuses history again by stating that the conflict in Iraq came before the conflict in Afghanistan. How is he not a complete blithering idiot?

Meanwhile, Obama lays out a bright new future of world cooperation before a quarter million cheering people in Berlin.

I think it is absolutely essential for Republicans to try to find some way to get this guy, McCain, off all our backs, before he destroys the party forever. What a loser! Embarrassing, really. Maybe even more so than Bush and his buddies.

[20080725-01](#) 10:10 Dennis Re: Stop Energy Market Speculation Now!

from SteveB:

Visit this Website to learn more about how Congress can dramatically reduce the price of oil and gas. With your help, Congress will take action now on this important issue.

Dear SteveB,

Are you serious? Congress is inept, corrupt, and incompetent. They can't do anything about oil prices.

Speculators are not driving the price of oil. The real culprit is good old-fashioned supply and demand. Global growth has been on a tear in recent years, and should climb by more than 4 percent this year. That growth has required oil, a lot of it. The supply of oil, however, has not kept pace. Nor will we see a significant increase in production in the coming year.

For oil prices to continue falling, and to stay below \$100 for a sustained period, will require a major global downturn in growth. And the weight of evidence suggests that's not going to happen anytime soon.

20080725-02	19:02	Dennis	"The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy
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T. Boone Pickens isn't alone... Alternative energy just got a strong new backer. Billionaire James Tisch, CEO of holding company Loews, wrote an op-ed piece for the *Washington Post* in support of wind and solar power. He said two factors will drive the shift to alternative energies — **the high price of traditional fuels** and cheaper alternative technologies. According to Tisch, wind energy is economic at about 7 cents per kilowatt-hour, down from 15 cents to 20 cents a few years ago. It costs 12 cents per kilowatt-hour to build a gas-fired power plant.

And with retail electricity prices set to rise as much as 30% this year, we should see a "liftoff" in solar energy. Tisch says a rooftop solar panel will pay for itself in 10 years, a 10% return on capital. Compared with the less-than 5% yield municipal bonds pay, that represents an extraordinary investment. Finally, Tisch believes hybrid cars will soar in popularity. It costs 2 cents per mile for a hybrid versus 20 to 25 cents per mile in traditional fuels.

"The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" by James Tisch, *The Washington Post*

July 20, 2008, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/18/AR2008071802614.html>)

Bob Dylan said it best: "The answer is blowin' in the wind." While politicians and environmentalists have been busy arguing about how best to require that greenhouse gases be curtailed, the world around them has changed. The precipitous rise in oil and gas prices over the past year has made the debate on greenhouse gas emissions moot. The reduction in the output of those gases will move forward at warp speed, not because of rules, regulations and cap-and-trade decrees but because of free markets and economics.

Two factors are driving this sea change. First, the price of our traditional fuels — oil, gas and coal — has risen dramatically. Second, the silent and inexorable march of technology has dramatically reduced the costs of clean alternative energy sources such as wind turbines and photovoltaics, which converts sunlight into electricity. The result will be a dramatic reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases — without politicians passing a single additional piece of legislation.

How have we come to this point? Blame it on oil prices and technology. The extraordinary increase in the price of hydrocarbons and coal has created a price umbrella under which competing technologies can flourish. Already, clean wind energy is increasing by leaps and bounds. In the past five years, more than 5 gigawatts of wind turbine capacity has been built in Texas alone; on days when the winds whistle along the plains, wind energy represents just under 10 percent of the electrical supply in the Lone Star State.

Today, wind energy is economic at about 7 cents per kilowatt hour, and that is without factoring in production tax credits. A few years ago, that cost was 15 to 20 cents. Compare the 7 cents for wind energy with the 12 cents per kilowatt hour required to build a gas-fired power plant, and you can see why there is a veritable land rush to harness wind energy.

Texas is not the only state where the gravitational pull of economics and markets is working. Across the country, the price of electricity has skyrocketed for homeowners and businesses. This steep increase is creating a wide opening for technologies such as photovoltaics. The cost of this technology has fallen over the past few decades and is about ready for prime time. That retail electricity prices are increasing by as much as 30 percent this year will only accelerate the arrival of the "liftoff" phase of photovoltaics. Also, retail electricity prices in New York may soon be headed to 30 cents per kilowatt hour. At those prices, an investment in a photovoltaic array on the rooftop of a house will pay for itself in

fewer than 10 years, resulting in a greater than 10 percent return on one's capital cost. Compared to the sub-5 percent yield on municipal bonds, this return represents an extraordinary investment.

So, without a gavel coming down in a single additional legislative session, wind and the sun will become much bigger contributors to our national electricity mix. And an added benefit is that they generate absolutely no greenhouse gases.

One more fast-approaching major change will all but guarantee that curtailment of greenhouse gases becomes an issue of the past: the advent of the electric car. Improvements in battery technology mean that in the next five to 10 years, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles will finally be on our roads. Within the next two to three decades, the gasoline-fired internal combustion engine automobile will no longer be sold. Since gasoline accounts for more than a third of worldwide oil demand, the rise of plug-in hybrids represents a mega-change in terms of emissions.

Plug-in hybrids are dramatically cheaper to operate than today's cars. They will consume about 2 cents' worth of electricity to travel one mile, compared with the current 20- to 25-cent cost of driving a mile using gasoline. If consumers flock to them because of their lower operating costs, and they will, the resulting reduction in greenhouse gases will be a benefit of extraordinary proportion — one that the Kyoto crowd thought could be achieved only through draconian regulation.

These changes will take place not only in the United States but worldwide. These technologies will be adopted simply because they are cheaper than their hydrocarbon-burning cousins. The old world of burning hydrocarbons to generate energy and power automobiles is on the way out because it is being priced out of the market. In the next few decades, it is possible that the only thing oil products will be used for is to power airplanes, heavy vehicles and ships. All that is required on the part of those wanting to reduce greenhouse gases is a little patience so these new technologies can be adopted by the market.

So there is a silver lining in the run-up of hydrocarbon prices. These elevated costs are causing a dramatic change in our energy and automobile mix that will result in significantly less greenhouse gas emissions in the next few decades. The change is already on the way based on today's technology, and it will only quicken with the technological advances that are sure to come. Without a doubt, the answer is blowin' in the wind.

(The writer is chief executive of Loews Corp., which has interests in Diamond Offshore drilling; Boardwalk Pipelines, an interstate natural gas pipeline company; and HighMount Exploration and Production, which drills for natural gas.)

20080725-03	21:05	SteveB	Re: "The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy Speculation
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Dear Dennis,

But the demand is buoyed by speculators who have no intention of taking delivery of any oil. They simply sell to other speculators who artificially drive up the price. Oil is now like gold. Do you really think all those buyers of gold futures actually want to hold any gold? Not by a long shot. The result is a bubble of artificially high prices which WILL burst, but the net result is that we are all hurt, including many of the speculators, and all of the legitimate buyers.

20080726-01	09:09	Dennis	Re: "The Answer's in the Wind—and Sun" Energy Speculation
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from SteveB:

But the demand is buoyed by speculators who have no intention of taking delivery of any oil.

Dear SteveB,

So is corn, soybeans, and pork bellies. That's how the market works. If whiney Americans (Phil Gramm got that right) weren't so addicted to oil (Dubya got that right), speculators wouldn't buy oil futures. And if the American dollar wasn't so weak (an even bigger factor in high oil prices), gold wouldn't be increasing in price (it still trails oil in appreciating, by the way).

If Congress wasn't such a bunch of cowardly wimps they would have been adding taxes to the price of gas at the pump all along. Gas shouldn't be so cheap (it's twice as much in Croatia and three times as much in Turkey, were I just traveled

and paid the price without whining). If it was priced higher, then Americans would drive sensible cars, conserve resources (by not paying things they don't need with money they don't have), and might even start saving money for the future.

I'm not counting on that happening in my lifetime. So while Americans whine away I'm buying energy and gold stocks. It sure beats sending useless petitions to Congress.

20080726-02	09:16	Dennis	"After 20 Years of Ignoring This Investment, It's Finally Time to Buy" Wind Energy
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"After 20 Years of Ignoring This Investment, It's Finally Time to Buy" by Chris Mayer, Daily Wealth

July 26, 2008, (<http://www.dailywealth.com/666/After-20-Years-of-Ignoring-This-Investment-It-s-Finally-Time-to-Buy>)

I've just spent the past few days in Vancouver at the annual Agora Financial Investment Symposium. It's always an interesting conference.

This year, Jim Rogers, of *Investment Biker* fame, spoke at the conference. Rogers, as usual, predicted the bull market in commodities has much further to run. He likes cotton, sugar, and coffee — all are 60% to 80% off their all-time highs. He advised attendees to pocket those little sugar packets that hotels have lying around for coffee and tea.

I spoke as well. The big theme to cover was "Seeking Profits in a Time of Risk and Scarcity," which is something I focus on all the time in my advisories. We own a number of scarce assets — everything from water rights out West, to oddball industrial metals, to office space in Tokyo.

Energy, though, is always the big subject at conferences right now. I think we've reached a point in this investment cycle where the focus will now shift to ideas that ease the high cost of energy through new energy-efficient products and materials.

Alternatives to hydrocarbon fuels also get a lot of attention. Wind, for example, is getting a lot of ink lately thanks to T. Boone Pickens' forceful editorials supporting it. Pickens, who made billions in the oil and gas patch, has focused his latest efforts on water and wind.

To tell you the truth, I haven't closely investigated clean energy since I started investing two decades ago. Alternatives like solar, wind, and geothermal simply couldn't compete with coal, oil, and natural gas on cost. But that's all starting to change...

Over the weekend, James Tisch, the CEO of one of my favorite companies (and favorite investments), Loews Corp, wrote an editorial in *The Washington Post* also supporting wind power. Tisch is one of the best investors in the world.

He's heavy into oil and natural gas. His company owns pieces of oil-service company Diamond Offshore and natural gas pipeline operator Boardwalk Pipeline. And he has a wholly owned subsidiary, HighMount Exploration & Production, which drills for natural gas.

Nonetheless, Tisch thinks that the old hydrocarbon fuels — oil, natural gas, and coal — are getting priced out of the market. They are getting so expensive the alternatives look cheaper. **This is rendering the debate on greenhouse gas emissions moot.**

He writes: "The reduction in the output of those gases will move forward at warp speed, not because of rules, regulations and cap-and-trade decrees, but because of free markets and economics."

He used the example of wind power. Today, the economics of wind energy work at 7 cents per kilowatt-hour. That is a lot better than the 12 cents per kilowatt-hour required to build a gas-fired plant.

That explains the rapid build-out of wind power in places such as Texas. "In the past five years," Tisch writes, "more than 5 gigawatts of wind turbine capacity has been built in Texas alone; on days when the winds whistle along the plain, wind energy represents just under 10% of the electrical supply in the Lone Star State."

On this point, I'd mention that owning wind-swept land in Texas is a pretty good idea.

Tisch makes other good points I'd like to pass along... He talks about electricity prices rising as much as 30% this year in some parts of the country. That makes rooftop solar panels suddenly look like a good economic proposition. Tisch maintains that such an investment would "pay for itself in fewer than 10 years, resulting in a greater-than-10% return on one's capital cost." Compared with the sub-5% you get on Treasuries, it looks like a good deal.

It's a fascinating time. There will still be ways to make money selling the old fuels. These changes don't take place overnight. But I agree with Tisch. The high price of energy sets in motion the wheels that will ultimately bring it lower. For investors today, our focus should start to shift more toward finding the winners in the new era of clean energy. Finally, he notes the improvements in battery technology. He predicts that within the next two or three decades, no one will sell a gasoline-powered car. Hybrids are already "dramatically cheaper" than today's cars. To travel one mile, they consume 2 cents worth of electricity, compared with 20-25 cents using gasoline. Again, pure economics will drive the change.

(Editor's note: Chris Mayer is the editor of *Capital & Crisis*, an investment advisory we read religiously at DailyWealth.)

20080728-01	11:01	SteveB	Re: "After 20 Years of Ignoring This Investment, It's Finally Time to Buy" Wind Energy, Energy Speculation
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Dear Dennis,

Wind is good. Using our food supply to make fuel has turned out to be a disaster and a boon to starvation everywhere.

I disagree with you, though, about speculation in the commodities markets. Speculators artificially and unnaturally drive-up the cost of all commodities, and I believe the problem requires a worldwide solution. Gold is simply the most obvious market to see how the effect works. Gold is essentially, even intrinsically worthless, except in the electronics, dental, and jewelry industries. These legitimate uses would never support a \$1000/oz. price, since there is plenty of gold in the world and more coming daily.

Now, I believe almost completely in the free and fair marketplace. But something has to happen:

1. Anyone who buys a futures contract MUST take delivery of the goods. The contract cannot be resold. (not as free a market as I would like).
2. (better) When anyone purchases or re-purchases a futures contract, they have to pay the eventual supplier for delivery of the goods. If you re-sell the contract, the new buyer must also pay the eventual supplier for the delivery of the goods.
3. The other possibility would be to license legitimate traders who actually buy commodities and bar pure speculators from the marketplace. Why not?

Any of these will get speculators out of, especially, the energy, food and metals markets, and prices will fall to what would be reflected in a free and fair marketplace. These would be truly free and fair prices for all—buyers and sellers.

If you like the existing marketplace so well, look at the ease with which Enron manipulated and corrupted it. The band-aids applied have not fixed the underlying speculative problems.

But I share your concerns that governments, especially ours, seem to be pretty inept (at best) in everything they do. But we have learned much over the last hundred years or so about how to implement capitalism in countries where one would not suspect it could be successful—Russia, Colombia, China, India, and the list could be very long indeed if egos like Evo Morales, Hugo Chavez (DON'T BUY FROM CITGO!), and Fidel Castro didn't stand in the way. So I don't think I share your cynicism.

Take care. Hope you're enjoying your summer as much as I am here in Montana.

20080728-02	12:23	Dennis	Re: Energy Speculation
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from SteveB:

I disagree with you, though, about speculation in the commodities markets.

Dear SteveB,

These government agencies—the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the Federal Reserve, The U.S. Treasury, and the U.S. Dept of Energy—have all found speculation has little effect on oil prices. Blaming rising prices on speculation is an act of denial (despite the raising the example of Enron, which really was market manipulation—this, however, is no Enron). The causes include primarily a weak dollar and increased usage in developing nations, most of which provide subsidies to their populations to keep them from rioting. (The U.S. would be hypocritical to criticize these subsidies, by the way, with all the U.S. agricultural subsidies that distorts the price of food in developing countries.)

Americans have been spoiled by cheap energy for too long. All of the easy-to-access oil has been pumped. The world now has a lot more people with the money, particularly in Asia, to compete for energy resources. If Americans want to avoid confrontations over scarce energy resources in the future, there needs to be a huge investment in alternative energy immediately.

Personally, I think Americans are 30 years late in waking up to this and would rather whine about it than make the sacrifices necessary to solve the problem. Call me a cynic, but I envision that Americans are more likely to go to war to secure oil than to sacrifice their bloated lifestyles.

20080728-03	13:09	Dennis	"Lovable, Moronic Capitalists" Economics, Greed
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"Lovable, Moronic Capitalists" by Bill Bonner, Daily Reckoning

July 25, 2008, (<http://dailyreckoning.com/lovable-moronic-capitalists/>)

The first economists—the two Adams, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson—called themselves "moral philosophers." They were studying the human economy as though it were an anthill—to see how it worked. They figured it must follow rules—just like all other things under Heaven—and tended to see mistakes people made, such as spending too much money, as moral failings.

Modern economists are more like auto mechanics. They think they can control the economy with a screwdriver. And to some extent they're right. Which is why the world economy is in such a mess; they turned the wrong screws. But it's why we moral philosophers are having such a good time; finally, we get to laugh and say "I told you so."

In the news last week was word that the Argentines are taking back their national airline—Aerolineas Argentinas. Back in the heyday of privatization—led by economists from the University of Chicago—they sold it to a Spanish group. But now the Iberians can't seem to make a go of it—not with oil over \$130 a barrel—so the Argentines are re-nationalizing it.

What is the likelihood that the heirs to Juan Peron will do a better job of running an airline than a private company? You might put the same basic question to Gordon Brown. What are the odds the Labor Party will run Northern Rock better than private owners? And in the United States of America—almost 30 years after the Reagan Revolution—the federal government is effectively nationalizing the biggest and most important financial institutions in the world, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Between the two of them, Fannie and Freddie hold almost half the entire nation's mortgages—equal to about a third of the U.S. GDP. It probably won't be too long before General Motors is nationalized too. Someone is going to have to pay GM's pension bill. Even if the company isn't nationalized, its health and pension obligations probably will be. But can America's Republicans and Democrats do a better job of running a mortgage company or an auto company than card-carrying capitalists?

On the evidence, maybe so.

Milton Friedman warned that if you put government in charge of the Sahara there would soon be a shortage of sand. But the heirs to Friedman have some explaining to do. The smartest of them have crashed airlines, busted banks and wrecked builders. They've ruined businesses so simple that even a half-wit could have made a profit. Fannie and Freddie couldn't win at their business, even though the deck was stacked in their favor from the very beginning. And the Friedmanites' beloved markets—which are supposed to "look ahead" and anticipate trouble before it happens—must have

shut their eyes years ago. They walked out into the blazing desert without a map or a hat; no wonder they've been acting strange.

To many of the world's politicians and opinion mongers, the evidence of the last 12 months has proved what they always suspected—that capitalists are greedy s.o.b.s. But we would have spotted them that...and readily conceded that they are often morons too. Still, a system in which people get what they've got coming is infinitely better than a system in which people take only what government gives them. That's the essential difference between capitalism and socialism: one yields to Armani-clothed fraud; the other to cheap-suit force. Both have their moral failings. But one is wicked; the other is merely dumb.

Want to know who caused Aerolineas Argentina's bumpy ride...and who's responsible for bringing down Fannie and Freddie? Follow the money. Before 1971, in the Bretton Woods monetary era, major economies used the dollar as a reference of value. The greenback was a North Star—helping businessmen and investors find their way. The U.S. dollar was reliable because it was tied to gold, which the U.S. Treasury promised to deliver to any country at a rate fixed at \$42 an ounce. Then, on Aug. 15, 1971, the U.S. Treasury reneged.

Egged on by modern economists, the last link with gold was cut. Governments, investors and businessmen could still look to the dollar as a point of reference, but good luck to them. This disgraceful mischief caused even the stars to wobble.

Since then, the U.S. government could print almost as many dollars as it wanted. Arguably, it printed too many. For something—perhaps it was too much cash and credit in circulation—led American homeowners to think house prices would rise forever. They over borrowed, homebuilders overbuilt, and Fannie and Freddie—even with all their Ph.D. economists on the payroll—over-lent. And something—maybe it was the same thing—caused the price of oil to rocket upwards 400% in the last five years.

The airlines hadn't seen that coming either. So, the big lenders and the high fliers are in trouble. Those are only two of a long list of today's troubles that can be traced...directly or indirectly...to the world's monetary system of the last 37 years. Businessmen, consumers and investors respond to financial signals. If interest rates are set too low, they tend to borrow too much. If the money supply expands too rapidly, they expand too rapidly too. To make a long story short, a bubbly supply of cash and credit led to bubbly markets.

The U.S. and major foreign stocks market bubbled up to all-time highs in Jan., 2000; then they headed down. In inflation adjusted terms, most never recovered. Then, in 2003, it was housing's turn...followed by emerging markets...and lately, oil and commodities.

Sure, the capitalists are greedy. And sure, many of them make mistakes. But with feds rearranging the heavens, it's a wonder they didn't wash up more often.

(Bill Bonner is the founder and editor of *The Daily Reckoning*. He is also the author, with Addison Wiggin, of the national best sellers *Financial Reckoning Day: Surviving the Soft Depression of the 21st Century* and *Empire of Debt: The Rise of an Epic Financial Crisis*. Bill's latest book, *Mobs, Messiahs and Markets: Surviving the Public Spectacle in Finance and Politics*, written with co-author Lila Rajiva, is available now by clicking here: <http://agorafinancial.com/>.)

20080728-04	15:37	SteveB	Re: Energy Speculation, Gasoline
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Dear Dennis,

I forgot to mention in my last email that I have thought we should tax our gasoline and diesel fuel up to \$4.00 a gallon for the past 30 years. Fuel would still be a minor part of what it costs to drive a decent automobile. The tax could have gone to develop alternatives, but, in the government's hands, who knows what would actually ever have gotten done.

And, yes, it is what Europe has done for a long time and that's where I got the idea a long time ago. If WE had done it too, I think everything would be better now. Every time alternative fuels have been able to start-up (see "Who Killed the Electric Car"), the price of oil has been made to plummet and the alternatives have gone under.

We need a major life-style change toward public transportation and electric cars and more compact cities. We have been sold down the river by our politicians. The weak dollar and the federal debt are just two small signs of that.

But from what I hear from my friends in Europe, they are practically in a state of chaos now. Their policy is now hurting almost everyone. They have not done cr*pola to develop alternatives to imported oil. They are the sissy's and whiners, not Americans, in my book. Why are they in chaos instead of being able to rely on their non-existent alternatives? What went wrong there that wouldn't have gone wrong here?

But I am positive that speculation adds greatly, at the present time at least, to the prices of all important commodities. Again, just look at the ridiculous price of gold? How can you believe our government that oil isn't exactly the same situation? It's only human nature that it would be so. Speculation IS "market manipulation".

Down with "free" trade!

20080729-01 11:05 J. Tester Energy, Gasoline

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for contacting me about the need for Congress to take action to address the increasing price of gasoline. I understand your concerns because I use 3,000 gallons of diesel every year on my farm. Today's prices add up quickly and put a dent in the bottom line for families and small businesses across the state.

To get at the heart of the recent spike in the price of gas, I am working hard with my Senate colleagues to crack down on speculators and market manipulators who inflate gas prices above the levels dictated by global supply and demand. I also believe that investing in renewable energy can help put our country on the path to energy independence. Last year, Congress passed legislation designed to curb America's dependence on oil. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (H.R. 6) greatly expanded the production of biofuels like cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel. This legislation also increased fuel efficiency standards to 35 miles per gallon by 2020. These are good initiatives that will help curb our country's reliance on foreign oil.

In addition, I strongly support responsible energy development here in America. The oil and gas industry is a vital part of Montana's economy and I want to find ways to develop this industry in the future. Montana's Richland County is one of the fastest growing oil production areas in the nation. Small companies in this area are providing our nation with fuel, jobs, and economic development. These producers compete with some of the largest oil companies and bring diversity to the marketplace. To further development in this area, I am also working closely with my colleague Senator Dorgan of North Dakota to promote development of the Bakken formation in Eastern Montana and North Dakota.

There are also vast areas in the Gulf of Mexico open to oil drilling. These sites are one of the United States' best sources of petroleum production. Many of the areas currently open to exploration are not being developed, despite significant incentives to do so. We need to continue to maximize areas currently available before sensitive regions are opened to new development.

As we move forward on legislation to bring down the price of fuel, be assured that I will keep your views in mind. Please do not hesitate to contact me again in the future if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely, Jon Tester, United States Senator, <http://tester.senate.gov/contact>

20080801-01 11:03 SteveM Fw: Executive Summary; McCain vs. Obama

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I know that some of you don't like to read long drawn out missives...so here's the executive summary...

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Congress</u>	<u>Military</u>
John McCain	26 Years	22 Years
Barrack Obama	143 days	0

[20080801-02](#) 16:31 SteveB Re: Executive Summary; McCain vs. Obama

Dear SteveM,

And it is so very obvious that all McCain's years have contributed to nothing but a negative-minded, senile half-brain intent upon maintaining his crabby, ill-tempered, dictatorial view of the status quo. I'm ready for a fresh approach myself. Any fresh approach.

[20080801-03](#) 19:27 SteveB To: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point 08/01/08 @ 18:45, Experience

Dear Glenn Beck:

I was just listening to your program. You were asking if anyone out here could tell you what experience Obama has that would qualify him to be President. And I must say that, at least on this subject, your listeners do not seem to be a very intelligent group, no insult intended.

What Obama has run is a very, very good Presidential campaign. This is a big organization and he has done a better job than the Clintons or, arguably, John McCain, who has mainly been a failure at Presidential campaigns...at least up to the present moment.

And let me ask you this—what has McCain ever run except a campaign? Not a company. Not a state. Not a federal bureaucracy. He has been in the Senate longer than Obama, but that's not necessarily a plus for those of us who are sort of anti-politician.

Obama is smart and will try something new. He is not like McCain—old, crusty, senile, and determined to maintain the awful status quo no matter what cost.

PS: The Republican party has sold us all down the river, and I believe McCain will continue on the Bush road to ruin. I should have included that McCain is small-minded, negative, and often confused, if not lying. I think it is interesting how closely you and the other Conservative radio hosts stick to the Republican talking points. Please try to think more independently. Your country and its future are at stake.

[20080801-04](#) 20:19 SteveM Re: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point, Experience

Dear SteveB,

And yet , like Pelosi and Reed, you didn't answer the question, but attacked McCain on his age. Please refer to the earlier Executive summary. [[20080801-01](#)]

[20080802-01](#) 10:10 SteveB Re: Glenn Beck; Obama Radio Point, Experience

Dear SteveM,

I did mention McCain's executive experience...running his campaigns. Other than that, the only executive experience he seems to have is running scandal and corruption during the Keating Five times. He didn't even run the prison camp and what was he, a captain? They don't run anything except maybe one airplane. I've even heard that Cindy gets on top and runs things in the bedroom, thanks to Viagra. He does have more Senate experience. So what? He's senile now! That's not an attack on his age, that's a fact! Senility is so apparent in the videos that it's amazing.

[20080802-02](#) 15:21 SteveB "McCain: The Most Reprehensible of the Keating Five"

SteveM,

Come on, be honest, is it because he's black?

All McCain can do is attack Obama and they are the stupidest attacks imaginable. McCain has no program, no plan, unless we can trust him at his word to be:

1. Against abortion.
2. For free trade (at our complete peril).
3. For destroying the environment.
4. For raising taxes.
5. For more and more illegal immigration.
6. For war in Iraq for 100 years.
7. For a continuation of that idiot Bush's policies to reduce our liberties, spy on us, create an immense deficit, pursue provably needless wars, do nothing about any problems such as factory loss, healthcare, illegal immigration, education, deteriorating standard of living, the rape of America via free trade, energy (except to increase oil company profits...what a funny coincidence!), etc., etc.

And I am so very tired of seeing Obama attacked for his lack of experience. I say, great! You have not addressed the point I made about Hillary and that I now make about McCain. They may both have spent many years in Washington (running up massive favor debts to the good old boy networks), but neither of them have any but the tiniest bit of true executive experience. If McCain EVER had any, he's forgotten it by now. Hillary stole that of her husband and called it her own. P-U-L-E-E-Z-E !!! You seem to have no come-back for that glaring fact.

The American people deserve a CHANGE! The change Obama represents is not more risky than having the country run by a crooked idiot like Bush or McCain!

McCain was never exonerated in the Keating 5 scandal. In fact, he was severely reprimanded by the Senate. He is still completely in the pocket of the lobbyist and big business. This is your hero?

"McCain: The Most Reprehensible of the Keating Five" by Tom Fitzpatrick, *Phoenix New Times*

Nov. 29, 1989, (<http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/1989-11-29/news/mccain-the-most-reprehensible-of-the-keating-five/>)

(The story of "the Keating Five" has become a scandal rivaling Teapot Dome and Watergate.)

You're John McCain, a fallen hero who wanted to become president so desperately that you sold yourself to Charlie Keating, the wealthy con man who bears such an incredible resemblance to The Joker.

Obviously, Keating thought you could make it to the White House, too.

He poured \$112,000 into your political campaigns. He became your friend. He threw fund raisers in your honor. He even made a sweet shopping-center investment deal for your wife, Cindy. Your father-in-law, Jim Hensley, was cut in on the deal, too.

Nothing was too good for you. Why not? Keating saw you as a prime investment that would pay off in the future.

So he flew you and your family around the country in his private jets. Time after time, he put you up for serene, private vacations at his vast, palatial spa in the Bahamas. All of this was so grand. You were protected from what Thomas Hardy refers to as "the madding crowd." It was almost as though you were already staying at a presidential retreat.

Like the old song, that now seems "Long ago and far away." Since Keating's collapse, you find yourself doing obscene things to save yourself from the Senate Ethics Committee's investigation. As a matter of course, you engage in backbiting behavior that will turn you into an outcast in the Senate if you do survive.

They say that if you put five lobsters into a pot and give them a chance to escape, none will be able to do so before you light the fire. Each time a lobster tries to climb over the top, his fellow lobsters will pull him back down. It is the way of lobsters and threatened United States senators.

And, of course, that's the way it is with the Keating Five. You are all battling to save your own hides. So you, McCain, leak to reporters about who did Keating's bidding in pressuring federal regulators to change the rules for Lincoln Savings and Loan.

When the reporters fail to print your tips quickly enough—as in the case of your tip on Michigan Senator Donald Riegle—you call them back and remind them how important it is to get that information in the newspapers.

The story of "the Keating Five" has become a scandal rivaling Teapot Dome and Watergate. The outcome will be decided, not in a courtroom, but probably on national television.

Those who survive will be the sociopaths who can tell a lie with the most sincere, straight face. You are especially adept at this.

Last Friday night, on The John McLaughlin Show, which features well-known Washington journalists, the subject of the Keating Five was discussed. Panelist Jack Germond suggested that three of the Keating Five were probably already through in politics.

So you spend your days desperately trying to make sure you will be one of the survivors. You keep volunteering to go on radio and television stations to protest your innocence. Last week you made ABC's Nightline. Not long before that you somehow managed to get James Kilpatrick, the national columnist, to write a favorable paragraph about you. Last Sunday morning, you made it to national television again; this time on ABC's This Week With David Brinkley. You smiled at the panel with your usual studied insouciance. Sitting next to you was Senator John Glenn of Ohio.

Brinkley, Sam Donaldson, and George Will were the interrogators.

It was a sobering scene. There you sat with Glenn, both sweating before the cameras, waiting to answer questions: two badly tarnished American icons. No one forgets that Glenn was the first American astronaut to orbit the Earth. You won't let anyone forget that you were a prisoner of war. But you have played that tune too long. By now your constant reminders about your war record make you seem like a modern version of Arthur Miller's tragic failure Willy Loman.

Clearly, both you and Glenn sold your fame for Charles Keating's money. It was a Faustian bargain. It was also a bad joke on the rest of us and a disaster for many old people who lost their life's savings to Keating.

The money was never really Keating's to give. But he never would have got his hands on it if you and the rest of the Keating Five didn't halt the government takeover for two long years while Keating's people continued their looting.

And now, the tab for the Savings and Loan heist must be paid from taxpayer pockets.

On Sunday, Senators Dennis DeConcini, Alan Cranston, and Riegle refused offers to appear on the Brinkley show. What must we make of that?

You, the closest of them to Keating and the deepest in his debt, have chosen the path of the hard sell. You may even make it out of the pot, but to many, your protestations of innocence taste like gall. You are determined to bluff your way. You will stick to your story that you were acting to help a constituent and intended to do nothing improper. The very fact you attended the meeting makes you guilty, just as every man who entered the Brinks vault went to prison.

You insist that an accounting firm Keating hired told you Lincoln was sound. Alan Greenspan, who Keating also hired, wrote a report saying it was sound. Why shouldn't you believe the people Keating hired? You were, after all, fellow employees.

Perhaps you might silence your own conscience about all this someday.

Just keep telling everyone that it was your wife's money invested in that shopping center with Keating and that you knew nothing about it. Keep saying that cynical newspaper people don't understand that every move you make has always been for the enrichment of Arizona, the education of our Native Americans on the reservation, for the love of the elderly in Sun City and Green Valley.

Keep telling them that it wasn't that you were bought off but that Charlie Keating got special help only because he was one of the biggest employers in the state.

Just keep sitting there and staring into the camera and denying that Keating bought you for money and jet plane trips and vacations.

So what if he gave you \$112,000? Just keep smiling at the cameras and saying you did nothing wrong. Maybe the voters will understand you took those tiring trips to Charlie's place in the Bahamas in their behalf. Certainly, they can understand you wanted to take your family along. A senator deserves to travel on private jets, removed from the awful crush of public transportation.

You sought out a master criminal like Keating and became his friend. Now you've discarded him. It shouldn't be surprising that you are now in the process of selling out your senatorial accomplices.

You're John McCain, clearly the guiltiest, most culpable and reprehensible of the Keating Five. But you know the power of television and you realize this is the only way you can possibly save your political career.

20080802-03 15:48 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/02/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

In the most amazing development of all, McCain's campaign came out the other day and said that McCain doesn't speak for the campaign!

And don't tell me he doesn't want to increase taxes. He has gone back and forth and I don't think he knows what he wants to do. As he says, he doesn't know anything about economics. LOL I've never seen a worse run campaign in my life than McCain's, or a more devious, dishonest, negative, bitter, and boring one. Even worse than Hillary's abortion of a campaign.

These guys make Obama look like a towering genius.

20080803-01 10:53 SteveM The John Edwards Story; Media
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[This is another one of those emails which, while honestly telling about a true story on the surface, are in fact telling a world of lies beneath. I'd estimate that this email is 50% truth and 50% lie so insidious that it will literally rot the brain of an unsuspecting person. Here's the way it works. Fact (and admittedly a strike against Democrats by association): John Edwards is a rat. Lie: There was no liberal media conspiracy. It's a pretend conspiracy that the truth is being repressed. How dare they! The hidden agenda of this email is nefarious—to sow distrust and discord, at the very least. In a time when there is as much conservative media as liberal, the myth of the evil, lurking liberal media is perpetuated. And then there is the simple yet inescapable fact that one of the most basic and important tenants of liberal media is, duh, trying to get as close to the truth as it is humanly possible to do. Media that does not do this cannot be defined as liberal. Is respect for the truth a basic tenant of Rupert Murdoch, FOX, Rush, Glenn, and the rest of the conservative media gang? Their only basic tenants seem to be money and their agenda. In the case of this "liberal media conspiracy" the facts are these: All the mainstream media, liberal, middle, and conservative were slow to pick up the story from the Enquirer, because there was no corroboration. Then *The Washington Post* was a leader in getting the story out there in July, 2008, forcing Edward's admission to the affair, if not the child, on Aug. 7, 2008. —SteveB]

Dear SteveB,

Here's some better detail from MSM web sites also. Why has this not made the Evening news like the discredited story about McCain's alleged "affair did for 3 days?

Note that unlike the *NY Times* "McCain affair" there are photos, eye witnesses and progeny as a result of an affair, from which DNA could be offered up as proof of paternity. Oh how the mighty Democratic social conscience for us un-washed minions has fallen.

You got love the liberal media, Note the *LA Times* pull the story than reposted and edited venison with no explanation in Oct 7, and only 5 days ago reposted with an explanation once the "evidence" became "overwhelming", and in their BACKYARD!

What a bunch of

"Media Ignore John Edwards' Hotel Hookup" by James Hirsen, Newsmax

July 28, 2008, (<http://www.newsmax.com/Hirsen/John-Edwards-Blackout/2008/07/28/id/324710>)

After the *National Enquirer* broke a story about former presidential candidate John Edwards' meeting at the Beverly Hilton Hotel with his alleged mistress and the child they had together, the mainstream media proceeded to ignore the story.

Coverage of the incident continued to be noticeably absent from most major print and broadcast outlets. Fox News did corroborate that Edwards was where the Enquirer reporters said he was at the time, and that the potential Democratic vice presidential nominee was not registered as a guest at the hotel.

This is a man who ran as a serious candidate for leader of the free world and whose wife is bravely battling cancer. Still, the mainstream media for the most part have remained mum.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,391426,00.html> [July 25, 2008. —SteveB]

A Beverly Hills hotel security guard told FOXNews.com he intervened this week between a man he identified as former Sen. John Edwards and tabloid reporters who chased down the former presidential hopeful after what they're calling a rendezvous with his mistress and love child.

The Star Report: John Edwards sex scandal? Hey, you didn't hear it here, by Jeff Thomas, Mercury News

July 30, 2008, (http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_10048465 [Dec. 17, 2011, article no longer available. —SteveB])

So what's all this about squeaky-clean Democrat John Edwards and a sordid sex scandal? What, you haven't heard? If that's the case, then maybe you're one of the few remaining Americans who get most of their news from those dead-trees-and-ink thingies.

Members of the so-called Main Stream Media—yes, including this one—have treated the story of an alleged Edwards affair as if it were just another space alien story out of the *National Enquirer*. But wait! It is indeed the Enquirer that is out in front on this story, but it appears they have slightly more to go on than a UFO sighting.

They say they caught Edwards taking a back elevator to a woman's Beverly Hilton Hotel suite at 2 a.m. last week, and when the stakeout team tried to talk to him about what he was doing there, he bolted back downstairs and hid in a bathroom for 15 minutes before security intervened. The *Enquirer* says it has photos (and video?) of the whole encounter.

It gets even stranger. The alleged other woman (remember, Edwards is married to Elizabeth Edwards, who is suffering from incurable cancer) is the woman that the Enquirer reported last October was pregnant with Edwards' child. The Edwards campaign's response to that was that, no, the child's father is actually a close, married, aide to Edwards. That's loyalty! So far, there has not been a denial from either Edwards or the woman, who once produced videos for the Edwards presidential campaign, about the alleged escapade in Beverly Hills.

And if it's all a simple misunderstanding, if John Edwards was dropping by a hotel suite at 2 a.m. to say hello to a former campaign worker, then maybe someone should suggest to the politician that he come out and say that. Maybe it was his \$500-a-cut hairdresser, for goodness sakes! In which case, money well spent. In any case, it doesn't seem like this is the kind of story that is going to fade into the mists of time. Especially in the slow-news days of August.

"Birth Certificate of Child Linked to Ex-Sen. John Edwards Lists No Father" by Lisa Zagaroli, McClatchy Newspapers

Aug. 21, 2008,

(http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_10067918?source%253Dmost_email%2626978592730A3B8C7F471EACE0DA4EF2.html)

The birth certificate of a child whom a tabloid newspaper claims was fathered by former Democratic Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina doesn't identify the child's father.

The document, obtained through a routine records request, shows that Frances Quinn Hunter was born last Feb. 27 to Rielle Hunter, a videographer who worked on Edwards' presidential campaign last year. But the space for the name of the father is blank, although the child was born more than two months after Hunter identified Andrew Young, Edwards' campaign finance director, as the father of her then unborn child. Young claimed paternity in a statement from his lawyer that was posted on the political blog mydd.com.

"John Edwards Denies Affair with Campaign Worker" *LA Times*

Oct. 13, 2007, (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2007/10/breaking-news-j.html>)

Former Sen. John Edwards today denied a story in the National Enquirer that he had an extramarital affair with a former campaign worker who followed him on numerous trips around the country.

Without naming the woman, the supermarket tabloid reported online that "Presidential candidate John Edwards is caught in a shocking mistress scandal that could wreck his campaign." The paper's only source is an unnamed friend of the woman who says the two met at a New York bar about 18 months ago. The newspaper quotes the woman as saying, "Sparks flew immediately. She never expected it would turn sexual since John is married and is running for president. But it soon did—and she fell for him."

The Associated Press reported today that Edwards told reporters, "The story is false. It's completely untrue, ridiculous." He said the story was "made-up." [Another great moment in American politics! —SteveB]

"I've been in love with the same woman for 30-plus years," Edwards added, about his wife Elizabeth, who is suffering from incurable cancer, "and as anybody who's been around us knows, she's an extraordinary human being, warm, loving, beautiful, sexy and as good a person as I have ever known. So the story's just false."

(This item was originally posted Thursday evening, Oct. 11. It was removed by an editor Friday but was reposted Saturday in a shortened form.)

UPDATE: Since some have asked for more details on this post, here they are. Better late than never: Thursday evening John Edwards spoke to a group of reporters, denying an alleged affair, initially reported in the National Enquirer, which had become the subject of intense speculation on the web. The Associated Press moved a story on the denial, and our blogger posted an item on the Edwards denial, including some details of the Enquirer story. It also mentioned a Huffington Post item that identified a woman who worked for Edwards and a feature on that woman from Newsweek last winter.

Shortly after, editors trimmed the post to delete the Huffington and *Newsweek* material, believing it also had not been verified. About 10 hours later a Times editor, concerned about an item now entirely focusing on the Enquirer allegations, removed the entire post and comments, some of which expressed similar concerns.

After web editors discovered the deletion, they launched an internal discussion about the importance of not deleting items from the site without explanation. That resulted in the item being reposted Saturday evening, minus three more paragraphs of Enquirer allegations but retaining the link to the Enquirer story. A brief explanation for the one-day deletion was also posted. Since the reposted item no longer carried the blogger's name, he felt it inappropriate to be responding online to past reader comments, so he removed his responses.

20080803-02	11:13	G. Haselhurst	On Truth & Reality; Philosophy, Science
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Dear SteveB:

Thank you for subscribing to our philosophy / science newsletter: "Philosophy of Science".

Geoff Haselhurst

<http://www.spaceandmotion.com>

Wisdom from Truth and Reality

20080803-03 11:50 SteveB Re: Truth and Reality; Philosophy, Science, Cosmology, Mind of God

Dear Geoff and Karene:

I love your website! Thank you!

I am working on a long poem about the nature of the universe/reality.

I first ran into the theory that matter is the result of a wave phenomenon through space in a series of articles in R&D Magazine, sometime in the 90's. The articles were written by a retired Kodak research scientist whose name now escapes me (I think there was a "Van" in it.). We corresponded briefly and he sent me a copy of one of his unpublished books. I believe he was seen as somewhat of a crackpot by the scientific community, but his theories made some sense to me. I have lately been trying to learn his name to re-read his writings and find out if he is still alive, but have had no luck so far. Have you ever come across such an individual?

At that time, as now, I wonder if TIME could be that wave phenomenon? In that case, if there is a God, all he had to do to create the universe was to begin the "ticking" of time. To me, that has an elegant simplicity, and is certainly no more far-fetched than the Hobbs Field.

BUT, as happy as I am that you have figured out so much of the "apparent" universe, I believe it must be remembered that one cannot prove that we and our universe do not simply exist in a computer program or, as the Buddhists posit, are part of what they refer to as "the Mind of God". If you have studied Zen or seen the movie, Matrix, or read Descartes, you will know what I mean. I would hope that this uncertainty would permeate any search for the truth. All we can ever theorize about, I believe, is this "apparent" universe in which we are somehow immersed. Reality is apparently beyond us.

That said, please allow me to question, as you do, a couple of pet theories of modern physics. The articles on your website raise some good points, but it seems to me, as a lay scientist only, that the big-bang theory, the red shift, Einstein, Hawking, and quantum physics make a pretty good cosmological case, and our best observations seem to support them.

BUT, it certainly gets complicated, doesn't it? Dark matter, dark energy, a time when there was no time (before the big-bang), 16 or so dimensions, an infinity of possible universes, including our Goldilocks one...truly mind boggling stuff!

Lately, I have been wondering this: If, almost 14 billion years ago, a big-bank flung out all the matter in the universe, and if today we see some of that matter in the form of allegedly ~13 billion-year-old galaxies moving away from us at nearly the speed of light, and if it seems to scientists, unfortunately I guess, that there is more "dark energy" in the universe than "dark matter"...then why is there not a big, giant, huge hole left in our visible universe surrounding the spot where the big-bang occurred? Wouldn't it be a logical conclusion that there should be one, and that we should be able to see it?

I would love to know your thoughts on these subjects.

Again, thank you so much for your website and your thoughtful work.

20080803-04 14:02 SteveB Re: The John Edwards Story; Edwards & McCain Affairs, Media

Dear SteveM,

Well...YA! I'm sure Edwards' pr*ck hasn't fallen off the way McCain's must have years ago!

Your email mentioned "McCain's affair"? LOL (Never heard about it on any of my news media...so, thanks for the info...not surprised to know McCain cheated on his wife as well as the American people. Makes me wonder what happened to his first wife, before Cindy took over...? But I knew all about Edwards from all the common media outlets, so I don't see any conspiracy. Even your sources are pretty mainstream.)

20080803-05 14:35 SteveM Re: Edwards & McCain Affairs, Media

Dear SteveB,

Never happened *NY Times* made up story, reporter was fired, Editor resigned. Since you didn't hear about where you are it now make sense with you support Obama and believe CNN, and Channel that's so bad about facts they've been lampooned on SNL.

I guess we're going to have the start pumping light and truth in to you up there, LOL!

20080803-06 14:42 Trudy Fw: Bad American; Media

"Today is a gift, that is why it is called the Present"—Magyar Gypsy

[Source of original email unknown. These points mostly answer non-existent media accusations and stereotypical "supposed" views of the Left. "WE NEED GOD BACK IN OUR COUNTRY!" Where has he been? Europe? —SteveB]

YES, I'M A BAD AMERICAN

I Am the Liberal-Progressive's Worst Nightmare. I am an American.

I believe the money I make belongs to me and my family, not some Liberal governmental functionary be it Democratic or Republican!

I'm in touch with my feelings and I like it that way!

I think owning a gun doesn't make you a killer, it makes you a smart American.

I think being a minority does not make you noble or victimized, and does not entitle you to anything.

I believe that if you are selling me a Big Mac, do it in English.

I believe everyone has a right to pray to his or her God when and where they want to.

My heroes are John Wayne, Babe Ruth, Roy Rogers, and whoever canceled Jerry Springer.

I know wrestling is fake and I don't waste my time watching or arguing about it.

I've never owned a slave, or was a slave, I haven't burned any witches or been persecuted by the Turks and neither have you! So, shut up already.

I believe if you don't like the way things are here, go back to where you came from and change your own country! This is AMERICA.

If you were born here and don't like it you are free to move to any Socialist country that will have you.

I want to know which church is it exactly where the Reverend Jesse Jackson preaches, where he gets his money, and why he is always part of the problem and not the solution. Can I get an AMEN on that one?

I think the cops have every right to shoot your sorry rear if you're running from them... [What about the rare case where your son runs because he thinks the cops are robbers? Simply, tough luck? Wouldn't it have been possible to save his life by mandating that the State, the Right's dreaded "BIG, BAD GOVERNMENT" be very, very careful and sure before it uses deadly force on its sovereign citizens whom it doesn't even have the right to make carry an ID card, yet somehow have the right to kill. —SteveB]

I also think they have the right to pull you over if you're breaking the law, regardless of what color you are.

And, no, I don't mind having my face shown on my driver's license. I think it's good.....

And I'm proud that "God" is written on my money.

I think if you are too stupid to know how a ballot works, I don't want you deciding who should be running the most powerful nation in the world for the next four years.

I dislike those people standing in the intersections trying to sell me stuff or trying to guilt me into making "donations" to their cause.

I believe that it doesn't take a village to raise a child, it takes two parents.

I believe "illegal" is illegal no matter what the lawyers think.

I believe the American flag should be the only one allowed in AMERICA! [So kiss those state and Confederacy flags goodbye? —SteveB]

If this makes me a BAD American, then yes, I'm a BAD American. If you are a BAD American too, please forward this to everyone you know. We want our country back! WE NEED GOD BACK IN OUR COUNTRY!

20080803-07	15:00	SteveB	Re: Media, McCain, Obama
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Dear SteveM,

I suppose comedian and drug addict Rush Limbaugh is the guy who knows the truth?

Actually, most of us find CNN to be pretty objective. They bend over backwards to give McCain's ridiculous campaign the benefit of a doubt. FOX is obviously right wing, NBS and MSNBC are left wing. I don't ever watch any of the other networks, but I read a lot of stuff online.

I take it ALL with a giant grain of salt. I just know that when I personally watch what Obama actually does and says, I see an honest, intelligent, positive, concerned man who loves his country and wants it to be better. When I personally watch McCain, I see a bumbling, senile, negative, arrogant, power-hungry man who can't even keep his own story straight, let alone understand the modern world.

I don't listen to what anyone has to say. I watch what has happened, what happens, and what is actually said, and I draw my own conclusions. I don't believe anyone else's conclusions. I have no vested interest in anything but the truth. I want what is best for America. I find it impossible to believe that my eyes and mind deceive me about these two men. I trust my instincts and observations implicitly. I always have and I always will.

I realize that I am not in alignment with Obama's political philosophy, but I know that I was not in alignment with Lincoln's, Kennedy's, or Reagan's, yet these were all great Presidents, BECAUSE THEY WERE INTELLIGENT AND HAD LOVE IN THEIR HEARTS.

I don't believe McCain knows what it means to have love in his heart, and I say that only because I have personally watched what he has done and what he has to say. He is a bitter old man. I honestly do not have any idea whether I am in alignment with his political philosophy, because I cannot for the life of me detect one, at least not one that is consistent. And on every issue where he seems to maintain a modicum of consistence (see previous list), such as being pro-life, pro-free-trade, pro-illegal immigration, favoritism to special interests, especially giant corporations a la Bush...I disagree with him totally and absolutely, and I believe that you do also. This is the philosophy and policies that have sold the American people down the river and you know it. And who can even guess what his tax policy might be.

I don't give a goddamn about political philosophy. Look at radio talk show hosts for instance. On the Right we have a bunch of blithering idiots, and on the Left we have a bunch more blithering idiots. The same thing with almost all of our highly polarized politicians. The truth lies in the Middle Way. This was discovered thousands of years ago and has never been successfully refuted.

What I want in a President is a good man. An intelligent man is a plus. I don't have much faith in government either way, not even our own. But I KNOW from watching him and listening to him that McCain is not a good man, and if he ever was intelligent, he has so obviously lost way too many brain cells by this time to ever be considered so again.

Stop thinking about political philosophy! As my Zen teacher used to tell me, "The only problem with thinking is that it never gets you anywhere." It took me years to realize that he was speaking to my propensity, even need, to be overly logical. It took me years to learn to trust my feelings, yet they have seldom led me astray.

Seek and trust yours and I think you will see that this race is not as philosophically simple as you seem to think. I think you know in your heart that I am right... about that point at least.

Ease up and give this guy a chance to speak to you. McCain and Bush have had their chance and they have failed utterly and demonstrably. Period.

At this point in the history of the greatest nation the world has ever seen, WE NEED A CHANGE! Or do you truly believe that our government has been moving in the right direction? I find it hard to believe that you do.

[20080803-08](#) 15:17 SteveB Re: John McCain, Keating Five

The Keating 5 stuff may have been more than 20 years ago, but it reveals the same corruption which is destroying our country. McCain sold his soul and sold us out then, he's obviously sold it since, and he will sell it again. That is simply the kind of leader he is. He is for sale, just like Clinton and Bush before him. I will never believe that this is a good thing for America. This is the one thing needs to change if we are ever to solve our problems.

People don't change. Least of all old, senile people who poop in their pants. :-)

[20080804-01](#) 10:31 SteveB Re: John McCain, Keating Five

Dear SteveM,

Thanks for calling. I guess we got cut-off, then we were driving to the store, etc. Sorry.

The whole incident led to my telling Marci about the Keating 5 this morning. She was appalled and amazed that this guy would be able to run for President.

The more I think about it and the more I see how nasty his behavior is, the more I agree. He is a slimy, mangy dog in sheep's clothing and the sheep's clothing is in tatters. He does not deserve your loyalty and support, my friend. He represents everything you are against, believe me.

[20080805-01](#) 23:08 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/05/08 & Bonus: "Cindy McCain as Miss Buffalo Chip?"

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT (MISS BUFFALO CHIP):

Senile moment of the day. John McCain nominates his visibly embarrassed wife, Cindy, to partake in the bikers' 2008 Sturgis, ND Miss Buffalo Chip Beauty Contest, where contestants wear tiny bikinis, maybe take them off or get them wet, and must lick/suck pickles while the audience fantasizes they're...

"Cindy McCain as Miss Buffalo Chip?" by Kate Phillips, *New York Times*

Aug. 5, 2008, (<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/cindy-mccain-as-miss-buffalo-chip/>)

(Sturgis, ND) John McCain nominates his visibly embarrassed wife, Cindy, to partake in the bikers' Miss Buffalo Chip Beauty Contest, where contestants must wear tiny bikinis, maybe take them off or get them wet, and eat bananas, pretending they're big penises.

AND, MCCAIN HAS TO DO THIS READING FROM A PREPARED SCRIPT!!!! Ya, this is the fool we need in the White House. OMG!

Video #1 (Go, Cindy!): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjtQGAtbe04>.

Video #2 (McCain pardoned): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNI_oDEQ4gk.

TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

McCain opposed more offshore drilling for oil (the right position, if you ask me) until just after he received a big campaign contribution from big oil in June. Then he flip-flopped. Gee, sure glad this politician can't be bought! Now, can he remember who bought him? LOL!

20080806-01	20:56	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/06/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

After spending the last 2-3 days sarcastically mocking Obama's sensible suggestion to save fuel by properly inflating tires as if it were Obama's only energy proposal when, in reality, it was only one of many, McCain today decided that, well ya, it IS a good idea to make sure your tires are properly inflated and started handing out tire gauges in a serious, rather than in a sarcastic way. Gee, glad you thought of it, Johnny Boy!

This total misrepresentation of the truth that McCain has been engaging in is the kind of lying I think we're all sick to death of in American politics.

20080806-02	21:06	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/06/08—Bonus
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TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

McCain says he likes Paris Hilton's response "ad" to his despicable, green-with-envy attack ad of Obama in Europe spliced with views of Paris Hilton, Britney Spears, and three huge phallic symbols (so subtle, Johnny Boy!). Just another "uppity" black man, huh? You sure hated that 250,000 people crowd in Berlin, when you usually draw about 200 max., huh, Johnny?

The problem is, cute clever little Paris absolutely skewers McCain in the video "ad", but McCain doesn't seem to get it. LOL

20080807-01	19:31	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/07/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Actually...there wasn't one that I know of, though I'd be willing to bet that Cindy and/or McCain's senior staffers know of at least one, but they ain't tellin'!

Today, either McCain spoke at some event where only the usual 5 or 6 people showed up or Hillary shoved him below the radar of the "liberal news media." Obama was all over the place, and there were Hillary and Bill again, making fools of themselves, as usual. A convention floor fight? Ya, right!

Maybe with Obama on vacation, McCain will be able to get a little news coverage for his outlandish lies, total reversals of principle, outright meanness, and witty slip-ups, gaffs, mistakes, and...uh..."senior moments".

Except...oops...there will be the Olympics to compete against. Sorry, Johnny Boy.

20080808-01	18:12	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/08/08; "John McCain: Profile in Courage? Older Than God?"
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Well, folks, today McCain was pushed totally out of the news by the Olympics and the John Edwards Affair Debacle. The latter is a subject near and dear to Johnny Boy's heart, of course.

One Senile Moment that I have previously missed in these missives was the concocting of the McCain attack ad in which a bunch of prominent Democrats are taped saying nice things about Johnny Boy. It turns out that these videos were all years old and these Democrats were speaking of the previous incarnation of John McCain, which has now been completely repudiated by the new and improved John McCain. Whew! Obama was easily able to quickly put together a rebuttal attack ad containing more recent quotes from all the same Democrats making comments highly critical of the current incarnation of John McCain. What Johnny Boy expected to gain by all this, except to alienate his base, is anybody's guess.

Great news video on McCain's buddy, "W":

http://www.theonion.com/content/video/bush_tours_america_to_survey.

"John McCain: Profile in Courage? Older Than God?" from The Onion

July 17, 2008, (<http://www.rantsnreviews.com/tag/john-mccain/page/6/>)

Thoughts on Torture: Doesn't support stuff he couldn't handle.

Saturday Night Live Appearance: Solid.

Where He'd Be If Not Running for President: Dead.

Awards: Distinguished Flying Cross (Vietnam War); Silver Star (World War II); Bronze Star (Crimean War).

Inspiring Example: Co-sponsored a campaign finance act with Democrat Russ Feingold, the aim of which is to leave every campaigner as broke as McCain and Feingold.

Key Issues:

Health Care: Supports universal health care for all current and former POWs.

Iraq War: "The United States should no longer act as the world's police but instead as the world's stripper, dressed as the police."

Abortion: Would strongly oppose any legislation that would allow fetuses to be removed from the womb, fed only watery rice porridge, and physically and mentally tortured for months on end.

Immigration: Supports a path to legalization because Latinos are one of the few ethnic groups that don't appear in the senator's recurring nightmares.

Economy: "Once we win this ideological war on radical Islamic extremism which will rage for thousands of years, then we will concentrate on the economy."

Climate: Is against any kind of change at all.

Pakistan/Iran: Will not meet with leaders of unfriendly states, unless it's to give them a head's up that the United States is about to bomb them.

20080808-02	20:00	SteveB	"McCain Madness"
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From a fellow Republican...

"McCain Madness" by Chuck Baldwin, *Wall Street Journal*

Feb. 8, 2008, (<http://www.libertylounge.net/forums/27009-mccain-madness-article-chuck-baldwin.html>)

A few weeks before Super Tuesday, my friend Howard Phillips asked me who I thought the Republican Presidential nominee would be. I predicted John McCain. With the results of Super Tuesday now history, most political pundits are also predicting that the Arizona senator will gain the Republican nomination for President. And with Mitt Romney now out of the race, McCain is all but assured the nomination. One did not need to be a seer to figure this one out.

For one thing, President George W. Bush all but destroyed whatever conservative influence was left in the GOP. Peggy Noonan is right about that.

Furthermore, the capitulation and compromise of principle by the Religious Right has also significantly sealed the death warrant of conservatism within the GOP. For the sake of not offending George Bush or losing whatever seat at the table the various leaders of the Religious Right felt they had, their spirit of resistance waned to the point that the very name "Christian Conservative" has lost all meaning, not to mention power.

As a result, Republicans have come to accept Big Government, runaway federal spending, the Welfare State, the Warfare State, the Nanny State, empire-building, gargantuan trade and budget deficits, warrantless eavesdropping, the loss of 4th Amendment rights, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. Therefore, how could anyone expect the vast majority of Republican voters to suddenly rediscover a huge commitment of conviction to conservative principles?

Add to that question the fact that there is only one true conservative/constitutionalist who made it to the Republican primaries: Congressman Ron Paul. And virtually the entire media and political establishment pummeled Congressman Paul to the point that his limited success in the race can be categorized as nothing short of miraculous.

Make no mistake about it: the establishment wants one of its own to succeed George Bush. In order for that to happen, they must manipulate the primaries to ensure that, no matter who wins in November, one of their fellow elitists will still wield power in Washington, D.C. On the Democratic side, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama fit the bill. And on the Republican side, John McCain is the ultimate insider. A long-standing member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), John McCain will pursue the goals and ambitions of the globalists with a vengeance. As Pat Buchanan said recently, "John McCain will make Dick Cheney look like Gandhi." Buchanan is right on with that prediction.

Despite a liberal, Big Government track record, many Republican "conservatives" who have always been critical of John McCain are already beginning to warm up to him, feeling that his nomination is inevitable. Include in this list such notables as Grover Norquist, Tony Perkins, and fellow CFR member Richard Land.

Fortunately, not all of the conservative "talking heads" have jumped on the McCain bandwagon. Include in this list: Ann Coulter, who said she would campaign for Hillary Clinton if McCain is the Republican nominee; James Dobson, who said he would never vote for John McCain—no matter what; and Mr. Republican Cheerleader himself, Rush Limbaugh.

Then there is Mike Huckabee: the candidate to whom the evangelical George Bush robots have gravitated. Huckabee is every bit the Big Government liberal that is John McCain. In fact, Huckabee and McCain have developed a very close friendship, according to numerous sources. Many are even predicting that Huckabee will be McCain's running mate, in order to dupe evangelicals into accepting the McCain candidacy. (I have been saying this myself for months.) Even Rob Schenck said this about Huckabee: "After careful and prayerful consideration, I have concluded that an evangelical vote for Mike Huckabee is a vote for John McCain, and a vote for John McCain will be a disaster for this country."

But just who is this man, John McCain?

John McCain's father and grandfather were both admirals in the U.S. Navy. John was schooled in one of the most elite boarding schools in America. He graduated from the Naval Academy where he ranked 894th out of 899 students.

According to Joel Skousen's World Affairs Brief, Feb. 1, 2008, "[John McCain] used nepotism to get ahead: When he was rejected by the National War College, he used his father's contacts with the Secretary of the Navy to make them reconsider." Skousen also notes that "McCain cheated on his first wife after she had a severe accident. He then divorced her and married his multi-millionaire mistress, whose daddy bought McCain a spot in the Congress."

It has also never been explained why the son and grandson of Navy admirals would not rise to the rank of Admiral himself. (He exited the Navy as a Captain.) Was it his numerous adulterous affairs or his violent temper? Or both?

John McCain's biographer Robert Timberg chronicles McCain's numerous sexual affairs with subordinates both when he was an Executive Officer and later Squadron Commander. Obviously, such fraternization is a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Skousen and many others have chronicled McCain's violent temper. Even as a young man, McCain was "a strikingly violent man." Timberg quotes McCain describing his propensity for violence, even as a youngster, saying, "At the smallest provocation I would go off into a mad frenzy, and then suddenly crash to the floor unconscious."

McCain says his vicious temper was transformed after being held as a Prisoner of War by the North Vietnamese. There is no doubt that John McCain was tortured by his Vietnamese captors, but it also seems clear, by both the written and oral records of many, that McCain spent the bulk of his captivity collaborating with his captors.

It is more than interesting that former POW John McCain would use the power of his senate seat to stop the investigation and pursuit of American MIAs in Vietnam. What would possess a former naval officer to do such a thing? In fact, a group of Vietnam veterans has uploaded a web page dedicated to exposing the truth regarding John McCain's record on this matter. See it at:

<http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnmccain.com/>.

That John McCain still has a vicious temper is well known. We can all remember him singing "Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb Iran," to the tune of the Beach Boys hit song "Barbara Ann." He also said North Korea should be threatened with "extinction." He often boasts of America's 100-year war with Iraq and talks of pursuing enemies "to the gates of hell." There is no doubt, John McCain is one mad man.

Furthermore, McCain's position on a host of issues is extremely problematic for the future of America. On immigration, John McCain joined with Ted Kennedy to sponsor an amnesty bill for illegal aliens. He voted to give social security dollars to illegal aliens. His Hispanic Outreach Director, Juan Hernandez, is a dual American-Mexican citizen widely known for his "Mexico First" declarations.

He repeatedly voted against the Bush tax cuts. He co-authored the McCain/Feingold campaign finance bill that was ruled to be an unconstitutional infringement of the First Amendment. Regarding the Second Amendment, the president of the NRA called John McCain the "worst 2nd Amendment candidate," and Gun Owners of America gives McCain a grade of F-.

John McCain co-sponsored the energy tax bill (along with his senate buddy Joe Lieberman), which would dramatically increase the cost of gasoline. He supports radical global warming legislation. He joined with Democrats (Gang of 14) to block the attempt to confirm conservative, strict constructionist judges. In 2000, he called Christian leaders "agents of intolerance." He has received the endorsement of the pro-abortion Republicans for Choice Political Action Committee. And let's not forget that John McCain was ringleader of the infamous Keating Five ethical scandal, which cost taxpayers more than \$160 billion.

Consider, too, the top donors to John McCain's campaign. One will find many of the same multinational corporations that support Democrats Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton also supporting John McCain. Include in this list Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, Lehman Brothers, and JP Morgan Chase & Co.

(By comparison, the top contributors to Ron Paul's campaign are [in order]: 1. Members of the U.S. Army, 2. Members of the U.S. Navy, 3. Members of the U.S. Air Force.) Source: <http://www.opensecrets.org/pres08/contrib.asp?id=N00005906&cycle=2008.>)

(And, in case one is interested, the same big Arkansas conglomerates that supported Bill Clinton also support Mike Huckabee.) Source: <http://www.opensecrets.org/pres08/contrib.asp?id=N00007539&cycle=2008.>)

Even *New York Post* D.C. Bureau Chief Charles Hurt wrote, "[I]f history is any guide, the McCain we've seen of late on the campaign trail is the most conservative McCain we'll ever see."

To vote for John McCain is madness!

"John McCain's Skeleton Closet" (<http://www.realchange.org/mccain.htm>)

John McCain is a maverick senator, Vietnam veteran and former prisoner of war for 5 years in North Vietnam. In 2000, he nearly beat George W. Bush by being an outspoken, even honest politician, which stunned everybody. He also is known for crafting bipartisan approaches to issues such as smoking and campaign reform.

This time around though, at 71, he apparently decided "now or never" and seems to have sold his soul, suddenly adopting a bunch of boilerplate conservative positions he was brave enough to resist 8 years ago. Now, conveniently, he's even claiming to be a Baptist instead of an Episcopalian.

It didn't look like anyone was buying it for a while there, but dang if he hasn't come back and pretty much sewed up the Republican nomination. McCain went from front runner to 3rd or 4th in various polls, spent all of his huge pile of cash and lost most of his staff, and worked his way back into a dominant position.

That New Time Religion

John McCain grew up Episcopalian. He went to an Episcopalian high school. For at least 15 years, he has been listed as an Episcopalian in authoritative directories such as the Almanac of American Politics and Congressional Quarterly's Politics in America 2008. He told a reporter from McClatchy News Service in June 2007, that he was an Episcopalian.

Suddenly, in Sept., 2007, he's campaigning in South Carolina, the heavily Baptist state where George W. Bush barely managed to stop McCain's presidential campaign 8 years ago. And guess what? McCain tells a reporter "By the way, I'm not Episcopalian. I'm Baptist."

When pressed, he said he's attended the North Phoenix Baptist Church in Arizona for more than 15 years, though he has never been baptized in that church. Now see, that's exactly the problem. Baptism is kind of a big thing in the Baptist Church. (That's how they got the name.) No baptism, not Baptist.

Anyway, details aside, this is one very clear indication of how McCain has changed. Now, he's just another hungry politician, happy to pander if it helps him win. Which eliminates the very reason people were excited about him in 2000—his honesty.

Founding Member of the Keating Five

Back in the old days, defendants in famous trials got numbers—the Chicago Eight, the Gang of Four, the Dave Clark Five, the Daytona 500. McCain was one of the "Keating Five," congressmen investigated on ethics charges for strenuously helping convicted racketeer Charles Keating after he gave them large campaign contributions and vacation trips.

Charles Keating was convicted of racketeering and fraud in both state and federal court after his Lincoln Savings & Loan collapsed, costing the taxpayers \$3.4 billion. His convictions were overturned on technicalities; for example, the federal conviction was overturned because jurors had heard about his state conviction, and his state charges because Judge Lance Ito (yes, that judge) screwed up jury instructions. Neither court cleared him, and he faces new trials in both courts.)

Though he was not convicted of anything, McCain intervened on behalf of Charles Keating after Keating gave McCain at least \$112,00 in contributions. In the mid-1980s, McCain made at least 9 trips on Keating's airplanes, and 3 of those were to Keating's luxurious retreat in the Bahamas. McCain's wife and father-in-law also were the largest investors (at \$350,000) in a Keating shopping center; the Phoenix New Times called it a "sweetheart deal."

Mafia ties

In 1995, McCain sent birthday regards, and regrets for not attending, to Joseph "Joe Bananas" Bonano, the head of the New York Bonano crime family, who had retired to Arizona. Another politician to send regrets was Governor Fife Symington, who has since been kicked out of office and convicted of 7 felonies relating to fraud and extortion.

Family Problems

McCain has a reputation as a politician who has difficulty keeping his pants zipped, according to Republican sources. He acknowledges that his adultery broke up his first marriage. His second wife Cindy, the daughter of a wealthy Budweiser beer distributor, was addicted to prescription narcotics and even stole hard drugs from a medical charity that she ran. McCain acknowledges that she didn't want him to run, and only agreed once he promised that she doesn't have to go to New Hampshire or Iowa.

Quotes:

Leonardo DiCaprio is "an androgynous wimp."—McCain.

"The thought of [McCain] being president sends a cold chill down my spine. He is erratic. He is hotheaded. He loses his temper and he worries me."—Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi, who has known McCain for 35 years.

Sources:

"McCain Says He's Been Baptist For Years", by Bruce Smith, The Associated Press, Sept. 12, 2007

"Candidates invite questions about their faith", by Stephen Dinan, *Washington Times*, Sept. 18, 2007

"The Pampered Politician", by Amy Silverman, *Phoenix New Times*, May 15, 1997

"See John Run Off at the Mouth", *Phoenix New Times*, Oct. 1, 1998

"Opiate for the Mrs.", *Phoenix New Times*, Sept. 8, 1994

"Flashes: What's Up, Murdoch?", *Phoenix New Times*, Sept. 17, 1998, the U.S. Veteran's Dispatch web site.

"Symington Gets Slammer", *Phoenix New Times*, Feb. 2, 1998

Election 98: Arizona Governor, Fox News web site, 1998 coverage (no longer on web)

"Keating Gets New Trial", CNNfn Web Site, Dec. 2, 1996

"No More Wagging,", (editorial) by Maureen Dowd, *The New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1999

"John McCain, rock-and-roll dad", by Andrew Essex, *The New Yorker Magazine*, Dec. 6, 1999 p52

"Unmasking Darth McCain", by William Cleeland, *The Daily Illini*, Mar. 9, 2001

"Famed McCain Temper is Tamed", By Michael Kranish, *Boston Globe*, Jan. 27, 2008

20080810-02 16:03 SteveB "John McCain and Adultery"

It's not just John Edwards.

Just to set the record straight about what a rat this guy is. He is no "hero"! Vicki Iseman wasn't the first, and she won't be the last. Shocking details of John McCain's history. How could the Republican party choose an adulterer to represent them after the way they ripped Bill Clinton apart for the same thing?

"John McCain and Adultery" by Jake Morphonios, The Liberty Tree

Feb. 28, 2008, (<http://www.nolanchart.com/article2957-ron-paul-john-mccain-and-adultery.html>)

In 1965 John McCain, a member of the U.S. Navy, married an attractive model named Carol Shepp. In 1967 McCain was sent to Vietnam. It didn't take long before McCain was shot down and taken prisoner.

Carol waited faithfully for McCain during his imprisonment. In 1969, Carol was in a terrible car crash. She was thrown through the windshield and suffered serious injuries. But Carol would not allow her POW husband to be notified of what had happened to her because she didn't want him to feel any additional stress. She stood by her man, alone, for the 5 years he was in prison. [Gee, what a "war hero", Johnny Boy!]

McCain was released in 1973 and returned home to find that Carol's accident had "left her 4 inches shorter and on crutches, and she had gained a good deal of weight." McCain no longer had a trophy wife he could feel proud of.

By the late 70's McCain had engaged in adulterous behaviors, as chronicled in the book *The Nightingale's Song* by Robert Timberg. Timberg wrote:

Off duty, usually on routine cross-country flights to Yuma and El Centro, John started carousing and running around with women. To make matters worse, some of the women with whom he was linked by rumor were subordinates. At the time the rumors were so widespread that, true or not, they became part of McCain's persona, impossible not to take note of.

In 1979 John McCain met Cindy Lou Hensley at a military reception in Hawaii.¹ Cindy was a millionaire and very attractive. McCain was eighteen years older than the wealthy Hensley, but that didn't stop him from developing an adulterous relationship with her.²

McCain says of their first meeting, "She was lovely, intelligent and charming, 18 years my junior but poised and confident. I monopolized her attention the entire time, taking care to prevent anyone else from intruding on our conversation. When it came time to leave the party, I persuaded her to join me for drinks at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. By the evening's end, I was in love."

Knowing that Cindy's father had extensive business and political contacts³, McCain decided to abandon his first wife and marry Cindy. McCain divorced⁴ Carol in Apr., 1980 and immediately married Cindy the next month, May 17th. With the Hensley fortune and connections, McCain ran for Congress in 1982. He craved power and has been on a course to secure ultimate control ever since.

A man that cannot be faithful to a loving, self-sacrificing wife cannot be trusted to be faithful to the American people. Bill Clinton taught us that. This week the New York Times reported that during his previous Presidential run in 2000, McCain may have had an inappropriate relationship with the young and lovely lobbyist, Vicki Iseman. The public, not knowing McCain's history of adultery, responded to the NY Times as if they had to be making the story up. NOW what do you think?

Images are all over the internet of Cindy McCain standing at her husband's side as he denied reports of committing adultery with yet another young influential woman.

I wonder what Cindy was thinking.

¹Dan Nowicki, Bill Muller. "John McCain Report: Arizona, the early years", *The Arizona Republic*, 2007-03-01. Retrieved on 2007-11-21.

²Nancy Collins. "Cindy McCain: Myth vs. Reality", *Harpers Bazaar*, July 2007. Retrieved on 2008-01-11.

³Nicholas Kristof. "P.O.W. to Power Broker, A Chapter Most Telling", *The New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2000. Retrieved on 2007-04-22.

⁴<http://www.usvetdsp.com/mcaindiv.htm>

20080810-03	16:18	SteveB	"Is John McCain Stupid?"
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"Is John McCain Stupid?" by Daniel Henninger, *The Wall Street Journal*

July 31, 2008, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121745962594698731.html>)
(http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=103x373935)

Is John McCain losing it?

On Sunday, he said on national television that to solve Social Security "everything's on the table," which of course means raising payroll taxes. On July 7 in Denver he said: "Senator Obama will raise your taxes. I won't."

This isn't a flip-flop. It's a sex-change operation.

He got back to the subject Tuesday in Reno, Nev. Reporters asked about the Sunday tax comments. Mr. McCain replied, "The worst thing you could do is raise people's payroll taxes, my God!" Then he was asked about working with Democrats to fix Social Security, and he repeated, "everything has to be on the table." But how can? Oh never mind.

Yesterday he was in Aurora, Colo., to wit: "On Social Security, he [Sen. Obama] wants to raise Social Security taxes. I am opposed to raising taxes on Social Security. I want to fix the system without raising taxes."

What I'm asking is, does John McCain have the mental focus, the intellectual discipline, to avoid being out-slicked by Barack Obama, if he isn't abandoned by his own voters?

It's not just taxes. Recently the subject came up of Al Gore's assertion that the U.S. could get its energy solely from renewables in 10 years. Sen. McCain said: "If the vice president says it's doable, I believe it's doable." What!?!? In a later interview, Mr. McCain said he hadn't read "all the specifics" of the Gore plan and now, "I don't think it's doable without nuclear power." It just sounds loopy.

Then this week in San Francisco, in an interview with the Chronicle, Sen. McCain called Nancy Pelosi an "inspiration to millions of Americans."

Notwithstanding his promises to "work with the other side," this is a politically obtuse thing to say in the middle of a campaign. Would Bill Clinton, running for president in 1996 after losing control of the House, have called Newt Gingrich an "inspiration"? House Minority Leader John Boehner, facing a 10-to-20 seat loss in November, must be gagging.

The one thing—arguably the only thing—the McCain candidacy has going for it is a sense among voters that they don't know what Barack Obama stands for or believes. Why then would Mr. McCain give voters reason to wonder the same thing about himself? You're supposed to sow doubt about the other guy, not do it to yourself.

Yes, Sen. McCain must somehow appeal to independents and blue-collar Hillary Democrats. A degree of pandering to the center is inevitable. But this stuff isn't pandering; it's simply stupid. Al Gore's own climate allies separated themselves from his preposterous free-of-oil-in-10-years whopper. Sen. McCain saying off-handedly that it's "doable" is, in a word, thoughtless.

Pelosi heads a House with a 9% approval. To let her off the hook before the election reflects similar loss of thought.

The forces arrayed against Sen. McCain's candidacy are formidable: an unpopular president, the near impossibility of extending Republican White House rule for three terms, the GOP trailing in races at every level, a listless fundraising base, doubtful sentiments about the war, a flailing economy.

The generic Democratic presidential candidate should win handily. Barack Obama, though vulnerable at the margin, is a very strong candidate. This will be a turnout election. To win, Mr. McCain needs every Republican vote he can hold.

Why make it harder than it has to be? Given such statements on Social Security taxes, Al Gore and the "inspirational" Speaker Pelosi, is there a reason why Rush Limbaugh should not spend August teeing off on Mr. McCain?

Why as well shouldn't the Obama camp exploit all of this? If Sen. Obama's "inexperience" is Mr. McCain's ace in the hole, why not trump that by asking, "Does Sen. McCain know his own mind?"

In this sports-crazed country, everyone has learned a lot about what it takes to win. They've heard and seen it proven repeatedly that to achieve greatness, to win the big one, an athlete has to be ready to "put in the work."

John McCain isn't doing that, yet. He's competing as if he expects the other side to lose it for him. Sen. McCain is a famously undisciplined politician.

Someone in the McCain circle had better do some straight talking to the candidate. He's not some 19-year-old tennis player who's going to win the U.S. presidential Open on raw talent and the other guy's errors. He's not that good.

20080811-01 20:46 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/11/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

We have already heard McCain's campaign proclaim that Johnny Boy does not speak for the campaign.

Now, the *New York Times* reports that his campaign is having to hide his cell phone from him:

Mr. [Steve] Schmidt [a senior aide who is a tough former marine] has sought to cut down on Mr. McCain's use of his cell phone and limit the people who have regular access to Mr. McCain in an effort to keep him more focused, advisers said. He has been the impetus for an effort by Mr. McCain to limit sharply his engagements with reporters, the kind of freewheeling encounters that Mr. McCain enjoys—and that helped him charm the news media for years—but that often lead him to veer from his campaign's message of the day.

There are 8 a.m. calls every day in which the campaign settles on the daily message or attack. Someone in Mr. McCain's entourage—typically Nicolle Wallace, a Schmidt ally and a veteran of Mr. Bush's 2004 campaign and White House who recently joined the campaign as a traveling senior adviser—is given the responsibility of making sure Mr. McCain agrees to the message and tries to stick to it." If McCain is elected, will these people also be able to hide the button that launches all-out atomic war? I sure hope so!

TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

McCain declared that, if elected, he would not run for a second turn, guaranteeing his lame duckiness throughout his Presidency and highlighting his vast age. This position has recently been rejected in another major flip-flop, this one, at least, making a little sense. Right, Johnny Boy, just what our nation needs, an 80-year-old lying, adulterous, senile Bush-clone President.

20080812-01 20:57 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

What a simple-minded, old-old-fashioned view of the world you have, Johnny Boy. You and George W. rattling your swords, threatening Russia, and telling them what they MUST do. How Putin must be laughing his a*s off! We're already up to our ears in war, boys. How many soldiers do you have left to send to Moscow? 2 or 3? And gee, we sure wouldn't want to leave Germany undefended, right?

As a matter of fact, this incident got me thinking that, at this moment in history, if Mexico, or Cuba, or Haiti, or Canada, or, heaven forbid, Russia wanted to invade the U.S., I'm not sure we'd have enough of an Army on the job to defend ourselves thanks to you two jokers. Am I wrong? What exactly IS our U.S. homeland defense? Nukes?

And Johnny Boy, is this the unsubtle way you would handle any world crisis? As if we're just at the end of WWII not deeply into 2008? As if we are going to bluster our way through any crisis? As if the world will do anything but laugh at your empty, worthless threats? Wouldn't a slightly, dare I say, nuanced approach be more effective at times?

And Johnny Boy, isn't your top foreign policy advisor and current traveling pal, Randy Scheunemann, currently registered—still—with the U.S. Dept. of Justice as a foreign agent working on behalf of the government of Georgia? I'm sure YOU don't see this as a conflict of interest, Johnny, but I sure do. Maybe instead of going off, as usual, half-cocked, you old bastard, you should do a little research and learn how the U.S. at least partly provoked this little war, and how Russia—though partly or even largely wrong—may have a valid point in what they've done. You talk about Georgia being a democracy as if WE have to defend it? What is Russia?

But, of course, if you still think the Cold War never ended, or that we have so much might that we can threaten Russia in their own back yard, or if you think that oil pipeline is so important, maybe it's time to break out those nukes, Johnny Boy.

20080812-02 21:46 SteveM Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveB,

I thought you were an American?

20080813-01 08:29 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveM,

That is your first truly ridiculous comment. What a page from the ugly-Republican playbook...when all else fails, question their patriotism.

20080813-02 08:54 SteveM Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveB,

DO you hear yourself when you speak/write this last piece of drivel. IT's f*cking UGLY The f*cking Russians are rolling over a democracy, and you belittle McCain for standing up to the Russians and with the oppressed, instead of putting aside your petty differences with him and standing with him in defiance! As the Georgians call for our help!

It's not your patriotism I question. [That's why you said, "I thought you were an American?" —SteveB]

20080813-03 09:09 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveM,

My point is that W has made it impossible for us to have any real influence in the world. All these two idiots can do is posture and throw out empty threats and orders that everyone in the world is laughing at. This is not how America should be. We need big, big change. Can McCain provide it? LOL

By the way, Russia is a democracy too, the last time I looked. Do you have all the inside information so that you know definitively that Russia was not provoked into having to defend their peacekeepers in S. Whatchamacallit? If that were to be the case (like Iraq had no WMD's), that would make the U.S. look even more stupid, wouldn't it, my friend? But I wouldn't expect McCain to show any reasonable restraint and not go off half-cocked before he can even know all the facts. He can just issue empty orders to Russia, proving he has no executive experience whatsoever, let alone any "expertise" in foreign affairs.

What a joke this man is!

20080813-04 09:39 SteveM Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveB,

With regard to Russia you are wrong, because you don't have all the information to make those statements below.

And it is difficult to take serious the latest hate filled, vitriol laced attacks on McCain that have nothing to do with policy and the impact of a possible partisan Congress, Senate and an Executive branch. Headed by an man whose meager

'record' of service shows he's NEVER reached across the aisle to work with the loyal opposition. Pelosi and Reed's behavior belies what is to come as they become emboldened.

Simply put this election has little to do with Mac or BHO and more about checks and balances. Change just for change sake is not good. And unless one is a drug addict/Alcoholic, DRASTIC change has NEVER work out for the best.

Pull the wool from your eyes and look at the big picture.

I'm going to the gym (It's actually the back room, LOL)

20080813-05 12:00 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08

Dear SteveM,

The problem is...checks and balances don't apply because McCain is absolutely unfit to be President. He totally lacks executive experience. He is stupid and senile. He is hot-tempered, dishonest, disloyal, corrupt, wishy-washy, mean, and an adulterer. History proves these things. Period. These are not qualities we want in a President and, beside them, party affiliation means nothing.

But I don't blame you for being afraid of the awful defeat the national Republicans are going to suffer in November because of their arrogant renunciation of the principles of the party and Bush's utter stupidity.

As to Russia-Georgia, I don't have any inside information either. I just know that the manner of Bush-McCain is wrong and not something that I personally want to see from our "leaders". It only makes matters worse. We should be strong, but not just straw dogs like Bush has made us. And the experts seem to think the jury is still out as to how justified this war is. How justified was Iraq, and that's right in Russia's backyard, not ours? I don't think it's right if Russia starts ordering us around either. McCain is so obviously a hot-headed fool who will do nothing but make everything worse for our country. If you want to balance the power, try to help the Republicans gain back control of the Congress. LOL

20080813-06 12:24 Dennis Fw: Lee Iacocca: Throw the Bums Out!

The following is by Lee Iacocca, the man who rescued Chrysler Corporation from its death throes. He's now 82 years old and has a new book, and here are some excerpts:

from Lee Iacocca:

'Am I the only guy in this country who's fed up with what's happening? Where the hell is our outrage? We should be screaming bloody murder. We've got a gang of clueless bozos steering our ship of state right over a cliff, we've got corporate gangsters stealing us blind, and we can't even clean up after a hurricane much less build a hybrid car. But instead of getting mad, everyone sits around and nods their heads when the politicians say, 'Stay the course.'

Stay the course? You've got to be kidding. This is America , not the damned 'Titanic'. I'll give you a sound bite: **'Throw all the bums out!'**

You might think I'm getting senile, that I've gone off my rocker, and maybe I have. But someone has to speak up. I hardly recognize this country anymore.

The most famous business leaders are not the innovators but the guys in handcuffs. While we're fiddling in Iraq , the Middle East is burning and nobody seems to know what to do. And the press is waving 'pom-poms' instead of asking hard questions. That's not the promise of the ' America ' my parents and yours traveled across the ocean for.

I'll go a step further. You can't call yourself a patriot if you're not outraged . This is a fight I'm ready and willing to have. The Biggest 'C' is Crisis ! (Iacocca elaborates on nine C's of leadership, crisis being the first)

Leaders are made, not born. Leadership is forged in times of crisis. It's easy to sit there with your feet up on the desk and talk theory. Or send someone else's kids off to war when you've never seen a battlefield yourself. It's another thing to lead when your world comes tumbling down.

On Sept. 11, 2001, we needed a strong leader more than any other time in our history. We needed a steady hand to guide us out of the ashes. A Hell of a Mess! So here's where we stand. We're immersed in a bloody war with no plan for winning and no plan for leaving. We're running the biggest deficit in the history of the country. We're losing the manufacturing edge to Asia, while our once-great companies are getting slaughtered by health care costs. Gas prices are skyrocketing, and nobody in power has a coherent energy policy. Our schools are in trouble. Our borders are like sieves. The middle class is being squeezed every which way. These are times that cry out for leadership. But when you look around, you've got to ask:

'Where have all the leaders gone?' Where are the curious, creative communicators? Where are the people of character, courage, conviction, omnipotence, and common sense? I may be a sucker for alliteration, but I think you get the point. Name me a leader who has a better idea for homeland security than making us take off our shoes in airports and throw away our shampoo? We've spent billions of dollars building a huge new bureaucracy, and all we know how to do is react to things that have already happened.

Name me one leader who emerged from the crisis of Hurricane Katrina. Congress has yet to spend a single day evaluating the response to the hurricane, or demanding accountability for the decisions that were made in the crucial hours after the storm.

Everyone's hunkering down, fingers crossed, hoping it doesn't happen again. Now, that's just crazy. Storms happen. Deal with it. Make a plan . Figure out what you're going to do the next time.

Name me an industry leader who is thinking creatively about how we can restore our competitive edge in manufacturing. Who would have believed that there could ever be a time when 'The Big Three' referred to Japanese car companies? How did this happen, and more important, what are we going to do about it?

Name me a government leader who can articulate a plan for paying down the debt, or solving the energy crisis, or managing the health care problem. The silence is deafening. But these are the crises that are eating away at our country and milking the middle class dry.

I have news for the gang in Congress. We didn't elect you to sit on your a*s and do nothing and remain silent while our democracy is being hijacked and our greatness is being replaced with mediocrity. What is everybody so afraid of? That some bonehead on Fox News will call them a name? Give me a break. Why don't you! guys show some spine for a change?

Had Enough? Hey, I'm not trying to be the voice of gloom and doom here. I'm trying to light a fire. I'm speaking out because I have hope. I believe in America. In my lifetime I've had the privilege of living through some of America 's greatest moments. I've also experienced some of our worst crises: the 'Great Depression', 'World War II', the 'Korean War', the 'Kennedy Assassination', the 'Vietnam War', the 1970s oil crisis, and the struggles of recent years culminating with 9/11.

If I've learned one thing, it's this: 'You don't get anywhere by standing on the sidelines waiting for somebody else to take action. Whether it's building a better car or building a better future for our children, we all have a role to play. That's the challenge I'm raising in this book. It's a call to 'Action' for people who, like me, believe in America. It's not too late, but it's getting pretty close. So let's shake off the cr*p and go to work. Let's tell 'em all we've had enough.'

20080813-07

13:23

SteveB

Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/12/08; "Rice Told Georgia to Avoid Conflict with Russia"

Dear SteveM,

I told you it was a little more complicated than it first appeared.

"Rice Told Georgia to Avoid Conflict with Russia" AFP

Aug. 13, 2008, (http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5izFv2gnxpm_UCyh8eOXcJKXZwRuw)

(WASHINGTON) U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice privately warned Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili to avoid a conflict with Russia during her trip to Tbilisi in July, The *New York Times* reported Wednesday.

"She told him, in no uncertain terms, that he had to put a non-use of force pledge on the table," an unnamed senior U.S. official who accompanied Rice on the trip told the newspaper.

The message was delivered during a private dinner on July 9, the report added.

Publicly, however, during the trip Rice blamed Russia as a source of continuing unrest in the country. Russia "needs to be a part of resolving the problem and solving the problems and not contributing to it," she said at a July 10 joint press conference with Saakashvili.

Rice's July visit to Georgia came amid increased diplomatic confrontation between the Washington and Moscow over Georgia's desire to join NATO, as well as the status of the separatist provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Despite the public bravado, top U.S. officials warned the Georgians not to allow the conflict to escalate through until hours before Georgia launched its attack, the newspaper reported.

The top U.S. envoy for the region, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried, received a phone call from Georgia's foreign minister on Thursday saying their country was under attack, the report stated.

"We told them they had to keep their unilateral cease-fire," the unnamed official told the newspaper. "We said, be smart about this, don't go in and don't fall for the Russian provocation. Do not do this'."

Saakashvili did not inform Washington ahead of the offensive, senior U.S. officials told the newspaper. "The Georgians figured it was better to ask forgiveness later, but not ask for permission first," an administration official told the newspaper. "It was a decision on their part. They knew we would say no."

20080813-08	13:39	SteveM	Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)
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Dear SteveB,

Did you not get the memo a month ago about the secret mission to remove WMD's?

[Yellow cake uranium is not a WMD. —SteveB]

Even the liberal media reported it just now on TV with a F*CKING apology!!!! And Pelosi and Reed have shut the f*ck up about it too!

What am I going to have to do? Pump light in to your spider hole too!

1. U.S. removes 'yellowcake' from Iraq—Conflict in Iraqmsnbc.com. Jul 5, 2008 ... Secret U.S. mission hauls uranium from Iraq. Last major stockpile ...The removal of 550 metric tons of "yellowcake"—the seed material for ...www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25546334/.
2. FOXNews.com—Report: Uranium Stockpile Removed From Iraq in ... Jul 5, 2008 ... Report: Uranium Stockpile Removed From Iraq in Secret U.S. Mission, The last ... The yellowcake was the last major stockpile from Saddam's... www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,376747,00.html.
3. Uranium removed from Iraq nuclear site—International Herald Tribune Jul 7, 2008 ... The yellowcake removed from Iraq—which was not the same yellowcake that ... The U.S. military has begun withdrawing the last of the extra... www.ihf.com/articles/2008/07/07/mideast/iraq.php.

4. LiveLeak.com—550 METRIC TONS of YELLOWCAKE Removed from Iraq Jul 5, 2008 ... 550 METRIC TONS of YELLOWCAKE Removed from Iraq. AP Exclusive: U.S. removes uranium from Iraq By BRIAN MURPHY The last major remnant of Saddam ... www.liveleak.com/view?i=398_1215296975.

5. U.S. Secretly Takes Yellowcake From Iraq, A Huge Stockpile Of ... Jul 5, 2008 ... A huge stockpile of natural uranium, the last major remnant of ... The yellowcake wasn't the only dangerous item removed from Tuwaitha. ... www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/07/05/world/main4235028.shtml.

20080813-09	17:53	SteveM	Fw: The Obama Tidal Wave
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[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says some truth, much malarkey. <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/billbrown.asp>.—SteveB]

The Obama Tidal Wave

We are witnessing a political phenomenon with Barack Obama of rare Magnitude. His speeches have inspired millions and yet most of his followers Have no idea of what he stands for except platitudes of 'Change' or That he says he will be a 'Uniter'. The power of speech from a charismatic person truly can be a Powerful thing. Certainly Billy Graham had charisma and both his manner of Speech and particularly the content changed millions. On the extreme other hand, the charisma of Adolph Hitler inspired Millions and the results were catastrophic. Barack Obama certainly is no Hitler or a Billy Graham, but for many Americans out there feeling just like a surfer who might be ecstatic and Euphoric while riding a tidal wave, the real story is what happens when it hits Shore.

Just Some of What Defines Barack Obama:

1. He voted against banning partial birth abortion. [Amen! —SteveB]
2. He voted no on notifying parents of minors who get out-of-state Abortions. [Amen! —SteveB]
3. Supports affirmative action in Colleges and Government. [OK, no big deal, simply a continuation of the status quo. —SteveB]
4. In 2001 he questioned harsh penalties for drug dealing. [Amen! —SteveB]
5. Says he will deal with street level drug dealing as minimum wage Affair. [Amen! —SteveB]
6. Admitted marijuana and cocaine use in high school and in College. [Amen! Amen! —SteveB]
7. His religious convictions are very murky. [And McCain's and yours aren't? —SteveB]
8. He is willing to meet with Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, Kim Jung Il And Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Amen!
9. Has said that one of his first goals after being elected would be To have a conference with all Muslim nations. Amen!
10. Opposed the Patriot Act.. [Amen! Amen! It is an invasion of our Constitutional rights! —SteveB]
11. First bill he signed that was passed was campaign finance reform. [Amen! Amen! —SteveB]
12. Voted No on prohibiting law suits against gun manufacturers. [Amen! Amen! Amen! —SteveB]
13. Supports universal health-care. [Amen! Amen! Amen! —SteveB]
14. Voted yes on providing habeas corpus for Guantanamo detainees. [So what? Big deal! —SteveB]
15. Supports granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. [I'll talk to him about this one, but so did McCain! —SteveB]

16. Supports extending welfare to illegal immigrants. [I'll talk to him about this one, but so did McCain! —SteveB]
17. Voted yes on comprehensive immigration reform. [I'll talk to him about this one, but so did McCain! —SteveB]
18. Voted yes on allowing illegal aliens to participate in Social Security. [I'll talk to him about this one, but so did McCain! —SteveB]
19. Wants to make the minimum wage a 'living wage'. [Amen! —SteveB]
20. Voted with Democratic Party 96 percent of 251 votes. [So the Republicans are better? —SteveB]
21. Is a big believer in the separation of church and state. [So am I!!!!!! F*ck "the church"! So were the founding fathers! —SteveB]
22. Opposed to any efforts to Privatize Social Security and instead Supports increasing the amount of tax paid. [I'm OK with that for now...we need big reform here. —SteveB]
23. He voted No on repealing the Alternative Minimum Tax. [Big deal! —SteveB]
24. He voted No on repealing the 'Death' Tax. [I'll talk to him about this one, but so did McCain! —SteveB]
25. He wants to raise the Capital Gains Tax. [I'll talk to him about this one! —SteveB]
26. Has repeatedly said the surge in Iraq has not succeeded.... [Who knows? —SteveB]
27. He is ranked as the most liberal Senator in the Senate today and That takes some doing. [Ha! He is truly not more liberal than Hillary. —SteveB]

If your political choices are consistent with Barack Obama's and you think that his positions will bring America together or make it a better Place, then you will probably enjoy the ride and not forward this Email.

If you Are like most Americans that after examining what he stands for, are truly not In line with his record, it would be prudent to get off the wave or better yet, Never get on, before it comes on shore and undermines the very foundations of This great Country.

We have limited time to save America or the Supreme Court As we know it.

Inaction is action. If you agree this is important, pass it on. The mainstream media Will not do it for you!

Bill Brown, MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOURS.

20080813-10 21:20 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/13/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Senator John McCain: "In the 21st century, nations don't invade other nations." Excuse me, Johnny Boy, while I pickup my a*s from the floor which I just laughed off. I guess it's too much to expect someone of your advanced years to remember, say...IRAQ!

And it appears more and more likely today that it could have been at least partly Johnny Boy's technically illegal foreign policy meddlings which helped cause this little war. After all, he is not the President (thank God!) or the State Department and, therefore, has no legal right to conduct American foreign policy. Yet McCain's conversations with Georgia's president and McCain's buddy-buddy with their bought-and-sold lobbyist/agent, Randy Scheunemann, seem to have helped lead the Geogian leader to think that he could attack Russia and that maybe we would come to their aid or that maybe Russia would be afraid of the U.S. and not retaliate.

Hence, McCain recently going off like a rocket and talking as if he were the President on this matter, further deepening the crisis—speaking as if he speaks for the people and government of the U.S. Anything to cover-up his culpability. And

this, just after accusing Obama of trying to act too "Presidential" in Europe. Does the nerve and stupidity of this a*s-hole know no end? So much for your foreign policy "expertise", Johnny Boy!

20080814-01	10:19	H. Dean	Fw A Book of Lies—your action urgently needed
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Dear SteveB:

This morning our team here sent this email to a group of dedicated supporters, but I'm sending it to everyone I know.

In 2004, the media let right-wing crackpots like Jerome Corsi spread lies about John Kerry. Now Corsi is publishing another hit piece attacking Barack Obama.

This year I'm drawing the line—we're not going to let Corsi and the Republicans get away with it again.

Scroll down to check out Corsi's track record of ideologically driven lies and conspiracy theories, then sign up for the DNC Rapid Response Team and help keep these dirty tricks from ruining another election:

<http://www.democrats.org/rapidresponse>.

I hope you'll forward this email to everyone you know, too.

Thanks, Howard Dean

from DNC Rapid Response Team

Friend:

One of the most vile smear peddlers of the 2004 election has found a new target.

Jerome Corsi just published a new book full of rehashed distortions and the same old lies about Barack Obama, and the right-wing noise machine is in full gear promoting it.

In 2004, Corsi helped launch the Swift Boat smear campaign with a book of distortions and lies he wrote about John Kerry. Corsi was so extreme in his misrepresentations that even other Swift Boat attackers tried to distance themselves from him.

We cannot afford to let Corsi get away with the same dirty tricks that fooled so many people in 2004. We can't rely on the media to hold him accountable—in fact, the sheer brazenness of the lies is attracting even more coverage. The media have shown that they aren't going to stop him.

It's up to you to spread the truth, so here it is. Below you will find the facts about Corsi and his desperate fabrications. Read the latest research for yourself (it's almost unbelievable) and get this information to everyone you know who is following this election. Forward this message to your friends and family or use this online tool to get the truth out:

<http://www.democrats.org/bookoflies>.

Together we'll show Corsi, the Republicans, and John McCain that Barack Obama and the Democrats don't back down from a fight.

Thanks, DNC Rapid Response Team

The latest research on Jerome Corsi:

TOO CRAZY EVEN FOR SWIFTBOAT LIARS

Corsi Was Dropped From Unfit for Command Promotions Because of His Anti-Muslim, Anti-Catholic Comments.

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote in an editorial, "Consider the book *Unfit for Command*, put out by a collection of partisans who have now made it acceptable for veterans to attack each other's war records. The current *National Review* carries a piece decrying the bookstores that fail to carry "John O'Neill's book." This is curious in that the volume has a second author, but Jerome Corsi has dropped from the marketing because he has been revealed as the author of religiously bigoted remarks published on a Web site. Corsi not only considers Muslims to be pederasts, but he took the trouble to slam Catholic priests and refers to the pope as senile. Rather than wonder whether a book written by such a man can be trusted, the marketing tactic has shifted to pretend Corsi doesn't exist." [*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Pennsylvania), 9/19/04]

O'Neill Tried to Minimize Corsi's Role in *Unfit for Command* After Bigoted Comments Came to Light.

"In a bit of historical revisionism, Swift Boat Veterans for Truth founder and *Unfit for Command* co-author John O'Neill distorted Jerome Corsi's role in co-authoring the book. O'Neill's backtracking comes on the heels of Media Matters for America's documentation of Corsi's history of posting bigoted comments. During appearances on MSNBC's Scarborough Country on Aug. 10 and CNN's Wolf Blitzer Reports on Aug. 11, O'Neill downplayed Corsi's role in writing the book. When asked about Corsi's involvement, O'Neill asserted, Corsi was "simply an editor and not really any sort of co-author." But an MMFA item entitled "Unfit book materials show Corsi more than just an 'editor,'" revealed Corsi to be much more than simply an editor of the anti- Kerry book. [Media Matters Press Release, 8/13/04]

"Anti-Kerry Book Author Apologizes for Slurs."

"One of the authors of a new anti-John Kerry book frequently posted comments on a conservative Web site describing Muslims and Catholics as pedophiles and Pope John Paul II as senile. In chat room entry last year on freerepublic.com, Corsi writes: 'Islam is a peaceful religion—just as long as the women are beaten, the boys buggered and the infidels are killed.' In another entry, he says: 'So this is what the last days of the Catholic Church are going to look like. Bugging boys undermines the moral base and the lawyers rip the gold off the Vatican altars. We may get one more Pope, when this senile one dies, but that's probably about it.'" [AP, 8/10/04]

ONE PARANOID BOOK OF LIES AFTER ANOTHER

Corsi Wrote a Book Saying Bush's "Globalist Agenda" Is Leading to a North American Union.

"The real reason behind President Bush's push for immigration reform, says author Jerome R. Corsi, is to unite the United States, Mexico and Canada by erasing borders and creating a "North American Union." That is the theme of Mr. Corsi's new book, "The Late Great U.S.: The Coming Merger with Mexico and Canada," which says the Bush administration's 'globalist agenda' is leading to a merger of the countries through the implementation of policies and laws to open trade barriers and renovate the highway systems in anticipation of increased travel within the new megastate. Mr. Corsi said a growing number of Americans think the North American Union is being forced onto Americans. Government officials say the idea is no more than an unjustified conspiracy theory spread through the Internet. Mr. Corsi said the impetus of the plan was the creation of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, announced by leaders of the United States, Mexico and Canada at Waco, Texas, in 2005." [Washington Times, 7/18/07]

Conservative Human Events Writer: Corsi Isn't "Any More Worthy Of Being Taken Seriously Than Those Who Think Jews Rule The World Or The 'Truthers' Who Think President Bush Is Responsible For 9/11.

"Under the headline "There Isn't Going to Be a North American Union," John Hawkins wrote, "Yesterday, Jerome Corsi was prattling on about the North American Union again after Michael Medved deservedly spanked him for spreading conspiracy theories. While I don't think Corsi is any more worthy of being taken seriously than those who think Jews rule the world or the 'Truthers' who think President Bush is responsible for 9/11, I thought I would respond to him one last time. (I think that's about the fourth time I've said that.) Now, why respond again? What's the point? Well unfortunately, a lot of conservatives consider this conspiracy theory to be so preposterous that they believe it's beneath them to even bother discussing it, and that leaves Corsi and his ilk to dominate the debate. And since there are a lot of conservatives being taken in by this North American Union nonsense, somebody has got to step up to the plate." [Human Events Online, 1/10/07]

Editor of Human Events: "I Guess There Are People Who Believe In" Corsi's North American Union Conspiracy, "But There Are People Who Believe In Bigfoot."

"Corsi plays on growing nationalist fears. He sees a scenario in which a North American Union is born and shares a currency, the "amero." Even some right-wing standard-bearers regard the fears as over-blown. Jed Babbin, editor of the conservative newspaper Human Events, says: "I guess there are people who believe in [the plan for a North American Union]. But there are people who believe in Bigfoot." [Newsweek, 12/10/07]

Corsi Wrote a Book Disagreeing With Most Scientists That There is a Limit to Oil.

"All his life, Jerome Corsi's been told that we're running out of oil. "I remember driving with my dad in a 1952 Plymouth and listening to him talk about the end of oil," says the 59-year-old New Jersey author. "Hasn't happened yet, and it's not going to happen." What makes him so sure? He doesn't buy the fossil fuel theory—that oil comes from dead plants and dinosaurs. He believes it comes out of the ground naturally, and that there's more coming up all the time...Eighteenth century Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov found biological debris in oil and concluded that it must have biological origin. "I'm at the point where the dinosaur theory seems silly," says Corsi. "You take a pile of cats and you bury them, dig them up 10 years later and you don't get oil." "The truth is that there is so much oil around the world that it's been easy to find," Corsi says. "We're awash in oil. There's more oil today in proven reserves than ever before in human history." [Western Standard (Alberta), 2/13/06]

Corsi Wrote a Book Claiming Democrats Were Being Corrupted by Iranian Funding and Helping Iranians Get Nukes.

"After their bitter campaign 2004 experience with the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, John Kerry and his fellow Dems aren't waiting to be shot at again. Yesterday, aides to Sens. Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden and Ted Kennedy jumped all over literary mugger Jerome Corsi, co-author of the Kerry-bashing best seller 'Unfit for Command.' They knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the face (metaphorically, anyway) over his next Democrat trashing tome, 'Atomic Iran: How the Terrorist Regime Bought the Bomb and American Politicians.' The book—which Nashville's Cumberland House Publishing won't release till next month—claims Democratic pols are being corrupted by Iranian money and helping the nuke-seeking mullahs in Tehran." [Daily News (New York), 2/24/05] Corsi Wrote Unfit For Command Although He Was Not a Veteran. "Though not a veteran himself, Corsi co-authored 'Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry.'" [Boston Herald, 1/25/05]

THE WRITINGS OF A PARANOID AND HATEFUL MAN

To read more of his posts, follow this link: <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/user-posts?name=jrlc>

HATRED AND INTOLERANCE TOWARD ISLAM

"Let's see exactly why it isn't the case that Islam is a worthless, dangerous Satanic religion? Where's the proof to the contrary?" "Islam is like a virus—it affects the mind—maybe even better as an analogy—it is a cancer that destroys the body it infects."

ATTACKS ON JOHN KERRY...WITH NO MILITARY BACKGROUND

"First let's undermine the U.S. in Vietnam. Then we can go for gay marriage. When you get to be Pres. JFK-lite, there will be no end to how much of America we can destroy."

"Just don't let anybody put a tablet with the Ten Commandments in front of the school where that girl wants to wear a Muslim scarf—OH, No— then the RATS would complain. Anti- Christian, Anti- American—just like their Presidential Candidate—Jean Francois Kerrie."

"After he married TerRAHsa, didn't John Kerry begin practicing Judiasm? He also has paternal grandparents that were Jewish. What religion is John Kerry?"

"Kerry has a long history of Communist supporters."

"Kerry offers a clear choice. Anti-American hatred."

"John F*cking Commie Kerry and Commie Ted discuss their plan to hand America over to our nation's enemies."

DESPICABLE WRITINGS ON ISLAM SHOW BLIND HATRED

"The only good Mullah is a dead Mullah." [12/21/01]

"Forget about democracy. Just get out the checkbook and put everybody in Iraq on the payroll. That's all they want. Pay them first, democracy (or some b.s. Islamic version of it) will follow." [6/18/03]

"Mohammed-al-Mohammed proclaiming guidance from his hate-god Allah-i'll-be-da*ned-allah kills another dozen women and children by convincing a teenager to blow him/her/self up for victory in another world. Haven't we all had enough of this stupid "religion"?" [5/17/03]

"Another Mohammed-al-Mohammed Islam religion of hate maniac bites the dust. (Top Iraqi army official surrenders)" [5/17/03]

"Certainly can't be one of the Islam is a Religion of Peace hijackers? " [Bus Hijacking Near Bremen, Germany] [4/25/03]

"One more Mohammed al-Mohammed el-Mohammed Mohammed iced—great. " [Car Bomb Kills Egyptian Islamist in Lebanon Camp] [3/1/03]

"Let them build mosques—seems about all the Germans are worth these days." (Germany's Economic Woes) [2/6/03]
"Islam—the Legacy of Clinton." (AFP: Two Chechens with belts of explosives stopped in Moscow) [12/24/02]

"Islam is like a virus—it affects the mind—maybe even better as an analogy—it is a cancer that destroys the body it infects. A throwback, Medieval, anti-modern, anti-science, anti-knowledge doctrine." [11/26/02]

"Forget it—the only thing these Islamonazis understand is force—time to nuke the Temple of the Dome and send this "religion" back to Hell, the place it came from. " [11/17/02]

"Go for the Oil Fields. Set the mad dog lawyers loose!!! Let's ROLL!!! Take even the diapers from their heads. Remember—according to the Koran, Islam approves of lying as long as it is to non-believers. Saudis are lying killers who harbor killers." [11/17/02]

"All-ah be damned. What took him so long?" [11/14/02]

"Islam is like a virus—it infects the minds of the believers. Islamonazis are, unfortunately, the logical extreme of the "religion." [11/13/02]

"Good plan—raise OBL from the dead every time we get ready to ice another Islamonazi—ON TO BAGHDAD. LET'S ROLL !!!" [11/13/02]

"Nuke the ISLAM-nazis and let's move on. No more MUSLAMO fascists!!" [11/10/02]

"Islam has declared World War III against everything non-Muslim. " [10/28/02]

"When will the liberal media wake up to see that Islam has declared a World War against everything non-Muslim. May Allah be damned to the hell Muslims wish to create on earth." [10/25/02]

"Are there any Islamic "clerics" who aren't violent?" [10/20/02]

"May Islam join the garbage heap of worthless religions we have grown beyond. Any believers of Hermes out there?" [10/13/02]

"Muslims regularly trash religious sites holy to others. Jerusalem has a series of sites the Muslims have wrecked (e.g., the bus station they placed below the "Golgotha" site honored by many as an alternative location for the Christ's crucifixion). Seems like the Muslim principle that it is okay to lie to infidels. Very different mindset—no respect for anything non-Muslim" [9/30/02]

"ALL Arab MUSLIMS lie (the Koran endorses lying to infidels, namely us)—none of these names are real—Abdallah is really Mohammad Mohammad Mohammad readily altered to include Atta or Haj or whatever else they decide to call themselves for the moment." [7/10/02]

"Gotta love this stupid religion, ISLAM—Makes the Nazis look like a Sunday stroll in the park. ISLAM—it's gotta be straight from HELL. Just the Devil in disguise—that seems to about sum it up." [6/14/02]

"Arabs lie. ISLAM preaches lying to Infidels. Fingerprints don't lie. Boo-hoo—time to demand IDs to check into hotels and passport registration for all foreign nationalists who want hotel rooms. Also, ID checks and passport registrations for anyone renting an apartment." [6/5/02]

"Let's get rid of all the Saudi Arabians—that would have gone a long way to preventing Sept. 11." [6/5/02]

"Yet another violent raghead named Mohammad. What's new? Islam looks like a cancer, a plague, a deadly virus. No doctor worries about the free speech rights of cancer cells." [6/5/02]

"Yet another Little Islamic Man of Hate. Is there any other kind?" [5/31/02]

"The only thing the Islamic world understands is force. Let's destroy a few of these hate schools and start targeting these mad preachers of hate." [5/22/02]

"Let's see—who is it not politically correct to profile? Islam the "Peaceful Religion" whose Fundamental believers are insane, suicidal killers that hate America and all democratic societies? Or Arabs whose racial hatred of Jews drives them to create secret societies of terrorists sworn to eliminate Israel and all states who support Israel?" [5/20/02]

"Finally a way to end Jihad. Maybe the whole Arab world will blow itself up—live by the sword, die by the sword—seems an ancient formula. Bye, Bye Jihad." [5/20/02]

"I repeat: Muslims, cancer cells. It's hard to tell the difference. No doctor worries about the First Amendment rights of cancer cells. The therapy is to eliminate cancer cells so the body can go on living. Great to repeat it—keeps the thread going. Let the Muslims stop preaching terror and I'll revise my view. Meanwhile, Muslims, cancer cells is an equation that works." [5/20/02]

"May all these Arab maniacs explode and kill themselves—next time, maybe they will take Arab*RAT with them. Best solution to the homicide bombers is that they eliminate themselves, with as little loss to civilians as possible." [5/20/02]

"I repeat: Muslims, cancer cells. It's hard to tell the difference. No doctor worries about the First Amendment rights of cancer cells. The therapy is to eliminate cancer cells so the body can go on living." [5/19/02]

"Muslims, cancer cells. It's hard to tell the difference. No doctor worries about the First Amendment rights of cancer cells. The therapy is to eliminate cancer cells so the body can go on living." [5/17/02]

"File under the category "Islam is a worthless, violent CULT, not a Religion." [3/28/02]

CORSI HAS LOST TOUCH WITH EVEN THE FALSE REALITY HE LIVES IN

FALSE: "We find there is even uncertainty whether Stanley Ann and Obama Senior were ever married in a church." [p. 44]

REALITY:CORSI ADMITS ON THE SAME PAGE THAT OBAMA'S PARENTS HAD A LEGAL AMERICAN MARRIAGE

TIME Reported On Obama's Parents' Divorce Records.

TIME reported, "On Feb. 2, 1961, several months after they met, Obama's parents got married in Maui, according to divorce records." [TIME, 4/9/08]

Corsi Cites Time Story To Say "Divorce Papers Confirm...

"Corsi wrote, "Other sources say divorce papers confirm that a civil ceremony was held on Maui, on Feb. 2, 1961, when Ann was three months pregnant with Obama." Corsi cites the Apr. 9th, 2008, *Time* story for his reference to Obama's parents' wedding. [p. 44]

EVEN A LITTLE BASIC RESEARCH DISPROVES CORSI'S FABRICATIONS

FALSE: "Senator Obama could claim to be a citizen of Kenya, as well as of the United States. Obama can trace his heritage back to his mother, who was born in the United States and was an American citizen when he was born, and to his father, who was born in Kenya and was a Kenyan citizen when Obama was born." [p 103]

REALITY: OBAMA CANNOT CLAIM KENYAN CITIZENSHIP

Kenya Does Not Allow Dual Citizenship Applications for People Over 21 Years of Age.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management writes of Kenya, "DUAL CITIZENSHIP: Not recognized except for persons under 21 years old." The Kenyan Constitution writes, "A person who, but for the proviso to section 87 (1), would be a citizen of Kenya by virtue of that subsection shall be entitled, upon making application before the specified date in such manner as may be prescribed by or under an Act of Parliament, to be registered as a citizen of Kenya: Provided that a person who has not attained the age of twenty-one years (other than a woman who is or has been married) may not himself make an application under this subsection, but an application may be made on his behalf by his parent or guardian." [U.S. Office of Personnel Management; Kenyan Constitution]

Even if Obama Had Applied for Dual Citizenship Before He Was 21—Which He Did Not—It Would Have Expired.

A person who, upon the attainment of the age of twenty-one years, is a citizen of Kenya and also a citizen of some other country other than Kenya shall, subject to subsection (7), cease to be a citizen of Kenya upon the specified date unless he has renounced his citizenship of that other country, taken the oath of allegiance and, in the case of a person who was born outside Kenya, made and registered such declaration of his intentions concerning residence as may be prescribed by or under an Act of Parliament." [Kenyan Constitution]

INVENTING WILD CONSPIRACIES ABOUT ANYTHING HE CAN

Corsi Wrote a Book Claiming Democrats Were Being Corrupted by Iranian Funding and Helping Iranians Get Nukes.

After their bitter campaign 2004 experience with the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, John Kerry and his fellow Dems aren't waiting to be shot at again.

Yesterday, aides to Sens. Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden and Ted Kennedy jumped all over literary mugger Jerome Corsi, co-author of the Kerry-bashing best seller 'Unfit for Command.' They knocked him to the ground and kicked him in the face (metaphorically, anyway) over his next Democrat trashing tome, 'Atomic Iran: How the Terrorist Regime Bought the Bomb and American Politicians.' The book—which Nashville's Cumberland House Publishing won't release till next month—claims Democratic pols are being corrupted by Iranian money and helping the nuke-seeking mullahs in Tehran." [*Daily News* (New York), Feb. 24, 2005.]

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20080814-02	12:52	SteveB	To: Rush Limbaugh; Oil, Energy
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Dear Rush:

I was driving in the car here this morning in beautiful, smog-free Montana, listening to your broadcast, basically about the History Channel's Modern Marvels episode detailing all the things we make from oil.

I think you missed the point! It is because of all these things you mentioned—plastic, makeup, asphalt, industrial chemicals, medicines, etc. etc. that are most conveniently and cheaply made from oil—that we need to conserve oil. Now, I'm as sorry as you are that idiot Al Gore is so closely associated with the concept, but the energy crisis is not the fault of conservation, it's the fault of greed and excess.

If you think, as you stated, that we can't go a long ways toward reducing our energy dependence on oil in 10 years, then I guess you thought we couldn't go to the moon, or maybe you're even one of those people who think we didn't go to the moon! Are you so totally dependent upon your oil stocks that you can't see what could be done, what should be done,

and what can and must be done? And jobs and the economy don't need to be destroyed to do it. In fact, solving this problem will create more wealth and jobs than this nation has ever seen.

And I'm not talking about big government programs. Everything our government truly touches turns to sh*t, we have proven that over and over. But government can help by providing the types of incentives that are now wasted on big oil companies.

I believe that 30 years ago, gasoline should have been taxed up to about \$4.00 per gallon. Even at that price, and even with all the whining, this would still make gasoline a small part of the cost of driving a vehicle. I'm sure it's a very small part of the cost of driving your vehicle, Rush. Figure it out if you don't believe me.

If we had done that 30 years ago, I think the problem would now be non-existent, but our politicians sold us down the river as usual. The tax could have been used to provide tax incentives to companies solving the problem, not big oil companies being part of the problem. I think wind can help a lot. I think nuclear, if well-thought-out can help. Turning food into fuel is a stupid idea to my mind—look at the price of grain lately—but there is algae and sugar cane and oil-producing beans. We need more and better public transportation and much, much more use of railroads. Our cities need to be controlled better to stop urban sprawl eating up our valuable farm land and to produce more compact cities, easier to get around in, and more conducive to alternative forms of transportation and public transportation.

But our best source of energy could solve two problems. We possess abundant coal. We have an existing power grid infrastructure. We need to produce most of our electricity from coal, sequester the pollution and CO2 using existing technology (because I don't want to keep experimenting on the only home we have in the universe, regardless of what anyone thinks of global warming), heat our homes with natural gas or electricity, produce and sell cheap electric cars—which we have proven can be done right now—and solve both the oil and pollution problems at the same time.

The only problem is that all of these solutions run counter to the vested interests you seem to so highly regard and support—big oil and the internal combustion engine. What a deadly love affair, for our world, for our economy, for our security, and for our future. I'm sorry if I am the first to inform you that, except for trucks, ships, and motorcycles, the internal combustion engine running on gasoline must die!

Although all the products you mentioned and that were covered in the Modern Marvels program can also be made from coal, it is cheaper and easier to make them from oil.

Let's keep gasoline at \$4.00 a gallon, at least; transition to coal for electric trains and cars, and let's save the oil for ships, trucks, motorcycles, race cars, plastics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. Otherwise, we may have to ultimately do without all of these things, at least at a price that anyone but you yourself can afford.

The thing I heard from you that was most shocking to me was your utter pessimism that our energy problems can be solved. Come on, Rush, how can you give up on America, American ingenuity, and the American way of life so easily????????? I would have expected better of you! Thank you.

20080814-03 17:56 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/14/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Reprise: Senator John McCain: "In the 21st century, nations don't invade other nations." Something I meant to mention in yesterday's posting: I guess McCain not only excludes Iraq in this "rule", but also the mess that is Africa. But then of course, Africa doesn't count either, because they're...dare I say it, Johnny Boy...black!

Today McCain maintained that he would not rule out Pennsylvania's Tom Ridge as his VP choice, despite Mr. Ridge's pro-choice stance. If you want to give-up on your Evangelicals and destroy your chances of winning the election, that would be a smart thing to do, Johnny Boy. At the same time, in an interview with a conservative publication, the Weekly Standard, McCain indicated that NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg's support for abortion rights "would make it difficult to choose him."

Trial balloon after trial balloon. I guess you don't know what to do, do you, Johnny Boy?

20080814-04 18:08 SteveB Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists

Dear SteveM, (ref. email about Obama's abortion stance and questionable religion)

I was just wondering...do you really, truly feel that the idiot government has any right or intelligence or judgment to order people, especially pregnant women, what they can and cannot do with their own bodies?

What about the right to privacy, especially in the first trimester? Show me something in the Bible forbidding it. Where is "life" defined in the Bible?

They are a brainwashed cult, for cryin' out loud. Right, there is no evolution and the universe is 6000 years old and Mary was a virgin!!!!!!

And is Johnny Boy an Episcopalian or a Baptist, as he now claims?

20080814-05 18:11 SteveM Re: Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists

Dear SteveB,

No I believe in a woman's right to choose, in the first trimester.

It gets murky and well defined after that, like partial birth abortion.

The real battle and confusion is when does life begins, I like to believe it occurs during the birth process.

As for calling some ones belief system or guide book (Bible, Koran) a crock, is not very PC Mr. Baker, Oddly enough if you had made the same statement about the Koran, the PC police would have busted you and taken your key board privileges away. But it seems it's OK for open season on Christians, which is the real crock!

I'm not very religious, I'm only in church for funerals, but I feel the 10 commandments offer some good guideline for life. And given the choice of hanging with Muslims or Christians, I'll take the Christians, because they won't KILL me for being a non-believer or a non practitioner like you.

By the way, Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

20080814-06 18:13 SteveB Colin Powell on John McCain

I just saw a great quote from Colin Powell:

I've known John McCain for 30 years, and I've never found a reason to vote for him yet!!!!

20080814-07 19:12 SteveB To: Dave Spurgel; The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear David Spergel:

I heard about your WMAP work on the Science channel and looked up your website, where I found your email address.

I'm currently working on a longish poem concerning many of the latest theories of physics, titled "Dark Matter". These are all subjects that I find fascinating.

What I have been wondering...ever since I was watching the fireworks this past 4th of July. You know those mortar projectiles that explode about 200-300 feet in the air, sending colored sparks out in all directions? The place where the explosion occurs, which I call ground-zero, is empty of anything shortly after the explosion.

And what I've been thinking is that, if there was a big bang (and I have to admit that it seems likely), and if the farthest galaxies are still streaming away from us at nearly the speed of light (or at least were, when that light left them, say 12-13 billion years ago, and that is the rub...we don't know for sure what they're doing now), then shouldn't there be a big hole of nothing in the universe at ground zero of where the big bang occurred?

I don't think you have found such a hole of nothingness, have you? If not, why not? Could this mean that there wasn't a big bang after all?

If you can answer, I would really appreciate it, and I will send you a copy of my poem for free when it is finished.

Thank you very much and happy hunting!

20080814-08 19:24 SteveB Re: Abortion & Christian Fundamentalists

Dear SteveM,

I have read the Koran from beginning to end and, you know, I guess that it was dictated to Mohammed by God, even though Mohammed was illiterate. At least God was smart enough by this time to make sure that it got written down (late in Mohammed's life). Unfortunately for the modern world, neither Jesus nor any of his direct disciples knew how to or cared to write diddly.

Anyway, in one part of the Koran, God spends an entire chapter berating the people of a nearby village for spreading rumors that Mohammed's wife was a whore. It's so nice that God has so much time on his hands. In another part, God talks not about slavery being wrong, but that you should treat your slaves well. The Old Testament also testifies to slavery—even one's daughters. And little boy's a*s'es are certainly not off limits to these Arab b*stards. Mohammed's religion is to be spread by war, killing, whatever it takes to save the Infidel.

Missing from both great books, of course, is any mention that the Earth is anything to be treasured and taken care of. Apparently, it is to be raped at will, like the virgins in heaven. You might think that God, knowing the future, would have cautioned care in population growth, resource usage, and taking care of what he gave us, as the American Indians teach. A real lack of foresight, in my humble opinion. Thanks for the help, God.

McCain and his pro-life stance are *mierda*. I suppose that he thinks, as the Evangelicals do, that he knows the mind of God. And he thinks Obama is arrogant and elitist?

20080815-01 06:50 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/15/08
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I just heard John McCain say that the Georgia-Russia conflict..."is the most serious international crisis since the end of the Cold War."

He must maximize this little conflict to crisis proportions in order to try to convince the American people that it's so serious that we need to elect Johnny Boy, with his immense foreign-policy expertise, which, to my mind, is a total figment of his warped imagination. (see previous postings). It's as much a fantasy as the one about Hillary Clinton being ready to run the country on her famous "day one", when we now know from all the campaign insiders that she couldn't even run a campaign. Neither Hillary nor Johnny Boy have any executive experience at all, so they need to stop talking about how Obama doesn't have any. It is ideas and leadership that matter on this level playing field of experience.

OMG! Where on this green Earth has this senile b*stard been keeping himself? Is he ever serious, or is it simply a fallacy to seek seriousness in the rantings of a senile idiot?

Hypocrisy! Hypocrisy! And more Hypocrisy and Lies!

20080815-02 09:07 D. Spurgel Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology
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Dear SteveB:

The big bang theory (or better the expanding universe theory) seems to do a remarkably good job of explaining the evolution of the universe from a few minutes after the big bang until today. There are a host of observations that match the predictions of the theory.

What happened in the first minute of the big bang is less certain — as we go back in time, we are probing physics at higher and higher energies. The first microsecond corresponds to energies greater than that probed in the biggest particle accelerators.

The physics of the big bang itself is poorly understood. At these high energies, we need to combine quantum mechanics and general relativity. At present, we do not have a successful theory of quantum gravity, so do not have solid answers to questions like "what was there before the big bang?" "what caused the big bang?" "is the universe infinite?" "why did the big bang seem to happen at many points at once?" These questions are of great interest to both experts and the general public. They are topics of active research.

Good luck with your poem. —Dave Spurgel

20080815-03 10:02 SteveM Re: A Book of Lies

ref: Howard Dean (democraticparty@democrats.org.)

If you didn't send this to me I would not have known about it! You know that there is always some truth to these types of books, This should convince the fence sitters that the puppet BHO can't be entrusted to lead this great country!

BTW, who has their hand up his b*tt? Hateful Harry Reed or Nancy "the C*nt" Pelosi? Say what's her brother doing these days? Time? Roll in the Clintons and John Edwards if you guys are doing a great job of representing the country!

Tell Doctor Dean, How come it's only "free speech" when liberal, progressive socialists are doing the talking?

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

Luv ya, don't ever change, you continue to bring laughter to my life!

20080816-01 06:56 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/16/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Today's Senile Moment is so easy, which is good because we're about to head out the door to a concert tonight.

McCain's campaign, with Johnny Boy's approval, as you've probably heard by now, "appropriated" Jackson Browne's song, "Running on Empty", without payment, acknowledgement, or permission. Browne, a Democrat for Obama, is suing.

Just a simple mistake, right Johnny Boy? How many simple mistakes can a campaign make? And how many simple mistakes would you make as President, you lying, stealing, corrupt, stupid, decrepit old codger.

Tomorrow night's "faith debate" should pose an interesting contract between the two would-be candidates. Good luck, Johnny Boy, you're going to need it. Try hard to be honest, for once, and keep your ugly temper under control, please.

20080816-02 10:36 SteveM Instructions for Life

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

1. Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
2. When you lose, don't lose the lesson.

3. Follow the three R's:

- Respect for self.
- Respect for others.
- Responsibility for all your actions.

4. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.

5. Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.

6. Don't let a little dispute ruin a great relationship.

7. When you realize you've made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.

8. Spend some time alone every day.

9. Open your arms to change, but don't let go of your values.

10. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.

11. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you'll be able to enjoy it a second time.

12. A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.

13. In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don't bring up the past.

14. Share your knowledge. It is a way to achieve immortality.

15. Be gentle with the Earth.

16. Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.

17. Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.

18. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.

19. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.

20080817-01 15:33 Mary Fw: No "Change" for Him!

[Source of original email unknown. I sent an email to the address listed at the end (since removed), on 11/22/11. Delivery failed. Email the same as forwarded by SteveM (Oct. 5, 2008) and Phil (Oct. 22, 2008). —SteveB]

Dear Friends:

My name is Joe Porter [or Dan Frost]. I live in **Champaign, Illinois** [or Kokomo, IN]. I'm 46 years old, a born-again Christian [or just a "Christian"], a husband, a father, a small business owner, a veteran, and a homeowner. I don't consider myself to be either conservative or liberal, and I vote for the person, not Republican or Democrat. I don't believe there are "two Americas"—but that every person in this country can be whomever and whatever they want to be if they'll just work to get there—and nowhere else on earth can they find such opportunities. I believe our government should help those who are legitimately downtrodden, and should always put the interests of America first.

The purpose of this message is that I'm concerned about the future of this great nation. I'm worried that the silent majority of honest, hard-working, tax-paying people in this country have been passive for too long. Most folks I know choose not to involve themselves in politics. They go about their daily lives, paying their bills, raising their kids, and doing what they can to maintain the good life. They vote and consider doing so to be a sacred trust. They shake their heads at the political pundits and so-called "news", thinking that what they hear is always spun by whomever is reporting it. They

can't understand how elected officials can regularly violate the public trust with pork barrel spending. They don't want government handouts. They want the government to protect them, not raise their taxes for more government programs.

We are in the unique position in this country of electing our leaders. It's a privilege to do so. I've never found a candidate in any election with whom I agreed on everything. I'll wager that most of us don't even agree with our families or spouses 100% of the time. So when I step into that voting booth, I always try to look at the big picture and cast my vote for the man or woman who is best qualified for the job. I've hired a lot of people in my lifetime, and essentially that's what an election is—a hiring process. Who has the credentials? Whom do I want working for me? Whom can I trust to do the job right? I'm concerned that a growing number of voters in this country simply don't get it. They are caught up in a fervor they can't explain, and calling it "change".

Change what?, I ask.

Well, we're going to change America , they say.

In what way?, I query.

We want someone new and fresh in the White House, they exclaim.

So, someone who's not a politician?, I press.

Uh, well, no, we just want a lot of stuff changed, so we're voting for Obama, they state.

So the current system, the system of freedom and democracy that has enabled a man to grow up in this great country, get a fine education, raise incredible amounts of money and dominate the news and win his party's nomination for the White House—that system's all wrong?

No, no, that part of the system's okay—we just need a lot of change.

And so it goes. 'Change we can believe in.' Quite frankly, I don't believe that vague proclamations of change hold any promise for me. In recent months, I've been asking virtually everyone I encounter how they're voting. **I live in Illinois** [or Indiana], so most folks tell me they're voting for Barack Obama. But no one can really tell me why—only that he's going to change a lot of stuff. Change, change, change. I have yet to find one single person who can tell me distinctly and convincingly why this man is qualified to be President and Commander-in-Chief of the most powerful nation on earth—other than the fact that he claims he's going to implement a lot of change.

We've all seen the emails about Obama's genealogy, his upbringing, his Muslim background, and his church affiliations. Let's ignore this for a moment. Put it all aside. Then ask yourself, what qualifies this man to be my president? That he's a brilliant orator and talks about change?

CHANGE WHAT?

Friends, I'll be forthright with you—I believe the American voters who are supporting Barack Obama don't have a clue what they're doing, as evidenced by the fact that not one of them—NOT ONE of them I've spoken to can spell out his qualifications. Not even the most liberal media can explain why he should be elected. Political experience? Negligible.

Foreign relations? Non-existent. Achievements? Name one. Someone who wants to unite the country? If you haven't read his wife's thesis from Princeton , look it up on the web. This is who's lining up to be our next First Lady? The only thing I can glean from Obama's constant harping about change is that we're in for a lot of new taxes.

For me, the choice is clear. I've looked carefully at the two leading applicants for the job, and I've made my choice.

Here's a question—where were you five and a half years ago? Around Christmas, 2002. You've had five or six birthdays in that time. My son has grown from a sixth grade child to a high school graduate. Five and a half years is a good chunk of time. About 2,000 days. 2,000 nights of sleep. 6, 000 meals, give or take.

John McCain spent that amount of time, from 1967 to 1973, in a North Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp.

When offered early release, he refused it. He considered this offer to be a public relations stunt by his captors, and insisted that those held longer than he should be released first. Did you get that part? He was offered his freedom, and he turned it down. A regimen of beatings and torture began.

Do you possess such strength of character? Locked in a filthy cell in a foreign country, would you turn down your own freedom in favor of your fellow man? I submit that's a quality of character that is rarely found, and for me, this singular act defines John McCain.

Unlike several presidential candidates in recent years whose military service is questionable or non-existent, you will not find anyone to denigrate the integrity and moral courage of this man. A graduate of Annapolis , during his Naval service he received the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross. His own son is now serving in the Marine Corps in Iraq. Barack Obama is fond of saying "We honor John McCain's service...BUT...", which to me is condescending and offensive—because what I hear is, "Let's forget this man's sacrifice for his country and his proven leadership abilities, and talk some more about change."

[Here we go with the "war hero" stuff, though it seems to have little to do with qualifications and maybe nothing to do with character. Who knows for sure? —SteveB]

I don't agree with John McCain on everything—but I am utterly convinced that he is qualified to be our next President, and I trust him to do what's right. I know in my heart that he has the best interests of our country in mind. He doesn't simply want to be President—he wants to lead America , and there's a huge difference. Factually, there is simply no comparison between the two candidates. A man of questionable background and motives who prattles on about change can't hold a candle to a man who has devoted his life in public service to this nation, retiring from the Navy in 1981 and elected to the Senate in 1982.

Perhaps Obama's supporters are taking a stance between old and new. Maybe they don't care about McCain's service or his strength of character, or his unblemished qualifications to be President. Maybe "likeability" is a higher priority for them than "trust". Being a prisoner of war is not what qualifies John McCain to be President of the United States of America—but his demonstrated leadership certainly DOES.

Dear friends, it is time for us to stand. It is time for thinking Americans to say, "Enough." It is time for people of all parties to stop following the party line. It is time for anyone who wants to keep America first, who wants the right man leading their nation, to start a dialogue with all their friends and neighbors and ask who they're voting for, and why.

There's a lot of evil in this world. That should be readily apparent to all of us by now. And when faced with that evil as we are now, I want a man who knows the cost of war on his troops and on his citizens. I want a man who puts my family's interests before any foreign country.

I want a President who's qualified to lead. I want my country back, and I'm voting for John McCain.

Semper Fi, Daniel L. Frost Jr., GySgt USMC Retired, Kokomo , IN [I'm confused. You said, above, that you live in Illinois. Besides, the issue is George Bush! —SteveB]

20080817-02 16:13 SteveB "\$65 Oil Is Coming (Maybe)" Energy, Speculation

["\\$65 Oil Is Coming \(Maybe\)" by John Markman, MSN Money](#)

Aug. 15, 2008, (<http://money.ca.msn.com/investing/jon-markman/article.aspx?cp-documentid=19292150>)

If you're frustrated over the high cost of gasoline at the pump, don't trade in your Hummer for a Vespa just yet: A leading energy analyst is telling clients these days to prepare for crude oil to retreat back below \$65 per barrel over the next three years.

How could it happen? He says conservation, new drilling, efficient new vehicles, alternative energy sources, a rising U.S. dollar and a global recession will combine to blast prices back to the Stone Age — or at least to last year's levels.

"The match has struck, the fuse has been lit, and four or five years from now OPEC producers are going to be drinking their own oil and choking on it," says Tony Kolton, the founder and president of Logical Information Machines, a provider of research to most of the world's major energy-trading companies for two decades.

Plenty of smart analysts disagree with this point of view, figuring that emerging-market demand will pump up fossil-fuel prices and that North Americans will blithely forget all about conservation if gasoline prices trend lower. But since Kolton's view is deeply out of consensus and at least minimally plausible, it does deserve our attention.

Speculators unmasked

Kolton, a specialist in the history, composition and psychology of the energy market, believes that speculators were without question behind the run-up of prices to \$147 per barrel in July and that government threats to expose and punish their behaviour spooked them out of their positions in a hurry.

He says his data on open interest of non-commercial positions in crude trading, as well as conversations with professional traders at big oil companies, clearly show that speculators, and not rising demand from Asia, pushed the market to extremes.

In contrast to people who say the oil market is too big to be pushed around by hedge funds, Kolton counters that in fact it is much smaller than the bond, currency or equity markets. The oil market "can be easily manipulated," he says.

The reason for the misconception is that while the market is large in dollar terms, most of the oil companies' hedging positions are pointed the same direction and set for months at a time. So marginal new positions that point the opposite way can have an outsize impact, much like a 5-foot rudder can change the direction of a 500-foot ship.

"I would ask all the fundamental guys why oil was \$147 a month ago and \$114 today," Kolton says. "Their opinion that crude moves purely on real demand is BS. When the fast money comes out, there's a giant sucking sound."

The swift exit of the fast-money crowd has pushed oil back down to its March level, around \$110. Kolton's research on seasonality and demand suggests oil prices will rebound back to the \$125 area and then resume their crash. The \$100 level will be hard to crack, but he expects energy bears to prevail over bulls within six months and launch crude on a journey below \$65.

"You had a perfect storm of pre-Olympics demand in China, a plunging (U.S.) dollar, speculation, cold weather and fear of supply disruptions in Nigeria and Iran pushing it up, and now they've all swung around on a dime," Kolton says, observing that U.S. recession and conservation are gutting demand, Iran is at the negotiating table, the U.S. dollar is soaring against the euro in reaction to the worsening European economy, and the summer has proved milder than normal, sapping the use of air conditioning throughout North America.

"People who don't trade the futures markets don't realize that this is typical for commodities, which always trade on emotion. Look at silver in the late 1970s, which went from \$4 to \$50 and back to \$4 in two years," Kolton says.

Diminished demand

What about all that talk of how supply is running out? Well, it's funny: The spike to \$147 seems to have really got people thinking about scarcity, and they've started making plans that could be very long-lasting.

It's sort of like the day a person realizes it's time to stop smoking — a light-bulb moment of alertness to a long-simmering crisis. Oil bears now think the \$147 level was a slap in the face that made major corporate users consider changing their behaviour in persistent and fundamental ways.

Auto companies became focused on creating smaller hybrid cars; individuals are discovering the joys of public transportation, car pools and bicycles; churches are lecturing on the need to turn out the lights in vacant rooms; and American presidential candidates are debating the merits of inflating tires. And perhaps most importantly, going green appears to have emerged from fad to lifestyle as the cool dads now drive Mini Coopers instead of gas-guzzling Suburbans to their kids' soccer practices. Big private-equity and venture-capital funds, and industrial titans such as General Electric (GE.N), are throwing billions of dollars into creating better batteries, advanced materials and vehicles that run on plug-in electric power and plentiful U.S. natural gas. Meanwhile, oil giants from Brazil to Beijing are exploring for new oil and

finding it offshore a lot more easily than expected, with payoffs to come a lot sooner than most skeptics now believe possible.

All of this is coming at a time when a credit drought has seriously impaired economic growth and blunted employment levels in developed nations in Europe and the Americas, and threatens to spread to Australia and much of Asia. When people are commuting and consuming less, and when companies are making less, they collectively use less energy. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported Tuesday that oil demand during the first half of 2008 fell by an average 800,000 barrels per day compared with the same period a year ago — the biggest volume decline in 26 years.

Bad news and other views

Of course, we should probably be careful about what we wish for. While stock prices have risen smartly as energy prices have cracked in the past month, stocks are likely to fall steeply along with oil prices if a global recession is the major driver behind demand destruction. Just in case you're wondering, Kolton's historical and economic research and his gut instincts as a veteran trader lead him to think that the Dow Jones Industrial Average (\$U.S.:INDU) will sink to the 9,500 level next year — retracing the 2003-07 bull market — before the bear has had its fill.

Opposing point of view? Yeah, I've got that. David Anderson, an energy portfolio manager at Palo Alto Investors, who has been my go-to guy for years on the subject, thinks the idea of crude oil falling below \$65 per barrel is ludicrous. And, frankly, he says he doesn't even care when it comes to his energy-industry positions.

"We never base our view on energy-industry stocks on the direction of oil prices," he says. "We are buying growth companies in a growth industry and always have at least a five-year horizon. The fundamentals of the business — increasing demand and decreasing supply over the long term — favour higher stock values over time."

Anderson says energy bears are just not facing reality. He points to U.S. Department of Energy research that forecasts global growth in demand rising to at least 110 million barrels of oil per day in a decade from the current level of 85 million. "To get to that level while supply from the best and biggest fields in the Middle East, North Sea and Gulf of Mexico is shrinking will be very tough," he says. "Oil prices are going up to ration supply, short of a total global economic meltdown."

If you want to invest along with Anderson instead of Kolton, here are the large and medium-sized companies he likes best on the recent pullback, with expectations that they will roar back starting in September: Petrohawk Energy (HK.N), Plains Exploration & Production (PXP.N), Chesapeake Energy (CHK.N), Apache (APA.N), Southwestern Energy (SWN.N), EOG Resources (EOG.N) and Range Resources (RRC.N). Anderson is always good with the small caps, and among his favourites now are Canadian Superior Energy (SNG.TO), Arena Resources (ARD.N) and Gastar Exploration (GST.N). With any luck, Kolton and Anderson can both be right. These energy companies were going to be very profitable with \$75 crude oil a year ago, so they must be minting money now. Short of an expectation for the lights to go out worldwide over the next year, consider buying at these levels, while the pessimism lasts.

20080817-03 16:35 Dennis Re: "\$65 Oil Is Coming (Maybe)" Energy, Speculation

from SteveB:

The swift exit of the fast-money crowd has pushed oil back down to its March level, around \$110. Kolton's research on seasonality and demand suggests oil prices will rebound back to the \$125 area and then resume their crash. The \$100 level will be hard to crack, but he expects energy bears to prevail over bulls within six months and launch crude on a journey below \$65.

Dear SteveB,

I'm certain Kolton is dead wrong and am investing accordingly. The price of oil corrected due to temporarily decreased demand and reversal of the dollar. We'll never see \$65 oil again (probably never under \$100 again either). When Americans stop whining and adjust to the reality of higher energy costs by resuming their old driving habits, the price will rise again. We'll see \$200 oil within the next year when the dollar resumes its inevitable decline. The professional traders at the big oil companies have been consistently wrong (they thought last year that we'd see \$25 oil again). This guy better take a remedial course in economics if he doesn't believe in the fundamentals of supply and demand.

Dear Mary,

I'm amused at this guy's delusion. Being a prisoner of war is not what qualifies John McCain to be President of the United States of America—but his demonstrated leadership certainly DOES.

What has he demonstrated? That he knows nothing about economics and doesn't care. That he's emotionally unstable (ask his Senate colleagues if they trust him). That he reacted irrationally to the Russian invasion of Georgia by saying that in the 21st century nations should not invade other nations (has he forgotten he supported invading Iraq). That he doesn't support health care reform (that would bail out the auto and other companies from their retirement cost nightmares). That he didn't show up eight times to vote for renewal of alternative energy (but claims in his ads that he supports it). That he really doesn't understand the cost of war (over nine trillion dollars just for the Iraq war, not to mention the loss of over 3000 American military lives). That he hasn't supported benefits for his fellow veterans (who don't happen to own ten houses and have a rich wife). I could go on and on, but you get the idea...

As Iacocca points out, America is going over a cliff. Do we want this senile old man to be the driver? I have a lot of questions about Obama. He does seem to think, like most politicians, that pandering will win votes. But I do think he is highly intelligent and, if elected, would be wise enough to seek the advice of those who are more experienced before making critical decisions. He does need to be more specific about what change would mean. But there is no doubt that a significant change in direction for the country is needed soon. Although, in my opinion, I think it's probably way too late. We're already over the cliff and the next president will be scrambling to pick up the pieces.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

10 Reasons I'm Voting Democrat

1. I'm voting Democrat because I believe the government will do a better job of spending the money I earn than I would.
2. I'm voting Democrat because freedom of speech is fine as long as nobody is offended by it.
3. I'm voting Democrat because when we pull out of Iraq I trust that the bad guys will stop what they're doing because they now think we're good people.
4. I'm voting Democrat because I believe that people who can't tell us if it will rain on Friday CAN tell us that the polar ice caps will melt away in ten years if I don't start driving a Prius.
5. I'm voting Democrat because I'm not concerned about the slaughter of millions of babies so long as we keep all death row inmates alive.
6. I'm voting Democrat because I believe that business should not be allowed to make profits for themselves. They need to break even and give the rest away to the government for redistribution as THEY see fit.
7. I'm voting Democrat because I believe three or four pointy headed elitist liberals need to rewrite the Constitution every few days to suit some fringe kooks who would NEVER get their agendas past the voters.
8. I'm voting Democrat because I believe that when the terrorists don't have to hide from us over there, and they come over here I don't want to have any guns in the house to fight them off with.
9. I'm voting Democrat because I love the fact that I can now marry whatever I want. I've decided to marry my horse.
10. I'm voting Democrat because I believe oil companies' profits of 4% on a gallon of gas are obscene but the government taxing the same gallon of gas at 15% isn't.

Any Questions?

[20080818-02](#) 10:40 SteveB Re: "I'm Voting Democrat"

Dear SteveM,

Hey, I'm glad to see you've finally seen the light. As you know, I'm voting Democratic too! Any questions?

[20080818-03](#) 14:35 SteveB To: Neil deGrasse Tyson; The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear Neil deGrasse Tyson:

I have loved learning of your work and watching you on TV. I found your email address on the web.

I'm currently working on a longish poem concerning many of the latest theories of physics, titled "Dark Matter. These are all subjects that I find fascinating.

What I have been wondering...ever since I was watching the fireworks this past 4th of July. You know those mortar projectiles that explode about 200-300 feet in the air, sending colored sparks out in all directions? The place where the explosion occurs, which I call ground-zero, is empty of anything shortly after the explosion.

And what I've been thinking is that, if there was a big bang (and I have to admit that it seems likely), and if the farthest galaxies are still streaming away from us at nearly the speed of light (or at least were, when that light left them, say 12-13 billion years ago, and that is the rub...we don't know for sure what they're doing now), then shouldn't there be a big hole of nothing in the universe at ground zero of where the big bang occurred?

I don't think even WMAP has found such a hole of nothingness, has it? If not, why not? Could this mean that there wasn't a big bang after all?

If you can answer, I will really appreciate it, and I will send you a copy of my poem for free when it is finished.

Thank you very much and happy gazing, etc.!

[20080818-04](#) 07:34 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/18/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

At Saturday's Faith Forum, or whatever it was, McCain complained that \$3,000,000 of the taxpayers' money had been spent to study the DNA of bears in Montana.

One problem is that I consider the preservation of bears in Montana to be a worthy project and worth the tiny amount of money spent on it.

But, Johnny Boy, what I guess you forgot is that YOU VOTED FOR THE BILL THAT MADE THE APPROPRIATION!!!

You're obviously getting a little too old for this line of work, Johnny Boy.

[20080818-05](#) 08:48 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/18/08—Part 2; "The McCain Doctrines"

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT PART 2:

Today, in a speech before the VFW in Florida, McCain criticized Obama for wanting to be President of the United States. Is there no shame and no honesty left in this man? Does he really think we're all so stupid that we don't know that

Johnny Boy is running for President too? Did he just forget that he's running too? What can the story possibly be on this a*s-hole? Excuse me while I puke! (Am I stating these humble points too strenuously? I don't think so, especially since Obama is unwilling or unable to do so. Therefore, I have to!)

And I am doubly sick of McCain's claims that he is right about Iraq and Obama is wrong because McCain backed the surge and Obama did not. It will take historians a long time to figure out whether the surge had much or little to do with the current situation in Iraq, but the worst part of McCain's argument is that it ignores the fact that McCain has been dead wrong about Iraq ever since his warmongering started right after 9/11, right up to the "surge" even if one grants that he is right on that one point. The Iraq War did not begin with the famous "surge". It began in 2003 for Christ's sake, when McCain claimed that it had been run magnificently and proclaimed that Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld would have places in his Cabinet if he were ever President. America has come to see this was as wrong, no matter how patriotic we are and no matter how much we support the troops. But, of course, Johnny Boy, Obama is a traitor and against America if he agrees, as he always has, with the current majority of the American people, and disagrees with your "expert" warmongering assessment, Mr. Foreign Policy Expert Johnny Boy McCain.

Excuse me while I puke some more. Grow-up, McCain, you a*s-wipe!

"The McCain Doctrines" (formerly: "Why This Man Cannot Be Allowed to Run the Foreign Policy of America!!!!") by Matt Bai, *New York Times*

May 18, 2008, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/18/magazine/18mccain-t.html?pagewanted=all>)

(Whatever their disagreements on policy, United States senators, even in today's hyper-political climate, are reluctant to impugn one another's motives or integrity.)

That's doubly true among those who experienced combat in the Vietnam War, a group that now includes four sitting senators—the Republicans John McCain and Chuck Hagel and the Democrats John Kerry and Jim Webb—as well as former colleagues like Bob Kerrey, Max Cleland and Chuck Robb. These men share an obvious bond, and over the years they have more readily crossed partisan lines than other senators, constituting, in some ways, a party unto themselves. To outsiders, they give the impression of having seen things in their youth that confer a different kind of perspective on mere politics; they seem to know that there are worse things in life than losing an election and having to go home. In contrast to the insecurities of the many boomer politicians who avoided service in Vietnam or marched against it, the Senate's former soldiers exude a confidence that goes beyond military matters.

The war in Iraq has tested some of these friendships, however. Last year, after House Democrats voted to set a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq, McCain and Webb—both of whom were featured heroes in a classic book on the era, Robert Timberg's *Nightingale's Song*—became embroiled in an unusually public disagreement. After McCain pointedly said the enemy in Iraq was celebrating along with Democrats, Webb accused him of unfairly questioning other people's patriotism. When Webb and Hagel (a close personal friend of McCain's) proposed a bill to give troops leaving Iraq and Afghanistan more time at home before redeploying, McCain, whose 19-year-old son has served with the Marines in Iraq, forcefully opposed them, saying the troops were needed in the theater. More recently, McCain has found himself on the opposite side of Webb and Hagel again, this time over their "G.I. bill" that would offer education money to every returning veteran. McCain and others want a more limited bill that would encourage rank-and-file soldiers to re-enlist rather than return to civilian life.

In these skirmishes, McCain is the outlier. Among his fellow combat veterans in the Senate, past and present, he is the only one who has continued to champion the war in Iraq; by contrast, Kerry, Webb and Hagel have emerged in the years since the invasion as unsparing critics of American involvement there. (In a new book, Hagel, who voiced deep concerns about Iraq even as he voted for the war resolution in 2002, predicts that the war will turn out to be "the most dangerous and costly foreign policy debacle in our nation's history.") This divide among old allies may be the inevitable result of a protracted war that has cleaved plenty of American households and friendships. But it may also be that the war is revealing underlying fractures among the Senate's Vietnam coalition.

There is a feeling among some of McCain's fellow veterans that his break with them on Iraq can be traced, at least partly, to his markedly different experience in Vietnam. McCain's comrades in the Senate will not talk about this publicly. They are wary of seeming to denigrate McCain's service, marked by his legendary endurance in a Hanoi prison camp, when in fact they remain, to this day, in awe of it. And yet in private discussions with friends and colleagues, some of them have pointed out that McCain, who was shot down and captured in 1967, spent the worst and most costly years of the war

sealed away, both from the rice paddies of Indochina and from the outside world. During those years, McCain did not share the disillusioning and morally jarring experiences of soldiers like Kerry, Webb and Hagel, who found themselves unable to recognize their enemy in the confusion of the jungle; he never underwent the conversion that caused Kerry, for one, to toss away some of his war decorations during a protest at the Capitol. Whatever anger McCain felt remained focused on his captors, not on his own superiors back in Washington.

Not all of McCain's fellow veterans subscribe to the theory that the singularity of his war experience has anything to do with his intransigence on Iraq. (Bob Kerrey, for one, told me that while he was aware of this argument, he has never believed it.) But some suspect that whatever lesson McCain took away from his time in Vietnam, it was not the one that stayed with his colleagues who were "in country" during those years—that some wars simply can't be won on the battlefield, no matter how long you fight them, no matter how many soldiers you send there to die.

"McCain is my friend and brother, and I love him dearly," Max Cleland, Georgia's former Democratic senator, told me when we talked last month. "But I think you learn something fighting on the ground, like me and John Kerry and Chuck Hagel did in Vietnam. This objective of 'hearts and minds'? Well, hello! You didn't know which heart and mind was going to blow you up!

"I have seen this movie before, and I know how it ends," says Cleland, who lost three of his limbs to an errant grenade during the battle of Khe Sanh. "With thousands dead and tens of thousands more injured, and years later you ask yourself what you were doing there. To the extent my friend John McCain signs on to this, he is endangering America's long-term interests, and probably his own election in the fall."

If it is true that McCain's Vietnam experience left him with a different attitude about foreign wars from the one held by those who were on the ground, then it certainly wasn't apparent earlier in his political career. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, after he arrived in the Senate, McCain was, in fact, an outspoken opponent of American intervention in faraway lands—at least in cases where the country wasn't willing to lose thousands of lives to achieve its aims. But during the post-cold-war 1990s, as America's foreign-policy establishment struggled to define the nation's obligations to the rest of the world, McCain went through his own kind of inner journey, seeking some balance between the legacy of Vietnam and the pull of new crises around the globe—crises born of savagery and rife with human consequence. That journey led him inexorably toward Iraq, where McCain's resolve hardened to the point that now, as he prepares to run the climactic campaign of his life, he finds himself carrying the weight of another war, one that has divided the country and devastated his party. One way or the other, Iraq will determine this last phase of McCain's political life, as surely as the war in Vietnam defined its beginning.

When Captain McCain returned home from Hanoi in 1973, a grateful Navy gave him and his fellow P.O.W.'s their choice of assignments. McCain rather audaciously chose one normally reserved for higher-ranking officers: study at the prestigious National War College. The war in Vietnam collapsed during the five-plus years of his imprisonment, and McCain needed to understand what happened. He absorbed the writings of military historians, most notably Bernard Fall, a veteran of the French resistance who was a sharp critic of the American military in Vietnam. Fall, who lived (and died) among American troops in Vietnam, didn't quibble with America's strategic decision to intervene in the country, but he did lambaste its tactics: hunting down guerrillas in search-and-destroy patrols, trying to draw the Vietcong into traditional military battles. Fall believed the Americans did not learn from the failure in Indochina of the French, who insisted on fighting a jungle insurgency as if it were the Second World War.

In his book, Chuck Hagel writes of listening to declassified tapes from the mid-1960s in which Lyndon Johnson admitted to advisers that Vietnam probably couldn't be won but rued that withdrawal would make him the first American president to lose a war. "I wish someone had told me when I was sitting on a burning tank in a Vietnamese rice paddy that I was fighting for a lost cause just to save a president's legacy," Hagel observes acidly. Although McCain was held and tortured for the same cause, he never saw the situation the way Hagel did. In his view, the American effort began to turn around with the promotion in 1968 of Gen. Creighton Abrams, who adopted the tactics favored by counterinsurgency experts like Fall. Abrams pulled back the search-and-destroy teams and instead focused on winning the "hearts and minds" of South Vietnamese villagers. His goal was to encourage the South Vietnamese military to take over their own defense—the process that came to be known as "Vietnamization." McCain maintains that Abrams's strategy was working, but it was undercut by the fact that, by that point, the American public had already rendered its verdict, and the drawdown of troops continued until the war's chaotic end.

The lesson McCain and other conservatives took away from this version of history is that America was driven from Vietnam principally because the voters, discouraged by dire reports from a skeptical media, lost their will. McCain has said in the past that he felt the war could have been won had the right strategy been followed sooner. When I met with

McCain last month for a far-ranging conversation about Vietnam and Iraq, I asked him whether he still felt this was the case. "These are all hypotheticals," he replied. "But I think that if we had employed the strategy that Creighton Abrams put into effect when he relieved General Westmoreland"—that is, if the Abrams strategy had been used years earlier—"then at least the casualties would have been dramatically different."

As a new congressman in 1983, among the first of his generation of vets to serve in Washington, McCain brought with him an attitude toward American intervention similar to what would later come to be known as the Powell Doctrine, for its author, Colin Powell: simply put, if you were going to use the American military to end a dispute or displace a foreign government, then you had to have the American public firmly on your side and you had to be prepared to use overwhelming force to achieve your aims. Late that year, when his party's popular president, Ronald Reagan, proposed to extend the deployment of the Marines in Beirut, McCain was one of just 27 Republican representatives to object. The soldiers didn't have a clear mission, McCain said, nor enough numbers to affect the outcome of the conflict. (Ultimately, 241 American servicemen died when a suicide bomber struck the Marine compound there, and American forces were withdrawn.)

McCain strongly supported other operations, like the American-led invasion of tiny Grenada in 1983, as well as the first gulf war in 1991. But his first term in the Senate, which began in 1987, was marked mostly by extreme caution when it came to inserting American troops into foreign wars. As a newly arrived senator serving on the Armed Services Committee, McCain opposed Reagan's plan to fly the American flag on Kuwaiti oil tankers that were coming under fire from Iranian forces in the Persian Gulf.

In Aug., 1992, when the Bush administration and its allies were trying to get humanitarian aid to Bosnians caught in a multiethnic civil war, McCain broke with the majority of Republicans and voted against a resolution that authorized "demonstrations of force" in the region; he called it recklessly provocative. After the ambush in Somalia that claimed the lives of 18 American soldiers in Oct., 1993, a frustrated McCain introduced a resolution to bring the troops home immediately. Bob Dole, a staunch internationalist and then the Republican minority leader, persuaded other senators to defeat it.

McCain's critics have pointed to this early part of his political career to make the case that he later underwent a radical change in his philosophy, veering from a cautious approach to military force to a more hawkish, even bellicose mentality. His own aides, meanwhile, contend that McCain's philosophy has been entirely constant; they say his opposition to limited and ill-defined operations like Somalia and Bosnia wasn't at all inconsistent with his willingness, later, to use overwhelming force against a tyrant like Saddam Hussein.

The problem with these narratives is that neither reflects the context of the time. As two former national security officials in the Clinton administration, Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, explain compellingly in *America Between the Wars*, a book to be published next month, the period between the cold war and the war on terror—the 90s, roughly speaking—was a decade when foreign-policy thinkers across the ideological spectrum were groping about in darkness, trying to feel out the limits of American power and to balance the twin risks of action and inaction. During that time, the United States bounced from one unforeseen crisis to another, undertaking a military intervention every 18 months, on average—a staggering pace compared with that of the years that came before. Old ideological alliances in Washington were shattered and reformed, as pacifists lined up with conservative isolationists to battle liberal hawks and neoconservatives. New terms—"failed state," "humanitarian intervention," "ethnic cleansing"—entered the American lexicon. It's fair to say, then, that McCain did evolve in his views on when and how to use American force over the course of the decade, but it's misleading to separate his evolution from the larger transformation that was happening all around him.

During the cold war, the guiding framework for military intervention was built around a pretty straightforward set of questions: were American forces needed to stop the expansion of Soviet ideology or territory, and if so, were the potential casualties worth the risk? When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989, however, that framework disappeared almost overnight. Ecstatic policy makers slashed the size of the military and hoped for a "peace dividend." In a famous article in 1989, Francis Fukuyama posited that we were witnessing "the end of history"; from that time forward, the theory went, mankind would drift inexorably away from totalitarianism toward individual freedom and democracy. Fukuyama didn't actually advocate that the United States retreat from its assertive global role, but that's what many in Washington—and especially conservatives—chose to hear. The long war was over, and America could now focus on defending its own borders, using technologies like missile defense, rather than sending its soldiers abroad to "police the world."

McCain explicitly rejected this idea, and yet he wasn't eager to commit American troops to humanitarian missions that could easily turn into military nightmares like Somalia. For him, as for others, the defining dilemma of this new terrain

was Bosnia. In July 1995, after years of debate in Washington about how to stop Serbian forces from wiping out the Bosnian Muslims, the Serbs overran the town of Srebrenica and, while Dutch peacekeepers stood by, mowed down thousands of Muslim boys and men. Coming not long after the mass killings in Rwanda, the slaughter in Srebrenica again brought the moral implications of inaction home to American politicians—especially those who, like McCain, previously opposed armed intervention.

NATO responded with a series of airstrikes against Bosnian Serbs, which ultimately pushed the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, to negotiate a settlement to the war. Clinton then urged Congress to approve the deployment of 20,000 American troops to help enforce the agreement. At the time, McCain was supporting the presidential campaign of his friend Phil Gramm, who was running against Dole in the Republican primaries. Gramm opposed the intervention, and he pleaded with McCain to stand by him; instead, this time, McCain decided to partner with Dole to ensure passage of the supporting resolution, stifling significant Republican opposition. It was a turning point, both for McCain and American consensus as a whole. "The Bosnian intervention was life-changing for a lot of people," Bob Kerrey told me. "It caused even some liberals to go from opposing intervention to supporting it."

Throughout the late '90s, McCain criticized what he called Clinton's "feckless photo-op foreign policy," but he also emerged as an important bulwark for the administration against Republicans who reflexively opposed Clinton's every move as commander in chief. McCain strongly supported airstrikes against Sudan and Afghanistan, in retaliation for terrorist attacks on two American Embassies, and against Iraq, where Saddam Hussein was obstructing weapons inspectors. In 1999, McCain took the lead in supporting the bombing of Serbia to prevent another genocide in Kosovo. His tone had changed considerably since the days before Srebrenica. "Our interests and values converge clearly here," McCain said in a speech from the Senate floor. "It seems clear to me that Milosevic knows no limits to his inhumanity and will keep slaughtering until even the most determined opponent of American involvement in this conflict is convinced to drop that opposition."

By the time McCain ran for president in 2000, he was the one arguing in debates for a more robust military presence in humanitarian crises, while George W. Bush forswore "nation building" and vowed a more "humble" foreign policy. During that campaign, McCain introduced the closest thing he had found to a doctrine for foreign intervention: the "rogue-state rollback," under which he proposed arming and training internal forces that might ultimately overthrow menacing regimes in countries like Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

McCain's more ambitious view of American power made him a natural ally of neoconservative thinkers like William Kristol, the editor of the fledgling *Weekly Standard* (now a *New York Times* columnist), and Robert Kagan of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Empowered during the Reagan era, the neocons were largely shoved aside during the '90s by the more isolationist, anti-Clinton voices who dominated Republican politics. By the time McCain expanded his circle of influence to include Kristol and other neocons in the late '90s, they had rallied around a single unifying cause: the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. In 1998, McCain was one of the sponsors of the Iraq Liberation Act, signed into law by Bill Clinton, which officially changed American policy from containing Hussein to deposing him, and he became a leading figure in the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, a lobbying group founded by Randy Scheunemann, who is now his chief foreign policy adviser. McCain met with Ahmad Chalabi, the smooth Iraqi dissident who was a favorite of the neocons, and supported him publicly.

After the terrorist attacks of 2001 and the sudden elevation of Al Qaeda as a defining national security threat, McCain never had any doubt that Iraq, with its supposed capability to unleash or share weapons of mass destruction, posed an existential threat to the United States. Reading his statements from the time, there is no indication that he ever judged the invasion of Iraq by the standard he had used earlier in his career—whether it had the potential to become another Vietnam. Instead, as American troops swarmed Baghdad, McCain repeatedly compared Hussein to Adolf Hitler and predicted that the occupation of Iraq would be remembered in much the same way that history celebrated the liberation and rebuilding of Europe and Japan.

I arranged to talk with McCain during the last week of April, before a fund-raising event at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Tampa. When he strode, an hour late, into the conference room his campaign had reserved, his gait was rushed and purposeful and his manner decidedly businesslike. Having survived the sadism of the Vietcong and, more recently, skin cancer, McCain these days shows the wear of his 71 years. His face is more topographically interesting than it was when he first ran for president eight years ago, the skin folding into small craters and valleys as it runs into his neckline. His eyes look warier and less mischievous than they did back then. You can imagine, looking at him, how McCain spent much of these last few years: beseeching and indulging Republican power brokers, many of whom he does not like, all the while tolerating their lectures, bridling his infamous temper, keeping the irritation pent up. Perhaps repression exacts its cost.

Sitting down at the end of a long granite table, he greeted me warmly, and then, before I could ask a question or even introduce the subject at hand, he dove headlong into a five-minute soliloquy. He told me that he had just driven in from the airport on Eisenhower Boulevard, and that Eisenhower was a man he very much admired, because Eisenhower understood the costs of war and strove to keep America out of it. He then made reference to a "rather hysterical" column by Fareed Zakaria in that morning's Washington Post about McCain's views on foreign policy. His voice was tight and measured. "I've seen other stories and I've seen comments about my national-security speech," McCain said, referring to an address he gave in Los Angeles a few weeks earlier. "The story line is as follows: 'McCain's not the same McCain. He's changed, and now he's become a hawk, and he is dramatically different from what he was.'" He recited this narrative as if repeating the nonsensical words of dullards. "And anybody is free to write whatever they want and form whatever opinions they want to form. But facts are facts. And the fact is that I know war, and I know the tragedy of war. And no one hates war more than veterans."

From here, McCain went on to list for me some of the military actions he supported (Grenada, Panama) and some that he opposed (Beirut, Somalia). He had always followed the same set of values, he said, grounded in the premise that all people, not just Americans, were created equal and had inalienable rights. And when America could intervene militarily to further those values around the world without needless sacrifice in lives and money, he was all for it, and where we couldn't, he was not, and there was nothing extreme about that.

"As far as people who advise me," McCain went on, though I still hadn't asked a question, "probably one of my most trusted advisers for the last 30 years is Henry Kissinger, not known as a hawk or a neocon." McCain infused the word with sarcasm. "I also remember the days when Ronald Reagan was portrayed as a hawk and a neocon. I remember the near hysteria in response to his 'tear down this wall.' I remember the 'Oh, you can't do that, when you call the Soviets an evil empire.' I remember all those things. Same people who are now saying—" He stopped himself midsentence, then began again. "I'm always open to new ideas and new thoughts, but my principles were grounded many years ago in places like the National War College and other places where I have learned and studied and talked to people I admire and respect. "So," McCain said finally, "with that preface, I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have, and again, it's always good to be with you."

It's rare to see a presidential candidate vent in quite this way, but clearly some of the criticism over his policies on Iraq and foreign policy in general—mild criticism, to this point—had wounded McCain. When he looks in the mirror, he does not see a reckless or belligerent leader, and yet that was the man his detractors claimed to see. A few weeks earlier, the liberal radio host Ed Schultz made headlines by calling McCain a "warmonger" and then happily repeating the charge on CNN. As McCain and I talked, the Democratic National Committee had begun broadcasting an ad that repeatedly showed him saying at a New Hampshire campaign event that he would be fine with keeping American troops in Iraq for 100 years. The quote had been ripped out of context—he went on to say that such a troop presence would be possible only without casualties, in the same way that American soldiers had remained quietly for decades in South Korea and Europe—but it had already become a staple of Democratic attacks, and McCain could expect to see it about half a million more times before November.

McCain's major Los Angeles address seemed to have been written in part to reverse this perception. The speech began with McCain's hatred of war, then moved on to stress his commitment to multilateralism and to ending global warming. McCain called, again, for a "League of Democracies" to foster cooperation among free nations. Only in the final minutes did he get around to even mentioning Iraq. Clearly, the campaign was starting to worry about McCain being Reaganized in this way—that is, of having the fall campaign become a referendum on whether he was stable and rational enough to be trusted with the nation's nuclear codes.

McCain described himself, in that speech and in his preamble to our interview, as a "realistic idealist"—a phrase meant to bridge a divide inside his party. While there haven't really been neat camps into which you can divide Republicans in the post-cold-war era, some rough labels did emerge throughout the '90s. On one extreme were the isolationists, led most noisily by Pat Buchanan, who essentially believed that the end of the cold war should also have meant the end of America's military involvement in distant lands. In the middle were the group known as realists, who were willing to use force, but only where the country's vital strategic interests were at stake and where an international consensus could be forged. The realists identified with leaders like Kissinger and James Baker, the former secretary of state, who famously declared of Bosnia, "We do not have a dog in that fight." And then, on the other end of the spectrum, you had the idealists, including most of those known as neocons. The idealists believed that American force could and should be used to promote American values abroad, whether or not the countries involved posed an immediate danger to national security and whether or not the rest of the world agreed.

McCain has never been confused for an isolationist, but neither can he be confined to either of the other factions. One reason is temperamental; McCain just doesn't like labels, and he isn't very good at sticking to orthodoxies—a personality quirk he has tried hard to control during the campaign. "He's not a guy who drinks Kool-Aid easily," says Gary Hart, the former Democratic senator who was once close enough to McCain to have been a groomsman in his wedding. "He's suspicious of any group who sees the world that simply." Lorne Craner, a foreign-policy thinker who worked for McCain in the House and Senate in the 1980s, told me that McCain had a standing rule in his office then. All meetings were to be limited to half an hour, unless they were with either of two advisers: Jeane Kirkpatrick, the Reaganite idealist, or Brent Scowcroft, the former general who was a leader in the realist wing. McCain loved to hear from both of them at length.

It's clear, though, that on the continuum that separates realists from idealists, McCain sits much closer to the idealist perspective. McCain has long been chairman of the International Republican Institute, run by Craner, which exists to promote democratic reforms in closed societies. He makes a point of meeting with dissidents when he visits countries like Georgia and Uzbekistan and has championed the cause of Aung San Suu Kyi, the imprisoned leader of the Burmese resistance. Most important, as he made clear in his preamble to our interview, McCain considers national values, and not strategic interests, to be the guiding force in foreign policy. America exists, in McCain's view, not simply to safeguard the prosperity and safety of those who live in it but also to spread democratic values and human rights to other parts of the planet.

McCain argues that his brand of idealism is actually more pragmatic in a post-9/11 world than the hard realism of the cold war. He rejects as outdated, for instance, a basic proposition of cold-war realists like Kissinger and Baker: that stability is always found in the relationship between states. Realists have long presumed that the country's security is defined by the stability of its alliances with the governments of other countries, even if those governments are odious; by this thinking, your interests can sometimes be served by befriending leaders who share none of your democratic values. McCain, by contrast, maintains that in a world where oppressive governments can produce fertile ground for rogue groups like Al Qaeda to recruit and prosper, forging bonds with tyrannical regimes is often more likely to harm American interests than to help them.

As we spoke in Tampa, I asked McCain if it was true, as his friend Joe Lieberman and others suggested to me, that he had been brought to a more idealist way of thinking partly by the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica. "I think so, I think so," he said, nodding. "And Darfur today. I feel strongly about Darfur, and yet, and this is where the realist side comes in, how do we effectively stop the genocide in Darfur?" He seemed to be genuinely wrestling with the question. "You know the complications with a place that's bigger, I guess, than the size of Texas, and it's hard to know who the Janjaweed is, who are the killers, who are the victims. It's all jumbled up.

"So I've always tried to make a case for the realist side," he continued. "And I think it was pretty clear that in Kosovo, we could probably benefit the situation fairly effectively and fairly quickly. And yet I look at Darfur, and I still look at Rwanda, to some degree, and think, How could we have gone in there and stopped that slaughter?"

McCain is known for being a gut thinker, averse to overarching doctrines or theory. But as we talked, I tried to draw out of him some template for knowing when military intervention made sense—an answer, essentially, to the question that has plagued policy makers confronting international crises for the last 20 years. McCain has said that the invasion of Iraq was justified, even absent the weapons of mass destruction he believed were there, because of Hussein's affront to basic human values. Why then, I asked McCain, shouldn't we go into Zimbabwe, where, according to that morning's paper, allies of the despotic president, Robert Mugabe, were rounding up his political opponents and preparing to subvert the results of the country's recent national election? How about sending soldiers into Myanmar, formerly Burma, where Aung San Suu Kyi remained under house arrest by a military junta?

"I think in the case of Zimbabwe, it's because of our history in Africa," McCain said thoughtfully. "Not so much the United States but the Europeans, the colonialist history in Africa. The government of South Africa has obviously not been effective, to say the least, in trying to affect the situation in Zimbabwe, and one reason is that they don't want to be tarred with the brush of modern colonialism. So that's a problem I think we will continue to have on the continent of Africa. If you send in Western military forces, then you risk the backlash from the people, from the legacy that was left in Africa because of the era of colonialism."

The United States faced a similar obstacle in Myanmar, McCain went on, shaking his head sadly. "First of all, you'd have to gauge the opinion of the people over time, whether you'd be greeted as liberators or as occupiers," McCain said. "I would be concerned about the possibility that if it were mishandled, we might see an insurgent movement." He talked a bit about Aung San Suu Kyi, whom he called "one of the great figures of the 20th century," but then wondered aloud if the American public would support a military intervention.

"It goes back to the Vietnam thing," McCain told me. "I'm just not sure the American people would support a military engagement in Burma, no matter how justified the cause. And I can't tell you exactly when it would be over. And I can't tell you exactly what the reaction of the people there would be." Most American politicians, of course, would immediately dismiss the idea of sending the military into Zimbabwe or Myanmar as tangential to American interests and therefore impossible to justify. McCain didn't make this argument. He seemed to start from a default position that moral reasons alone could justify the use of American force, and from there he considered the reasons it might not be feasible to do so. In other words, to paraphrase Robert Kennedy, while most politicians looked at injustice in a foreign land and asked, "Why intervene?" McCain seemed to look at that same injustice and ask himself, "Why not?"

"I think we've learned some lessons," McCain told me. "One is that the American people have to be willing to support it. But two, we need to work more in an international way to try to beneficially affect the situation. And you have to convince America and the world that every single avenue has been exhausted before we go in militarily. And we better think not a day later or a week later, but a year and 5 years and 10 years later. Because the attention span, unfortunately, of the American people, although pretty remarkable in some ways, is not inexhaustible."

WHAT WAS STARTLING about this conversation was that, while McCain was talking about the dangers of intervening in a Zimbabwe or a Burma, he might just as well have been talking about the invasion of Iraq. Didn't that country, too, have a colonial history that had been carelessly considered, to say the least? Didn't the war's proponents fail to plan more than a few weeks out or to ask the hard questions about how their soldiers might be greeted in the streets?

"Yes, I agree with you," McCain said, nodding again, when I put this question to him directly. "It was one of the penalties that we paid. But remember, the major reason to go into Iraq were the weapons of mass destruction. That was the conventional wisdom at the time, not only held by the United States but certainly many other nations."

This was, of course, an arguable point, and that argument, with the benefit of hindsight, will probably continue to rage in Washington and in political-science departments around the country for decades. But the invasion of Iraq is now five years past, and the question at the heart of the 2008 campaign—or one of them, anyway—is bound to revolve around a more current dilemma. Why, given all the lessons of military intervention that McCain himself had just laid out, does he think it still makes sense to stay? Having bemoaned the impact of Vietnam on the nation, why is McCain—alone among the veterans of that war in the Senate—determined to settle in for another long and costly counterinsurgency?

The parallels between Vietnam and Iraq can be too readily overstated. The very nature of the wars is markedly different, for better or worse; Vietnam was a Communist uprising against an autocratic government, while Iraq represents a multiparty, ethnic conflict more similar to that of the Balkans. The casualties, to this point, aren't nearly analogous, either. The United States lost some 58,000 soldiers in Vietnam, compared with a death toll, after five years in Iraq, of about 4,000.

Still, in this current conflict there are echoes of Vietnam that have grown too loud to easily ignore. Both conflicts were entered into under pretenses that were later widely discredited. Reports from the front in Iraq depict American soldiers who find it difficult to discern friends from enemies as they try to navigate an unfamiliar culture, language and landscape. American leaders are talking yet again about transferring responsibility for the war to local forces and the police, but Iraqization doesn't seem to be faring a whole lot better than Vietnamization did; last month, some 1,000 Iraqi troops deserted during a crucial battle in Basra. Veterans return from their tours with missing limbs and deep psychological trauma. Pro-war officials frame the conflict as a central front in a longer struggle against an evil ideology, and they warn ominously of the proliferation of terrorist cells that will ensue if the insurgents aren't defeated in Iraq, just as the architects of Vietnam once promised a lethal fall of dominoes throughout Southeast Asia.

Like the war planners themselves, McCain made some assumptions before the invasion that turned out to be seriously flawed. He spoke in favor of the de-Baathification of the Iraqi government and military, a decision now widely considered to have been a disaster, and he predicted that American soldiers would be hailed as conquering heroes in Baghdad. But to his credit, he was also the first of the Iraq hawks to sound the alarm on the flailing occupation, singling out Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld for stinging criticism. After visiting Baghdad and Basra in the summer of 2003, McCain labeled Rumsfeld's military strategy a failure and began a long and lonely crusade for an influx of new troops to secure the capital and outlying areas—the tactic that came to be known as "the surge" when the president finally changed course three and a half years later and ordered another 20,000 troops into the theater.

The surge is unpopular with a lot of military leaders, mainly because of what they call "strategic stretch"—the resulting shortage of troops available to fight unforeseen conflicts in other parts of the globe. (There are now about 160,000

American troops tied down in Iraq, and those troops are already facing both extended tours and shorter intervals in between redeployments.) Some of the Pentagon's top commanders—most recently Richard Cody, the vice chief of staff of the Army, who testified before Congress last month—have voiced concern about the military's overall readiness at a time when the troop level in Afghanistan may soon reach 40,000 and when leading politicians, McCain prominently among them, have vowed to use military action if necessary to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weaponry. McCain maintains that the military can increase its ranks by offering cash and other incentives to recruits, but it has already significantly lowered its recruiting standards and may not be able to stoop much lower. As Gen. James Jones, the former NATO commander and a close friend of McCain's, told me, "You can buy the numbers of troops, but you may not be able to buy the quality you need."

Even so, McCain insists that the surge and the Pentagon's new counterinsurgency strategy, which centers on a "hearts and minds" approach, can ultimately drive out insurgents and reduce American casualties in Iraq to virtually nothing. "Is it long and hard and tough? Yes," McCain told me. "Has Al Qaeda been beaten? No, but they certainly have been diminished." (To the dismay of many of his critics, McCain often uses "Al Qaeda" as a shorthand for the Iraqi insurgent group that calls itself Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia.) "And it's obviously not just Al Qaeda," he went on. "It's Shiite militias. It's former Baathists who are still unhappy. It's corruption within the police that we have to worry about."

"All I can say is, the surge is succeeding," he said. "If someone wants to disagree with that, they're free to, but I have statistics—whether they be instances of violence, whether it be U.S. casualties, whatever it may be—that prove that this new tactic is succeeding. So I'm willing to stick with it."

A lot of McCain's fellow veterans in Washington seem confounded by what they see as his obvious failure to absorb the lessons of Vietnam. Jack Murtha, the Pennsylvania congressman and decorated Vietnam vet who became an early and outspoken critic of the war, told me that watching Iraq unfold convinced him, for the first time, that American troops could never have prevailed in Vietnam, no matter how long they stayed. "These kinds of wars cannot be won militarily," he said flatly. Another Democratic congressman with a Purple Heart, Mike Thompson of California, told me that promises of victory in Iraq sounded painfully familiar. "When I was in Vietnam, the members of Congress knew that we weren't going to be there forever, that we would have to redeploy, and in the time between when they knew that and when we redeployed, a lot of boys were injured and killed," Thompson said. "I think Senator McCain has been an outstanding public servant, but I think he's wrong on this."

In McCain's mind, however, there is a different kind of symmetry linking Vietnam and Iraq. Talking to him about it, you come to understand that he has, indeed, applied lessons from the first war to the second—but they are the lessons that he learned not in combat or in the Hanoi Hilton but in the pages of the books he read at the National War College in the 1970s. To McCain, the first four years of the Iraq war, as prosecuted by the Bush administration, seem strikingly similar to the years in Vietnam before Creighton Abrams arrived on the scene.

"It's a little bit eerily reminiscent, in that search-and-destroy is basically the same tactic that Rumsfeld, Casey, Sanchez, et al. employed," McCain told me, referring to George Casey and Ricardo Sanchez, the two previous generals to command coalition forces in Iraq. "Go out, kill bad people and then go back to base. That's basically what search-and-destroy was. We obviously failed to learn that lesson in history." In McCain's war, then, David Petraeus, the more innovative general who took over in 2007, is now playing the part of Abrams, pursuing a winning strategy that needs only the patience of the American people and their government to ultimately succeed.

"After nearly four years of a failed strategy, the difference in one year is dramatic," McCain says. "If they make that same progress in the next year," he predicts, "I think it's going to be quite impactful on American public opinion, as well as, more importantly, events on the ground."

The lesson McCain drew from Vietnam all those years ago is that you cannot turn your back on a war when at last you figure out how to win it, and he is determined not to let that happen again. Far from having failed to internalize the legacy of Vietnam, as some of his friends in the Senate suspect, he is, if anything, entirely driven by it. "I don't think you can isolate John's views in Iraq from his experience in Vietnam," Gary Hart told me. "Whether he is aware of it or not—and I want to tread carefully here, because I don't like psychologizing people—I don't think he can separate those things in his mind. In a way, John is refighting the Vietnam War."

JOHN MCCAIN HAS NEVER been very good at political artifice. Like every politician I've known, McCain will sometimes surrender to the cheap ploy or prevarication when the moment demands it, but it is often with a smirk or a wince, some hard-to-miss signal that he knows he's up to no good. In the more serious instances when he knows he has put expedience over principle (his reversal on the Bush tax cuts just in time for the campaign season may well turn out to be

one of them), he has an almost therapeutic need to acknowledge it later, as he did when he told South Carolinians, weeks after losing the brutal primary there in 2000, that he had been wrong to defend the Confederate flag just to win their votes. And so, whether you agree with him or not, there is a notable honesty to his position on the war in Iraq. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have spent the primary season competing over who's more eager to ship out of Iraq, but everyone associated with their campaigns knows that withdrawal will not happen quickly or without peril. McCain's pitch, on the other hand, is as straightforward as it is stripped of political charm. We made a mess in Iraq, he says, but it's our mess now, and we have to stay on and fix it.

Ultimately, McCain is relying on the same strategy to achieve success both in Iraq and in the November election. In each endeavor, McCain is staking everything on the notion that the public, having seen the success of a new military strategy, can be convinced that the war is, in fact, winnable and worth the continued sacrifice. Absent that national retrenching, McCain admits that this war, like the one in Vietnam, is probably doomed. Near the end of our conversation in Tampa, I asked him if he would be willing to change course on Iraq if the violence there started to rise again. "Oh, we'd have to," he replied. "It's not so much what McCain would do. American public opinion will not tolerate such a thing."

The problem is that there's actually no evidence to suggest that a reduction in casualties in Iraq will translate into a greater public tolerance for a protracted engagement there. According to Gallup, Americans' confidence that the surge is improving the situation on the ground rose sharply between last summer and this spring; 40 percent of those polled in March said the surge is working, compared with 22 percent last July, while 38 percent said it was making no difference, down from 51 percent last year.

For McCain, that's no small measure of vindication. And yet, during the same period, even as optimism about the new strategy grew, the percentage of Americans who say they want a timetable for gradual withdrawal—those, in other words, who agreed primarily with the two Democratic candidates—remained almost exactly the same, rising to 41 percent from 39 percent. (Another 18 percent have consistently said they want to get out right away.) Nor has the success of the surge in reducing American casualties done a thing to convince the public that the invasion made sense in the first place. According to another Gallup poll released a few weeks ago, 63 percent of Americans now believe it was a mistake to go to war—an all-time high.

It doesn't help that McCain has never put his argument for staying into some larger context that might explain what he really means by "winning" the war in Iraq. If you ask him to define victory, his answer is that Americans soldiers will have stopped dying, and that the Iraqi military and government will be functioning on their own. That would be a great day, no doubt, but surely the overarching purpose of a war can't be to stop more soldiers from dying in it. (On the one notable occasion when McCain tried to put a more hopeful spin on progress in Iraq, during a visit there last spring, the result was an unqualified public-relations debacle: strolling through an outdoor market in Baghdad market wearing a flak jacket and surrounded by what seemed like a regiment of U.S. soldiers, McCain declared that life for Iraqis was at last returning to normal. The next day, by some accounts, 21 Shiite workers at the market were abducted and killed.) McCain's main reason for continuing on in Iraq seems to be that we're already there and must not accept defeat, and that's an argument that probably feels all too familiar to many Americans who lived through a decade of aimless war in Vietnam, to no discernible end.

Undaunted, McCain soldiers on toward November and what could be his final campaign. When he ran in 2000, his philosophy of national greatness—the importance, as he always puts it, of "serving a cause greater than one's self"—found its expression in ideas like national service and campaign reform, proposals that independents and even many liberals could embrace. For a time then, McCain, adrift within his own party, was almost certainly the most popular politician in America. This time, his theme of selflessness is bound up, irrevocably, with Bush's unpopular war. Democrats, alarmed over their own disunity, can hardly wait to start pummeling McCain with Iraq. While I was working on this article, the Center for American Progress, the left's leading policy center in Washington, took the liberty of sending over a 10-page litany of McCain's selected comments on Iraq since 2002, delineated by helpful subheadings like "The War Begins—Rosy Outlook" and "The Critical Time Is Always Right Around the Corner."

McCain shrugs this off and insists that he will never waver from his support of the war, no matter what the personal cost. "As I said a year ago," he told me, "I would rather lose a campaign than a war." If he doesn't make the most persuasive argument of his life, he risks losing both.

20080818-06	21:07	SteveB	To: Keith Olbermann; "John McCain, Grow up!"
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Dear Keith:

You were at the height of your powers tonight when you railed for Senator McCain to "Grow up!"

This was the greatest thing I'd seen and heard since you chastised Senator Clinton for sort of calling for, or hoping for, Senator Obama's death!

You are the best! I love it! Please, please keep up the great work! Thank you!

—SteveB

20080819-01 14:41 SteveB 2nd Amendment

Dear Pat & SteveM,

PS—Do you know why the provision about the right to own guns is in the Constitution? Because the founding fathers did not trust the government...they didn't trust any government. Rightfully so, in my humble opinion.

They wanted citizens to have the firepower to overthrow their government when it became too corrupt to serve the people—as it has now largely become.

Unfortunately, they didn't envision Howitzers, fighters, helicopters, bombers, nuclear submarines, or A-bombs, so we citizens don't really have enough firepower any more to accomplish a change of government using our hand guns, rifles, and shotguns, yet this is the reason we were given the right to own them. Maybe with the media as allies...???

But we still have the ballot, my friend. I hope you will use it wisely, because this country that I love and that I want to pass to my children has become unbelievably f*cked-up, and I think it should be all right for someone, anyone, to have the guts to say so, and to want to change things!

20080819-02 16:20 SteveB "Reality Bites Again"

Dear SteveM,

Once again, just like with the energy crisis, etc., etc., the old politics that McCain is so much a part of, has led to nothing but failure and American decline. It is time to make it illegal for politicians like McCain and their campaigns to be bought and sold by the big power brokers. We need to kick-out all the traditional politicians in Washington and gain our freedom and security back! Then and only then will the labels "conservative" and "liberal" be able to recover any meaning.

McCain is part of the problem, not the solution!

The Daily Reckoning PRESENTS: The feeble American response to Russia's assertion of power in the Caucasus of Central Asia was appropriate, since, according to James Howard Kunstler, the United States' claims of influence in that part of the world are laughable. Read on...

"Reality Bites Again" by James Howard Kunstler, Kunstler.com

Aug. 19, 2008,

(<http://www.24hgold.com/english/contributor.aspx?article=1489669978G10020&contributor=James+Howard+Kunstler>)

(The truth about the Georgia-Russia Conflict.)

The U.S. had taken advantage of temporary confusion in Russia, during the ten-year-long post-Soviet collapse interval, and set up a client government in Georgia, complete with military advisors, sales of weapons, and even the promise of club membership in the Western alliance known as NATO. These blandishments were all in the service of the Baku-to-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which was designed specifically to drain the oil region around the Caspian Basin with an outlet on the Mediterranean, avoiding unfriendly nations all along the way.

At the time this gambit was first set up, in the early 1990s, there was some notion (or wish, really) among the so-called western powers that the Caspian would provide an end-run around OPEC and the Arabs, as well as the Persians, and deliver all the oil that the U.S. and Europe would ever need—a foolish wish and a dumb gambit, as things have turned out.

For one thing, the latterly explorations of this very old oil region—first opened to drilling in the 19th century—proved somewhat disappointing. U.S. officials had been touting it as like unto “another Saudi Arabia” but the oil actually produced from the new drilling areas of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and the other Stans turned out to be preponderantly heavy-and-sour crudes, in smaller quantities than previously dreamed-of, and harder to transport across the extremely challenging terrain to even get to the pipeline head in Baku.

Meanwhile, Russia got its house in order under the non-senile, non-alcoholic Vladimir Putin, and woke up along about 2007 to find itself the leading oil and natural gas producer in the world. Among the various consequences of this was Russia’s reemergence as a new kind of world power—an energy resource power, with the energy destiny of Europe pretty much in its hands. Also, meanwhile, the U.S. had set up other client states in the ring of former Soviet republics along Russia’s southern underbelly, complete with U.S. military bases, while fighting active engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, if this wasn’t the dumbest, vainest move in modern geopolitical history!

It’s one thing that U.S. foreign policy wonks imagined that Russia would remain in a coma forever, but the idea that we could encircle Russia strategically with defensible bases in landlocked mountainous countries halfway around the world...? You have to ask what were they smoking over at the Pentagon and the CIA and the NSC?

So, this asinine policy has now come to grief. Not only does Russia stand to gain control over the Baku-to-Ceyhan pipeline, but we now have every indication that they will bring the states on its southern flank back into an active sphere of influence, and there is really not a damn thing that the U.S. can pretend to do about it.

We could have spent the past ten years getting our own house in order—waking up to the obsolescence of our suburban life-style, scaling back on the Happy Motoring, reconnecting our cities with world-class passenger rail, creating wealth by producing things of value (instead of resorting to financial racketeering), protecting our borders, and taking the necessary measures to defend and update our own industries. Instead, we pi*sed our time and resources away. Nations do make tragic errors of the collective will. The cluelessness of George Bush is nothing less than a perfect metaphor for the failure of a whole generation. The Boomers will be identified as the generation that wrecked America.

So, as the vacation season winds down, this country greets a new reality. We miscalculated in Western and Central Asia. Russia still “owns” that part of the world. Are we going to extend our current land wars there into the even more distant and landlocked Stan-nations? At some point, as we face financial and military exhaustion, we have to ask ourselves if we can even successfully evacuate our personnel from the far-flung bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

This must be an equally sobering moment for Europe, and an additional reason for the recent plunge in the relative value of the Euro, for Europe is now at the mercy of Russia in terms of staying warm in the winter, running their kitchen stoves, and keeping the lights on. Russia also exerts substantial financial leverage over the U.S. in all the dollars and securitized U.S. debt paper it holds. In effect, Russia can shake the U.S. banking system at will now by threatening to dump its dollar holdings. The American banking system may not need a shove from Russia to fall on its face. It’s effectively dead now, just lurching around zombie-like from one loan “window” to the next pretending to “borrow” capital—while handing over shreds of its moldy clothing as “collateral” to the Federal Reserve. The entire U.S., beyond the banks, is becoming a land of the walking dead. Business is dying, homeownership has become a death dance, whole regions are turning into wastelands of “for sale” signs, empty parking lots, vacant buildings, and dashed hopes. And all this beats a path directly to a failure of collective national imagination. We really don’t know what’s going on.

The fantasy that we can sustain our influence nine thousand miles away, when we can’t even get our act together in Ohio is just a dark joke. One might state categorically that it would be a salubrious thing for America to knock off all its vaunted “dreaming” and just wake up.

20080819-03	16:54	SteveM	Re: “Reality Bites Again”
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Dear SteveB,

American's Creed is:

"I believe in the United States of America, as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principals of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies."—William Tyler Page

Stop reading the blame-America-first blogs.

20080819-04	17:05	Dick	Fw: The Bakken Formation; Oil, Energy
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[Source of original email unknown. See Jun 25, 2009 response. —SteveB]

Verify here: <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1911>.

don't even have to check with Scopes to see if this is true...Just put in "Bakken Formation" on GOOGLE and stand by for the load of info that will descend on you!...me.

1. Ever heard of the Bakken Formation?

GOOGLE it. It will blow your mind. The U. S. Geological Service issued a report in April ('08) that only scientists and oilmen/women knew was coming, but man was it big. It was a revised report (hadn't been updated since '95) on how much oil was in this area of the western 2/3 of North Dakota; western South Dakota; and extreme eastern Montana ... check THIS out:

The Bakken is the largest domestic oil discovery since Alaska's Prudhoe Bay, and has the potential to eliminate all American dependence on foreign oil. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates it at 503 billion barrels. Even if just 10% of the oil is recoverable... at \$107 a barrel, we're looking at a resource base worth more than \$5.3 trillion. 'When I first briefed legislators on this, you could practically see their jaws hit the floor. They had no idea.' says Terry Johnson, the Montana Legislature's financial analyst.

'This sizable find is now the highest-producing onshore oil field found in the past 56 years,' reports *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. It's a formation known as the Williston Basin , but is more commonly referred to as the 'Bakken.' And it stretches from Northern Montana, through North Dakota and into Canada . For years, U. S. oil exploration has been considered a dead end. Even the 'Big Oil' companies gave up searching for major oil wells decades ago. However, a recent technological breakthrough has opened up the Bakken's massive reserves... and we now have access of up to 500 billion barrels. And because this is light, sweet oil, those billions of barrels will cost Americans just \$16 PER BARREL! That's enough crude to fully fuel the American economy for 41 years straight.

And if THAT didn't throw you on the floor, then this next one should - because it's from TWO YEARS AGO, people!

2. U. S. Oil Discovery- Largest Reserve in the World!

Stansberry Report Online — Apr. 20, 2006: "Hidden 1,000 feet beneath the surface of the Rocky Mountains lies the largest untapped oil reserve in the world is more than 2 TRILLION barrels." On Aug. 8, 2005, President Bush mandated its extraction. They reported this stunning news: We have more oil inside our borders, than all the other proven reserves on earth. Here are the official estimates:

- 8 times as much oil as Saudi Arabia
- 18 times as much oil as Iraq
- 21 times as much oil as Kuwait
- 22 times as much oil as Iran
- 500 times as much oil as Yemen—and it's all right here in the Western United States.

HOW can this BE!? HOW can we NOT BE extracting this!? Because the democrats and leftwing republicans have blocked all efforts to help America become independent of foreign oil.

James Bartis, lead researcher with the study says we've got more oil in this very compact area than the entire Middle East -more than 2 TRILLION barrels. Untapped. That's more than all the proven oil reserves of crude oil in the world today, reports *The Denver Post*. Think 'OPEC' will drop its price - even with this find? Think again! It's all about the competitive marketplace, - it has to.

Got your attention/ire up yet? Hope so! Now, while you're thinking about it ... and hopefully P.O'd, do this:

3. Act!

Take 10 minutes and compose an e-mail; fax or good old-fashioned letter to all your friends and associates. Alert them to the fact that democrats and 'liberal' republicans have been and will continue to obstruct all plans to make America independent of foreign oil. The only solution is to vote all democrats and Marxist oriented republicans out of office. If you don't take a little time to do this, then you should stifle yourself the next time you want to complain about gas prices .. because by doing NOTHING, you've forfeited your right to complain.

[20080819-05](#) 17:17 Pat Re: 2nd Amendment

Dear SteveB,

I don't think the founding fathers meant to support armed insurrection. I think they put their faith in a revolution every 4 years called an "election". I think they would be appalled at what capitalism and it resultant corporation have done to the process. I personally don't think that democracy can properly exist in our form of capitalism. [I'm afraid you may be right about this last point, Pat. —SteveB]

[20080819-06](#) 17:27 SteveB Re: "Reality Bites Again"

Dear SteveM,

This is a bunch of cr*p and you know it. It is because I love my country that I want it to be better, as good as it used to be. The American people have so obviously been sold down the river by its politicians that things need to change. Wanting this change (or not wanting it, in your case) is no reflection whatsoever upon one's patriotism or love of America. That is the truth, my friend!

[20080819-07](#) 19:37 SteveM 1999 *Arizona Republic* Articles on John McCain (Chapts. 1-7), incl. The Keating Five

I remember the Keating Five. Do you remember the other four and their political affiliations? Yes, they are Democrats all!

In the end, McCain received only a mild rebuke from the Ethics Committee for exercising "poor judgment" for intervening with the federal regulators on behalf of Keating. Still, he felt tarred by the affair.

"The appearance of it was wrong," McCain said recently. "It's a wrong appearance when a group of senators appear in a meeting with a group of regulators, because it conveys the impression of undue and improper influence. And it was the wrong thing to do."

McCain noted that Bennett, the independent counsel, recommended that McCain and Glenn be dropped from the investigation.

"For the first time in history, the Ethics Committee overruled the recommendation of the independent counsel," McCain said. "I'm sure it had nothing to do with the fact that I was the only Republican of the five and the Democrats were in the majority (in the Senate)."

But McCain owns up to his mistake:

"I was judged eventually, after three years, of using, quote, poor judgment, and I agree with that assessment."

He was accused of improperly aiding Charles H. Keating, Jr., chairman of the failed Lincoln Savings and Loan Association, which was the target of an investigation by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB).

After a lengthy investigation, the Senate Ethics Committee determined in 1991 that Alan Cranston, Dennis DeConcini, and Donald Riegle had substantially and improperly interfered with the FHLBB in its investigation of Lincoln Savings. Senators John Glenn and John McCain were cleared of having acted improperly.

All five of the senators involved served out their terms. Only Glenn and McCain ran for re-election, and they were both re-elected.

Care to try again?

"Chapter I: What Is Honor?" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_I_1999.htm)

There is a grim determination to Sen. John McCain as he rises to address the Republican faithful. He moves stiffly through the heavy air of the gymnasium, his war injuries still evident.

There is his sore right knee, broken years ago when he ejected from a bomber over North Vietnam. There is his aching right shoulder, shattered by his captors. There is his hair, turned prematurely white by mistreatment and malnutrition.

Then there are his political wounds.

There is the edge McCain carries that led to angry outbursts with reporters during the Keating Five scandal. The defiant tone in his attacks on pork-barrel spending and calls for campaign-finance reform.

But for McCain, it's not about falling down. It's about getting up again.

Moments before he rose to speak, the lights had dimmed, and patriotic images had flashed on a screen: an American flag, a pilot in a flight suit, a senator shaking hands with President Reagan.

"At a time when America is searching for heroes to lead us," a narrator intoned, "it has the genuine article in John McCain."

Those are the scripted themes of McCain, 63, as he sets out on his carefully calculated campaign for the GOP nomination for president - genuine hero, proven leader, man of integrity in a wayward time.

But McCain is no comic-book hero, drawn in two dimensions.

He's sometimes driven by courage and duty, sometimes by anger and pride.

"I think life is a series of contradictions," said Jay Smith, who worked on McCain's first four campaigns. "Life is complex. Who among us is so simplistic that you can just pigeonhole?"

Certainly not McCain.

In recent years, he's become a champion of campaign-finance reform. More than a decade ago, he took free trips to the Bahamas with savings and loan tycoon Charles Keating. He continues to take big money from interests before his committees.

He's amassed a rogues' gallery of troublemaking former pals - Keating, Gary Hart, John Tower, Fife Symington, Duke Tully - who hardly square with his ambitions as a reformer.

As a senator, he's pilloried tobacco companies, though his wife owes her personal millions to beer sales.

He has romanced the national press while warring with Arizona reporters.

He prides himself on his personal integrity yet admits he wasn't faithful to his first wife, Carol, who was injured in a horrific car accident while McCain was in Vietnam.

He courts the veteran vote yet is despised among veterans who believe there are still POWs alive in southeast Asia.

He was hawkish on Kosovo, yet as a freshman congressman, he opposed Reagan's sending of Marines to Lebanon.

Some say McCain's seemingly principled positions - as on tobacco and campaign-finance reform - are all for show, helping him build his maverick image with a windmill tilt or two.

"In both instances (tobacco and campaign-finance reform), he took positions that were doomed to failure and stuck to them," said Grant Woods, former Arizona attorney general and an early McCain protégé.

"In terms of federal legislation, we're in the same position today that we were in five years ago. I wonder what the point of that is. If you truly want to accomplish something on the issue, you've got several ways to go, and this one has produced nothing - and by nothing, I mean nothing."

INTENSE, LIKABLE

Spend any time around McCain and you quickly find that he is well-read, intense, likable. He can talk Robinson Crusoe or Saturday Night Live. He can lead the bull session or just listen. One minute he is chatting about a Sports Illustrated story he read about Bobby Allison ("One of the greatest NASCAR drivers ever, and he's living on the charity of others") and the next he is shaking his head over World War I and the Battle of the Somme ("That's the argument for media coverage. They never would have put up with it").

While at the Naval Academy, McCain let some subjects slide, spending his time reading history and literature and, of course, howling at the moon. He graduated fifth from the bottom of his class.

McCain's sense of humor, sometimes indelicate, gets him in trouble. Back when he entered politics, he once referred to the Arizona retirement community of Leisure World as "Seizure World." More recently, it was a crude joke about Chelsea Clinton that raised eyebrows.

Still, McCain can be funny.

On a recent trip to South Carolina, state director Trey Walker was stumbling his way along the aisle of the moving campaign bus.

"Trey," McCain said, "is on a work-release program."

During an appearance at a Gridiron Club dinner in Washington, McCain appeared at the podium, wearing a jacket ridiculously covered with fake ribbons and medals, and cracked:

"The question I ask myself every morning while shaving in front of the mirror is: OK, John, you're an incredible war hero, an inspiration to all Americans. But what qualifies you to be president of the United States?"

From staffers, McCain inspires a loyalty not often found in Washington. He treats them like extended family, always remembering a child's name or a sick relative. Some have been with McCain for more than a decade.

"It's fun to be around him," longtime aide Deb Gullett says. "He cuts up all the time. If you screw up, you feel worse about it than he does."

Some have snickered about aides combing McCain's hair and dusting off his suit jacket before television appearances. What they do not realize is that McCain cannot do it himself - his shoulders are too damaged.

For exercise, McCain walks. He's hiked nearly every trail in Arizona, from the well-known to the obscure. He often drags along his family and staff.

As with everything else, McCain is a relentless hiker. On a recent trip to Lake Powell, he led his party through a slot canyon where the water was almost over their heads.

Gullett jokingly dubbed it "The McCain Death March" and vowed not to return.

In all this hubbub, McCain's family, including wife Cindy, stays in the background. Cindy has no interest in politics. She has agreed to travel with McCain once or twice a month, but she'd clearly rather be at home raising her four children, ages 14, 13, 11 and 8.

"My job is at home," she says simply.

After a well-publicized bout with an addiction to painkillers in the early 1990s, Cindy no longer reads the newspaper. She keeps up with news by listening to the radio.

These days, Cindy and John go weeks without seeing each other. It's a sacrifice they've made to raise their children in Phoenix.

"There are times I wish he were there on that particular evening," Cindy said. "But I wouldn't change our life in any way."

A LITTLE FREELANCING

On the campaign trail, McCain frustrates his handlers. He doesn't repeat the message often enough, frequently choosing to freelance. And if McCain wants to stand and answer questions, to hell with the carefully prepared schedule.

"We used to try," said John Weaver, McCain's national political director. "We'd say, 'Senator, we have to go,' and he would just look at us."

The man who earned the nickname "White Tornado" in Congress belies his years by working a schedule that would bury men half his age. While campaigning, his days often last from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

"I think I can outwork any other candidate," McCain says.

And there is much work to do, he says.

The presidency is broken, and the White House is stained by the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. McCain plans to fix it.

"I'm not running for president to be someone," McCain said recently. "I'm running to do something. This is your country, my friends. And I'm running for president to give it back to you."

McCain says his background makes him qualified to be president. He is the son and grandson of admirals. He flew Navy attack bombers in Vietnam. He spent close to six years in a North Vietnamese prison camp. He served two terms in the House of Representatives and was elected to his third Senate term last year.

He's not in awe of the top job.

"I'm obviously aware of the enormous responsibilities," he said. "But I don't find it intimidating."

Most Americans have yet to meet John McCain. With Texas Gov. George W. Bush leading the polls, the national press has been content to sketch McCain as a caricature:

Former prisoner of war. Crusader for reform and breath of fresh air in Washington. One of the Keating Five, but the media tone on that seems to be, who cares, really?

"Since McCain is not yet a threat, nobody is talking much about his negatives," Woods said. "Because of the Bush phenomenon, (McCain's) avoided scrutiny. He'll stay under the radar just because we really don't have a race."

THE POW FACTOR

Tilton, N.H. - At Oliver's Diner, a woman shyly walks up to McCain, her eyes moist.

"I've been waiting 30 years to meet you," she says, and thrusts out her hand.

McCain looks down. The woman is holding a stainless steel POW bracelet, embossed with the lettering LCDR JOHN MCCAIN III 10-26-67.

"I'm very touched," McCain says. "Very touched."

Judy Tilton says she started wearing McCain's bracelet when she was 7 years old. It was given to her by her father, a retired lieutenant colonel in the National Guard.

Tilton said she first noticed McCain when he was elected to the Senate.

"I thought, 'Wait a minute, I know him,' " she said. "Every time he came to New Hampshire, I thought, 'Maybe I'll meet him.' "

When she saw a notice for the breakfast, Tilton decided it was time.

"It was terrific," she said. "I've been waiting a long time."

McCain knows that being a war hero is not enough to be elected president. But it doesn't hurt.

His military experience gives him a trump card over a generation of draft dodgers and National Guardsmen, those who avoided the war that stole much of McCain's youth.

After all, it was McCain who turned down an early release offered because his father was an admiral. McCain knew it was a propaganda ploy.

It was McCain who rotted in prison and was beaten to a pulp while Bill Clinton studied at Oxford and George W. Bush flew National Guard jets in Texas.

This gives McCain instant credibility on two key campaign issues, foreign policy and national defense, that make Bush and other non-combatant candidates a little queasy.

To tell his story, McCain doesn't need to drag out his medals, which include the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross and a fistful of others. His experiences were chronicled in a book, *The Nightingale's Song*, by Robert Timberg, as well as an A&E special that might have been titled *John McCain: Hero or God?* McCain just released his own book about his family and his Vietnam experience, *Faith of My Fathers*.

That book conveniently ends with his release from North Vietnam, skipping the less ennobling things that happened later.

His war story, and the bluntness of his personality that goes along with it, appeal to people.

Among them is his New Hampshire driver, Frank Cartier, a 28-year-old Manchester firefighter and Gulf War veteran whose unit led the 1st Marines into Kuwait City.

Cartier had always admired McCain and became his first volunteer in New Hampshire when he saw a blurb in the local paper. Cartier said McCain impressed him right off the bat.

Cartier said most candidates would just shake your hand and look to the next person. Not McCain.

"I was wearing my Marine tie clip," Cartier recalled. "And he looked me right in the eye and said, 'Thank you for serving.'

"As a Marine, you get a sense of who you would want to lead you into battle. I would gladly take the hill for John McCain."

This is the kind of impact McCain hopes to have, to bring younger voters back into the fold. As he campaigns, McCain often notes that the last election had the lowest voter turnout among 18- to 26-year-olds of any election in history.

"It is a shameful thing, my friends," McCain said, "when young people say we are corrupt. But to a certain extent, they are correct."

McCain also is attracting others into the fray, people who have never participated before. One is Rick Kamp, a 50-year-old marketing executive who hosted a meet-and-greet for McCain at his home in Concord, N.H.

Kamp rented a tent for the back yard and brought in a bartender and mountains of sandwiches for the guests, who would be tapped for donations before the end of the evening.

By the time things got started, it was raining in Concord. The crowd squeezed into Kamp's living room. As McCain spoke with a C-Span camera crew looking on, Kamp and his wife beamed.

"This is my maiden voyage in political activism," Kamp said.

Kamp, who sought out the McCain campaign on his own, said he wanted to support a candidate who is willing to take tough stands and fight for what he believes in.

"He's not the type who needs an overnight poll to tell him what to think or what to say on any given day," Kamp said. "I like that."

Despite the adulation, McCain says there is one thing he might change about his public persona: He doesn't want to be the "POW Candidate."

That may be strategy disguised as humility.

"I'm sure he doesn't want to be the POW candidate, but it's an integral part of his resume," said Jay Smith, who runs a public relations firm in Washington. "It's something people respond to for positive reasons.

"You use what you can use."

At every McCain rally, there are large posters of McCain as a young pilot, standing next to his bomber. In South Carolina, when McCain was introduced in stifling meeting halls, the speaker would note that "John McCain spent five and a half years in a place much smaller and hotter than this."

In his speeches, McCain spins stories about being a POW, though usually about other brave prisoners. He often notes that he was not a hero but served in the company of heroes.

"It doesn't take a lot of talent to get shot down," McCain is fond of saying. "I was able to intercept a surface-to-air missile with my own airplane."

When he talks of the war, or about another soldier's courage, it reminds people he is no phony.

In a speech before the state Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in New Hampshire, McCain recalled the tale of Mike Christian, a fellow POW who used red and white cloth to sew an American flag inside his prison uniform. Every night, the POWs hung up Christian's shirt and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

One day, the North Vietnamese guards found the flag. They took Christian from the cell and beat him severely. When he was returned, his ribs were broken and his face badly bruised. The other POWs cleaned up Christian the best they could.

Later that night, as McCain struggled to sleep on the concrete slab that was his bed, he looked over into the corner of the room.

"There, beneath that dim light bulb, with a piece of white cloth and a piece of red cloth and his bamboo needle, his eyes almost shut from the beating that he had received, was my dear friend Mike Christian, making another American flag."

"Chapter II: John Wayne McCain" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_II_1999.htm)

Annapolis, Md., 1955 - Midshipman John McCain and his roommate, Frank Gamboa, are eating lunch at the mess hall at the U.S. Naval Academy when a first classman, a "firstie" in Naval parlance, begins dressing down a Filipino steward.

"He was just being nasty to him," Gamboa recalls. "(The firstie) was obviously not in a happy mood."

Gamboa hardly notices this exchange, but young John McCain is paying close attention. Since the steward is an enlisted man, he cannot fight back. The firstie is being a bully, a no-no at the Naval Academy.

The man outranks everyone at the table. McCain and Gamboa are barely past being plebes, the school's lowest rank. Fearing trouble, other underclassmen eat quickly and leave. The browbeating continues.

Finally, McCain can take no more.

"Hey, why don't you pick on someone your own size?" McCain blurts out.

There is a moment of silent shock at the table.

"What did you say?" replies the firstie.

"Why don't you stop picking on him?" McCain says. "He's doing the best he can."

"What is your name, mister?" snaps the firstie, an open threat to put McCain on report.

"Midshipman John McCain the Third," McCain says, looking straight at the upperclassman. "What's yours?"

The firstie saw the look in McCain's eyes. And fled.

"The guy got so flustered he just got up and left the table," Gamboa recalls.

A FAMILY IN SERVICE

John McCain had plenty to live up to at the Naval Academy.

There was his grandfather, Admiral John "Slew" McCain, Class of 1906, a grizzled old sea dog who commanded aircraft carriers in the Pacific during World War II.

Slew McCain's peers at the Naval Academy were Chester Nimitz and William "Bull" Halsey, who would become major commanders during World War II. One of Slew McCain's first assignments was as executive officer on a gunboat in the Philippines commanded by Nimitz.

"They would hunt and fish, and every now and then they would stop in for their mail," the younger McCain said recently in a TV interview. "Can you imagine?"

In the 1930s, the military passed a regulation that aircraft carriers could be commanded only by aviators. Already in his 50s, McCain's grandfather went to flight school.

He crashed five airplanes but got his wings and went on to command a carrier. He eventually would rise to command all U.S. carriers in the Pacific, under Halsey. Planes under Slew McCain's command participated in a number of battles, including Leyte Gulf, and once sank 49 Japanese ships in a day.

According to his grandson, McCain was the quintessential combat officer - a throwback, a gregarious, beloved commander who didn't worry whether his uniform was pressed. But the war, and his lifestyle, taxed his health.

"He had a very hard life to start with," the younger McCain recalled recently. "He smoked and he drank and he didn't take care of himself. Also, the strain of operations in World War II was immense."

When the Japanese surrendered aboard the USS *Missouri* on Sept. 2, 1945, Slew McCain was there. He can be seen in the famous picture, standing in the front row of U.S. officers. He was 61 years old, but he looked 80.

In fact, he had been sick for two weeks, at least since a cease-fire was called on Aug. 15, 1945. Around that time, the elder McCain talked with John Thach, who recalled the conversation in the book *Carrier Warfare in the Pacific*.

McCain had been staying in his sea cabin, popping his head out only occasionally.

"Admiral, you don't feel very well, do you?" Thach asked.

"Well," McCain responded, "this surrender has come as kind of a shock to all of us. I feel lost. I don't know what to do. I know how to fight, but now I don't know whether I know how to relax or not. I am in an awful letdown. I do feel bad."

On the day of the surrender, the old man would see his son, John S. McCain Jr., a submarine commander. The younger McCain had been given the job of escorting Japanese submarines into Tokyo Bay. Father and son posed for a picture aboard the *Proteus*, a submarine tender.

It was the last time John McCain Jr. would see his father alive.

Four days after the surrender aboard the *Missouri*, the elder McCain flew back to Coronado, Calif. Thach went to visit him and noted that he looked even worse. A few minutes into the visit, McCain said he wanted to lie down.

Thach went to San Diego to visit his father-in-law. A short time later, he got a phone call.

John "Slew" McCain had died of a heart attack.

He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery, next to his brother, William Alexander McCain, a cavalry officer known as "Wild Bill."

Bill McCain, who graduated from West Point, chased Pancho Villa with Gen. Blackjack Pershing, served as an artillery officer during World War I and attained the rank of brigadier general.

In his new book, *Faith of My Fathers*, McCain details his Scotch-Irish roots, noting that his great-aunt was a descendant of Robert the Bruce, an early Scottish king.

On this continent, McCain's roots date to the American Revolution. An early ancestor, John Young, served on Gen. George Washington's staff. After the family moved to Mississippi, a number of McCain's ancestors fought in the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy.

McCain's grandfather grew up on the family plantation in Carroll County, Miss. He attended the University of Mississippi, then entered the Naval Academy.

'HE WAS A TOUGH GUY'

Like his grandfather, John McCain was no scrubbed angel when he reached the Naval Academy in 1954. At Episcopal High, a private boarding school in Alexandria, Va., McCain was a rebel, earning the nickname "McNasty" from classmates who didn't dare cross him.

At 5-9, McCain was an excellent lightweight wrestler in high school. One of McCain's school friends, Malcolm Matheson, said McCain was no bully but took no guff.

"I always got along with him, but he was a tough guy," Matheson said. "He was small but feisty. He's always been that way.... If you messed with him, you probably would end up on the wrong side of it."

Despite his rebellious nature, McCain was destined to attend the Naval Academy, like his grandfather and his father (Class of '31) before him.

Ron Thunman, who commanded McCain's plebe, or first-year, class, said he had no idea that McCain came from an old Navy family but said the young man immediately impressed him. The plebe battalions competed in sports, McCain as a boxer.

What he lacked in skill, he made up for in ferocity, Thunman said.

"I got a real kick out of him," Thunman said. "It was clear that nobody was going to take him down without a hell of an effort."

Thunman said he noticed McCain had a quick mind and a good sense of humor. He quickly emerged as a leader in his group.

"He stood out because he was just one of those people that you liked and you got a chuckle out of," Thunman said. "He was somebody who was always moving at top speed in one direction or another. He was never one to hang back."

A free spirit, McCain chafed under the strict rules of the academy. Each year, he was always in the "Century Club," students with more than 100 demerits.

It was mostly small stuff - messy quarters, unshined shoes, reporting late to formation, things like that, recalls Gamboa, who roomed with McCain for three years.

"He and I, we got a lot of demerits," Gamboa said. "It was almost impossible not to."

McCain's grades were good in the subjects he enjoyed, such as literature and history. Gamboa said McCain would rather read a history book than do his math homework. He did just enough to pass the classes he didn't find stimulating.

"He stood low in his class," Gamboa said. "But that was by choice, not design."

On weekends, everyone wanted to hang out with McCain, who grew up around Washington and knew all the best parties. And with his good looks, McCain attracted plenty of women.

"We used to call him John Wayne McCain," Gamboa said. "He was graying at the temples, and it made him more dashing.... It was a real adventure living with John."

McCain's bio in the academy yearbook said it all:

"Sturdy conversationalist and party man. John's quick wit and clever sarcasm made him a welcome man at any gathering. His bouts with the academic and executive departments contributed much to the stockpiles of legends within the hall."

One such bout almost ended in disaster.

The further cadets rose in the academy, the fewer demerits they were allowed. Naturally, McCain was pushing the limit as his senior year neared an end.

McCain already had been skirting the rules. He and some friends had bought a television, which was prohibited. They would gather in their rooms on weekends, watching boxing on Friday nights and a Western, *Maverick*, on Sundays. The men kept the TV hidden in a "pipe locker," a space between the dormitory rooms that housed plumbing, heating and ventilation.

"One day, the company officer got to crawling around in there, and he found the TV," Gamboa said.

Normally, all the men involved would play a game similar to "paper, rock, scissors" to determine who would get the demerits. But Gamboa and the others wouldn't let McCain take the chance - the 30 demerits from the TV would get him kicked out.

"He wanted to, but we just insisted," Gamboa said. "The guy who took the demerits (a model midshipman named Henry Vargo) had none."

McCain also offered advice to the lovelorn. More than one midshipman made his way to McCain's room to ask for advice on a romantic relationship.

One evening, Gamboa was writing a thank-you letter to a date (a custom in those days), when McCain came up and snatched the letter away.

"This is a terrible letter," McCain said. "Did you have fun with her? Do you want to see her again? Here, I'll tell you what to say."

Gamboa and McCain remain close to this day. The friendship says something about McCain, notes Gamboa, a first-generation Mexican-American.

When the two met at the Naval Academy, they had nothing in common. Gamboa was the son of immigrant parents from a little town in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas. McCain was the son and grandson of naval officers and attended private schools in Virginia.

But to McCain, race and status meant nothing, Gamboa said.

"I don't think John McCain had even been associated with Hispanics or any minorities, given where he lived and the school he went to, but yet he picked me, a Mexican-American, to be his roommate," Gamboa said.

"I've heard the comment that he has always done well with minorities. He's the most colorblind person I've ever met in my life.

"He treats me like a brother."

CHOOSING A CAREER

As the men graduated from the Naval Academy, they had to make a choice as to what branch of service they would enter, the Navy or the Marines.

Gamboa said he always knew what McCain would pick.

"There was never any question in our minds that he was going to be a flier," Gamboa said. "He was an adventurous spirit, and that's what he would do."

For McCain's roommates - Gamboa, Keith Bunting and Jack Dittrick - it was still an open question. Until they met Jack McCain, John's father.

During World War II, the elder McCain won the Silver Star while commanding two submarines: the USS *Gunnel*, which sunk freighters and battled Japanese destroyers in the Pacific; and the USS *Dentuda*, which was on hand at the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay.

While his son attended the Naval Academy, Jack McCain was living in nearby Washington, working as the Navy's senior liaison officer to Congress.

On weekends, John McCain and his roommates would go to his father's house, where the elder McCain would chomp cigars and tell them about the Navy.

"Every time we went to John's house, we would get a blue and gold pep talk from Jack McCain," Gamboa said.

Jack McCain was not subtle. To his friends, he was known as "Good Goddamn McCain."

Speaking to the Annapolis Class of 1970, Jack McCain made light of the antiwar slogan "make love, not war," by noting that naval officers "were men enough to do both," according to *Faith of My Fathers*.

"He was the best naval officer I ever met in my life," Gamboa said. "I think that's where John got his love of history, from his father. His father's den was filled ceiling to floor with books, and the majority were on history."

Jack McCain made a big impression on the midshipmen. McCain and his roommates joined the Navy, and all reached the rank of captain - Bunting as a submariner, Dittrick as an aviator and Gamboa on surface ships. John McCain went to flight school.

During training, McCain had several close calls, including a crash in Corpus Christi Bay and a collision with power lines in Spain. In both cases, he emerged virtually unscathed.

In 1964, while stationed in Pensacola, Fla., McCain started a relationship with Carol Shepp, a tall Philadelphia model he met while at Annapolis.

The next year, the two were married in Philadelphia. John soon adopted Carol's two sons from a previous marriage. In 1966, they had a daughter, Sydney.

A year later, McCain was sent to Vietnam as a bomber pilot on an aircraft carrier. Carol would not see her husband again for almost six years.

"Chapter III: The Crown Prince" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_III_1999.htm)

"THE PLANTATION," HANOI, AUGUST 1968 - John McCain sat on a stool, his teeth broken, his body battered from a savage beating, his arms tied behind him in torture ropes.

A guard entered the room.

"Are you ready to confess your crimes?" he asked.

"No," McCain replied.

Every two hours, one guard would hold McCain while two others beat him. They kept it up for four days.

Finally, McCain lay on the floor, a bloody mess, unable to move. His right leg, injured when he was shot down, was horribly swollen. A guard yanked him to his feet and threw him down. His left arm smashed against a bucket and broke again.

"I reached the lowest point of my 5 1/2 years in North Vietnam," McCain would write later. "I was at the point of suicide."

What happened next is chronicled in *The Nightingale's Song*, by Robert Timberg:

(McCain) looked at the louvered cell window high above his head, then at the small stool in the room. He took off his dark blue prison shirt, rolled it like a rope, draped one end over his shoulder near his neck, began feeding the other end through the louvers.

A guard burst into the cell and pulled McCain away from the window. For the next few days, he was on suicide watch.

McCain's will had finally wilted under the beatings. Unable to endure any more, he agreed to sign a confession.

McCain slowly wrote, "I am a black criminal and I have performed the deeds of an air pirate. I almost died and the Vietnamese people saved my life, thanks to the doctors."

He would never forgive himself.

"I had learned what we all learned over there," he would write later. "Every man has a breaking point. I had reached mine."

BRUSH WITH DEATH

Lt. Cmdr. John McCain was not thinking about a cell in the Hanoi Hilton when he took off in his A-4E Skyhawk from the USS *Oriskany* on the morning of Oct. 26, 1967.

As a pilot, McCain had led a charmed life, surviving a bad accident on the USS *Forrestal* about two months before.

The Forrester was stationed in the Tonkin Gulf, preparing for a mission. McCain was strapped into his jet, warming up the engine. Suddenly, a missile on another plane misfired, shooting across the deck and slamming into McCain's fuel tank. The missile didn't detonate, but the impact spilled hundreds of gallons of highly flammable aviation fuel on the deck. McCain's plane was engulfed in smoke.

As a fire blazed beneath him, McCain scrambled out of the cockpit, then dropped and rolled through the burning aviation fuel. Slapping out the fire on his flight suit, McCain started back to assist another pilot.

Then the first bomb exploded.

Flaming shrapnel whizzed across the flight deck. One man was decapitated; others were burned beyond recognition. McCain was knocked backward, and small pieces of metal peppered his chest. As the crew frantically fought the fire, more bombs and planes exploded.

In the end, 134 men lost their lives, and the Forrester was almost abandoned. McCain's injuries were minor.

After the accident, McCain transferred from the *Forrester* to the *Oriskany*, another aircraft carrier.

On Oct. 26, McCain would fly his 23rd sortie over Vietnam, joining a 20-plane mission to bomb a power plant in Hanoi, the North Vietnamese capital, which had been off-limits to U.S. attacks.

An officer warned McCain to be careful, that some of the pilots might not return.

"Don't worry about me," McCain said.

Hanoi was well-defended against air attack. As McCain approached his target, surface-to-air missiles the size of telephone poles filled the sky. Suddenly, his instrument panel lit up. A missile had locked on to his plane.

McCain dropped his bombs and began to pull up. Suddenly, a missile sheared off his right wing, sending his plane spinning toward earth, out of control. McCain ejected, breaking his right leg and both arms. He regained consciousness as he settled into a small lake in the center of Hanoi.

McCain's battered body sank 15 feet to the bottom of the muddy lake. He managed to kick his way to the surface with his one good leg, but his equipment dragged him back down. Finally, as he went down for a third time, McCain used his teeth to inflate his life preserver and bobbed to the surface.

North Vietnamese pulled McCain from the lake, stripping off his clothes. McCain felt a twinge in his right knee and was horrified to see his leg bent at a 90-degree angle.

"My God, my leg," McCain said.

A man slammed a rifle butt down on McCain's right shoulder, shattering it. Others bayoneted him in the foot and groin.

Eventually, he was thrown onto a truck and taken to Hanoi's main prison. He was placed in a cell and told he would not receive any medical treatment until he gave military information. McCain refused and was beaten unconscious.

On the fourth day, two guards entered McCain's cell. One pulled back the blanket to reveal McCain's injured knee.

"It was about the size, shape and color of a football," McCain recalled.

Fearful of blood poisoning that would lead to death, McCain told his captors he would talk if they took him to a hospital.

"They brought in this doctor we called Zorba, and he examined me, took my pulse and turned to this other guy we called The Bug and said something in Vietnamese, and The Bug said, 'It's too late, it's too late,' " McCain said.

"I said, 'If you take me to the hospital, I'll get well.' Zorba took my pulse again and shook his head, and The Bug said, 'It's too late.' And they took me back to my cell."

About two hours later, McCain's cell door burst open, and The Bug rushed in, saying, "Your father is a big admiral. Now we take you to the hospital."

It had taken some time, but the North Vietnamese figured out that McCain's father, Jack, was a major Naval commander for the United States. They started calling McCain "The Crown Prince."

MAINTAINING SILENCE

McCain was moved to a filthy hospital, where blood and plasma were administered. He recovered a little but was still in sorry shape.

Soon, McCain was told that a Frenchman wanted to talk to him and would take a message back to McCain's family.

Before the meeting, the North Vietnamese tried to set McCain's shattered right arm, which was broken in three places. Without anesthetic, a doctor using a fluoroscope worked on the arm for 90 minutes, with McCain screaming in pain. The arm had two floating bones, and the doctor could not set it properly.

Finally, the doctor gave up and wrapped a cast around McCain from his neck to his waist and down his right arm to his wrist.

They moved McCain to a new room with clean white sheets. Soon afterward, a North Vietnamese known as The Cat arrived. He was the commander of all prison camps in Hanoi.

Through an interpreter, The Cat told McCain that "the French television man is coming."

It was at that point that McCain realized his visitor was a journalist.

"I don't think I want to be filmed," McCain said.

The Cat wouldn't be dissuaded. He told McCain that he needed two operations and that he would not get them if he didn't say he was grateful to the Vietnamese people and sorry for his crimes.

The French TV crew arrived, led by a reporter named Francois Chalais. On the film, which was shown later on CBS television, McCain looks drugged. He wasn't. He was in agony from the abortive attempt to set the bones in his right arm.

McCain told Chalais that his treatment was satisfactory. This upset The Cat, who stood behind McCain and told him to say he was grateful for humane and lenient treatment. McCain refused. When The Cat pressed it, Chalais broke in.

"I think what he told me is sufficient," he said.

On the film, McCain told his wife, Carol, and his children that he was getting well and that he loved them. When the North Vietnamese insisted that McCain call for a quick end to the war, Chalais waved them off.

"How is the food?" Chalais asked.

"Well, it's not Paris, but I eat it," McCain replied.

The interview ended, and McCain was taken to his dirty room. The North Vietnamese operated on his knee, accidentally cutting the ligaments on one side. Throughout his stay as a POW, McCain could never walk right. Among his fellow POWs, he earned the nickname "Crip."

BLAME THE AMERICANS

After six weeks in the hospital, McCain was taken to a prison camp known as The Plantation and placed in a cell with George "Bud" Day and Norris Overly, both Air Force majors.

Taking one look at McCain, Day was convinced that the North Vietnamese had brought McCain to their cell to die and planned on blaming the Americans.

"He was extremely skinny, and he was just about filthy," said Day, a lawyer in Fort Walton Beach, Fla. "He had food and drink and liquids run all over his face. He had a pretty good beard . . . he probably weighed less than 100 pounds.

"He was in this great big white cast, and his hair was snow white. He just looked like he was absolutely on the verge of death."

Day said McCain's injured right arm jutted from his body cast like a stick "sticking out of a snowman."

But more than anything else, Day remembers McCain's eyes.

"His eyes were extremely bright, they had that real fever luster," Day said. "I just took one look at him and had no qualms that he was going to die, and soon."

Despite his poor condition, McCain still was happy to see fellow Americans. The men spent the night whispering among themselves.

By 6 a.m., Day was convinced that McCain had a decent chance to live, providing the fever did not get him. Slowly, McCain began to recover.

"He was just a very determined guy with a lot of spirit," Day said. "It's kind of like when you see a horse, a young colt, and you just know this is a strong-spirited animal. You could see all that in him."

McCain, it seemed, was too tough to die.

"John was not going to help the Lord take him out," Day said. "If the Lord was involved in taking him out, John was resisting all the way. If the Lord was helping him, John was giving Him 100 percent of his effort."

In the first days, McCain could not wash or feed himself without help. The task of nursing McCain fell to Overly, since Day had been tortured in ropes and had little use of his hands.

"I've got to give Norris a lot of credit," Day said. "Norris took care of John like a baby, like it was his own child. There was no question that he loved John. He did things for John that only a parent would do for their children."

Occasionally, North Vietnamese dignitaries would stroll by to gawk at the prize prisoner. Since McCain's father was an admiral, the North Vietnamese thought McCain's family was very wealthy. They would ask how many corporations his father owned. McCain just laughed.

Slowly, he was nursed back to health. McCain's infections were healing, now that he could wash regularly. Soon, he could hobble around in his cell for a few minutes at a time.

After a time, Overly was removed from the cell and placed with two other prisoners who were going to be released early.

Early release was forbidden by the military's Code of Conduct. To prevent the enemy from subverting prisoners or using them as propaganda tools, officers were to accept release in the order they were captured. That meant that the first man to be released should have been Navy Lt. Everett Alvarez, who had been shot down on Aug. 5, 1964.

Nevertheless, Overly and two others accepted early release. The other POWs soon dubbed the practice the "Fink Release Program."

McCain has spoken with Overly only once since the war, during a short phone conversation after McCain was released in 1973. But Day, who won the Medal of Honor for his service in Vietnam, has made his peace with Overly.

"If I had been in (Overly's) shoes, maybe I would have done things differently than I did," said Day, who retired from the Air Force in 1976 as a full colonel.

"I came back from Vietnam all crippled up and all screwed up, and a lot of that could have been avoided if I had given the gooks a lot of the stuff they were really pushing me for.

"I didn't think it was the right thing, so I didn't do it."

Once McCain was able to walk on his own, Day was moved out. For two years, McCain would be alone in his cell, which he described in U.S. News & World Report after his release:

"My room was fairly decent-sized - I'd say about 10 by 10. The door was solid. There were no windows. The only ventilation came from two small holes at the top in the ceiling, about 6 inches by 4 inches. The roof was tin, and it got hot as hell in there.

"The room was kind of dim - night and day - but they always kept on a small light bulb so they could observe me."

CODE TALKERS

In October 1968, McCain heard some noise in the cell behind him at The Plantation and began tapping on the cell wall, a common way for POWs to communicate. The call-up sign was the five-tap "shave and a haircut," and the other prisoner would answer with two taps.

For two weeks he got no answer, but finally two taps came back. Using a cup to the wall, McCain could hear the other prisoner and managed to give him the tap code. He finally gave McCain his name - Ernie Brace. For awhile, all Brace could do was tap out "I'm Ernie Brace" and then collapse into sobs.

Brace was a decorated former Marine who had flown more than 100 combat missions in Korea. He had been accused of deserting the scene of an aircraft accident, was court-martialed and received a dishonorable discharge.

But that didn't keep Brace out of the war. As a civilian pilot, he flew for a CIA-backed airline and was shot down over Laos.

Brace had spent 3 1/2 years in a bamboo cage with his feet in stocks and an iron collar around his neck. During the ordeal, he almost lost the use of his legs. He escaped three times, and when he was captured the third time, he was buried in the ground up to his neck.

After a year had passed, McCain and Brace were communicating with other prisoners in the camp, shuttling messages back and forth with the tap code.

On Dec. 9, 1969, a guard jerked open Brace's cell door. The incident is recounted in Brace's book, *A Code to Keep*.

"You are in bad trouble for communicating," the guard said. "You are being taken to a harsher place."

Blindfolded, Brace was put into a truck with soldiers and other prisoners. As the vehicle rolled through Hanoi, Brace felt someone tapping a message on his thigh.

"Hi," said the message. "I John McCain. Who U?"

Brace said tears began forming in his eyes as he grabbed his friend's hand, squeezing out the answer.

"EB here."

Offered early release, Brace turned it down, citing the military code. He was the longest-held civilian POW in Vietnam.

AN OFFER TO GO HOME

In June 1968, McCain was taken to an interrogation room where The Cat awaited him. He was joined by another man, "The Rabbit," who spoke very good English.

The Cat spent two hours in seemingly aimless conversation, telling McCain about how he had run French prison camps in the early 1950s. He said that he had released some prisoners early and that they had thanked him later. He also mentioned that Norris Overly had gone home "with honor."

All of sudden, The Cat blurted out: "Do you want to go home?"

McCain told him he'd have to think about it. He'd been hit by a bout of dysentery and was in poor shape. He was losing weight.

But McCain knew the real reason the North Vietnamese wanted to release him. He was the son and grandson of admirals (his father, Adm. Jack McCain, had been made commander of all U.S. forces in the Pacific in July 1968.) McCain's release would help the North Vietnamese propaganda machine.

McCain realized that the Code of Conduct gave him no choice. Alvarez, who was being held elsewhere, was supposed to be the first man released. McCain couldn't let down his father and grandfather.

"I just knew it wasn't the right thing to do," he said. "I knew that they wouldn't have offered it to me if I hadn't been the son of an admiral.

"I just didn't think it was the honorable thing to do."

Three days later, McCain met with The Cat again. The North Vietnamese turned the screws. The Cat told McCain that President Johnson had ordered McCain home. McCain asked to see the orders. The Cat didn't have any.

Then the North Vietnamese commander produced a letter from McCain's wife, Carol, saying, "I wished that you had been one of those three who got to come home."

McCain calmly told The Cat that the prisoners must be released in the order they were captured, starting with Alvarez.

On the Fourth of July, McCain had a final sit-down with The Cat and The Rabbit.

"Our senior officer wants to know your final answer," The Rabbit said.

"My final answer is the same," McCain said. "It's no."

"That is your final answer?"

"That is my final answer."

The Cat, who had been seated behind a pile of papers, grabbed a pen and snapped it in half. Ink spurted all over the desk. He rose and kicked the chair over behind him.

"They taught you too well," he said, then left, slamming the door.

Before long, McCain would find himself tied to a stool, and the guards would literally beat the "black air pirate" confession out of him.

McCain's account was confirmed in a cable from Averell Harriman, who was President Johnson's envoy to the Paris peace talks. Harriman had tea with a Vietnamese official, who mentioned that McCain had refused early release.

A CHRISTMAS SERVICE

On Christmas Eve 1968, about 50 POWs, including McCain, were herded into a room decorated with flowers for a makeshift church service.

The North Vietnamese were intent on milking the ceremony for every bit of PR value. Cameramen moved around the room, filming the ceremony. Flash bulbs popped in the background.

Meanwhile, McCain and other prisoners were busy exchanging information. One of the guards, conscious that he was being filmed, smiled while he told McCain to stop talking.

McCain cursed the guard and kept briefing another prisoner.

"I refused to go home," McCain said. "I was tortured for it. They broke my rib and re-broke my arm."

McCain pressed on, and the guards kept trying to quiet him.

"Our senior ranking officer is Colonel Larson," McCain said.

"No talking!"

McCain cursed them again and flashed his middle finger toward the camera.

He was taken back to his cell, where he waited for his beating. It didn't come until the day after Christmas.

In May 1969, the North Vietnamese asked McCain to write a letter to U.S. pilots asking them not to fly over North Vietnam. When he refused, they made him stand for hours and hours.

When McCain tired and sat down, a guard jumped on his injured leg. McCain was back on crutches for the next 18 months.

In late 1969, things began to look up for the POWs for the first time.

President Nixon had taken office in January. During the Johnson administration, released POWs weren't allowed to talk about bad conditions in the prison camps for fear that such complaints would make things even worse for the men still being held.

That changed under Nixon.

In August 1969, under pressure, the North Vietnamese began releasing sick and injured prisoners. Among them were Navy Lt. Robert Frishman, who had a badly injured arm, Air Force Capt. Wes Rumble, who was in a body cast with a broken back, and Navy Seaman Doug Hegdahl, who had lost 75 pounds.

The men held press conferences, telling the horrifying details of torture and mistreatment. After that, treatment of POWs began to improve.

By fall, the torture had almost stopped. The food improved. The guards seemed almost friendly.

McCain's barred cell door had been covered with wood to keep him from looking out and from getting any ventilation. But in fall 1969, the board was removed at night to cool McCain's cell. And prisoners were allowed to bathe more often.

"It was all very amazing," McCain would write later.

In December 1969, McCain was moved to the Hanoi Hilton. There he met with a Cuban journalist who asked McCain general questions about the war. After the interview, a photographer came in and started snapping pictures, though McCain had said he didn't want his picture taken. After that, he refused to meet with visitors.

In June 1970, McCain was moved into a room called "Calcutta," which had no ventilation. There, McCain suffered from heat prostration and another bout of dysentery and was cut to half rations.

In December 1970, McCain was moved to a room that housed 45 to 50 prisoners. In February 1971, the prisoners defied their captors and held a church service. When the men presiding over the service were taken away by guards, the men started singing "The Star Spangled Banner" very loudly.

Fearing a riot, the guards rushed in with ropes and subdued the men. A few days later, McCain and others were moved to a punishment camp the prisoners called Skid Row. Though the conditions were filthy, McCain said, the prison was a piece of cake compared with conditions in 1969.

In 1971 and 1972, conditions gradually improved. McCain, whose weight had dropped to 105 during his first years in Hanoi, began to regain some of his health. He was allowed to exercise, which eased the boredom and made it easier to sleep.

"He was crippled but mentally fierce," recalled Orson Swindle, who roomed with McCain for the last two years of their incarceration. "He was stiff-legged and had awkward movement of both arms. He did the funniest push-ups I've even seen.

"One of his arms was sort of crooked.... he did push-ups with a tilt to it."

The men were in a big room with a large concrete slab in the center and a 3-foot-wide, horseshoe-shape path around the slab. They would exercise by walking along the path.

"When John would run in place, it was sort of humorous to watch him," Swindle said. "One leg would bend, and the other wouldn't. It was a sight to behold."

To entertain themselves and the other men, McCain and Swindle organized "Sunday Night at the Movies" - retelling, and in some cases performing, scenes from Hollywood films they had seen.

One of their favorites was *One-Eyed Jacks*, a Marlon Brando movie in which Brando is beaten by a worthless sheriff played by Slim Pickens. McCain and Swindle especially loved the part where Brando calls Pickens a "scum-sucking pig."

In December 1972, McCain had a front-row seat to a full-scale bombing attack on Hanoi.

"It was the most spectacular show I'll ever see," McCain later wrote in *U.S. News and World Report*. "...The bombs were dropping so close that the building would shake. The SAMs were flying all over, and the sirens were whining - it was really a wild scene."

Though the bombing had been conceived by Nixon, the actual orders had been given by McCain's father, Jack.

McCain's father never wrote him during the war because of the propaganda value of such a letter. He did, however, try to pass McCain a secret message once, according to a passage in *Faith of My Fathers*.

In letters to his wife, McCain was using a fairly obvious code to send messages back to the States. Naval intelligence, fearing that McCain would be caught, apprised the admiral.

Adm. John McCain Jr. sent a hidden message in a letter Carol wrote to McCain: "JUNIOR URGES CAUTION PLEASE STOP THIS."

The younger McCain never saw it, because the North Vietnamese withheld Carol's letters.

By January 1973, McCain had been moved back to The Plantation. The prisoners sensed that the war was nearing its end. The guards hardly bothered them.

Around that time, McCain was playing bridge with Swindle and two others when he was dealt a perfect hand. But McCain made a rookie mistake and lost his advantage. The other men teased him unmercifully.

Finally, McCain stopped talking to Swindle, who slept right next to him on the floor. This went on for several days.

"We would be walking on the path, and I would say, 'Hi, John,' and John wouldn't respond," Swindle said.

Then one day, the guards came in and ordered Swindle to pack his gear. As one of the first pilots captured, Swindle was in line to be released.

As Swindle was being ushered out, a frantic McCain rushed up to his side.

"John comes running up and says, 'Orson, Orson, I've really been a jerk the last few days.' I said, 'I don't even want to talk to you,' and I turned away."

"Then I looked back at him and winked, and I had a big grin on my face, and I said, 'I'll see you at home.'"

In March, McCain joined a group of prisoners who were put onto trucks and driven to Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi. McCain said he didn't believe he was leaving until he actually spoke with an American in uniform.

It was the best day of his life.

"At the time, it wasn't that overwhelming. It was one of those things that you had anticipated for so long, nothing could have lived up to my expectations," McCain said. "It's like when a kid waits for Christmas, and then it arrives, and it can't quite live up to what he expected."

One by one, The Rabbit read off their names, and they boarded the plane.

McCain's long ordeal was over.

"Chapter IV: Arizona, the Early Years" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

June 5, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_IV_1999.htm)

In 1979, John McCain came face to face with his future.

He was in Hawaii, attending a military reception. While there, he met a young, blond, former cheerleader named Cindy Hensley.

It was an incredible stroke of luck for McCain.

How fortunate could one man be? Here was McCain, who had his eye on Congress, meeting a young, attractive beer heiress from Arizona, which was adding a congressional district in 1982.

McCain recalls that both he and Cindy fudged their ages at first. McCain made himself a little younger and Cindy made herself a little older. They found out their real ages when the local paper published them. McCain was 43, Cindy 25.

"So our marriage," McCain cracks, "is really based on a tissue of lies."

While they were dating, McCain called Cindy from Beijing, where he was traveling with a contingent from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while she was in the hospital recuperating from minor knee surgery. She thanked him for the lovely flowers in her room, sent from "John."

What McCain didn't tell Cindy was that he hadn't sent the flowers. They were from another John, who lived in Tucson.

"I never thanked him," Cindy notes with a grin.

After a whirlwind courtship, John asked Cindy to marry him. But there were some details to clear out of the way.

McCain needed a divorce from his wife of 14 years, Carol, who had been badly injured in a car accident while McCain languished in Hanoi.

The marriage had been strained by his years of absence, along with McCain's admitted affairs after returning from Vietnam.

In February 1980, less than a year after he met Cindy, McCain petitioned a Florida court to dissolve his marriage to Carol, calling the union "irretrievably broken." Bud Day, a lawyer and fellow POW, handled the case.

"I thought things were going fairly well, and then it just came apart," Day recalls. "That happened to quite a few.... I don't fault (Carol), and I don't really fault John, either."

In the divorce settlement, McCain was generous with Carol, the mother of their daughter Sydney and two other children, whom McCain had adopted. Among other things, McCain gave Carol the rights to houses in Florida and Virginia, and agreed to pay her medical bills for life.

Except for signing the property settlement, Carol did not participate in the divorce. A court summons and other paperwork sent to her during the proceeding went unanswered.

In April, the judge entered a default judgment and declared the marriage dissolved.

A month later, McCain married Cindy in Phoenix, and they moved there.

McCain was immediately plugged into Arizona's power elite. Cindy's father, Jim Hensley, owned a Phoenix Anheuser-Busch distributorship that had made him a millionaire many times over.

It was no secret that McCain was interested in a political career. In the six years after he returned from Vietnam, he had been in rehab and then was assigned to a political post, working in the Navy's Senate liaison office in Washington.

While there, McCain made friends with such political movers as Sen. Gary Hart and Sen. John Tower, who was the ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee. He also met Sen. Bill Cohen, now the secretary of Defense, who ended up being the best man at John and Cindy's wedding.

In 1981, McCain retired from the Navy, mostly because of his badly injured knees and shoulder, compliments of his North Vietnamese captors. Hensley gave his new son-in-law a job as vice president of public relations, but McCain was soon bored.

"Jim Hensley didn't care about PR," said Bill Shover, a former executive with Phoenix Newspapers Inc. who met McCain in 1981. "When you have the Budweiser franchise, you have a license to steal. You don't need PR."

It didn't take long for McCain to meet wealthy power brokers such as developer Charles Keating Jr. and Fife Symington III, who would later be elected governor. Local pols suggested McCain start slowly by running for the state Legislature, but McCain would have none of it.

Eager to make up for time lost as a POW, McCain wanted Arizona's new congressional seat.

But he had a problem. The new district was in Tucson. For McCain to move from Phoenix to Tucson would open him up to criticism as a carpetbagger.

Fate lent a hand. In January 1982, Rep. John Rhodes retired from the 1st District seat, which includes the East Valley.

On the day Rhodes announced his retirement, Shover got a call from McCain. He could hear noise in the background.

"Where are you?" Shover asked.

"I'm on the freeway," said McCain, who had stopped at a service station to call Shover. "I'm on the way to Mesa to buy a house."

Many have told the tale of John McCain winning the 1st Congressional District by wearing out three pairs of shoes. McCain's footwear definitely took a beating during the race, but it was more greenbacks than soles that swept McCain into the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982.

McCain's first campaign benefited from his wife's personal wealth, some of which had been tied up in a trust set up in 1971 by her parents, Jim and Marguerite "Smitty" Hensley.

In 1981, the trust expired and was dissolved, giving Cindy McCain a half interest in Western Leasing Co., a truck-leasing business controlled by her father, said Trevor Potter, general counsel to the McCain 2000 campaign and former chairman of the Federal Election Commission.

In 1982, Cindy McCain received \$639,000 from Western Leasing, according to a financial disclosure report filed by McCain. Potter said that figure reflects Cindy's income on paper, not the actual cash she received, which was about \$250,000.

In any case, that same year, the McCains lent \$169,000 of their own money to the campaign. Western Leasing, in part, made those loans possible, Potter said.

"Her financial assets played a part in allowing them to loan money to the campaign," Potter said. "And her financial assets included the income from Western Leasing."

Western Leasing was not the only income the McCains had in 1982. They earned a combined \$130,000 in salary and bonuses from Hensley and Co., the beer distributorship controlled by Cindy's father. John also had his Navy pension, which paid \$31,000 a year.

"No one pretends that Cindy had no money at all," Potter said. "It was hers. And it wasn't something Jim (Hensley) had given her for the campaign."

Under 1982 election rules, it was legal for McCain to tap his wife's assets, as well as his own, when making personal loans to the campaign. In 1983, the rules were rewritten, with tighter guidelines on the use of family money.

In the end, including the personal loans, McCain would raise more than \$550,000 to win the seat.

AN ALLY IN THE PRESS

McCain had money, and he also had another staunch ally in Phoenix: Darrow "Duke" Tully, publisher of the state's largest newspaper, *The Republic*.

Upon meeting McCain, Tully regaled him with stories of his own military service as an Air Force pilot in Korea and Vietnam. The two men quickly hit it off and soon were spending a lot of time together. Cindy McCain and Tully's second wife, Pat, also got along well. Both were far younger than their husbands.

Tully had logged many hours in Air Force simulators learning how to fly F-16s. He bragged about a simulated dogfight between him and McCain on the Goldwater gunnery range in southwest Arizona.

"Duke said he had gotten John in his sights and shot him down," Shover recalls. "John couldn't maneuver very well, because of his (formerly) broken arm."

Tully immediately started grooming McCain for public office.

Shover said Tully was practically McCain's PR man, hosting dinners to introduce him to the Valley's movers and shakers. He set up guest columns for McCain in PNI's flagship newspaper, *The Republic*. In one of them, McCain gave a tear-jerking account of Christmas in Hanoi. Tully became godfather to one of McCain's children.

With his connections and war record, McCain was taken seriously by the Republican establishment. Plus, McCain had charm. Women were drawn to him, and men respected him as a man's man.

"John was a very engaging guy," Shover recalls. "You could not help but like John."

McCain was vulnerable on one count. He was not from Arizona and looked like he was shopping for a congressional seat.

In 1982, at a candidates forum, McCain settled the carpetbagger issue for good. After noting that he had been a military brat and moved around his whole life, McCain played his ace in the hole.

"The place I lived the longest in my life was Hanoi," McCain said.

Although it was clear McCain had the tools to reach political office on his own, Tully helped open the door. Armed with a war chest provided by such people as Keating and Symington, McCain conducted a tireless door-to-door campaign and beat his primary opponents. He easily rolled over his Democratic challenger in the general election.

Tully and McCain would only get closer, and McCain would influence the paper.

In the pages of *The Republic* and *The Phoenix Gazette*, McCain could do no wrong. Political columnists adopted him like a lost puppy. Late *Gazette* columnist John Kolbe blasted McCain's Republican primary opponent in 1982, Jim Mack, for calling McCain's first wife to dig up dirt.

In 1984, McCain won a second term in the House, facing only token opposition. He was already hunting bigger game. McCain wanted to succeed Barry Goldwater, who was retiring from the Senate.

McCain's main stumbling block was Gov. Bruce Babbitt, a popular Democrat with deep family ties in the state. McCain's people decided early on that the race would be half won if they could persuade Babbitt to stay out.

"It wasn't so much a strategy as it was a reality," recalls Torie Clarke, McCain's press secretary from 1983 until 1989. "The theory was, if we worked really hard...if John really could get his roots deep in Arizona, it became less and less likely that Babbitt would want to run against him."

Babbitt also was toying with a run for president in 1988, two years after he would have been elected to the Senate. McCain's people kept the pressure on, making it clear that McCain planned an all-or-nothing assault on the seat.

In March 1985, Babbitt made it official: He wasn't running for the Senate. In May, five-term Congressman Bob Stump also took a pass, giving McCain an open field for the Republican nomination.

To face McCain, the Democrats fielded Richard Kimball, a tall, good-looking 37-year-old with an offbeat personality. Urged on by Tully, *The Republic* and *Gazette* editorial pages tore into Kimball, a former member of the Arizona Corporation Commission.

Republic columnist Pat Murphy blasted a Kimball position paper because it contained grammatical and spelling errors. Kolbe, now firmly in McCain's corner, also lampooned Kimball, saying he suffered from "terminal weirdness."

Of course, everyone knew that McCain was Tully's favorite.

"(Tully) was really pushing John," Shover said. "He liked him. (McCain) was probably the guy Duke wanted to be. Duke was this Walter Mitty type."

Walter Mitty to be sure. All of Tully's war stories were pure fiction. McCain, like everyone else, had been fooled.

Tully invented his military history to live up to the expectations of his father, whose other son had been killed in a military training accident.

In late 1985, the pressure of living the lie was building up inside Tully, causing him to drink and alienate his wife, Pat. After she filed for divorce, Tully, in his own words, "was beginning to crack up."

He began to drop not-so-subtle hints to people that he had never served in the military. Then, on Oct. 25, a concerned secretary summoned Shover to Tully's office.

Shover found Tully stepping on his plaques and certificates and throwing them into a trash can.

Determined to protect his boss, Shover told him to quietly get rid of his uniforms and to stop telling his fake war stories.

Tully refused to be quiet about it.

"It's almost like he was trying to get caught," Shover said.

Eventually, word leaked out to Tully's enemies, one of whom was Maricopa County Attorney Tom Collins, who had been smacked by *The Republic* for taking a trip with his family at taxpayer expense.

Collins, along with freelance aviation writer Dick Rose, began to investigate Tully's background. The day after Christmas, Tully told Shover that Collins would have a press conference to expose him.

Shover drafted Tully's letter of resignation and called Indianapolis, the headquarters of *The Republic's* parent company, Central Newspapers Inc.

Tully's reign was over.

One of the early press calls was to McCain.

"His response was kind of like, 'Yeah, I have heard of Duke Tully. I'm sorry about what happened to him. Any other questions?' " Shover said.

Shover said McCain was a political opportunist who moved quickly to distance himself from Tully.

"In other words, he walked," Shover said. "He used Duke Tully to gain what he got in his life and he left him just when Duke needed him most."

'SEIZURE WORLD'

The fall of Tully threw Kimball off balance, since he had sought to paint McCain as a tool of the newspaper and its publisher. For the next few months, Kimball darted and dashed around McCain, throwing a lot of punches and landing none.

McCain took Kimball seriously, though.

"We worried, we sweated, we were concerned every single day," Clarke said. "From the first to the last, until Election Day....that's probably the reason John is so successful. That's the way he is."

In June 1986, McCain gave Kimball an opening, jokingly referring to Leisure World, a retirement community, as "Seizure World."

Kimball launched another series of attacks, calling McCain "bought and paid for" by special interests, since much of McCain's campaign contributions came from political action committees in four industries: defense, real estate, petroleum and utilities.

Kimball also noted that McCain was a millionaire because of his wife's interests in the beer distributorship owned by her father. Kimball wasn't shy about airing the Hensley family laundry.

He had dug up old newspaper clips that showed Jim Hensley had been an underling to well-known power broker Kemper Marley Sr., a rich rancher and wholesale liquor baron with ties to the 1976 car-bomb murder of *Arizona Republic* reporter Don Bolles.

After World War II (Hensley was a bombardier on a B-17 that was shot down over the English Channel), Hensley and his brother Eugene went to work at Marley-owned liquor distributorships in Phoenix and Tucson.

In 1948, the Hensley brothers were convicted of falsifying records to conceal, government lawyers contended, the illegal distribution of hundreds of cases of liquor. The sales occurred from 1945 to 1947, postwar years when liquor was rationed and in short supply.

Eugene Hensley was sentenced to a year in federal prison. Jim Hensley got six months, but his sentence was suspended. He received probation.

In 1953, Jim Hensley was again charged with falsifying records at Marley's liquor firms. The companies were defended by William Rehnquist, who would go on to become chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Hensley was found not guilty.

'STANDING ON A SOAPBOX'

In late 1986, as Kimball gained ground on McCain in the Senate race, the candidates agreed to debate on television.

Since McCain was a good deal shorter than the lanky Kimball, he stood on a riser behind the podium. At one point, Kimball called him on it, saying McCain was "standing on a soapbox" to make himself look taller.

McCain was angry but kept his cool. The next day, he got mad all over again when he saw himself standing on the riser on the front page of *The Republic*.

While the debate was mostly a draw, McCain enjoyed a huge fund-raising lead, outspending Kimball nearly 4 to 1. On Election Day, McCain steamrolled Kimball, 60 percent to 40 percent.

McCain went to a downtown hotel for his acceptance speech, an event chronicled in *The Nightingale's Song* by Robert Timberg.

Jay Smith, McCain's political consultant, was told to make sure McCain stood on a riser as he delivered his acceptance speech.

"Arriving at the hotel shortly after McCain, Smith saw reporters and well-wishers huddle together on the stage," Timberg wrote. "From the midst of the throng, he heard a familiar voice floating upward, thanking the voters for sending him to the Senate. Familiar but disembodied. McCain had seen the riser and kicked it aside. The White Tornado had become the Invisible Man."

By 1988, McCain was a hot property and was rumored to be George Bush's choice for vice president.

"Before Dan Quayle came popping out on the dock in New Orleans, the last name eliminated for consideration by the AP wire was John McCain," said Scott Celley, a McCain aide at the time.

But in October 1989, everything came crashing down around McCain.

"Chapter V: The Keating Five" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic* and AlterNet

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_V_1999.htm)
(<http://www.azcentral.com/news/specials/mccain/articles/0301mccainbio-chapter7.html>)

As a war hero and U.S. senator, John McCain's life has been chronicled in pictures. There are grainy mug shots of a young McCain, printed in U.S. newspapers after his jet was shot down over North Vietnam. There are black-and-white images of his return, grinning and waving, his hair turned prematurely gray by 5 1/2 years of malnutrition and torture in a Hanoi prison camp.

In happier times, there is McCain holding his newborn daughter while his wife, Cindy, smiles from her hospital bed.

But it is an innocent vacation picture that symbolizes McCain's Achilles heel and carries the reminder of the scandal that threatened his political career.

In the picture, which was taken in the Bahamas, McCain is seated on a bandstand while wearing an outrageous, straw party hat. Next to him on the dais, a bottle tipped to his lips, sits Charles Keating III, son of developer Charles H Keating Jr.

McCain calls the Keating scandal "my asterisk." Over the years, his opponents have failed to turn it into a period.

It all started in Mar., 1987. Charles H Keating Jr., the flamboyant developer and anti-porn crusader, needed help. The government was poised to seize Lincoln Savings and Loan, a freewheeling subsidiary of Keating's American Continental Corp.

As federal auditors crawled all over Lincoln, Keating was not content to wait and hope for the best. He'd spread a lot of money around Washington, and it was time to call in his chits.

One of his first stops was Sen. Dennis DeConcini. The Arizona lawmaker was one of Keating's most loyal friends in Congress, and for good reason. Keating had given thousands of dollars to DeConcini's campaigns. At one point, DeConcini even pushed Keating for ambassador to the Bahamas, where Keating owned a luxurious vacation home.

Now Keating had a job for DeConcini. He wanted him to organize a meeting with the regulators. The message: Get off Lincoln's back. Eventually, DeConcini would set up a meeting between five senators and the regulators. One of them was John McCain. McCain knew Keating well. His ties to the home builder dated to 1981, when the two men met at a Navy League dinner where McCain was the speaker.

After the speech, Keating walked up to McCain and told him that he, too, was a Navy flier, and that he greatly respected McCain's war record. He met McCain's wife and family. The two men became friends.

Charlie Keating always took care of his friends, especially those in politics. John McCain was no exception.

In 1982, during McCain's first run for the House, Keating held a fund-raiser for him, collecting more than \$11,000 from 40 employees of American Continental Corp.

McCain would spend more than \$550,000 to win the primary and the general election. In 1983, during McCain's second House race, Keating hosted a \$1,000-a-plate dinner for McCain, though he had no serious competition and coasted into his second term. When McCain pushed for the Senate in 1986, Keating was there with more than \$50,000.

By 1987, McCain had received about \$112,000 in political contributions from Keating and his associates.

McCain had also carried a little water for Keating in Washington. While in the House, McCain, along with a majority of representatives, co-sponsored a resolution to delay new regulations designed to curb risky investments by thrifts like Lincoln.

Hesitant Participant

Despite his history with Keating, McCain was hesitant about intervening. At that point, he had been in the Senate only three months. DeConcini wanted McCain to fly to San Francisco with him and talk to the regulators. McCain refused.

Keating would not be dissuaded.

On Mar. 24 at 9:30 a.m., Keating went to DeConcini's office and asked him if the meeting with the regulators was on. DeConcini told Keating that McCain was nervous. "McCain's a wimp," Keating replied, according to the book *Trust Me*, by Michael Binstein and Charles Bowden. "We'll go talk to him."

Keating had other business on the Hill and did not reach McCain's office until 1:30. A DeConcini staffer had already told McCain about the wimp comment.

When he arrived, Keating presented McCain with a laundry list of demands for the regulators.

McCain told Keating that he would attend the meeting and find out whether Keating was getting treated fairly, but that was all.

"Keating gave me the clear impression that he expected me to do more," McCain said later. "He had several specific requests."

When Keating questioned his courage, McCain invoked his POW experience. He told Keating that he didn't spend 5 1/2 years in the Hanoi Hilton to be called a coward. The two argued, then Keating stormed out.

Despite the dust-up, McCain attended not one but two meetings with the regulators. McCain later explained that he thought it was the right thing to do, because Keating was a constituent.

McCain would live to regret it.

The first meeting, on Apr. 2 in DeConcini's office, included Ed Gray, chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, as well as four senators: DeConcini, McCain, Alan Cranston, D-Calif., and John Glenn, D-Ohio.

The meeting had a clandestine air. Gray came alone. None of the senators brought their aides. DeConcini asked Gray to withdraw a regulation in order to help Lincoln. Gray shook his head.

For Keating, the meeting was a bust. Gray told the senators that as head of the loan board, he worried about the big picture. He didn't have any specific information about Lincoln. Bank regulators in San Francisco would be versed in that, not him. Gray offered to set up a meeting between the senators and the San Francisco regulators.

The second meeting was on Apr. 9. The same four senators attended, along with Sen. Don Riegle, D-Mich. Also at the meeting were William Black, then deputy director of the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corp., James Cirona,

president of the Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco, and Michael Patriarca, director of agency functions at the FSLIC.

In a recent interview with *The Republic*, Black said the meeting was a show of force by Keating, who wanted the senators to pressure the regulators into dropping their case against Lincoln. The thrift was in trouble for violating "direct investment" rules, which prohibited S&Ls from taking large ownership positions in various ventures.

"The Senate is a really small club, like the cliché goes," Black said. "And you really did have one-twentieth of the Senate in one room, called by one guy, who was the biggest crook in the S&L debacle."

Black said the senators could have accomplished their goal "if they had simply had us show up and see this incredible room and said, 'Hi. Charles Keating asked us to meet with you. 'Bye.' "

'ALWAYS HAMLET'

The five senators, including McCain, seemed like a united front to Black.

"They presented themselves as a group," Black said, "and DeConcini is the dad, who's going to take the primary speaking role. Both meetings are in his office, and in both cases it's 'we' want this, with no one going, 'What do you mean we, kemo sabe?' "

According to nearly verbatim notes taken by Black, McCain started the second meeting with a careful comment.

"One of our jobs as elected officials is to help constituents in a proper fashion," McCain said. "ACC (American Continental Corp.) is a big employer and important to the local economy. I wouldn't want any special favors for them.

"I don't want any part of our conversation to be improper."

Black said the comment had the opposite effect for the regulators. It made them nervous about what might really be going on.

"McCain was the weirdest," Black said. "They were all different in their own way. McCain was always Hamlet, wringing his hands about what to do."

Glenn, a former astronaut and the first American to orbit the Earth, was not as tactful.

"To be blunt, you should charge them or get off their backs," he told the regulators. "If things are bad there, get to them. Their view is that they took a failing business and put it back on its feet. It's now viable and profitable. They took it off the endangered species list. Why has the exam dragged on and on and on?"

Added DeConcini, "What's wrong with this if they're willing to clean up their act?" Cirona, the banking official, told the senators that it was "very unusual" to hold a meeting to discuss a particular company.

DeConcini shot back: "It's very unusual for us to have a company that could be put out of business by its regulators."

The meeting went on. McCain was quiet, while DeConcini carried the ball. The regulators told the senators that Lincoln was in trouble. The thrift, Cirona said, was a "ticking time bomb." Then Patriarca made a stunning comment, according to transcripts released later.

"We're sending a criminal referral to the Department of Justice," he said. "Not maybe, we're sending one. This is an extraordinarily serious matter. It involves a whole range of imprudent actions. I can't tell you strongly enough how serious this is. This is not a profitable institution."

The statement made DeConcini back off a little.

"The criminality surprises me," he said. "We're not interested in discussing those issues. Our premise was that we had a viable institution concerned that it was being overregulated."

"What can we say to Lincoln?" Glenn asked.

"Nothing," Black responded, "with regard to the criminal referral. They haven't, and won't be told by us that we're making one."

"You haven't told them?" Glenn asked.

"No," said Black. "Justice would skin us alive if we did. Those referrals are very confidential. We can't prosecute anyone ourselves. All we can do is refer it to Justice."

After the meeting, McCain was done with Keating.

"Again, I was troubled by the appearance of the meeting," McCain said later. "I stated I didn't want any special favors from them. I only wanted them (Lincoln Savings) to be fairly treated."

Black doesn't completely buy that argument. If McCain was concerned about Keating asking him to do things that were improper, why go to either meeting at all?

Black said McCain probably went because Keating was close to being the political godfather of Arizona and McCain still had plenty of ambition.

"Keating was incredibly powerful," Black said. "And incredibly useful."

McCain's reservations aside, Keating accomplished his goal. He had bought some time, though the price was very high.

SHORT-LIVED REPRIEVE

A month later, the San Francisco regulators finished a yearlong audit and recommended that Lincoln be seized. But the report was virtually ignored because of politics on the bank board.

Gray was being replaced as chairman by Danny Wall, who was more sympathetic to Keating.

The audit, which described Lincoln as a thrift reeling out of control, sat on a shelf. In Sept., 1987, the investigation was taken away from the San Francisco office, away from Black and Patriarca. In May, 1988, it was transferred to Washington, where Lincoln would get a new audit.

It was a win for Keating. A battle, not the war.

In Phoenix, the move sparked a triumphant party at the posh headquarters of American Continental.

Someone hurled a computer from the second floor, shattering a window. Keating, all 6-feet-5 of him, struck a Superman pose and ripped open his shirt to display a hand-drawn skull and crossbones over the letters FHLBB—the Federal Home Loan Bank Board.

A secretary climbed onto a desk to take photos, and American Continental executive Robert Kielty joined her. Keating grabbed a roll of tape and lashed their legs together. Potted plants were knocked over. Beer and champagne were spilled on the carved wood desks. Kielty took a bottle of champagne and poured it down another secretary's blouse.

"Get this champagne colder," Keating yelled.

Back in San Francisco, Black was fuming.

"Clearly, we were shot in the back," he would say later.

Despite the reprieve, Keating's businesses continued to spiral downward, taking the five senators with him. News of the meeting leaked out, and now all five men were answering some very embarrassing questions.

"Did you lean on regulators for Charlie Keating?"

"Did you get campaign contributions in exchange for your cooperation?"

"Why did you protect Keating?"

Together, the five senators had accepted more than \$300,000 in contributions from Keating, and their critics added a new term to the American lexicon:

KEATING FIVE

As the S&L failure deepened, the sheer magnitude of the losses hit the press. Billions of dollars had been squandered. The Keating Five became shorthand for the kind of political influence that money can buy. The five senators were linked as the gang who went to bat for an S&L bandit.

S&L "trading cards" came out. The Keating Five card showed Charles Keating holding up his hand, with a senator's head adorning each finger. McCain was on Keating's pinkie.

As the Keating investigation dragged through 1988, McCain dodged the body blows. Most landed on DeConcini, who had arranged the meetings and had other close ties to Keating, including \$50 million in loans from Keating to DeConcini's aides.

But McCain made a critical error.

In spinning his side of the Keating story, McCain adopted the blanket defense that Keating was a constituent and that he had every right to ask his senators for help. In attending the meetings, McCain said, he simply wanted to make sure that Keating was treated like any other constituent.

Keating was far more than a constituent to McCain, however.

On Oct. 8, 1989, The Republic revealed that McCain's wife and her father had invested \$359,100 in a Keating shopping center in Apr., 1986, a year before McCain met with the regulators.

The paper also reported that the McCains, sometimes accompanied by their daughter and baby-sitter, had made at least nine trips at Keating's expense, sometimes aboard the American Continental jet. Three of trips were made during vacations to Keating's opulent Bahamas retreat at Cat Cay.

McCain also did not pay Keating for the trips until years after they were taken, when he learned that Keating was in trouble over Lincoln. Total cost: \$13,433.

When the story broke, McCain did nothing to help himself. When reporters first called him, he was furious. Caught out in the open, the former fighter pilot let go with a barrage of cover fire. Sen. Hothead came out in all his glory.

"You're a liar," McCain snapped Sept. 29 when a Republic reporter asked him about business ties between his wife and Keating.

"That's the spouse's involvement, you idiot," McCain said later in the same conversation. "You do understand English, don't you?"

He also belittled the reporters when they asked about his wife's ties to Keating.

"It's up to you to find that out, kids."

And then he played the POW card.

"Even the Vietnamese didn't question my ethics," McCain said.

The paper ran the story a few days later. At a news conference, McCain was a changed man. He stood calmly for 90 minutes and answered every question.

On the shopping center, his defense was simple. The deal did not involve him. The shares in the shopping center had been purchased by a partnership set up between McCain's wife and her father.

But McCain also had to explain his trips with Keating and why he didn't pay Keating back right away.

On that score, McCain admitted he had fouled up. He said he should have reimbursed Keating immediately, not waited several years. His staff said it was an oversight, but it looked bad, McCain jetting around with Keating, then going to bat for him with the federal regulators.

Meanwhile, Lincoln continued to founder.

In Apr., 1989, two years after the Keating Five meetings, the government seized Lincoln, which declared bankruptcy. In Sept., 1990, Keating was booked into Los Angeles County Jail, charged with 42 counts of fraud. His bond was set at \$5 million. During Keating's eventual trial, the prosecution produced a parade of elderly investors who had lost their life's savings by investing in American Continental junk bonds.

'THE ULTIMATE SURVIVOR'

In Nov., 1990, the Senate Ethics Committee convened to decide what punishment, if any, should be doled out to the Keating Five.

Robert Bennett, who would later represent President Bill Clinton in the Paula Jones case, was the special counsel for the committee. In his opening remarks, he slammed DeConcini but went lightly on McCain, the lone Republican ensnared with four Democrats.

"In the case of Senator McCain, there is very substantial evidence that he thought he had an understanding with Senator DeConcini's office that certain matters would not be gone into at the meeting with (bank board) Chairman (Ed) Gray," Bennett said.

"Moreover, there is substantial evidence that, as a result of Senator McCain's refusal to do certain things, he had a fallout with Mr. Keating."

McCain, the ultimate survivor, had dodged another missile.

Among the Keating Five, McCain received the most direct contributions from Keating. But the investigation found that he was the least culpable, along with Glenn. McCain attended the meetings but did nothing afterward to stop Lincoln's death spiral.

Lincoln's losses eventually were set at \$3.4 billion, the most expensive failure in the national S&L scandal.

McCain also looked good in contrast to DeConcini, who continued to defend Keating until fall 1989, when federal regulators filed a \$1.1 billion civil racketeering and fraud suit against Keating, accusing him of siphoning Lincoln's deposits to his family and into political campaigns.

In the end, McCain received only a mild rebuke from the Ethics Committee for exercising "poor judgment" for intervening with the federal regulators on behalf of Keating. Still, he felt tarred by the affair.

"The appearance of it was wrong," McCain said recently. "It's a wrong appearance when a group of senators appear in a meeting with a group of regulators, because it conveys the impression of undue and improper influence. And it was the wrong thing to do."

McCain noted that Bennett, the independent counsel, recommended that McCain and Glenn be dropped from the investigation.

"For the first time in history, the Ethics Committee overruled the recommendation of the independent counsel," McCain said. "I'm sure it had nothing to do with the fact that I was the only Republican of the five and the Democrats were in the majority (in the Senate)."

But McCain owns up to his mistake:

"I was judged eventually, after three years, of using, quote, poor judgment, and I agree with that assessment."

[Gee, Johnny Boy, that would only leave one year of a four-year Presidency to turn that around and use good judgment at least a little of the time. I guess America would recover from the nuclear wars you'd probably cause during your three years of "poor judgment," to put it in your own words. Damning! How did you ever get nominated, Johnny Boy? — SteveB, Nov. 11, 2011]

"Chapter VI: Arizona, the Later Years" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_VI_1999.htm)

For many politicians, the Keating scandal would have been too much to overcome. But McCain refused to go down easily.

He employed a dual strategy. He would make himself accessible to any reporter anywhere who wanted to talk about the Keating Five, and he wouldn't let the controversy detract from his work as a senator.

McCain grimly marched about the country, struggling to clear his name.

"I have to say, it was not an easy time," said Torie Clarke, McCain's former press secretary. "But because of the strategy he decided to pursue.... nobody had time to sit around and feel sorry for themselves."

McCain's hobnobbing with the press had an unexpected side effect. Reporters started to like him.

McCain always returned phone calls. He showed up for his television appearances. He was willing to go off the record to help reporters unearth certain stories. He answered questions bluntly, without much political tap dancing.

For Beltway reporters bored with bureaucrats, McCain was fresh, new and different.

"Everybody in town," Clarke said, "from the makeup artist at the local news station to the producers and directors, every reporter and every editor, loves working with John McCain because he does not stand on ceremony, he has no airs."

Going into the 1992 election, some thought McCain was in trouble. President Bush was flagging in the polls, and McCain was coming off the Keating scandal. His Democratic opponent was Claire Sargent, a Phoenix community activist. Former Gov. Evan Mecham was running as an independent despite having been impeached and removed from office in 1988.

But McCain's image improved in 1991. Soon after the Persian Gulf War broke out, McCain was in demand. The phone began ringing off the hook the day POWs were taken.

"*The Today Show* called, and we started on *The Today Show* at four-something in the morning," said Scott Celley, a former aide. "The last thing I remember him being on was *Australian Nightline*, which was done here at Channel 10, a few blocks away, at close to 11 p.m. He was on television or the radio every minute of that day."

McCain became a regular on public affairs shows, using his expertise as a former Navy pilot and POW. McCain quickly became a national authority on foreign affairs.

The din of the Keating Five began to lessen. McCain stayed on message and began to distance himself from the scandal.

In 1992, McCain received 58 percent of the vote in the three-way election, easily winning a second Senate term.

Things did not go as well for Charlie Keating. In January 1993, a federal jury convicted him of 73 counts of wire and bankruptcy fraud in the collapse of American Continental and Lincoln.

Keating was sentenced to 12 years and seven months in prison but served just 50 months before the conviction was overturned on a technicality. In 1999, at age 75, he pleaded guilty to four counts of fraud for siphoning some \$975,000 from American Continental before he had declared bankruptcy in 1989. He was sentenced to time served.

In 1995, McCain was lionized in *The Nightingale's Song*, a book that examined the military and political careers of McCain and four other Annapolis graduates, James Webb, Robert McFarlane, John Poindexter and Oliver North.

Robert Timberg devotes two of his 475 pages to the Keating scandal and says this about it:

"Stripped of the veneer of sleaze that coated the affair, McCain's defense of his actions was solid and credible. It didn't matter. The Keating Five label endured, shabby journalistic shorthand that made up in simplemindedness what it lacked in precision."

By 1996, McCain was considered a front-runner to be Bob Dole's running mate in the race against Clinton and Al Gore, before Dole picked Jack Kemp.

Today, the Keating Five scandal is barely mentioned. In most national profiles of McCain, it has been reduced to one paragraph.

McCain knows it will never disappear altogether.

"It'll be on my tombstone," McCain told *60 Minutes'* Mike Wallace. "One of the Keating Five."

McCain ERUPTIONS

In the early 1990s, despite McCain's battering over Keating, he didn't stop throwing his weight around Arizona.

Some public officials are still stinging from McCain's volcanic temper.

One is Democrat Paul Johnson, the former mayor of Phoenix and an unsuccessful candidate for governor. During Johnson's stint as mayor, he saw McCain's temper up close, and it makes him think twice about McCain becoming president.

"His volatility borders in the area of being unstable," Johnson said. "Before I let this guy put his finger on the button, I would have to give considerable pause."

Johnson said he got a full dose of McCain's anger when he was in Washington in 1992, dealing with a federal land swap that involved the Phoenix Indian School. He and McCain, who disagreed over the issue, were in a hearing room with other mayors when hostilities broke out.

"He says, 'Start a tape recorder. It's best when you get a liar on tape,' " Johnson recalled. "Then I said something back to him, and before you knew it, we were nose to nose and chin to chin. No blows were exchanged, but we were as close to being 14-year-old boys as we possibly could be.... Testosterone was flowing all over place."

Johnson, who also fought McCain's plan for a regional airport, marvels at his wrath.

"Oh, gosh, you never dealt with a more brutal individual," Johnson said. "He was very tough."

McCain's penchant for bullying state officials essentially destroyed his relationship with Grant Woods, who served as state attorney general from 1990 until 1998.

Woods, son of powerful Mesa contractor Joe E. Woods, was an early McCain staffer. He provided key help in McCain's first run for Congress, mainly by persuading his influential father to support McCain in Mesa over several local candidates.

"The support of Joe Woods in the district was about 100 times more important than the support of Grant Woods," the younger Woods said. "When he went with McCain, it made it OK for the old guard to support McCain rather than one of the locals."

The Woods-McCain relationship began to chill in 1994 when Woods started investigating bid-rigging allegations surrounding Gov. Fife Symington's government cost-cutting program, Project SLIM. Despite pressure from other Republicans, including McCain, Woods pursued the probe.

Over the years, McCain had become very close to Symington. Even their staffs were tied together. Symington's former chief of staff, Wes Gullett, is McCain's deputy campaign director and is married to McCain aide Deb Gullett.

Others note that McCain called for the scalp of Gov. Evan Mecham, who was impeached and removed from office, but let Symington slide when he was under indictment for bank fraud. Symington later was convicted and resigned, but his conviction was overturned earlier this year.

McCain said the state was operating smoothly under Symington, which was not the case with Mecham. He bristled when it was suggested that he was protecting a friend.

"I really won't answer that kind of insinuation," McCain said. "I do what's best for the state. I do what's best for the country."

McCain added, "Of course (Symington) was a friend of mine. I had a friendly relationship with Gov. Mecham before he got into the difficulties."

Woods said McCain didn't like it when he investigated Symington.

"I think he probably liked to be in the loop," Woods said. "Consequently, when he wasn't, and then I kept investigating Republicans or criticizing Republicans...he never could get over that.

"It appeared clear to me that the only way I could return to his good graces was to be a good boy, and I wasn't willing to be a good boy."

Eventually, McCain and Woods had it out over Symington.

"He just did not approve of me constantly making life difficult for Republicans, and I made it clear that it wasn't going to change, and we weren't going to have any more of these conversations. We haven't talked in a long time."

Woods ultimately obtained a \$725,000 civil settlement in the SLIM case.

Woods said he finds it ironic that McCain, Mr. Maverick in the Senate, didn't want Woods to assume the same role in the Arizona Republican Party.

"I guess it's OK to be the maverick but not tolerate mavericks around you," Woods said.

WIFE'S DRUG SCANDAL

By the early 1990s, his political rehabilitation was complete. Nobody on the national stage seemed to care about McCain's foibles.

What McCain didn't know was that the Keating scandal had already claimed another victim, one from McCain's own family.

In August 1994, a group of Valley journalists received a strange phone call from Jay Smith, McCain's political strategist.

They were offered an exclusive in exchange for agreeing to certain terms. They would attend individual interview sessions Aug. 19 and sit on the story until Aug. 22. The five journalists - three print reporters, a television reporter and a radio reporter - agreed.

One by one, they went to the McCain home, where they were told an incredible story.

Cindy McCain told them that she had been a drug addict for three years. From 1989 to 1992, she was addicted to Percocet and Vicodin. Worse, she had stolen pills from the American Voluntary Medical Team, a relief organization that she founded to aid Third World countries.

"More than anything, I wanted to be able to face my children," she said at the time, "for them to know I wasn't lying to them. They're too young to fully understand right now, but someday they will."

Cindy blamed two back surgeries and the Keating Five scandal - a mix of physical and emotional pain - for driving her to drugs.

Things started to unravel when a Drug Enforcement Administration audit found irregularities in AVMT's records, prompting an investigation, Cindy told the reporters.

In 1992, as the Keating affair surfaced again during McCain's run for a second Senate term, Cindy's parents confronted her about her drug use.

What had been so clear to Cindy's parents was lost on McCain, who said he hadn't noticed his wife's addiction.

"I was stunned," McCain said at the time. "Naturally, I felt enormous sadness for Cindy and a certain sense of guilt that I hadn't detected it. I feel very sorry for what she went through, but I'm very proud she was able to come out of it. For her, it was like the Keating affair had been for me - a searing experience, and we both came out stronger. I think it has strengthened our marriage and our overall relationship."

To avoid prosecution on drug charges, she would enter a federal diversion program.

In telling her story, Cindy got choked up when she told of federal drug agents knocking on her door, asking about missing pills.

The reporters were sympathetic.

Cindy had always been physically fragile. She suffered two miscarriages early in her marriage to McCain until doctors determined she was a "DES baby." Cindy's mother had been given the drug diethylstilbestrol during her pregnancy.

During the 1940s and '50s, DES was thought to prevent miscarriages. Instead, it caused numerous birth defects, including deformed uteruses in female offspring. Doctors finally detected the problem and took special precautions during Cindy's third pregnancy.

Even so, there were long separations, because Cindy couldn't travel while pregnant. Besides, she preferred Arizona to Washington.

Cindy told the reporters that she finally entered The Meadows, a drug-treatment center in Wickenburg, and went to anti-dependency meetings twice a week.

In 1993, she said, a hysterectomy ended the nagging back pain that had driven her to the painkillers.

So why go public a year later?

"If what I say can help just one person to face the problem, it's worthwhile," she said. "They should know it's OK to be scared. It's OK to talk about it. And there's nothing wrong with staying home, carpooling and potty-training a 3-year-old."

Given Cindy's heartfelt confession, the handpicked journalists did what Smith expected. They painted Cindy as the victim, a courageous soldier beating back the devil of drug addiction.

But there was far more to the story. The reporters had been the victims of a spin job. It became apparent the next week, as more details came out.

John McCain had organized the interviews to head off a far more negative story, one that centered on a former AVMT employee who accused Cindy McCain in a lawsuit of ordering him to conceal "improper acts" and "misrepresent facts in a judicial proceeding."

The accuser was Tom Gosinski, who had been fired from AVMT in 1993. It was he who had tipped the DEA to check out Cindy's organization. His lawsuit had been filed as a warning shot - his real allegation was that Cindy McCain had fired him because he "knew too much" about her drug use.

The details were in a 212-page report from the Maricopa County Attorney's Office that was about to become public when McCain arranged the interviews.

Ironically, County Attorney Rick Romley entered the fray at the request of McCain lawyer John Dowd, who charged that Gosinski was extorting the McCains by offering to settle the case for \$250,000.

By asking Romley to investigate, Dowd helped create a public record that otherwise wouldn't have existed. When the report was released, McCain lost control of the story. Reporters who had been cut out of Cindy's private interview sessions, including those from The Republic, pursued it with new vigor.

Infuriated that his spin had failed to take, McCain refused to talk to reporters who weren't invited to Cindy's private interviews.

Dowd, who would later defend Gov. Fife Symington, put it plainly to a Republic reporter who called him for comment:

"You're not going to talk to Cindy. You're not going to talk to me. You're not going to talk to anybody associated with us. Have you got the message?"

Then he hung up.

Meanwhile, new allegations were surfacing, feeding the press frenzy for fresh angles, especially in light of McCain's silence.

Gosinski alleged that Cindy had asked him to lie to make it easier for her to adopt a baby from Bangladesh.

Backed up by court documents, the McCains denied there was anything improper in the adoption. They noted that the adoption probably saved the girl's life, as her cleft palate would not have allowed her to survive in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Gosinski's credibility started to slip. In Romley's report, several AVMT staffers said Gosinski had privately threatened to blackmail Cindy if she ever fired him.

Ultimately, Gosinski's lawsuit was dropped and he was never prosecuted.

The issue hasn't quite died. During a recent campaign swing through South Carolina, a New York Daily News reporter asked Cindy about her addiction.

She replied that she has been drug-free for eight years, but she acknowledged that she will always be in recovery.

"I had a real problem," she said, "and I dealt with my addiction head-on."

"Chapter VII: Inside the Beltway" by Bill Muller, *The Arizona Republic*

Oct. 3, 1999, (http://www.wmsa.net/People/john_mccain/ariz-republic_chap_VII_1999.htm)

None of McCain's battles have caused so much uproar - especially in his own party - as campaign-finance reform.

He surprised everyone by teaming with Democrat Russell Feingold and drafting a bill that would cut the legs out from under the major parties.

McCain's target was "soft money" - unlimited contributions given to political parties by corporations. He sees this as the ultimate evil in government, greasing the wheels for special interests.

Detractors say this is a bit high-handed, especially coming from a man who accepted \$112,000 in campaign contributions from Charlie Keating and his pals.

They also note that McCain's stand on campaign-finance reform has not prevented him from working Washington, D.C., for campaign cash or accepting tens of thousands of dollars from corporations who are under the thumb of the Commerce Committee, which McCain heads.

The committee holds sway over a number of key industries, overseeing issues ranging from cable and satellite television rules to airline deregulation to access to telephone long-distance markets.

Armed with this seeming contradiction, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott fired a salvo at McCain after he tried to re-energize his campaign-finance bill in July.

"I just think, when you're out there raising money right and left," Lott told *The New York Times*, "and then you're talking about how you need to reform the system, it rings a little hollow."

McCain says he will persist because he believes the public wants reform.

"Most Americans care very much that it is now legal for a subsidiary of a corporation owned by the Chinese Army to give unlimited amounts of money to American political campaigns," McCain says. "Most Americans care very much that the Lincoln bedroom has become a Motel 6 where the president of the United States serves as the bellhop."

Though outspoken in Congress, McCain has resisted criticizing other Republicans during the presidential race. Instead, he's decided that Clinton makes a good whipping boy.

When the Kosovo conflict broke out, public affairs shows went running to McCain, and he didn't disappoint them. He became the first major political figure to question Clinton's tactics.

Though Kosovo worked out in Clinton's favor, McCain didn't really take a hit, said Dennis Goldford, chairman of the department of politics and international relations at Drake University.

"Nothing backfired," Goldford said. "McCain didn't propose something, some use of force, that backfired and had tremendous casualties and was a disaster."

Since it was ultimately Clinton's call, "McCain could take a principled position and not worry about whether it actually worked or not," Goldford said.

Even apart from Kosovo, McCain says, Clinton has pursued a "feckless, photo-op foreign policy."

McCain blames the president for gutting the military, which has seen its numbers reduced in recent years. He points to 11,000 military personnel on food stamps and pilots leaving the Navy and Air Force in record numbers to fly for commercial airlines, where they can make more money.

McCain also wants the armed forces rebuilt to better deal with modern threats.

"We have a military that is structured to fight a tank battle on the plains of Europe," McCain says. "What we need is a force that can be moved around the world on short notice."

He says that base closings are a must and that the government must provide proper health care for World War II veterans. He says it's an "absolute disgrace" that veterans are being ignored.

How does one rebuild the military and cut taxes at the same time? For McCain, that means targeting pork-barrel projects and weapons systems that he deems unnecessary, such as the Sea Wolf submarine, which will cost \$4 billion apiece.

He also promises to repair Medicare and Social Security.

"More young Americans believe that Elvis is alive than believe they'll ever see a Social Security check," McCain says, adding that many in Congress don't see the need to repair Social Security. "They figure, 'Since I'll be gone by then, I'll let you figure it out yourselves. And you don't vote, so hell.'"

'A VERY EFFECTIVE VOICE'

Some have criticized McCain for failing to pass a piece of major legislation during his 17 years in Congress. McCain-Feingold died, as did his anti-tobacco bill. His line-item veto did pass, but it was later tossed out by the courts.

Congressman Matt Salmon, R-Ariz., said McCain shouldn't be judged on the number of bills he has passed.

"You should look at a person's success by how many bills they stopped," Salmon said. "He's been a very effective voice at cutting wasteful spending. I don't judge a person based on how many bills they get through... I think that's a bogus way of appraising somebody's strengths."

McCain was first elected to the House in 1982 and served two terms. As a freshman congressman, he broke from the pack in criticizing President Reagan's decision to station troops in Lebanon.

In a House floor speech in September 1983, McCain called for the withdrawal of all U.S. Marines from Lebanon. He was one of 27 Republicans to defy Reagan openly.

"The longer we stay in Lebanon, the harder it will be for us to leave," he said.

A month later, McCain was tragically proved right when the Marine barracks were bombed, killing 241 U.S. servicemen.

That speech drew national press for McCain, who was lauded in *Rolling Stone* magazine and was listed as a "Republican on the rise" by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Much of his second House term was dominated by talk of him running for the Senate, though in 1985, he drew more national attention when he returned to Vietnam with CBS news legend Walter Cronkite.

In 1986, McCain was elected to the Senate, replacing legendary Arizona conservative Barry Goldwater. In 1998, McCain was elected to his third term.

Over the years, McCain has earned his maverick status. He's not afraid to make a controversial floor speech, though some argue they have had little effect.

His defiant nature plays well in Arizona, a conservative state with a sagebrush-rebellion mentality. GOP voters like McCain's politics.

For the most part, he's been a good Republican, in some ways more conservative than Goldwater. During most of his years in Congress, he has been in the minority party.

Last year, McCain voted with his party 81 percent of the time. He voted to convict Clinton during the president's impeachment and supported the Contract With America.

During the Reagan years, McCain followed the party line, voting for prayer in public schools, the 1986 tax reform act, continued subsidies for tobacco companies and the reintroduction of some handgun sales.

He voted against the Equal Rights Amendment, funding for the Clean Air Act and opposed the 1983 nuclear freeze resolution.

At times, though, he would go against the tide.

In 1986, McCain voted with a two-thirds majority to override Reagan's veto of sanctions against South Africa. The next year, he outfoxed the administration and stopped an attempt to funnel \$28 million from a poverty food program into a raise for Department of Agriculture employees.

Today, as chairman of the Commerce Committee, McCain is shepherding the deregulation of the telephone industry as well as dealing with burgeoning issues involving transportation, cable television and the Internet.

McCain also has made a name for himself by fighting wasteful government spending, which often takes the form of pet federal projects in congressmen's or senators' districts.

As part of his campaign rhetoric, McCain notes that Congress looks at appropriations bills "the way Willie Sutton looked at banks."

To root out the pork, McCain has stationed a staffer at Appropriations Committee meetings. He also pushed the line-item veto, which would allow the president to remove certain elements of a bill while allowing the legislation to become law.

Although it passed, the courts struck down the line-item veto in 1997.

McCain recently started his "It's Your Country" Web site (www.itsyourcountry.com), to monitor pork and corporate welfare. It includes "the daily outrage," naming companies that get huge federal subsidies in exchange for contributions to political parties.

McCain also targeted Big Tobacco, seeking to raise taxes on cigarettes to help states pay their smoking-related health care costs, finance an anti-smoking advertising campaign and pay for health research.

The tobacco industry mounted a \$40 million national advertising campaign to defeat McCain's anti-tobacco bill, and it ultimately prevailed.

"The losers are the children of America," McCain said after the bill went down.

WATCHING HIS TEMPER

These days, John McCain is on his best behavior. He is focused on becoming president, and he's not going to let his temper get in the way. When reporters chase him on the street and ask for just one more question, McCain is accommodating.

"Anything," he says. "Anything."

It has not always been this way. More than one reporter has picked up his phone in the morning to hear McCain shrieking on the other end, furious over some injustice.

When *The Republic* ran an editorial cartoon about his wife Cindy's drug addiction, the senator didn't speak to his hometown paper for more than a year.

The cartoon, by Steve Benson, *The Republic's* Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, showed Cindy McCain holding an emaciated child upside down by the ankle and shaking him over a field of starving children.

"Quit your crying and give me the drugs," read the caption.

McCain also has yelled at bureaucrats, dressed down fellow members of Congress and earned the name Sen. Hothead from *Washingtonian* magazine.

Some Arizona elected officials have been scarred by run-ins with McCain, who brooks no disloyalty - you are either with him or against him.

But McCain is a shrewd campaigner. He knows he can't show that side if he's going to reach the Oval Office.

His flaws remain below the surface, and they aren't drawing a lot of press.

"It has to have some new twist to it or new information, something like, hey, did you know..." McCain says.

"There will always be people who will attack me. I've heard some of the damndest things said about me. I was on a radio show in Charleston (S.C.), and someone calls up and says, 'Did you ever commit adultery with prostitutes in Subic Bay?' " McCain recalls, laughing.

"And I said the last time I was in Subic Bay was 1966, but no.

"Once every couple weeks, some hand grenade is lobbed into the headquarters with some stupid statement or charge."

McCain has one advantage: Much of his dirty laundry already has been aired.

BEDFORD, N.H. - McCain's campaign van is rocketing down the road to another event, another 100 people who want to shake his hand, hear his words, hope against hope that he'll be president.

He's leaning way back in the seat, answering questions about Vietnam, about Charlie Keating, about anything.

Just for a moment, his eyes close and he slumps a little, the weight of the campaign on his shoulders.

Then he's asked to define his message. McCain's eyes flutter open. The van is pulling to a stop in front of someone's home.

"Reform," McCain says as the door slides open.

There is faint smattering of applause from the lawn.

"Principle," he says. "And freedom."

And then he is gone.

Read more *Biography of John McCain*: <http://www.azcentral.com/news/election/mccain/>.

20080819-08

21:08

SteveB

John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/19/08; "John Lewis: John McCain's Wise Man?"

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

At yesterday's VFW convention, McCain inexplicably attacked Obama for, of all things, wanting to be President:

Behind all of these claims and positions by Senator Obama lies the ambition to be President.

Not only is this a lunatic accusation since, as was pointed out yesterday, McCain also seems to want to be President...in his 2002 political memoir, *Worth Fighting For*, McCain has this to say:

I didn't decide to run for president to start a national crusade for the political reforms I believed in or to run a campaign as if it were some grand act of patriotism. In truth, I wanted to be president because it had become my ambition to be president. . . . In truth, I'd had the ambition for a long time.

Senility, pure and simple!

From senility to outright lies (or maybe the insanity defense applies here too, huh Johnny Boy?)...this (below) from Mother Jones and verified.

LIAR, LIAR, PANT'S ON FIRE, JOHNNY BOY!!!!!!!!!!!!!! CAUGHT AGAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

"John Lewis: John McCain's Wise Man?" by Janathan Stein, Mother Jones

Aug. 18, 2008, (<http://motherjones.com/mojo/2008/08/john-lewis-john-mccains-wise-man>)

John McCain says he plans to consult with Democratic Rep. John Lewis when he's President. That's news to Lewis.

During Saturday's presidential forum at Rick Warren's California mega-church, John McCain was asked to name the "three wisest people" he would "rely heavily on" if elected President. He didn't cite close confidantes Phil Gramm and Randy Scheunemann, possibly because they have gotten McCain into trouble politically. Instead McCain chose Gen. David Petraeus; former eBay CEO Meg Whitman, one of his economic advisers; and Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a leading figure in the civil rights movement.

This is not the first time McCain has invoked Lewis' name on the campaign trail. Earlier this year, in Selma, Alabama, he told the story of civil rights marchers trying to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in a 1965 march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery. Waiting at the crest of the bridge were a brigade of police and state troopers who meted out an attacks so violent that the day is known today as Bloody Sunday.

Central in McCain's telling was John Lewis, a man of just 25 who was at the front of the march and absorbed the first blow. Millions of Americans, McCain noted, "watched brave John Lewis fall."

But even though McCain has now repeatedly cited Lewis as a role model and potential adviser, McCain has not established a relationship with the Georgia Democrat in the 22 years they have served in Congress together. At the time of McCain's Selma speech, a Lewis associate told my colleague David Corn that McCain has never been close to Lewis. Lewis was not told about McCain's speech in Selma in advance, nor was he invited to attend.

In response to McCain's latest invocation of his name, Rep. Lewis said in a statement requested by Mother Jones, "I cannot stop one human being, even a presidential candidate, from admiring the courage and sacrifice of peaceful protesters on the Edmund Pettus Bridge or making comments about it." But, he added, "Sen. McCain and I are colleagues in the U.S. Congress, not confidantes. He does not consult me. And I do not consult him."

It took McCain years to fully embrace the goals that Lewis was fighting for on Bloody Sunday. In 1983, McCain voted against making Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday, in opposition to most members of Congress, including many of his Republican colleagues. In 1987, the governor of Arizona repealed the state's recognition of King; McCain supported the move. It was only in 1990, 25 years after Lewis marched in Alabama, when Arizona reversed its decision that McCain changed his own stance on the issue.

And there are, of course, the fundamental differences between John McCain's political philosophy and the goals of Lewis and his fellow marchers. Lewis hoped that the federal government would use its influence to protect the rights of disenfranchised individuals; he sought an expanded role for government because of what he believed was government's power to do good. It explains, in part, why Lewis is a Democrat today and supports Barack Obama for president. McCain, on the other hand, is a fanatical enemy of government spending and has said, "I've found over time that less government involvement is better." It's a philosophy that would have left Lewis and his cohorts out in the cold.

20080819-09 21:19 SteveB Re: 2nd Amendment

Dear Pat,

I don't think the founding fathers would be appalled by capitalism at all...it was absolutely rampant and dominant in the Colonies. Look at Ben Franklin and Paul Revere and Thomas Jefferson, to name but a few. Capitalism is one of the highest expressions of freedom, even though it does not necessarily require freedom. Having seen firsthand the slavery of China, and having lived through the usurpation of beautiful freedom and capitalism in Bolivia by a Marxist government, and having owned my own businesses since I was a sophomore in high school, I cherish capitalism...especially capitalism that is not allowed to run rampant and control the government. Then there is no true freedom nor true capitalism. And, believe it or not, historical documents—including the Constitution itself—prove that the founding fathers did believe armed insurrection would someday be required. I pray that they were wrong.

20080820-01 11:25 SteveM Re: The Keating Five

Dear SteveB,

[Source of quotes unknown. —SteveB]

What know [No? —SteveB] comments about the other 4 Dem 3 who were convicted! Alan Cranston (D-CA), Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ), John Glenn (D-OH), and Donald W. Riegle (D-MI),

Heck, if you are as charitable of BHO and Rev Wright, surely you can forgive Mac for something that happened 20 years ago? LOL!

In the end, McCain received only a mild rebuke from the Ethics Committee for exercising "poor judgment" for intervening with the federal regulators on behalf of Keating. Still, he felt tarred by the affair.

"The appearance of it was wrong," McCain said recently. "It's a wrong appearance when a group of senators appear in a meeting with a group of regulators, because it conveys the impression of undue and improper influence. And it was the wrong thing to do."

McCain noted that Bennett, the independent counsel, recommended that McCain and Glenn be dropped from the investigation.

"For the first time in history, the Ethics Committee overruled the recommendation of the independent counsel," McCain said. "I'm sure it had nothing to do with the fact that I was the only Republican of the five and the Democrats were in the majority (in the Senate)."

But McCain owns up to his mistake: "I was judged eventually, after three years, of using, quote, poor judgment, and I agree with that assessment."

20080821-01	11:12	SteveM	Fw: "Just One State" [California]; Illegal Immigration
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

This is only one State.....If this doesn't open your eyes, nothing will!

Just One State, from the *Los Angeles Time*

1. 40% of all workers in L. A. County (L.A. County has 10.2 million people)are working for cash and not paying taxes. This is because they are predominantly illegal immigrants working without a green card.
2. 95% of warrants for murder in Los Angeles are for illegal aliens.
3. 75% of people on the most wanted list in Los Angeles are illegal aliens.
4. Over 2/3 of all births in Los Angeles County are to illegal alien Mexicans on Medi-Cal , whose births were paid for by taxpayers.
5. Nearly 35% of all inmates in California detention centers are Mexican nationals here illegally
6. Over 300,000 illegal aliens in Los Angeles County are living in garages.
7. The FBI reports half of all gang members in Los Angeles are most likely illegal aliens from south of the border.
8. Nearly 60% of all occupants of HUD properties are illegal.
9. 21 radio stations in L. A. are Spanish speaking.
10. In L.A. County, 5.1 million people speak English, 3.9 million speak Spanish.

Less than 2% of illegal aliens are picking our crops, but 29% are on welfare. Over 70% of the United States ' annual population growth (and over 90% of California , Florida , and New York) results from immigration. 29% of inmates in federal prisons are illegal aliens. We are a bunch of fools for letting this continue.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Send copies of this letter to at least two other people. 100 would be even better. This is only one State..... If this doesn't open your eyes nothing will! And you wonder why Nancy Pelosi wants them to become voters!

20080821-02	11:29	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/20/08; "McCain Unsure How Many Houses He Owns"
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Now, Johnny Boy, I don't consider it bad, or arrogant, or elitist to be rich. But to not be able to count to 4 (or 7) is a little bit ridiculous, even for somebody of your advanced age, don't you think? And I still find it odd that, with your allegedly vast experience, you would assert that it takes \$5,000,000 to be rich, even if you have since retracted this "mistake".

You are a pompous, mean-tempered, corrupt, elitist, out-of-touch, lying fraud, John McCain!!!!!!!!!! Please do America a favor and go home to one of your 4?, 7?, many? houses and stay there! McCain unsure how many houses he owns

"McCain Unsure How Many Houses He Owns" by Jonathan Martin and Mike Allen, Politico

Aug. 21, 2008, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0808/12685.html>)

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) said in an interview Wednesday that he was uncertain how many houses he and his wife, Cindy, own.

"I think—I'll have my staff get to you," McCain told Politico in Las Cruces, N.M. "It's condominiums where—I'll have them get to you."

The correct answer is at least four, located in Arizona, California and Virginia, according to his staff. *Newsweek* estimated this summer that the couple owns at least seven properties.

In recent weeks, Democrats have stepped up their effort to caricature McCain as living an outlandishly rich lifestyle—a bit of payback to the GOP for portraying Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) as an elitist, and for turning the spotlight in 2004 on the five homes owned by Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) and his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry.

Pro-Obama labor groups have sent out mailers highlighting McCain's wealth, and prominent Democrats have included references to it in comments to reporters.

Twice in the past two weeks, those Democrats have focused on McCain's houses.

Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) told Politico's Ben Smith that it was McCain "who wears \$500 shoes, has six houses and comes from one of the richest families in his state."

And David Axelrod, Obama's chief strategist, referred in an interview with Adam Nagourney of *The New York Times* to an imagined meeting of McCain strategists "on the portico of the McCain estate in Sedona—or maybe in one of his six other houses."

McCain's comments came four days after he initially told Pastor Rick Warren during a faith forum on Sunday his threshold for considering someone rich is \$5 million—a careless comment he quickly corrected.

In the interview, McCain did not offer an alternate number, but had a new answer ready.

"I define rich in other ways besides income," he said. "Some people are wealthy and rich in their lives and their children and their ability to educate them. Others are poor if they're billionaires."

McCain, by anyone's measure, is well-off, if you account for his wife's fortune. Cindy McCain inherited control of her father's beer distributorship, the largest in Arizona, and has an estimated worth of more than \$100 million.

(Carrie Budoff Brown and Ben Smith contributed to this article.)

20080821-03	12:12	SteveM	Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton
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Dear SteveB,

Yeah, I really want Pelosi and Reid and BHO running the show for me, think about it! The Democrats purport that they are for the little guy, the poor guy, but look at the taxes for the lower incomes at 30K!

Both democratic candidates will return to the higher tax rates It is amazing how many people that fall into the categories above think Bush is screwing them and Bill Clinton was the greatest President ever. If Obama or Hillary are elected, they both say they will repeal the Bush tax cuts and a good portion of the people that fall into the categories above can't wait

for it to happen. This is like the movie *The Sting* with Paul Newman; you scam somebody out of some money and they don't even know what happened Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end. [There's that turd again. —SteveB]

Taxes... Whether Democrat or a Republican you will find these statistics enlightening and amazing. [If you don't believe the charts below, go to the link below and figure the amounts out yourself!]

<http://www.taxfoundation.org/publications/show/151.html>

	<u>Taxes under Clinton 1999</u>	<u>Taxes under Bush 2008</u>
Single making 30K	\$8,400	\$4,500
Single making 50K	\$14,000	\$12,500
Single making 75K	\$23,250	\$18,750
Married making 60K	\$16,800	\$9,000
Married making 75K	\$21,000	\$18,750
Married making 125K	\$38,750	\$31,250

[Not amazing at all. The Bush Tax Cuts are part of the cause of our problems. —SteveB]

20080821-04 12:18 SteveM Fw: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveB,

You think the war in Iraq is costing us too much? Read below.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Boy, am I confused. I have been hammered with the propaganda that it is the Iraq war and the war on terror that is bankrupting us. I now find that to be RIDICULOUS. I hope the following 14 reasons are forwarded over and over again until they are read so many times that the reader gets sick of reading them. I have included the URL's for verification of all the following facts:

1. \$11 Billion to \$22 billion is spent on welfare to illegal aliens each year by state governments. Verify at: <http://tinyurl.com/zob77>
2. \$2.2 Billion dollars a year is spent on food assistance programs such as food stamps, WIC, and free school lunches for illegal aliens. Verify at: <http://www.cis.org/articles/2004/fiscalexec.html>
3. \$2.5 Billion dollars a year is spent on Medicaid for illegal aliens. Verify at: <http://www.cis.org/articles/2004/fiscalexec.html>
4. \$12 Billion dollars a year is spent on primary and secondary school education for children here illegally and they cannot speak a word of English! Verify at: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0604/01/ldt.0.html>
5. \$17 Billion dollars a year is spent for education for the American-born children of illegal aliens, known as anchor babies. Verify at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0604/01/ldt.01.html>
6. \$3 Million Dollars a DAY is spent to incarcerate illegal aliens. Verify at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0604/01/ldt.01.html>
7. 30% percent of all Federal Prison inmates are illegal aliens. Verify at: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0604/01/ldt.01.html>

8. \$90 Billion Dollars a year is spent on illegal aliens for Welfare & Social services by the American taxpayers. Verify at: <http://premium.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0610/29/ldt.01.html>

9. \$200 Billion Dollars a year in suppressed American wages are caused by the illegal aliens. Verify at: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0604/01/ldt.01.html>

10. The illegal aliens in the United States have a crime rate that's two and a half times that of white non-illegal aliens. In particular, their children are going to make a huge additional crime problem in the U.S. Verify at: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0606/12/ldt.01.html>

11. During the year of 2005 there were 4 to 10 MILLION illegal aliens that crossed our Southern Border, also as many as 19,500 illegal aliens from Terrorist Countries. Millions of pounds of drugs, cocaine, meth, heroin and marijuana crossed into the U.S. from the Southern Border. Verify at: Homeland Security Report: <http://tinyurl.com/t9sht>

12. The National Policy Institute "estimated that the total cost of mass deportation would be between \$206 and \$230 billion or an average cost of between \$41 and \$46 billion annually over a five year period." Verify at: <http://www.nationalpolicyinstitute.org/pdf/deportation.pdf>

13. In 2006 illegal aliens sent home \$45 BILLION in remittances back to their countries of origin. Verify at: <http://www.rense.com/general75/niht.htm>

14. "The Dark Side of Illegal Immigration: Nearly One Million Sex Crimes committed by Illegal Immigrants in the United States." Verify at: <http://www.drdsk.com/articleshtml>

The total cost is a whopping **\$338.3 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR.**

Are we THAT stupid? If this doesn't bother you then just delete the message. If, on the other hand, if it does raise the hair on the back of your neck, I hope you forward it to every legal resident in the country including every representative in Washington, D.C.—five times a week for as long as it takes to restore some semblance of intelligence in our policies and enforcement thereof.

[20080821-05](#) 13:26 SteveB Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveM,

And Johnny Boy wants to do more for illegal aliens by giving them amnesty and letting a lot more into the country because he needs maids and gardeners for all his houses! And who knows what the cost of going to war with Russia would be. \$Trillions?

[20080821-06](#) 15:06 SteveM Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveB,

Wrong, McCain got my message after he reached across the isle (unlike BHO) to Teddy Kennedy to get something done. He gave away too much in making the deal and got the message from me and other, and backed off. Haven't you been listen He admitted he made a mistake. Stop talking and you might here more,

[Hilarious! Thanks, SteveM. —SteveB]

[20080821-07](#) 16:16 SteveB Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton

Dear SteveM,

Let me ask you this...and remember that no one dislikes the Clintons more than I do (except maybe Monica, Jennifer, Kathleen, and Christopher Hitchens)...why was the country so much better off at the end of Clinton's administration than we are at the end of idiot Bush's?

What a terrible waste and disappointment Bush, Cheney, McCain, and all the rest have been! Clinton was a better President getting his d*ck s*cked than idiot Bush or senile McCain could ever be (doing without)!

[20080821-08](#) 19:12 SteveB Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveM,

If this is all the Democrats' fault...where was idiot Bush's veto and his veto sustaining portion of Congress in all this? Almost nowhere to be seen! Where was McCain? Voting on the side of whoever paid him off!

[20080821-09](#) 19:44 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

McCain has now totally flip-flopped on his senile pledge to serve only one lame-duck term as President, if elected.

The reason? The latest polling shows that only 8% of the electorate would vote for McCain only if he will disavow running for a second term; while 10% say they would NOT vote for him if he is just going to be a lame-duck single-term President.

But, of course, your ambition to be President has nothing to do with your motives, right, Johnny Boy? The country be damned!

My God, I can't even imagine what that wasteland you call a mind will be like in 4 months, or 4 years, let alone 8 years, you senile a*s-wipe.

[20080821-10](#) 20:22 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus

TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

This is one that I am getting very sick of.

McCain's primary qualification for being President: he was a POW.

Why Obama doesn't love America or put America first: he wasn't a POW.

Why it's OK for McCain to be so rich and out-of-touch with most Americans that he doesn't even know how many homes he owns: he was a POW.

It was wonderful today seeing the McCain campaign going berserk today trying to attack Obama and defend McCain (he was a POW, you know) on his senile moment of being so rich he doesn't even know how many homes he owns!!!! I just loved it.

But, Johnny Boy, having been a total failure as a soldier in a war that has no relationship to the modern world (that you can find) is neither a qualification to be President nor an excuse for knowing nothing about ordinary economics. Not that it qualifies you as an expert on foreign policy either, which you have proven that you are not, and, in fact, you have instead proven that you would be a danger to your country and the world if you were President.

Lord, save us from this piece of floating cr*p (even if he was a POW)!

[20080821-11](#) 22:55 SteveM Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton

Dear SteveB,

You have to f*cking ask?

Clinton had a Republican Congress that was smart enough to not spend and Clinton didn't do anything about Immigration so now we are in the 16th year of the invasion. Clinton also didn't do anything about the first world Trade center bombing, the U.S.S. Cole or the Embassy bombing.. How much different would the U.S. be had Clinton spent the money on getting bin laden then. Clinton gutted the CIA and the Military. SEE WHAT IT GOT US! [Ummmmm...PEACE??? — SteveB]

You also seem to forget the mortgage melt down and high interest rates from 92 to 99/2000. My house in California was worth half of what I bought it for at one point in the nineties and 45 percent of my neighborhood was foreclosed HUD houses.

What Planet were you living on then?

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

[20080821-12](#) 23:44 SteveM Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveB,

Wrong again. McCain went against Bush many times because he wanted spending cuts BUT even you have to admit the problems have become and will remain worse with Pelosi and Reed. Go back and review the email regarding the cost of ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, 16 years of neglect. AND IF YOU REALLY want to SEE the costs spent some time in any border county (PHX is not one of them). But then Congress doesn't want to be called Xenophobes or Racist if we enforce the existing laws we don't need inactions waiting for new ones. But Pelosi and Reeds hands are apparently quicker than your eye. Hating Bush and calling him manes is backward looking. What are some old women who remembers all the bad stuff and brings it up during the argument? YOU NEED TO LOOK FORWARD if you want to solve the problems and recent past experience says Pelosi Reed and BHO will only f*ck it up worse. Like it or not, McCain has been right on many levels and issues. Deal with it!

[20080821-13](#) 23:47 Dennis Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus

from SteveB:

But, Johnny Boy, having been a total failure as a soldier in a war that has no relationship to the modern world...

Dear SteveB,

During my Vietnam tour last year we went by small boat though the maze of canals in the thick tangle of vegetation of the Mekong Delta. I kept thinking, when not singing to myself the "Vietnam Rag" by Country Joe McDonald ["It's one, two, three—what are we fightin' for." —SteveB], that it would have been pure hell serving on a swift boat. If anyone was a hero in Vietnam, Kerry and all those guys certainly were just for surviving that ordeal.

Later, I walked around the lake in the middle of Hanoi where McCain plopped after having his a*s shot out of the sky while bombing the city. It seemed to me that being a pilot bombing civilians from several thousand feet was not exactly heroic (actually, cowardly may not be too strong a word for it). Okay, so he survived a dingy hell hole of a cell for five years. An accomplishment, to be sure, but at least no one was shooting at him.

The bottom line is that neither of those Vietnam experiences qualify either Kerry or McCain for any political office.

[20080822-01](#) 09:52 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/21/08—Bonus

Dear Dennis,

I couldn't agree more. That's why it irks me so much that he calls himself a hero and acts like nobody dare challenge him. As you say, an accomplishment, yes, but not something that qualifies him as a hero or a Presidential candidate in any way. (I guess, unless the President were captured and held hostage by Columbian guerrillas or Iran or Osama bin Laden.)

[20080822-02](#) 09:56 SteveB Re: Income Taxes: Lower Under Bush Than Clinton

Dear SteveM,

None of this diatribe makes anything I said above any less true!

[20080822-03](#) 09:58 SteveB Re: The Cost of Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveM,

Again, none of this diatribe makes anything I said above any less true. Bush and McCain have done nothing but CAUSE problems for almost 8 years and have done nothing to solve them. They are so obviously the problem, not the solution!

[20080822-04](#) 18:58 D. Plouffe Keeping Track

Dear SteveB:

If somebody asked you, you probably wouldn't have to think about it.

But when a reporter asked John McCain how many houses he owns, he stumbled and said, "I think—I'll have my staff get back to you." If you're like the millions of people who are struggling to keep up with their mortgage, you might have a different perspective.

Not only does John McCain have trouble keeping track of all his houses, he looks at record gas prices and a crippling foreclosure crisis and thinks the economy is fundamentally "strong." And last weekend he said anyone making less than \$5 million a year isn't rich.

This is the side of John McCain his campaign wants to hide.

So yesterday, we launched a TV ad to show everyone how out-of-touch John McCain is with the economic realities of regular Americans. But if we're going to get the truth out, it's going to take all of us working together to make it happen.

The more we hear from John McCain about the economy, the more we see just how out-of-touch he is. You don't have to be an economist to understand that we can't afford eight more years, or four more years, or even one more year of the same failed economic policies that George Bush has put in place. If John McCain understood what Americans are dealing with, he'd know that we need to be doing more.

Barack has a plan to cut taxes for middle class families by \$1,000 and offer students who perform community service a \$4,000 tax break to pay for college tuition. But John McCain's tax plan does nothing for 101 million middle class families. Barack will set the minimum wage to rise with inflation. But John McCain is more concerned about making sure limits on campaign contributions rise with inflation—and he's voted against raising the minimum wage 19 times. That's a difference that should be easy to remember. Thanks for your help.

David Plouffe, Campaign Manager, Obama for America

Paid for by Obama for America.

[20080822-05](#) 19:44 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/22/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

For how long has Obama been calling for a responsible time-table for withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Iraq standing on its own two feet? And how long has McCain blustered and practically called him a traitor for wanting to perform the stated will of the American people?

Now, what has Coldoleezza Rice apparently negotiated in Baghdad? Could it be a...time-table, Johnny Boy, you war-mongering piece of cr*p? Looks like your famous "vast foreign policy experience" doesn't lead you in the right direction any more than your senility leads you to know how many houses you own.

Or maybe Bush and Rice and all the rest of the U.S. are ignorant, inexperienced traitors too? Come to think of it...what could they possibly know...hardly any of them were ever POW's like you were, Johnny Boy. And that's what makes you so smart and holier-than-thou, right, Mr. Patriot?

[20080822-06](#) 23:04 S. Schale 10 New Offices: Florida Campaign for Change

Dear SteveB:

As the convention kicks off next week in Denver with the theme of One Nation, the Florida Campaign for Change is opening the doors of ten new offices. We're inviting you to come and celebrate by uniting your communities in our campaign to change America.

Every day, more Floridians are embracing our campaign's message of change, but we need you to help keep the momentum going.

You—our supporters and volunteers—are the backbone of this movement, and these new offices will give you more access to the tools you need to change America.

Find your local office opening, meet fellow supporters, and grow our movement for change.

With Election Day less than 75 days away, now is the time to introduce people in your community to this campaign and Barack's message of change. Face-to-face contact is the best way to bring new people into the political process, and our new offices are a great way to get started.

No previous political experience is required to attend an opening and get involved—just a passion for this movement and a hunger for change.

Come join us this week at one of our new offices and learn how you can help us inspire more Floridians to join Barack's cause.

We look forward to seeing you this week. Thanks,

Steve Schale, Florida State Director, Obama for America

Paid for by Obama for America

[20080823-01](#) 08:21 SteveM Fw: Did You Know About This? Iraq, Media

[Source (and purpose) of original email unknown. Notice the bad ol' media again. Also, when we pulled out at the end of 2011, the country instantly became unstable. Bad, bad war. Stupid in the extreme! They were our counter-weight to Iran and Syria. Saddam was. Stupid Bush. —SteveB]

Did you know about this ? ? ? Did you know? I didn't know! How could we?

Did you know:

1. 47 countries' have reestablished their embassies in Iraq ?
2. The Iraqi government currently employs 1.2 million Iraqi people?
3. 3100 schools have been renovated, 364 schools are under rehabilitation, 263 new schools are now under construction; and 38 new schools have been completed in Iraq ?
4. Iraq 's higher educational structure consists of 20 Universities, 46 Institutes or colleges and 4 research centers, All currently operating?
5. 25 Iraq students departed for the United States in Jan., 2005 for the reestablished Fulbright program?
6. The Iraqi Navy is operational? They have 5—100-foot patrol craft,34 smaller vessels and a naval infantry regiment.
7. Iraq's Air Force consists of three operational squadrons, Which includes 9 reconnaissance and 3 US C-130 transport aircraft (under Iraqi operational control) which operate day and night, and will soon add 16 UH-1 helicopters and 4 Bell Jet Rangers?
8. Iraq has a counter-terrorist unit and a Commando Battalion?
9. The Iraqi Police Service has over 55,000 fully trained and equipped police officers?
10. There are 5 Police Academies in Iraq that produce over 3500 new officers every 8 weeks?
11. There are more than 1100 building projects going on in Iraq ? They include 364 schools, 67 public clinics, 15 hospitals, 83 railroad stations, 22 oil facilities, 93 water facilities And 69 electrical facilities.
12. 96% of Iraqi children under the age of 5 have received the first 2 series of polio vaccinations?
13. 4.3 million Iraqi children were enrolled in primary school by mid October?
14. There are 1,192,000 cell phone subscribers in Iraq and phone use has gone up 158%?
15. Iraq has an independent media that consists of 75 radio stations, 180 newspapers and 10 television stations?
16. The Baghdad Stock Exchange opened in June of 2004?
17. Two candidates in the Iraqi presidential election had a Televised debate recently?

OF COURSE WE DIDN'T KNOW! WHY DIDN'T WE KNOW? BECAUSE OUR MEDIA WON'T TELL US!

Instead of reflecting our love for our country, we get photos of flag burning incidents at Abu Ghraib and people throwing snowballs at the presidential motorcades. Tragically, the lack of accentuating the positive in Iraq serves two purposes: It is intended to undermine the world's perception of the United States thus minimizing consequent support; and it is intended to discourage American citizens.

Above facts are verifiable on the Department of Defense web site: <http://www.defenselink.mil/>

Did you know? I didn't know But I know now.....Pass it on! Give it a Wide Dissemination

20080823-02	12:23	SteveB	Re: Did You Know About This? Iraq, Media
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Dear SteveM,

What took so freakin' long? I would have thought all this stuff would have been accomplished by the time Bush and McCain told us the bold-faced lie that the mission had been accomplished. LOL!

Then it's about damn time to do the will of the majority of Americans and bring home the troops!!!

20080823-03	12:43	SteveB	Barack Obama's Birth Certificate: The Evidence
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[I deleted most of the rabid, racist, birther emails from 2008, unfortunately, perhaps, but I kept this. —SteveB]

"Born in the U.S.A.: The Truth About Obama's Birth Certificate" by Jess Henig, FactCheck.org

Aug. 21, 2008, (<http://factcheck.org/2008/08/born-in-the-usa/>)

Summary

In June, the Obama campaign released a digitally scanned image of his birth certificate to quell speculative charges that he might not be a natural-born citizen. But the image prompted more blog based skepticism about the document's authenticity. And recently, author Jerome Corsi, whose book attacks Obama, said in a TV interview that the birth certificate the campaign has is "fake." We beg to differ. FactCheck.org staffers have now seen, touched, examined and photographed the original birth certificate. We conclude that it meets all of the requirements from the State Department for proving U.S. citizenship. Claims that the document lacks a raised seal or a signature are false. We have posted high-resolution photographs of the document as "supporting documents" to this article. Our conclusion: Obama was born in the U.S.A. just as he has always said.

Update, Nov. 1: The director of Hawaii's Department of Health confirmed Oct. 31 that Obama was born in Honolulu.

Analysis

Update Nov. 1: The Associated Press quoted Chiyome Fukino as saying that both she and the registrar of vital statistics, Alvin Onaka, have personally verified that the health department holds Obama's original birth certificate.

Fukino also was quoted by several other news organizations. The Honolulu Advertiser quoted Fukino as saying the agency had been bombarded by requests, and that the registrar of statistics had even been called in at home in the middle of the night.

Honolulu Advertiser, Nov. 1 2008: "This has gotten ridiculous," state health director Dr. Chiyome Fukino said yesterday. "There are plenty of other, important things to focus on, like the economy, taxes, energy."

Will this be enough to quiet the doubters? "I hope so," Fukino said. "We need to get some work done."

Fukino said she has "personally seen and verified that the Hawaii State Department of Health has Sen. Obama's original birth certificate on record in accordance with state policies and procedures."

Update, Apr. 27, 2011: The White House released the long-form version of President Barack Obama's birth certificate, confirming (yet again) that he was born in the United States. The Hawaii Department of Health made an exception in Obama's case and issued copies of the "Certificate of Live Birth."

Since we first wrote about Obama's birth certificate on June 16, speculation on his citizenship has continued apace. Some claim that Obama posted a fake birth certificate to his Web page. That charge leaped from the blogosphere to the mainstream media earlier this week when Jerome Corsi, author of a book attacking Obama, repeated the claim in an Aug. 15 interview with Steve Doocy on Fox News.

Corsi: Well, what would be really helpful is if Senator Obama would release primary documents like his birth certificate. The campaign has a false, fake birth certificate posted on their website. How is anybody supposed to really piece together his life?

Doocy: What do you mean they have a "false birth certificate" on their Web site?

Corsi: The original birth certificate of Obama has never been released, and the campaign refuses to release it.

Doocy: Well, couldn't it just be a State of Hawaii-produced duplicate?

Corsi: No, it's a—there's been good analysis of it on the Internet, and it's been shown to have watermarks from Photoshop. It's a fake document that's on the Web site right now, and the original birth certificate the campaign refuses to produce.

Corsi isn't the only skeptic claiming that the document is a forgery. Among the most frequent objections we saw on forums, blogs and e-mails are:

1. The birth certificate doesn't have a raised seal.
2. It isn't signed.
3. No creases from folding are evident in the scanned version.
4. In the zoomed-in view, there's a strange halo around the letters.
5. The certificate number is blacked out.
6. The date bleeding through from the back seems to say "2007," but the document wasn't released until 2008.
7. The document is a "certification of birth," not a "certificate of birth."

Recently FactCheck representatives got a chance to spend some time with the birth certificate, and we can attest to the fact that it is real and three-dimensional and resides at the Obama headquarters in Chicago. We can assure readers that the certificate does bear a raised seal, and that it's stamped on the back by Hawaii state registrar Alvin T. Onaka (who uses a signature stamp rather than signing individual birth certificates). We even brought home a few photographs:

CERTIFICATION OF LIVE BIRTH

STATE OF HAWAII
HONOLULU



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HAWAII, U.S.A.

CERTIFICATE NO. 151 1961 - 010641

CHILD'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II

DATE OF BIRTH
August 4, 1961

HOUR OF BIRTH
7:24 PM

SEX
MALE

CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

ISLAND OF BIRTH
OAHU

COUNTY OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME
STANLEY ANN DUNHAM

MOTHER'S RACE
CAUCASIAN

FATHER'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA

FATHER'S RACE
AFRICAN

DATE FILED BY REGISTRAR
August 8, 1961

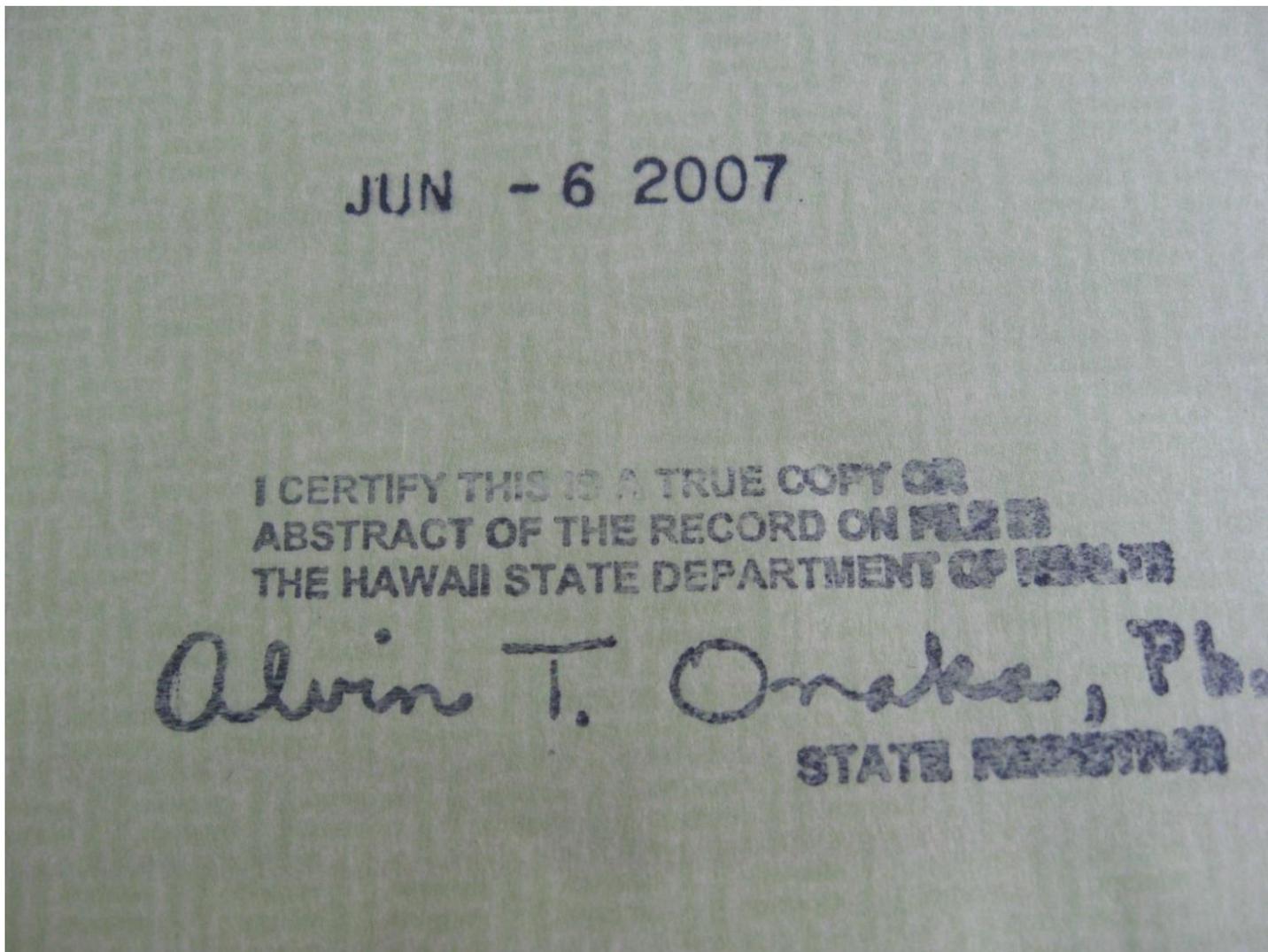
This copy serves as prima facie evidence of the fact of birth in any court proceeding. (HRS 33A-12b), 33A-15)

DHSM 1.1 (Rev. 11/01) LASER

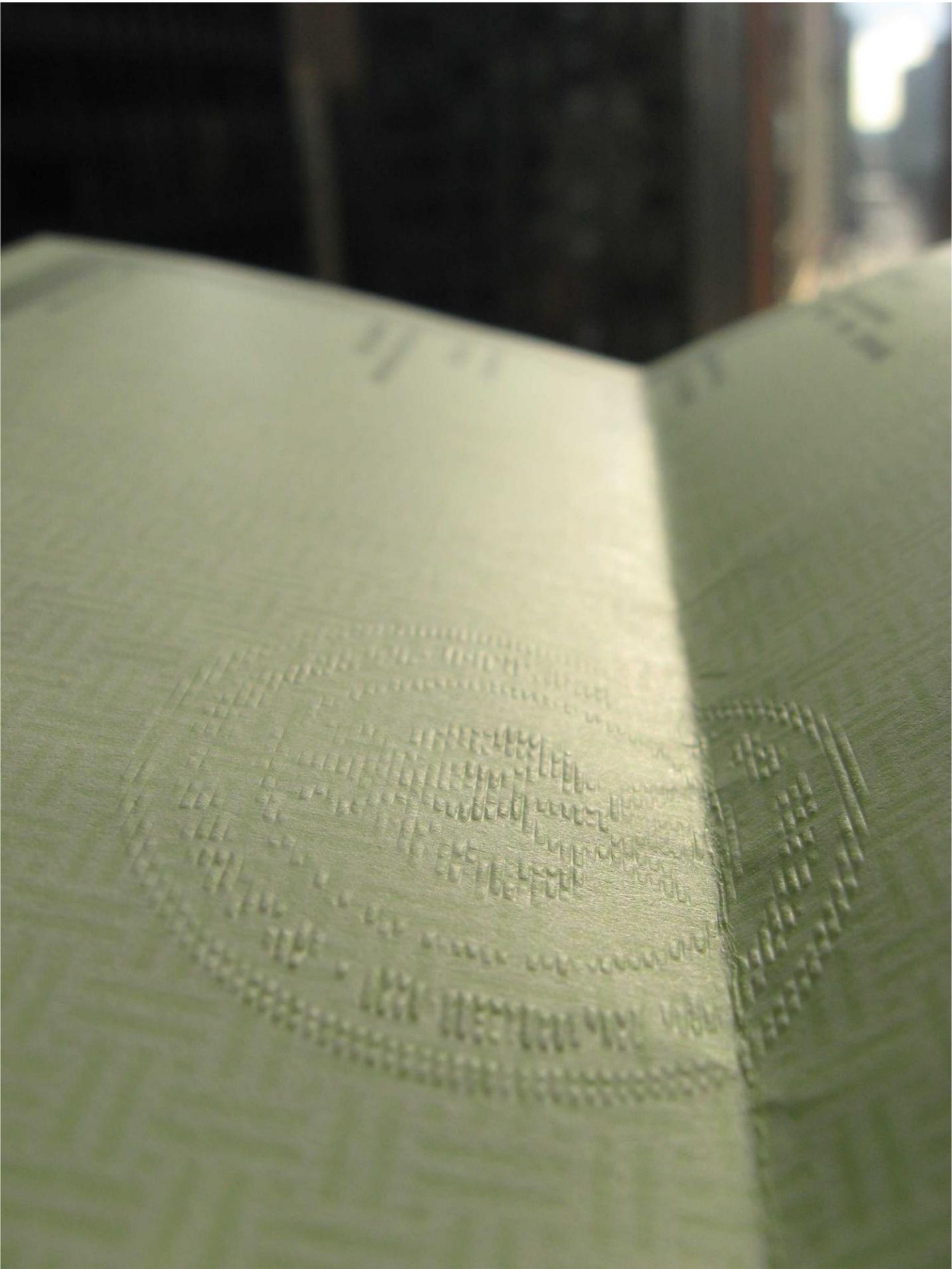
ANY ALTERATIONS VOID

CERTIFICATE

The Obama birth certificate, held by FactCheck writer Joe Miller.



Alvin T. Onaka's signature stamp.



The raised seal.

CERTIFICATION OF LIVE BIRTH

STATE OF HAWAII
HONOLULU

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HAWAII U.S.A.

CERTIFICATE NO. **151 1961 - 010641**

CHILD'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II

DATE OF BIRTH
August 4, 1961

HOUR OF BIRTH
7:24 PM

SEX
MALE

CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

ISLAND OF BIRTH
OAHU

COUNTY OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME
STANLEY ANN DUNHAM

MOTHER'S RACE
CAUCASIAN

FATHER'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA

FATHER'S RACE
AFRICAN

DATE FILED BY REGISTRAR
August 8, 1961

These photos haven't been edited in any way.

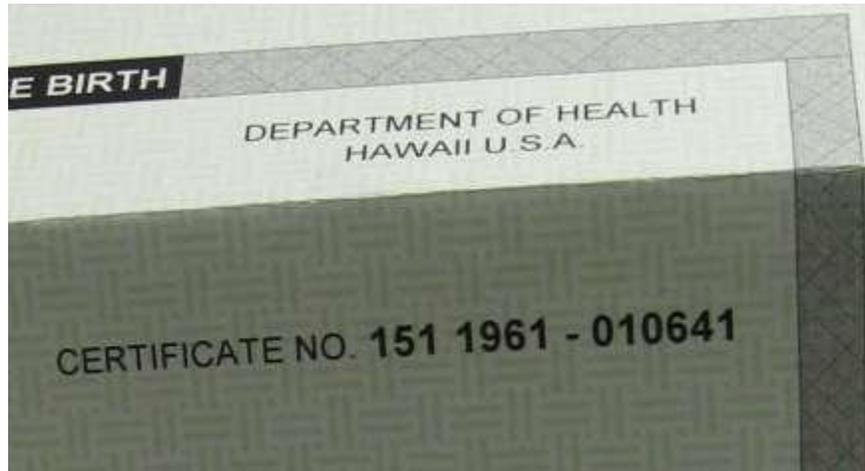
The certificate has all the elements the State Department requires for proving citizenship to obtain a U.S. passport:

"Your full name, the full name of your parent(s), date and place of birth, sex, date the birth record was filed, and the seal or other certification of the official custodian of such records." The names, date and place of birth, and filing date are all evident on the scanned version, and you can see the seal above.

The document is a "certification of birth," also known as a short-form birth certificate. The long form is drawn up by the hospital and includes additional information such as birth weight and parents' hometowns. The short form is printed by the state and draws from a database with fewer details. The Hawaii Department of Health's birth record request form does not give the option to request a photocopy of your long-form birth certificate, but their short form has enough information to be acceptable to the State Department. We tried to ask the Hawaii DOH why they only offer the short form, among other questions, but they have not given a response.

The scan released by the campaign shows halos around the black text, making it look (to some) as though the text might have been pasted on top of an image of security paper. But the document itself has no such halos, nor do the close-up photos we took of it. We conclude that the halo seen in the image produced by the campaign is a digital artifact from the scanning process.

We asked the Obama campaign about the date stamp and the blacked-out certificate number. The certificate is stamped June 2007, because that's when Hawaii officials produced it for the campaign, which requested that document and "all the records we could get our hands on" according to spokesperson Shauna Daly. The campaign didn't release its copy until 2008, after speculation began to appear on the Internet questioning Obama's citizenship. The campaign then rushed to release the document, and the rush is responsible for the blacked-out certificate number. Says Shauna: "[We] couldn't get someone on the phone in Hawaii to tell us whether the number represented some secret information, and we erred on the side of blacking it out. Since then we've found out it's pretty irrelevant for the outside world." The document we looked at did have a certificate number; it is 151 1961-010641.



Blowup of certificate number

Some of the conspiracy theories that have circulated about Obama are quite imaginative. One conservative blogger suggested that the campaign might have obtained a valid Hawaii birth certificate, soaked it in solvent, then reprinted it with Obama's information. Of course, this anonymous blogger didn't have access to the actual document and presents this as just one possible "scenario" without any evidence that such a thing actually happened or is even feasible.

We also note that so far none of those questioning the authenticity of the document have produced a shred of evidence that the information on it is incorrect. Instead, some speculate that somehow, maybe, he was born in another country and doesn't meet the Constitution's requirement that the president be a "natural-born citizen."

We think our colleagues at PolitiFact.com, who also dug into some of these loopy theories put it pretty well: "It is possible that Obama conspired his way to the precipice of the world's biggest job, involving a vast network of people and government agencies over decades of lies. Anything's possible. But step back and look at the overwhelming evidence to the contrary and your sense of what's reasonable has to take over."

In fact, the conspiracy would need to be even deeper than our colleagues realized. In late July, a researcher looking to dig up dirt on Obama instead found a birth announcement that had been published in the *Honolulu Advertiser* on Aug. 13, 1961:

91-939 Kalapu St., Ewa Beach, Ewa,	—
daughter, Aug. 3.	Al
Mr. and Mrs. Barack H. Obama,	St
6035 Kalanianaʻole Hwy., son, Aug. 4.	Sl
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Asing, 2135	Fr
Ani Aniku St., son, Aug. 4.	Fr
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew A. M.	Fr

Obama's birth announcement

The announcement was posted by a pro-Hillary Clinton blogger who grudgingly concluded that Obama "likely" was born Aug. 4, 1961 in Honolulu.

Of course, it's distantly possible that Obama's grandparents may have planted the announcement just in case their grandson needed to prove his U.S. citizenship in order to run for president someday. We suggest that those who choose to go down that path should first equip themselves with a high-quality tinfoil hat.

The evidence is clear: Barack Obama was born in the U.S.A.

Sources

United States Department of State. "Application for a U.S. Passport." Accessed Aug. 20, 2008.

State of Hawaii Department of Health. "Request for Certified Copy of Birth Record." Accessed Aug. 20, 2008.

Hollyfield, Amy. "Obama's Birth Certificate: Final Chapter." Politifact.com. June 27, 2008,
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/154599>.

Below photos X2 from (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/birthcertificate.asp>):

CERTIFICATION OF LIVE BIRTH

STATE OF HAWAII
HONOLULU



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HAWAII U.S.A.

CERTIFICATE NO. [REDACTED]

CHILD'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA II

DATE OF BIRTH
August 4, 1961

HOUR OF BIRTH
7:24 PM

SEX
MALE

CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

ISLAND OF BIRTH
OAHU

COUNTY OF BIRTH
HONOLULU

MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME
STANLEY ANN DUNHAM

MOTHER'S RACE
CAUCASIAN

FATHER'S NAME
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA

FATHER'S RACE
AFRICAN

DATE FILED BY REGISTRAR
August 8, 1961

OHSM 1.1 (Rev.11/01) LASER

This copy serves as prima facie evidence of the fact of birth in any court proceeding. [HRS 338-13(b), 338-19]

ANY ALTERATIONS INVALIDATE THIS CERTIFICATE

Short form.

STATE OF HAWAII		CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH			DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	
				FILE NUMBER	151 61 10611	
1a. Child's First Name (Type or print)		1b. Middle Name		1c. Last Name		
BARACK		HUSSEIN		OBAMA, II		
2. Sex	3. This Birth	4. If Twin or Triplet, Was Child Born		5a. Birth Date	Month Day Year	5b. Hour
Male	Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Twin <input type="checkbox"/> Triplet <input type="checkbox"/>	1st <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd <input type="checkbox"/>		August	4, 1961	7:24 P.M.
6a. Place of Birth: City, Town or Rural Location					6b. Island	
Honolulu					Oahu	
6c. Name of Hospital or Institution (If not in hospital or institution, give street address)				6d. Is Place of Birth Inside City or Town Limits?		
Kapiolani Maternity & Gynecological Hospital				If no, give judicial district Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
7a. Usual Residence of Mother: City, Town or Rural Location			7b. Island	7c. County and State or Foreign Country		
Honolulu			Oahu	Honolulu, Hawaii		
7d. Street Address				7e. Is Residence Inside City or Town Limits?		
6085 Kalaniana'ole Highway				If no, give judicial district Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
7f. Mother's Mailing Address					7g. Is Residence on a Farm or Plantation?	
					Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8. Full Name of Father			9. Race of Father			
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA			African 9			
10. Age of Father	11. Birthplace (Island, State or Foreign Country)	12a. Usual Occupation		12b. Kind of Business or Industry		
25	Kenya, East Africa ✓	Student 0		University 9		
13. Full Maiden Name of Mother			14. Race of Mother			
STANLEY ANN DUNHAM			Caucasian 1			
15. Age of Mother	16. Birthplace (Island, State or Foreign Country)	17a. Type of Occupation Outside Home During Pregnancy		17b. Date Last Worked		
18	Wichita, Kansas ✓	None 0		0		
I certify that the above stated information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.		18a. Signature of Parent or Other Informant			18b. Date of Signature	
		<i>Stanley Ann Dunham Obama</i>			Parent <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8-7-61	
I hereby certify that this child was born alive on the date and hour stated above.		19a. Signature of Attendant			19b. Date of Signature	
		<i>David A. Smolan</i>			M.D. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 8-8-61 D.O. <input type="checkbox"/> Midwife <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
20. Date Accepted by Local Reg.		21. Signature of Local Registrar			22. Date Accepted by Reg. General	
AUG - 8 1961		<i>U. K. Lee</i>			AUG - 8 1961	
23. Evidence for Delayed Filing or Alteration						

Long form.

[20080823-04](#) 12:45 SteveB Re: Barack Obama's Birth Certificate: The Evidence & Other Smears

Dear SteveM,

The rest of the Republican cr*p and smear campaign is all lies too! I'll demonstrate that one-by-one over the coming weeks.

Oh, John McCain, you were a POW, right? Big deal, Johnny Boy, you total failure as a soldier and total failure to your party and to your country!

[20080824-01](#) 01:04 Dennis "545 People"

All of this (below) raises the question: Who are the irresponsible people who elect these sorry b*stards? Are Americans just a bunch of spoiled, whining chumps who can't see how they are divided by lies and false promises? Americans may not deserve what they get, but they get what they deserve!

[Snopes.com says it's correctly attributed, but it's been slightly edited over the years. —SteveB]

"545 People" by Charlie Reese, *Orlando Sentinel*

Mar. 7, 1995, (http://www.fernleynews.com/1400000/545_People.html)

Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them.

Have you ever wondered why, if both the Democrats and the Republicans are against deficits, we have deficits?

Have you ever wondered why, if all the politicians are against inflation and high taxes, we have inflation and high taxes?

You and I don't propose a federal budget. The President does.

You and I don't have the Constitutional authority to vote on appropriations. The House of Representatives does.

You and I don't write the tax code, Congress does.

You and I don't set fiscal policy, Congress does.

You and I don't control monetary policy, the Federal Reserve Bank does.

One hundred senators, 435 congressmen, one president, and nine Supreme Court justices 545 human beings out of the 300 million are directly, legally, morally, and individually responsible for the domestic problems that plague this country.

I excluded the members of the Federal Reserve Board because that problem was created by the Congress. In 1913, Congress delegated its Constitutional duty to provide a sound currency to a federally chartered, but private, central bank.

I excluded all the special interests and lobbyists for a sound reason. They have no legal authority. They have no ability to coerce a senator, a congressman, or a president to do one cotton-picking thing. I don't care if they offer a politician \$1 million dollars in cash. The politician has the power to accept or reject it. No matter what the lobbyist promises, it is the legislator's responsibility to determine how he votes. Those 545 human beings spend much of their energy convincing you that what they did is not their fault. They cooperate in this common con regardless of party.

What separates a politician from a normal human being is an excessive amount of gall. No normal human being would have the gall of a Speaker, who stood up and criticized the President for creating deficits. The president can only propose a budget. He cannot force the Congress to accept it.

The Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, gives sole responsibility to the House of Representatives for originating and approving appropriations and taxes. Who is the speaker of the House? She is the leader of the majority party. She and fellow House members, not the president, can approve any budget they want. If the president vetoes it, they can pass it over his veto if they agree to.

It seems inconceivable to me that a nation of 300 million cannot replace 545 people who stand convicted—by present facts—of incompetence and irresponsibility. I can't think of a single domestic problem that is not traceable directly to those 545 people. When you fully grasp the plain truth that 545 people exercise the power of the federal government, then it must follow that what exists is what they want to exist.

If the tax code is unfair, it's because they want it unfair.

If the budget is in the red, it's because they want it in the red.

If the Marines are in IRAQ , it's because they want them in IRAQ.

If they do not receive social security but are on an elite retirement plan not available to the people, it's because they want it that way.

There are no insoluble government problems.

Do not let these 545 people shift the blame to bureaucrats, whom they hire and whose jobs they can abolish; to lobbyists, whose gifts and advice they can reject; to regulators, to whom they give the power to regulate and from whom they can take this power.

Above all, do not let them con you into the belief that there exists disembodied mystical forces like 'the economy, inflation,' or 'politics' that prevent them from doing what they take an oath to do.

Those 545 people, and they alone, are responsible.

They, and they alone, have the power.

They, and they alone, should be held accountable by the people who are their bosses provided the voters have the gumption to manage their own employees.

We should vote all of them out of office and clean up their mess!

(Charlie Reese is a former columnist of the *Orlando Sentinel Newspaper*.)

[20080824-02](#) 11:41 SteveB Re: 545 People; Government

Dear Dennis,

I like it! Let's do it! Throw the bums out!!!!

[20080825-01](#) 21:15 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/25/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

When asked about re-establishing the draft, McCain's answer seemed to be a definite "yes!" A couple of quotes from the policy section of Johnny Boy's website might inform anyone who cares that this guy is such a war-monger that he will never be able to do anything but raise taxes and re-establish the draft in order to fulfill his ambitions, which apparently include challenging the Russians on their own turf. I wonder how he feels about the Chinese? Shame on you, a*s-hole!

As President, John McCain will strengthen the military, shore up our alliances, and ensure that the nation is capable of protecting the homeland, deterring potential military challenges, responding to any crisis that endangers American security, and prevailing in any conflict we are forced to fight.

John McCain believes that the answer to these challenges is not to roll back our overseas commitments. The size and composition of our armed forces must be matched to our nation's defense requirements. As requirements expand in the global war on terrorism so must our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard be reconfigured to meet these new challenges. John McCain thinks it is especially important to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps to defend against the threats we face today.

If Johnny Boy is elected, the country will be bankrupt before his first term could end, and we can only pray that there is no terrible military defeat to go along with it.

[20080826-01](#) 10:13 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/26/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

SURPRISE! SURPRISE! On the Tonight Show last night, Johnny Boy defended being so out of touch with the country's economic realities that he STILL doesn't know how many houses he owns. His defense? He was a POW! LOL! How many times and for how many types of senility do you think you can go to that well, idiot?

[20080826-02](#) 11:33 SteveB "The Election from Hell" 2008 Election

"The Election from Hell" by John Derbyshire, *National Review*

Aug. 25, 2008, (<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/225398/election-hell/john-derbyshire>)

(I won't be watching either of the party conventions.)

How quickly time passes! It has been a mere year and a half since the first candidate debates, and the party conventions are upon us already. Next week, the Democratic-party convention in Denver—"Most Diverse in Party History" boasts the website. The following week, the Republicans in Minneapolis-St. Paul—"Twin Cities Promise Double Fun for GOP."

Fun? Melancholy spectacles both, in this writer's opinion, for this is the most disastrously awful choice Americans have ever been offered for the post of chief executive.

It is true that no election season reaches this point without much grumbling from commentators about the poverty of choice on offer. "Who else have you got?" asks pollee of poller in the famous Paul Conrad cartoon ... which dates from the 1964 campaign. There are grounds to believe that this election's choice is quite exceptionally bad, though.

I can't say that I ever felt much warmth for either John McCain or Barack Obama. The first struck me as a burned-out Senate seat-warmer (term limits! oh please, term limits!) who had shown outstanding courage as a young warrior but considerable wrong-headedness as a politician—a category of persons with which history has, after all, been well supplied. Obama I have never seen as anything but a bag of wind, possessed of great political guile, but steeped in the faddy, solipsistic notions of post-1960s college leftism.

That these two men are much worse than I thought only became apparent to me at the Saddleback interviews conducted by Baptist minister Rick Warren in front of 5,000 of his parishioners. Here the truth came out. These are not merely two different specimens of mediocrity, as is usual in Presidential campaigns; they are two different specimens of love-the-world romantic fantasist.

Perhaps there is at least—I am clutching at straws, dear reader—some tiny element of choice in the fact that McCain and Obama are methodologically different in their desires to spend as much of America's resources as they can get their hands on to lift up foreign peoples in foreign places. In accordance with their youthful experiences, McCain sees the task in warlike terms: "evil must be defeated." To Obama it's more a matter of community organizing: "building public health infrastructure around the world."

Both men are determined to set this planet to rights, though, and hang the cost. Doesn't the United States have infinite resources? Of course it does. Eliminator of All Evil, or Welfare Agency to the World; Brig. Gen. Jack D. Ripper or Albert Schweizer; you just have to choose. Can we afford it? Yes, we can! (That faint sound you hear? That's the clink-clink of devaluing dollars—just ignore it.)

One hardly knows where to start with this gibberish. With eliminating evil, perhaps.

Warren: How about the issue of evil? ... Does evil exist and if so, should we ignore it, negotiate with it, contain it or defeat it?

McCain: Defeat it. ... Of course evil must be defeated ...

Warren didn't raise a peep. This is a Christian church? Hasn't anybody present heard of original sin? The only way to eliminate evil is to eliminate the human race. I wouldn't rule out the possibility that McCain's policies will have that result, but if it's the result he intends, he ought to tell us.

Warren: There are 148 million orphans in the world, 148 million kids growing up without Mommies and Dads. ... Would you be willing to consider and even commit to doing some kind of emergency plan for orphans like President Bush did with AIDS?

Obama: I think it's a great idea. ... I think that part of our plan though has to be how do we prevent more orphans in the first place and that means that we're helping to build the public health infrastructure around the world ...

Heaven forbid that people in Nigeria, Nauru, Norway, or Nicaragua should build their own clinics and hospitals, without any help from Uncle Sam and his limitless bounty! Heaven forbid they should take care of their own orphans, and we of ours!

But then, as John McCain says: "America's greatest moral failure has been, throughout our existence, perhaps we have not devoted ourselves to causes greater than our self-interest." Except, of course, that nations are supposed to devote themselves to their self-interest, and to nothing else. That's what sane people want their nation to do. That's what all the other nations of the world do.

As individual human beings, of course, all but a small minority of us routinely devote ourselves to "causes greater than our self-interest." We gladly yield up our time, our money, and occasionally our very lives, on behalf of such causes—family, union, professional association, church, political party, neighborhood softball league, nation. Those of us who have deep religious convictions often go way beyond the norm, helping strangers in foreign lands. All good acts, all noble acts ... by individual human beings.

A government, however, is not a human being. This rather elementary point of ontology seems to have escaped all three principals in Saturday's gathering. Governments don't go to the bathroom; governments don't date; governments don't catch cold. As a human being, John McCain is free to give up time and money to causes above his personal self-interest, and would be right to feel pleased with himself for having done so. As chief executive of our federal government, however, during his working hours he should attend to America's national self-interest, AND TO NOTHING ELSE AT ALL.

Rick Warren didn't even ask the two men about the Census Bureau report, released two days before, a topic of much commentary. (Though not by me. I had already said what I had to say when the previous report came out in May 2007.) Possibly this omission was in deference to Saddleback's location down there in southern California. Perhaps Pastor Warren feared that if he mentioned demographics, viewers might find themselves wondering if the 5,000 people present at this forum are the last 5,000 left in Orange County who can understand English. More likely Warren just believes, in common with most genteel Americans, including for a certainty both candidates, that only wicked people talk about demographics.

So I won't be watching either of the party conventions. Both parties' choices of nominee are appalling to me. I contemplate the next four years with dread. I don't want either of these men in charge of the federal government, neither the crazy old fool nor the simpering sophomore. I don't want either the moralistic imperialism of John McCain or the welfare-state-to-the-world sentimentalism of Barack Obama. I don't want my country represented by either a Compassionate Crusader or by Oprah Winfrey in drag. (Possibly in person, too, if the rumors we're hearing about Obama's plans for Ms. Winfrey are true.)

Even if I wanted either of them, I do not believe, as both candidates apparently do, that our country has the nigh-infinite fiscal resources required to fund their lunatic world-saving schemes. The effort to rid Iraq of evil has cost us working stiff's a trillion dollars so far; say \$7,000 a head. Population-wise, the world has 260 Iraqs. So I'm in for two million bucks? John, hate to tell ya, but I don't have that kind of money. And this is the "conservative" candidate!

What a disaster! What on earth has happened to us? Nothing yet as bad as what will surely happen if either of these two gibbering numbskulls gets his hands on the levers of supreme executive power.

20080827-01	00:32	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/27/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

from MSNBC's First Read:

The McCain campaign may contend that Obama is the "biggest celebrity" in the presidential race, NBC/NJ's Adam Aigner-Treworgy notes, but its candidate has spent most of this week hobnobbing with as many GOP celebrities as his campaign can find.

On Monday, McCain kicked off the Democratic Convention with an endorsement from Puerto Rican Reggaeton star Daddy Yankee. He then hopped on a plane to fly up north for a fundraiser in Sacramento with Patricia Heaton (from "Everybody Loves Raymond") and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Heaton then traveled to Burbank, CA on McCain's Straight Talk Jet Monday afternoon to attend a fundraiser at the Beverly Hilton featuring stars from both

big and small screens. Those in attendance included Robert Duvall, Gary Sinise, Stephen Baldwin, Craig T. Nelson, Dean Cain (Lois and Clark), Jon Cryer, and long-time McCain supporter Wilford Brimley.

Then on Tuesday, McCain raised money in his hometown of Phoenix and was introduced by TV and movie star Angie Harmon and her husband, long time NY Giants defensive back Jason Sehorn. Capping off the star-studded start to the week, McCain took a brief afternoon trip to San Diego yesterday, making a surprise appearance at a fundraiser hosted by John Voigt.

Interesting that Paris Hilton is missing, even though one of the fundraisers was held at the Beverly Hilton. Gosh, Johnny Boy, sure looks like you're not out of touch with real Americans, are ya? Not by a long shot, Mr. House-Counter! LOL! I'm disappointed in Daddy Yankee because I kinda like some of his music, though he can't hold a candle to Don Omar.

The funniest McCain supporter, though, has to be Wilford Brimley. He and McCain make for two great old farts. I sure would hate to smell any room that the two of them might inhabit for a while. Can you spell "D-E-P-E-N-D-S"? Maybe Wilford could talk McCain into co-starring in another bad remake of Cocoon. Too bad there's nothing like those aliens yet that can cure, well...s-e-n-i-l-t-y, Johnny Boy!

20080828-01	15:03	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/28/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Yesterday, it was announced that McCain had picked his running mate, but was keeping his decision a secret for now.

Today, he announced that he has not made his choice yet.

Do you think that maybe he just forgot which person he picked??? LOL!

20080829-01	06:55	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/29/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Below, I quote the McCain campaign's senile reply to one of the greatest speeches ever given in my lifetime...a speech in which Obama annihilated McCain's petty, mean-spirited attacks on his patriotism, character, and experience; destroyed McCain's lies of independence and foreign policy expertise; spelled out in detail where he would lead America; and demonstrated the character, generosity of spirit, intelligence, and determination to lead the country in a new, better direction that is so far beyond what McCain can muster that it is as if the 21st Century were pitted against 5,000,000 BC.

The McCain response, as usual, contained nothing but more Republican lies, misconceptions, delusions, distractions, and irrelevant, misleading drivel.

I am serving notice that I will stand with Obama against this Washington business-as-usual, bought and- sold cr*p that has our great nation on the brink of destruction. Even if you think Obama's statements are just empty words, I swear to you that mine are not. IT IS TIME FOR CHANGE THAT IS PAST DUE, JOHN MC CAIN, YOU LYING TOTAL A*S-HOLE!!!!

Please explain to me, Johnny Boy, how it is that YOU are ready to be President, you inexperienced, usually dead wrong, war-mongering, lying, cheating, corrupt old-timer? Remember the Keating 5! Remember Iraq! Remember how you cheated on your wives! Remember how you have helped sell the American people down the river! For God's sake, you senile b*stard, remember how many houses you own!

From John McCain's website:

(ARLINGTON Va.) Tonight, the McCain campaign issued the following statement from Tucker Bounds, McCain 2008 spokesman, on Barack Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention:

Tonight, Americans witnessed a misleading speech that was so fundamentally at odds with the meager record of Barack Obama. When the temple comes down, the fireworks end, and the words are over, the facts remain:

Senator Obama still has no record of bipartisanship, still opposes offshore drilling, still voted to raise taxes on those making just \$42,000 per year, and still voted against funds for American troops in harm's way. The fact remains: Barack Obama is still not ready to be President.

20080829-02 07:40 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/29/08—Addendum

ADDENDUM TO TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Oh, but Johnny Boy, I momentarily forgot. You were a POW! Geez, as you keep reminding us and keep reminding us, that's what makes you such an expert on everything, makes you the only true patriot, and makes all your shortcomings somehow OK. Please excuse me, great warrior who fought no war.

I am an ardent, genuine conservative...who believes that government should stay out of our lives as much as possible. But who else will protect us from big unions, big business, big churches, big crime, big illegal immigration, or big foreign enemies...all of whom have bought and paid for our politicians, much to the detriment of you and me and of our children, brothers and sisters. I think we all know this in our hearts.

I will take an honest intelligent man anytime over a lying, dishonest, morally bankrupt, decrepit, old, stupid, senile fool.

But that's just me.

20080829-03 07:59 SteveM "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

"Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?" by Charles Krauthammer, Townhall.com

Aug. 29, 2008, (<http://townhall.com/columnists/charleskrauthammer/2008/08/29/self-made-man-or-mysterious-stranger/page/full/>)

(WASHINGTON) Barack Obama is an immensely talented man whose talents have been largely devoted to crafting, and chronicling, his own life. Not things. Not ideas. Not institutions. But himself.

Nothing wrong or even terribly odd about that, except that he is laying claim to the job of crafting the coming history of the United States. A leap of such audacity is odd. The air of unease at the Democratic convention this week was not just a result of the Clinton psychodrama. The deeper anxiety was that the party was nominating a man of many gifts but precious few accomplishments—bearing even fewer witnesses.

When John Kerry was introduced at his convention four years ago, an honor guard of a dozen mates from his Vietnam days surrounded him on the podium attesting to his character and readiness to lead. Such personal testimonials are the norm. The roster of fellow soldiers or fellow senators who could from personal experience vouch for John McCain is rather long. At a less partisan date in the calendar, that roster might even include Democrats Russ Feingold and Edward Kennedy, with whom John McCain has worked to fashion important legislation.

Eerily missing at the Democratic convention this year were people of stature who were seriously involved at some point in Obama's life standing up to say: I know Barack Obama. I've been with Barack Obama. We've toiled/endured together. You can trust him. I do.

Hillary Clinton could have said something like that. She and Obama had, after all, engaged in a historic, utterly compelling contest for the nomination. During her convention speech, you kept waiting for her to offer just one line of testimony: I have come to know this man, to admire this man, to see his character, his courage, his wisdom, his judgment. Whatever. Anything. Instead, nothing. She of course endorsed him. But the endorsement was entirely programmatic: We're all Democrats. He's a Democrat. He believes what you believe. So we must elect him—I am currently unavailable—to get Democratic things done. God bless America.

Clinton's withholding the "I've come to know this man" was vindictive and supremely self-serving—but jarring, too, because you realize that if she didn't do it, no one else would. Not because of any inherent deficiency in Obama's character. But simply as a reflection of a young life with a biography remarkably thin by the standard of presidential candidates.

Who was there to speak about the real Barack Obama? His wife. She could tell you about Barack the father, the husband, the family man in a winning and perfectly sincere way. But that only takes you so far. It doesn't take you to the public man, the national leader.

Who is to testify to that? Hillary's husband on night three did aver that Obama is "ready to lead." However, he offered not a shred of evidence, let alone personal experience with Obama. And although he pulled it off charmingly, everyone knew that, having been suggesting precisely the opposite for months, he meant not a word of it.

Obama's vice presidential selection, Joe Biden, naturally advertised his patron's virtues, such as the fact that he had "reached across party lines to... keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists." But securing loose nukes is as bipartisan as motherhood and as uncontroversial as apple pie. The measure was so minimal that it passed by voice vote and received near zero media coverage.

Thought experiment. Assume John McCain had retired from politics. Would he have testified to Obama's political courage in reaching across the aisle to work with him on ethics reform, a collaboration Obama boasted about in the Saddleback debate? "In fact," reports the Annenberg Political Fact Check, "the two worked together for barely a week, after which McCain accused Obama of 'partisan posturing'"—and launched a volcanic missive charging him with double cross.

So where are the colleagues? The buddies? The political or spiritual soul mates? His most important spiritual adviser and mentor was Jeremiah Wright. But he's out. Then there's William Ayers, with whom he served on a board. He's out. Where are the others?

The oddity of this convention is that its central figure is the ultimate self-made man, a dazzling mysterious Gatsby. The palpable apprehension is that the anointed is a stranger—a deeply engaging, elegant, brilliant stranger with whom the Democrats had a torrid affair. Having slowly woken up, they see the ring and wonder who exactly they married last night.

[20080829-04](#) 10:02 SteveB Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

Dear SteveM,

Total BS.

[20080829-05](#) 11:16 SteveM Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

Dear SteveB,

Your analytical debating skills dazzle me, as well as your undying devotion to the South side Chicago Machine Candidate. LOL!

Every statement [Krauthammer, above] is correct and I don't see any mean spiritedness, unlike your unwarranted personal assaults on Senator McCain

(ARLINGTON, Va.) Tonight, the McCain campaign issued the following statement from Tucker Bounds, McCain's 2008 spokesman, on Barack Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention:

Tonight, Americans witnessed a misleading speech that was so fundamentally at odds with the meager record of Barack Obama. When the temple comes down, the fireworks end, and the words are over, the facts remain: Senator Obama still has no record of bipartisanship, still opposes offshore drilling, still voted to raise taxes on those making just \$42,000 per year, and still voted against funds for American troops in harm's way. The fact remains: Barack Obama is still not ready to be President.

[20080829-06](#) 12:00 SteveB Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

1. McCain's record shows that he's nearly as partisan as they come.

2. Offshore drilling is a gimmick, bought and paid for by the oil companies and Arabs, and will have no impact even long range except to use up our precious reserves and pollute the coastlines. Ya, all we need is more of our energy supply to be at the mercy of hurricanes. We need a real, non-oil solution and we have needed it for 30 years and you know it. This is as big a gimmick as temporarily removing the gasoline tax to put road workers out of work without helping the real problem.

3. The tax thing is a blatant lie. He just didn't support the Bush tax cuts which are bankrupting the country, along with his little totally unnecessary war in Iraq, which was just to please his daddy. And McCain was all for that!

4. Obama has voted to support the troops more than McCain has, and in a bipartisan way.

5. McCain is no more ready to be President just because he was a POW. His thinking is old, his few ideas are wrong, he's been bought and sold, he has NO executive experience. Look it up. And they are not unwarranted attacks...the man is a crabby, mean, stupid, corrupt lying fool. Period. Look at his mean-spirited campaign.

[20080829-07](#) 12:39 SteveM Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

Dear SteveB,

Just because you don't like Mr. Krauthammers perspective doesn't make it any less true. Remember free speech is a two way street and you have not made one salient point in debate of Mr. Krauthammers points to prove the bullsh*t.

So now that McCain has picked his running mate and will receive a big bump in the polls. I'll leave you with the reminder that I predicted a land slide and now it's time to "turn out the lights, the party's over" LOL!

END of discussion.

[20080829-08](#) 15:21 SteveB Re: "Self-Made Man or Mysterious Stranger?"

Dear SteveM,

See daily McCain's Senile Moment of the Day postings for detailed reasoning and analysis.

I have nothing but disdain, ridicule, loathing, and revulsion for the Republicans who forsook their values and squandered the opportunity of a lifetime to make this a better country, but instead did their best to drive it into the ground. It's time for a change!

Take care, buddy. I have nothing but warm feelings for you, personally, and nothing but extreme sorrow for your political views.

[20080830-01](#) 06:41 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Remember yesterday's statement from the McCain website: "The fact remains: Barack Obama is still not ready to be President."?

Now, I'm not opposed to McCain's choice of 44-year-old Alaskan governor Sarah Palin for VP. But as a complete rookie who professes to having no interest in foreign affairs, doesn't her choice destroy McCain's #1 criticism of Obama, the very foundation of McCain's campaign, as it was Hillary's before him? (You aren't really very original are you, you old pr*ck?)

I mean, surely McCain couldn't admit that Governor Palin is not ready to serve as President, or he would be admitting to a crass political ploy of almost immeasurable stupidity. But how can the senile idiot argue that Obama is not ready to be President if he also argues that this woman is ready?

Looks like you caught yourself in your own trap, Johnny Boy. It's going to be interesting to see which lies and deceptions you use to try to wriggle your way out.

20080830-02 07:43 SteveM Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08

Dear SteveB,

How can anyone take you seriously if you don't admit that Palin has accomplished more as the Governor than BHO in his entire career. Plus as an outsider with a demonstrated record of change she offers more hope for change than insider Biden and empty suit BHO.

Based on her resume she's also more of a man than BHO AND more of a lady than Michelle, lol! Mac doesn't have to defend her, she can do it herself!

So now you're an ageist and sexist? LOL! What's next, racism directed towards whites?

Yeah you bet its politics, what with three of every 10 "Hill raisers" ready to vote for the McCain ticket, you can do the math, from the 18 million supporters. Yeah it's not hard to figure out when it comes to which minority is going to carry the vote for this historic minority selection. SteveB, need I remind you that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.

SteveB I really can't see how you can say Mac is mean, after his sincere congratulations advertisement to BHO on his nomination. While BHO was attacking him in his acceptance speech. [The opposite of what really happened. —SteveB]

Speaking of attacks now Biden won't be old beat up on a woman like he beat up on everyone in Congress. The public won't go for that. Now the empty suit and Biden will have to dance around and watch their words out of fear of being called a sexist. What a delicious and cruel twist of circumstances. Rolling on the floor laughing my A*S off.

Yes SteveB it's called hardball, welcome to the big leagues!

As Dandy Don Meredith used to sing on Monday night football, turn out the lights the parties over!

20080830-03 11:07 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—08/30/08

Dear SteveM,

You have lost your way, my friend, as you will come to see in the coming months.

At the same time McCain was congratulating Obama, he was running nasty, lying attack ads. Obama never attacked McCain in his acceptance speech. In fact, he complimented him...then pointed out all the details of how he was wrong. That is hardly an attack. That's the difference between a gentleman and a rat. You should watch the speech in order to start to get a feel for your future president.

Your opinion of Obama was formed from all the cr*p the right-wing fanatics were spewing. 99% of this BS has been disproven, but you cling to your misconceptions. It is sad.

I suppose you still believe Obama was not born in the U.S., that he's a Muslim, and that he and Michelle don't love America. None of this cr*p is true, none of the Republican response to his acceptance speech was true. This woman, Palin, has no record except more corruption. Period!

You lie, to yourself most of all, when you say you think she's qualified to be President when, in the same breath, you say Obama is not. Shame on you!

You are being manipulated, buddy. Come back down to reality with the rest of us and turn that radio off!

20080830-04 11:37 SteveM "Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"

Dear SteveB,

You really need to read the bio at this link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Palin.

And the article below from the left leaning *USA Today*, AND you don't come away thinking that she's more of a man than BHO AND more of a lady than Michelle, I'll buy you lunch.

"Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values" by John Fritze, *USA Today*

Aug. 29, 2008, (http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-08-29-palinprofile_N.htm)

Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, barely a year into her term, received a harrowing call in December from the physician reviewing her prenatal tests. The doctor asked her to come in for a talk.

Palin, who already had developed a reputation for directness, instead took the news over the phone, learning that her fifth child, Trig, had Down syndrome.

"I've never had problems with my other pregnancies, so I was shocked," Palin told the *Anchorage Daily News* in May. "It took a while to open up the book that the doctor gave me about children with Down syndrome."

She said there was never any doubt she would have her son, who was born in April.

Friends said Palin's resolve during the subsequent doctor visits, medical tests and Trig's birth offers insight into a woman who lived her principles and treasured her family as she faced one of her most difficult personal challenges.

"She's very, very strong in her values," said Curt Menard, mayor of Matanuska-Susitna Borough, who said he has known Palin since she was 3. "I don't think there was ever a question that they were going to have the baby."

Presumptive Republican presidential nominee John McCain introduced Palin, 44, as his running mate Friday. She is her party's first female candidate for vice president.

McCain: 'The right partner'

Audio: McCain taps Palin as running mate

Readers Dish: Talk plainly about Palin

McCain met Palin at the National Governors Association meeting in Washington in February and came away "extraordinarily impressed," according to a statement from McCain's campaign. On Thursday, McCain invited her to become his running mate.

Palin, the daughter of a teacher and a school secretary, is a former point guard who took her high school basketball team to the state championships in 1982. She won her first race for City Council of Wasilla in 1992 by casting herself as "a new face." McCain and other supporters sounded a similar refrain Friday, playing up the fresh voice she could bring to the presidential race.

Democrats, including presidential nominee Barack Obama's campaign spokesman Bill Burton, questioned her relative inexperience, but Palin has beat back similar criticism before. In 1996, at 32, she was elected mayor of Wasilla, a city of 9,780 located about 40 miles north of Anchorage. She ousted a three-term incumbent for the position and focused her tenure on reducing taxes.

"I was just your average hockey mom in Alaska, coaching some basketball on the side," Palin said during a rally in Dayton, Ohio, where her selection was announced. "My agenda was to stop wasteful spending, cut property taxes and put the people first."

Palin beat incumbent Gov. Frank Murkowski, a fellow Republican, in a 2006 primary and then beat a former governor, Democrat Tony Knowles, in the general election, becoming the state's first female governor.

Among Palin's accomplishments in the State House: passing legislation that began a competitive process to construct a gas pipeline and overhauling the state's ethics laws.

"She's a solid individual," said Gene Therriault, the Republican Senate Minority Leader in the Alaska Legislature. "I think she is a person who holds her principles very near and dear."

Critics argue that she is overly aggressive, noting that a nickname she picked up for being a strong basketball player, "Sarah Barracuda," stuck with her for her political career. A citizens group considered advocating for her recall as mayor after she fired several department heads.

Former Wasilla city councilman Nick Carney, who recruited Palin but later became one of her strongest critics in Wasilla, told the Anchorage Daily News in 2006 that he believed she made the staff changes as retribution because they supported her opponent in the race.

Palin faces an ongoing state investigation of accusations that she fired the state's public safety commissioner this year because he would not fire a state trooper who is her sister's ex-husband. She has denied any wrongdoing. Earlier this month, Palin released recordings of a phone conversation between one of her aides and a state trooper lieutenant in which the aide said the governor was troubled that her ex-brother-in-law remained on the force.

The trooper, Mike Wooten, was reprimanded and suspended for five days in 2006 for allegedly drinking beer while on duty and driving his marked patrol car, illegally killing a moose and using his Taser on his 10-year-old stepson, state records show.

Andrew Halcro, who ran against Palin as an independent in 2006 and now runs a blog critical of her, credited Palin with shaking up the Republican establishment in Alaska but also described her as "vindictive." "It seems her vindictiveness is what's gotten her into trouble with this trooper out here," he said. "She couldn't just let it go and walk away."

Palin ran for governor in part on a platform of cracking down on ethical violations. When she was chairwoman of the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, which helps oversee the state's energy industry, Palin complained about ethics violations by Randy Ruedrich, a fellow member of the commission who also chairs the Alaska Republican Party. Palin quit the commission in 2004. Ruedrich, who had resigned from the commission in 2003, paid a \$12,000 fine in 2004 for engaging in partisan political activity on the job.

Palin's family moved to Alaska in 1964 when she was 3 months old. She graduated from Wasilla High School in 1982. She received a bachelor's degree in communications and journalism from the University of Idaho in 1987, according to a National Governors Association biography.

She competed in the Miss Alaska contest after being chosen Miss Wasilla in 1984, according to the *Daily News*. Adrian Lane, a longtime family friend who lives in Wasilla, said he remembers her playing basketball at a young age with all the boys in the neighborhood.

"People misread her," Lane said. "She's strong. People aren't going to run over her."

She is married to Todd Palin, a lifelong Alaskan who is a production operator on the North Slope and a four-time champion of the Iron Dog, the world's longest snowmobile race.

Palin, who enjoys fishing and hunting, attends a non-denominational evangelical church with her family when she is in Wasilla.

"What I've seen in private is what you see in public," said pastor Larry Kroon of the Wasilla Bible Church. "I think her faith and her integrity are both very real."

The Palins have four children in addition to Trig. At the rally Friday, Palin said her oldest son, Track, enlisted in the U.S. Army last Sept. 11 and will deploy to Iraq this Sept. 11.

20080830-05 12:46 SteveB Re: "Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"

Dear SteveM,

According to your own John McCain, having strong values but no experience in Washington and no experience being a POW does not qualify a person to be President, so it therefore (ipso facto) does not qualify someone to be either a Vice-Presidential or Presidential candidate. Look-up all the drivel McCain and his campaign have put-out and you will see I'm right.

In the case of Obama, I know McCain and his campaign have ulterior motives, so I know I can't trust the ambitious bastard.

In the case of Palin, I'll take McCain's word for it!

Their only argument against Obama has been that he ain't qualified! And this b*tch is? No offense to women intended (I love 'em all)!

Doesn't the fact that the senile old-fart criticized Obama for his desire to be President, while running for President himself, tell you that this man has no principles whatsoever and will say anything? And that is just the very least, most obvious case of his utter moral corruption, ambition, and senility. This is an evil man. I will take a good, honest, intelligent man over an evil, lying, stupid man anytime for anything. Believe me, their particular political views don't matter a bit compared to that!

Supporting these pro-life Republican b*stards and their intrusions into our privacy, freedom, and dignity is why I questioned if you were born again, even more than that Bible passage, my friend.

20080830-06 13:17 SteveB Re: "Friends: VP Choice Has 'Very Strong' Values"

The McCain campaign has been totally unable to refute one single point that Obama made in his acceptance speech.

And that is what will ultimately cost the Republicans the election, by a landslide!

Plus (I predict) during the campaign, McCain will either die of old age or demonstrate his mean temper and senility so much that the electorate will reject him out of hand.

20080830-07 16:08 SteveB Fw (from MoveOn): Who Is Sarah Palin?

Dear MoveOn member,

Yesterday was John McCain's 72nd birthday. If elected, he'd be the oldest president ever inaugurated. And after months of slamming Barack Obama for "inexperience," here's who John McCain has chosen to be one heartbeat away from the presidency: a right-wing religious conservative with no foreign policy experience, who until recently was mayor of a town of 9,000 people.

Huh?

Who is Sarah Palin? Here's some basic background:

She was elected Alaska 's governor a little over a year and a half ago. Her previous office was mayor of Wasilla, a small town outside Anchorage. She has no foreign policy experience.¹ Palin is strongly anti-choice, opposing abortion even in the case of rape or incest.² She supported right-wing extremist Pat Buchanan for president in 2000.³ Palin thinks creationism should be taught in public schools.⁴ She's doesn't think humans are the cause of climate change.⁵

She's solidly in line with John McCain's "Big Oil first" energy policy. She's pushed hard for more oil drilling and says renewables won't be ready for years. She also sued the Bush administration for listing polar bears as an endangered species—she was worried it would interfere with more oil drilling in Alaska.⁶

How closely did John McCain vet this choice? He met Sarah Palin once at a meeting. They spoke a second time, last Sunday, when he called her about being vice-president. Then he offered her the position.⁷

This is information the American people need to see. Please take a moment to forward this email to your friends and family. We also asked Alaska MoveOn members what the rest of us should know about their governor. The response was striking. Here's a sample:

She is really just a mayor from a small town outside Anchorage who has been a governor for only 1.5 years, and has ZERO national and international experience. I shudder to think that she could be the person taking that 3 am call on the White House hotline, and the one who could potentially be charged with leading the U.S. in the volatile international scene that exists today.—Rose M., Fairbanks, AK

She is VERY, VERY conservative, and far from perfect. She's a hunter and fisherwoman, but votes against the environment again and again. She ran on ethics reform, but is currently under investigation for several charges involving hiring and firing of state officials. She has NO experience beyond Alaska.—Christine B., Denali Park, AK

As an Alaskan and a feminist, I am beyond words at this announcement. Palin is not a feminist, and she is not the reformer she claims to be.—Karen L., Anchorage, AK

Alaskans, collectively, are just as stunned as the rest of the nation. She is doing well running our State, but is totally inexperienced on the national level, and very much unequipped to run the nation, if it came to that. She is as far right as one can get, which has already been communicated on the news. In our office of thirty employees (dems, republicans, and nonpartisans), not one person feels she is ready for the V.P. position.—Sherry C., Anchorage, AK

She's vehemently anti-choice and doesn't care about protecting our natural resources, even though she has worked as a fisherman. McCain chose her to pick up the Hillary voters, but Palin is no Hillary.—Marina L., Juneau, AK

I think she's far too inexperienced to be in this position. I'm all for a woman in the White House, but not one who hasn't done anything to deserve it. There are far many other women who have worked their way up and have much more experience that would have been better choices. This is a patronizing decision on John McCain's part and insulting to females everywhere that he would assume he'll get our vote by putting "A Woman" in that position.—Jennifer M., Anchorage, AK

So Governor Palin is a staunch anti-choice religious conservative. She's a global warming denier who shares John McCain's commitment to Big Oil. And she's dramatically inexperienced. In picking Sarah Palin, John McCain has made the religious right very happy. And he's made a very dangerous decision for our country.

In the next few days, many Americans will be wondering what McCain's vice-presidential choice means. Please pass this information along to your friends and family.

Thanks for all you do. —Ilyse, Noah, Justin, Karin and the rest of the team

Sources:

¹"Sarah Palin," Wikipedia, Accessed Aug. 29, 2008, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Palin

²"McCain Selects Anti-Choice Sarah Palin as Running Mate," NARAL Pro-Choice America, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17515&id=13661-9148195-iaKOGex&t=1>

³"Sarah Palin, Buchananite," *The Nation*, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17736&id=13661-9148195-iaKOGex&t=2>

⁴"'Creation science' enters the race," *Anchorage Daily News*, Oct. 27, 2006, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17737&id=13661-9148195-iaKOGex&t=3>

⁵"Palin buys climate denial PR spin—ignores science," *Huffington Post*, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17517&id=13661-9148195-iaKOGex&t=4>

⁶"McCain VP Pick Completes Shift to Bush Energy Policy," Sierra Club, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17518&id=13661-9148195-iaOGex&t=5>

⁷"McCain met Palin once before yesterday," MSNBC, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=21119&id=13661-9148195-iaOGex&t=8>

"Choice of Palin Promises Failed Energy Policies of the Past," League of Conservation Voters, Aug. 29, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17519&id=13661-9148195-iaOGex&t=6>

"Protecting polar bears gets in way of drilling for oil, says governor," The Times of London, May 23, 2008, <http://www.moveon.org/r?r=17520&id=13661-9148195-iaOGex&t=77>

20080831-01 10:04 SteveB "Brazil Admits Amazon Deforestation on the Rise" Environment

"Brazil Admits Amazon Deforestation on the Rise" by AP

Aug. 30, 2008, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26472726/>)

(69 percent increase in 1 year reported; 20 percent of forest now cleared.)

(RIO DE JANEIRO) Amazon deforestation jumped 69 percent in the past 12 months — the first such increase in three years — as rising demand for soy and cattle pushes farmers and ranchers to raze trees, officials said Saturday.

Some 3,088 square miles of forest were destroyed between August 2007 and August 2008 — a 69 percent increase over the 1,861 square miles felled in the previous 12 months, according to the National Institute for Space Research, or INPE, which monitors destruction of the Amazon.

"We're not content," Environment Minister Carlos Minc said. "Deforestation has to fall more and the conditions for sustainable development have to improve."

Brazil's government has increased cash payments to fight illegal Amazon logging this year, and it eliminated government bank loans to farmers who illegally clear forest to plant crops.

The country lost 2.7 percent of its Amazon rain forest in 2007, or 4,250 square miles. Environmental officials fear even more land will be razed this year — but they have not forecast how much.

Minc says monthly deforestation rates have slowed since May, but environmental groups say seasonal shifts in tree cutting make the annual number a more accurate gauge.

Most deforestation happens in March and April, the start of Brazil's dry season, and routinely tapers off in May, June and July: Last month, 125 square miles of trees were felled, 61 percent less than the area razed in June.

Environmentalists also argue that INPE's deforestation report wasn't designed to give accurate monthly figures, but to alert and direct the government to deforestation hot spots in time to save the land.

The Amazon region covers about 1.6 million square miles of Brazil, nearly 60 percent of the country. About 20 percent of that land has already been deforested.

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20080831-02 16:39 J. Fornof Senator Obama's Campaign for Change in Hamilton, Montana
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Dear SteveB:

Now that we have the Hamilton office up and running, we were wondering if you were still interested in any volunteer opportunities with the campaign here in the valley. I'd love to get together with you and discuss the different things that we will doing as we look towards the general election. Please let me know if you are interested!

P.S. We are waiting on Obama-Biden gear to come in, but we do have a few t shirts available including one "Montana for Obama" XL shirt.

Thanks! John Fornof, Campaign for Change, Hamilton, MT, 773-459-7364

[20080901-01](#)

16:58

SteveB

John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/01/08; "Palin Flipped on Alaska's 'Bridge to Nowhere'"

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Lies, mistruth, and more lies. Sarah Palin, who supposedly loves her five young children and her pregnant 17-year-old daughter so much that she's abandoning them in favor of running as Johnny Boy's VP candidate, looks like just another Washington-type politician to me, except that she's only a super Alaskan black-fly light-weight version!

"Palin Flipped on Alaska's 'Bridge to Nowhere'" AP

Aug. 31, 2008, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26486063/#.TxhPB29SQhI>)

(She's touted her opposition to pork projects, but initially welcomed funds.)

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) Gov. Sarah Palin was for the so-called infamous "Bridge to Nowhere" before she was against it, a change of position the GOP vice presidential running mate conveniently ignored Saturday when she bragged about telling Congress "thanks but no thanks" to the pork barrel project. Federal funds for the \$398 million bridge were tacked into an appropriations bill as an earmark, the practice by which members of Congress get special funding for pet projects. Sen. John McCain opposes earmarks as an avenue for pork barrel and special interest spending.

After McCain introduced her as his choice for vice president on the Republican ticket, Palin talked about her reform credentials, and said she stopped the bridge project as part of an effort to end of earmarking in appropriations bills.

Pushed by Sen. Ted Stevens [The discredited Republican Senator from Alaska who will soon be tried on corruption charges. —SteveB], the bridge project became a symbol of congressional misuse of tax dollars. It would have connected the town of Ketchikan to an island with 50 residents and an airport on it. Ferries and water taxis serve the island now.

"I have championed reform to end the abuses of earmark spending by Congress," Palin said in her vice presidential campaign debut in Dayton, Ohio. "In fact, I told Congress, I told Congress 'thanks but no thanks' on that Bridge to Nowhere." [Gee, did she tell Congress twice? —SteveB] "If our state wanted a bridge, I said we'd build it ourselves," she said.

She didn't talk that way when she was running for governor. The Anchorage Daily News quoted her on Oct. 22, 2006, as saying yes, she would continue state funding for the bridge because she wanted swift action on infrastructure projects. "The window is now while our congressional delegation is in a strong position to assist," she said. [Ya, get that money while the Congressional delegation is still out of jail, Sarah! LOL! —SteveB]

[20080902-01](#)

13:15

Phil

Fw: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..." Colombo/Birther, etc. [& see 09/25/10, below]

[Source of original email unknown. Email the same as forwarded by SteveBA (Sept. 25, 2010). —SteveB]

A lot of unanswered questions!

Ah... Sorry to bother you, Mr. Obama, sir. Excuse me Mr. Obama, I mean Senator Obama, sir. Um . . .'know you are busy and important and stuff. I mean running for president is very important and... ah... hate to bother you. I will only take a minute ok, sir.

See, I have these missing pieces that are holding me up, and I was wondering sir, if you could take time out of your busy schedule and help me out. You know, no big deal, just some loose ends and things.

Hey, you have a nice place here! The wife sees houses like this on TV all the time and says, boy, she wishes she had digs like this, you know? Is that painting real? Really? Wow. I saw something like that in a museum once!

Oh, sorry sir. I didn't mean to get off the track. So if you could just help me out a minute and give me some details, I will get right out of your way. I want to close this case and maybe take the wife to Coney Island or something. Ever been to Coney Island ? No, I didn't think so...

Well, listen, anyways, I can't seem to get some information I need to wrap this up. These things seem to either be "locked" or "not available". I'm sure it's just some oversight or glitch or something, so if you could you tell me where these things are... I... I... have them written down here somewhere... oh, 'Sorry about the smears. It was raining out. I'll just read it to you.

Could you help me please find these things, sir?

- Your Occidental College records.
- Your Columbia College records.
- Your Columbia Thesis paper.
- Your Harvard College records.
- Your Selective Service registration.
- Your medical records.
- Your Illinois State Senate records.
- Your Illinois State Senate schedule.
- Your law practice client list.
- A certified copy of your original birth certificate.
- Your embossed, signed paper Certification of Live Birth.
- Your Harvard Law Review articles that were published.
- Your University of Chicago scholarly articles.
- Your Record of Baptism.

Oh, hey... listen! I know you are busy! Is this too much for you now? I mean, tell you what. I will come back tomorrow. Give you some time to get these things together, you know? I mean, I know you are busy, so I will just let myself out. I will be back tomorrow. And the day after.

".....In God We Trust....."

20080902-02 15:35 SteveB Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."
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Dear Phil,

I don't know if all these things are known, but most of this is a hoax. His birth certificate, for example, has been fully vetted, and other documents can be accessed from Obama's website, although some third-party sites will also verify that most of this is untrue.

Remember, McCain is the one who was not born in the U.S.! And Palin? Well, we don't know anything about her except that she was a desperate pick who appears to be totally unprepared to be a 72-yearold heartbeat away from the Presidency.

20080902-03 16:02 Phil Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."
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Dear SteveB,

What in the hell was the thinking on Palin, anyway? How can she bring anything to the ticket?

Obama is just going to roll in November.

20080902-04 16:29 SteveB Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."

Dear Phil,

God, I hope so! I'm sick of Bush, the Iraq war, the lies, the free trade, illegal immigration, and the economy. The Republicans had their chance and blew it big-time! I'll tell ya, regardless of politics...to solve our problems, I'll take a young, honest, intelligent man over an old, lying, pro-life, senile idiot anytime (and I don't give a goddamn if he was a POW)! It looks to me like Obama deserves a chance to be that man!

20080902-05 19:53 SteveB Fw: P.O.W.

Dear SteveB:

from Brave New PAC: [Defunct, 3/21/12. —SteveB]

To see McCain resort to playing the POW card when answering legitimate questions, in my mind, cheapens that experience. And by cheapening his own experience in war, he degrades all of our experiences in war. He turns the horrific incidents we've all seen, touched, smelled, and felt into a lame excuse to earn political points. And it dishonors us all.

—Brandon Friedman, a veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan

John McCain has been exploiting his prisoner of war experience every chance he gets. He has used this story to justify everything from not knowing how many homes he has to his healthcare plan to his marital infidelities to his taste in music. The McCain campaign is even using his POW story in paid ads. But now a veteran who was a prisoner with McCain in Vietnam is explaining loud and clear that being a POW does not qualify McCain to lead our country.

<http://bravenewpac.org/>

Dr. Phillip Butler knew McCain as a fellow POW. Watch and listen! We are sure this video will draw an onslaught of right-wing attacks, but we bring it to you because it is our job to continue to convey the truth together and give these issues national attention. As Dr. Butler has said, McCain does not have the temperament to have his finger near the red button. Get this video to everyone you know: friends, family members, coworkers, and especially those who don't share your political views. The video is designed to reach them. Get it on your social networking sites like Digg. And get it to every blog, newspaper, and TV station that has ever overplayed McCain's POW story. It is time to fight back with truth!

The mainstream press has already begun to call out McCain for overusing his POW story. And it's cut across all political persuasions.

Whether he's deflecting criticism over his health-care plan or mocking a tribute to the Woodstock music festival, Senator John McCain has a trump card: the Hanoi Hilton.—Edwin Chen, Bloomberg

Noun, Verb, POW—Andrew Sullivan, *The Atlantic Monthly*

The McCain campaign's constant invocation of the candidate's POW past is weird bordering on irrational...—Ana Marie Cox, TIME

I think they are going to it way too many times.—Howard Fineman, *Newsweek*

Remember how Joe Biden got the press to refer to Rudy Giuliani as "A noun, a verb, and 9/11"? Well, let's actually take Andrew Sullivan's lead here and get the media to boil McCain down to a similar phrase: "A noun, a verb, and POW." Considering how often the McCain campaign invokes his POW story, isn't that what they're already doing?"

Yours, Robert Greenwald and the Brave New team

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20080902-06	21:28	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/02/08; "Bushies Come to Palin's Aid"
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Hey, Johnny Boy, try to run away from idiot Bush all ya want. I think the American people will figure out the truth by election time, and you're goin' down, a*s-hole!

"Bushies Come to Palin's Aid" by Michael Isikoff, *Newsweek*

Sept. 2, 2008, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/blogs/stumper/2008/09/02/bushies-come-to-palin-s-aid.html>)

The McCain team has hastily assembled a team of former Bush White House aides to tutor the vice presidential candidate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, on foreign-policy issues, to write her speeches and to begin preparing her for her all-important Oct. 2 debate against Sen. Joe Biden.

Steve Biegun, who once served as the No. 3 National Security Council official under Condoleezza Rice at the White House, has been hired as chief foreign-policy adviser to the Alaska governor, campaign officials told NEWSWEEK. After taking leave from his job as vice president for international affairs at Ford Motor Co. last Friday, Biegun flew to St. Paul and, together with McCain's foreign-policy guru Randy Schuenemann, began briefings for Palin on national-security issues—an area where her resume is conspicuously thin.

Biegun is hardly the only Bushie to be tapped for Palin duty. Among others: Matt Scully, a former Bush White House speechwriter who helped draft some of the major foreign-policy addresses during the president's first term, is working on Palin's acceptance speech to the convention Wednesday night.

Mark Wallace, a former lawyer for the Bush 2000 campaign who served in a variety of administration jobs including chief counsel at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and deputy ambassador to the United Nations, has been put in charge of "prep" for the debate against Biden.

Wallace's wife, Nicolle Wallace, the former White House communications director, has taken over the same job for Palin. Tucker Eskew, another senior Bush White House communications aide, is serving as senior counselor to Palin's operation. Douglas Holtz-Eakin, the former chief economist at the Council of Economic Advisers who has been serving as top economics guru for the McCain campaign, has moved over to serve as Palin's chief domestic-policy adviser.

The proliferation of former Bush White House aides in the Palin team may strike some as ironic—and could even provide some fodder for the Democrats—given the McCain camp's efforts to distance itself from the unpopular president. (It has been widely noted, for example, that while the president is addressing the convention tonight by satellite, neither the president nor Vice President Cheney will be coming anywhere near St. Paul. And when Palin's selection was announced last week, McCain aides touted it as an example of the senator returning to his "reformer roots" and rebelling against the GOP establishment.)

One administration critic, Steve Clemons of the New America Foundation, said today that while he personally liked Biegun and viewed him as "extremely competent," his retention as Palin's foreign-policy tutor could have unpleasant consequences. Describing Biegun—a Russia expert who once served as staff director for Sen. Jesse Helms at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—as a "big gun" in conservative foreign-policy circles, Clemons said "he will turn her into an advocate of Cheneyism and Cheney's view of national-security issues."

20080903-01	11:50	SteveB	Oil Market Speculation; Energy
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Dear Dennis,

Hope you're having a great summer. Are you in Ann Arbor?

I just heard Michael Lynch of Strategic Energy & Research (SEER) on Bloomberg TV and thought of you.

He was saying that since there were no real demand/supply or geopolitical realities affecting the price of oil, that, at least, the run-up from \$85 to \$145 for a barrel of oil had to be speculative. [And see above, Aug. 17, 2007, 4:13 pm. —SteveB]

You notice most commodities coming down now as the realities of the marketplace finally take hold. The problem is that these speculative bubbles hurt us all (except the few successful speculators and the Arabs) and must somehow be stopped while still allowing a free market.

My suggestions before about making futures contracts final or paying delivery charges, I think, would accomplish this.

20080903-02	16:06	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08; "Obama hits Davis on 'Issues'"
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Has anyone but me noticed that Johnny Boy only seems to talk about Obama and/or Biden/Palin (or being a POW)? We still don't know how many houses he has, let alone what he would do about the economy, shipping jobs to China, illegal immigration, or...say...the energy crisis (except drill, drill, drill, which is the last thing we much do). I guess there are no problems if you're as rich and famous as John McCain! Talk about running away from the issues as if they don't exist and as if you Republicans haven't produced problems instead of solving them, Johnny Boy!

By "personality" your campaign couldn't possibly mean...maybe...RACE, could it, an*s breath?

"Obama hits Davis on 'Issues'" by Carrie Budoff Brown, Politico

Sept. 3, 2008 (http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0908/Obama_hits_Davis_on_issues.html)

Barack Obama hit John McCain on Wednesday over a comment from his campaign manager that the presidential race will be decided more on personalities than on issues.

"Which probably explains why last night when they were speaking, all these speakers [at the Republican National Convention] came up, you didn't hear a single word about the economy," Obama said at an economic forum in New Philadelphia, Ohio. "Not once did people mention the hardships that people are going through."

"I guess I don't blame them," Obama added, "because if you don't have any issues to run on, you want it all to be about personality. If you have got George Bush's track record and John McCain voting 90 percent of the time in agreement with George Bush, then you probably don't want to talk about issues either."

McCain campaign manager Rick Davis told *Washington Post* editors Tuesday that issues will have an impact on undecided voters but will not be conclusive.

"This election is not about issues," Davis said. "This election is about a composite view of what people take away from these candidates."

The Obama campaign challenged the remarks Tuesday, and Obama added criticism of Davis' remarks in his stump speech Wednesday, as part of an extended riff aimed at painting McCain as out of touch.

20080903-03	17:06	Clark	"Noonan, Murphy Trash Palin on Hot Mike: 'It's Over'"
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"Noonan, Murphy Trash Palin on Hot Mike: 'It's Over'" by Ben Smith, Politico

Sept. 3, 2008, (http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/0908/Noonan_Murphy_trash_Palin_on_hot_mic_Its_over.html)

After a segment with NBC's Chuck Todd ended today, Republican consultant Mike Murphy and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan were caught on a live mike ridiculing the choice of Sarah Palin.

"It's over," said Noonan, who then responded to a question of whether Palin is the most qualified Republican woman McCain could have chosen.

"The most qualified? No. I think they went for this — excuse me — political bullsh*t about narratives," she said. "Every time the Republicans do that, because that's not where they live and it's not what they're good at, they blow it."

Murphy chimed in: "The greatness of McCain is no cynicism, and this is cynical."

Noonan's blunt call contrasted with her conflicted column today saying Palin "could become a transformative political presence."

The Sarah Palin choice is really going to work, or really not going to work," Noonan wrote. "It's not going to be a little successful or a little not; it's not going to be a wash. She is either going to be magic or one of history's accidents. She is either going to be brilliant and groundbreaking, or will soon be the target of unattributed quotes by bitter staffers shifting blame in all *The Making of the President 2008* books.

(UPDATE: Noonan tries to explain her remarks, and says that what's "over" isn't, she meant, McCain's campaign, but that what's over is the truth to the belief that "whatever the base of the Republican party thinks is what America thinks.")

20080903-04	18:33	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08—Bonus
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TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

Just watched a video clip on TV of McCain handling a little baby at some political event today or yesterday. The baby's head was lolling around so much that I thought it was a wonder that Johnny Boy didn't break the baby's neck. Not only does this a*s-wipe not know how many houses he has, or whether someone is ready to be President, he has led such a sheltered life that he doesn't even know or, more likely, remember how to support a baby's neck. But, of course, I have to excuse his ignorance because, golly gee, he was a POW!

THIS MAN IS DANGEROUS! God help us!

20080903-05	18:53	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/03/08—Bonus—Addendum
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ADDENDUM TO TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

Yes indeed! The Family Values Party!

McCain can't handle a baby and has cheated on both of his wives. He divorced the first because she had medical problems after she stuck by him the whole time he was a, you guessed it, POW! He cheated on the second in a famous political scandal during his first run at the Presidency. I won't even mention his participation in the Keating Five scandal.

VP candidate Palin can't be bothered to help take care of her five children, including the four-month-old with Down's Syndrome and the pregnant, unmarried 17-year-old. She not only doesn't support abortion under any circumstances, she doesn't believe in sex education in the schools, easily available birth control, or public schools, for that matter. She's for good, old-fashioned, Bible-thumping home schooling. I guess even that doesn't prevent screwing around in her unsupervised family.

Ya, Mrs. Palin, you might as well leave them kids at home and go gallivantin' (love that word!) 'round the country espousing family values, cause you don't seem to be able to handle yer own family (so how ya gonna run the country?). Ya, invade them women's privacy and tell 'em what to do with their own lives and bodies, you gun-totin' trailer trash!

Jeez, American families would be in such good hands with these two ignorant scoundrels!

Ya know, I was just thinking...

If Obama gets elected: it will almost certainly ended two of the worst political dynasties (by far) in American history—the Clintons and the Bushes.

If McCain gets elected: it will encourage and perpetuate both of them.

<u>20080905-04</u>	19:11	Mike	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
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Dear SteveB,

I actually care more for the DNC side but your words are worse than a sugar infected 5th grade potty mouth...

I like good info and your an intelligent person with a knack for creative writing, but the cursing you use sounds like less intellectual.

I would love to read a piece that gives someone a sense of connection and deep thought. Your poetry always hits the spot. Try doing that with your angst and frustration.

Obama's economic side is optimistic, but even you know that you hope to move away from this country so why care so much about the candidates that only matter for 4 years. John McCain has gotten to this point for some reason. So what if you hate his guts. Be poetic about it or else run for office in a skirt with black face paint on and see what happens.

Keep the good stuff coming and wipe away the filth.

[You have to be kidding me! What filth? You will find very little "cursing" in these posts. Very occasionally, yes, but, then, we are a bunch of adults, sh*t happens! Get used to it. —SteveB]

<u>20080908-01</u>	10:25	David	Fw: Photo: Patriotic & Likes Guns
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<http://www.snopes.com/photos/politics/palin.asp>



[20080909-01](#) 10:20 Ben Fw: McCain-Pain Bumper Sticker



[20080909-02](#) 20:11 SteveB "Super-Smasher Targets Massive Mystery"

"Super-Smasher Targets Massive Mystery" by Alan Boyle, MSNBC

Sept. 8, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24525554/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/super-smasher-targets-massive-mystery/#.Ty_RRixSQhJ)

Chapter 1: Particle collider comes close to the big bang on a small scale

(MEYRIN, Switzerland) In the beginning was the big bang. God may have been around before then — but as far as scientists are concerned, the big bang is as far back as they can go. And to get back there, they're getting ready to blast subatomic particles so energetically that the extreme conditions of the freshly born universe will be re-created on Earth.

Will those "little big bangs" crack age-old scientific mysteries? Or, despite repeated assurances from the world's top experts, will they create black holes that could gobble up the planet? After decades of preparation, scientists are finally switching on a machine that will separate the facts from what is plainly science fiction.

The machine is the \$10 billion Large Hadron Collider, or LHC — the most powerful, most expensive particle-blaster ever invented. On Wednesday, Europe's CERN particle-physics lab is due to start shooting beams of protons through the LHC's 17-mile-round (27-kilometer-round) ring of tunnels beneath the French-Swiss border.

It will take months for the machine to reach full power. But eventually, those protons will be whipped up to 99.999999 percent of the speed of light, slamming together with the energy of two bullet trains colliding head-on. Underground detectors as big as cathedrals will track the subatomic wreckage on a time scale of billionths of a second. Billions of bits of data will be sent out every second for analysis.

As big as the numbers surrounding the LHC are, the mysteries it was built to address are bigger:

- What was the newborn universe made of?
- What causes things to have mass?
- Why is most of that mass hidden?
- Where did all the antimatter go?
- Is our entire universe a mere sliver of all that is?

"The LHC is the most powerful microscope that's ever been built," said John Ellis, a theoretical physicist here at CERN. "It will be able to explore the inner structure of matter on a scale that is 10 times smaller than anyone's been able to do before."

Ellis said the LHC also serves as "the most powerful telescope ever built," even though it looks inward rather than outward.

"We know that the way elementary particles interacted with each other controlled the very early universe," he explained. "So with the LHC we are able to, in some sense, re-create the conditions that existed in the universe when it was just a fraction of a second old — the sort of thing that the optical telescopes just can't see."

What's the point?

Past experiments in particle physics have yielded scores of practical spin-offs, ranging from new medical therapies to high-tech industrial materials — and even the World Wide Web, which you're using to read this report. But the potential for spin-offs isn't why more than 10,000 researchers around the world are looking forward so anxiously to the LHC.

"People ever since the ancient Greeks — and probably a long time before that — have wanted to understand how matter is made up, how it behaves, where the universe comes from," said Ellis, surrounded in his office by stacks of research papers. "And so we are responding to that continuing human urge."

The quest is not without controversy: Scientists say there's a chance that the LHC could create microscopic black holes, a phenomenon never before observed on Earth. They hasten to add that the tiny singularities will instantly pop out of existence, but that hasn't stopped critics from trying to block the collider's startup.

Two of the critics have filed suit in federal court in Hawaii, seeking the suspension of LHC operations until more studies are done.

Responding to the critics, CERN has issued a series of reports explaining why the LHC will pose no threat. Ellis was one of the report's authors. "If the LHC were to make microscopic black holes, it would be tremendously exciting — and no danger," he said.

The 62-year-old London native has spent more than half his life at CERN, delving into topics ranging from dark matter to the theory of everything. Once the LHC is up and running, he expects to find out whether the theories he and other physicists have developed over all those years lead to solid evidence — or lead to a scientific dead end.

"Theoretically, that would be the most interesting possibility, because it would really mean that we had to tear up our notebooks of the last 45 years and start more or less from scratch," Ellis said.

The God Particle

The theory described in all those notebooks is known as the Standard Model, which ranks among the scientific world's most successful theories. The Standard Model lays out a menagerie of subatomic particles and their interactions — and provides the basis for inventions ranging from television sets to microwave ovens to nuclear bombs.

Only one elementary particle predicted by the Standard Model has not yet been detected: the Higgs boson, which is thought to interact with other particles to give them mass. Without the Higgs, the big bang might have been an insubstantial flash in the pan — all energy, and no mass. Or so the theory goes.

The elusive Higgs boson looms so large as a gap in the Standard Model that Nobel-winning physicist Leon Lederman wrote a book about it called *The God Particle*. (He joked that he wanted to call it the "Goddamn Particle," but his editor wouldn't let him.)

"This is in some sense the holy grail of particle physics, to find this missing link in the Standard Model," Ellis said. "So that's one thing that we're really looking forward to with the LHC. In fact, back when we persuaded the politicians to stump up the money to build the thing, that's probably what we told them."

Not even the LHC will be able to spot the Higgs boson directly. Instead, physicists will have to infer its existence through an analysis of the other particles that should be created when it decays. It's not an easy task, but Ellis believes the evidence should turn up within a year or two of the machine's startup.

Even that won't mark the end of the quest. Ellis compared the Higgs boson to a doorway that should lead beyond the Standard Model.

"I don't think that the Higgs door, if you like, is just closing off the room, and there is nothing beyond," he said. "I believe there's going to be a lot more physics beyond. What it's going to be, I don't know. Maybe it's supersymmetry. Maybe space has additional dimensions. Maybe it's something that we haven't thought of yet. I certainly hope it's something we haven't thought of yet. It would be great to come across a real surprise."

But Ellis and his colleagues at CERN have two nagging concerns in the back of their minds: What if somebody else finds the magic door first? Or what if they spent all these billions of dollars and there's no Higgs particle at all?

A competitive twist

Fifteen years ago, when Leon Lederman wrote "The God Particle," he thought the Higgs boson would be found in the Superconducting Super Collider, a project that was just getting started in Texas. That machine would have been four times as powerful as the LHC — but when the costs started running far beyond the initial estimates, Congress killed the program.

Over the decade that followed, U.S. scientists weren't just waiting for the LHC to be built: The focus shifted to the Tevatron collider at Fermilab in Illinois, which theorists figured might have just enough punch to pick up the Higgs' trail.

Last year, researchers at Fermilab passed the word that they had found some interesting data — readings that hinted at the presence of the Higgs but weren't yet solid enough to publish. That added a competitive twist to the grail quest.

"The longer we wait, the higher the probability that Fermilab discovers something that we wouldn't mind discovering ourselves here," Jos Engelen, CERN's chief scientific officer and deputy director general, said last year.

Beyond the God Particle

What if physicists don't find the God Particle they are expecting to see? Ellis acknowledged that was a possibility. "This might be a little bit difficult to explain to our politicians, that here they gave us 10 billion of whatever, your favorite currency unit, and we didn't find the Higgs boson," he said.

But Ellis has faith that even then, there'd be something to discover — maybe something even weirder and more wonderful than the Higgs boson.

"Probably the most likely option then might be extra dimensions," Ellis said. "And there are some ideas where if you have some additional dimensions of space, you could somehow do the job that the Higgs does in the Standard Model."

For years, string theorists have noted that their equations come out better if they assume that the universe has nine or 10 spatial dimensions instead of the three we can perceive. The LHC could provide the first evidence of those extra dimensions: Some theorists say the collisions could produce anomalously heavy particles, suggesting that part of their momentum was going into the extradimensional realm. Harvard physicist Lisa Randall estimates that the LHC could nail down the evidence for extra dimensions in five years.

Other theorists have focused on the idea that every subatomic particle should have an as-yet-undetected "supersymmetric" partner that mirrors many of the characteristics of the particles we know, but is dramatically different in other respects. The partners would have greater masses and a different spin, for example.

To date, no actual evidence of supersymmetry has been found. But if supersymmetric particles don't exist, then a lot of the theories that look beyond the Standard Model would have to be thrown out.

If supersymmetric particles do exist, they could account for a large part of the universe's dark matter. That's the 90 percent of all matter that scientists can detect only by its gravitational effect — a puzzle that has bedeviled astronomers for decades. "There are good reasons to think that these dark matter particles, if they exist, will be observable in the LHC," Ellis said.

Exploring the big-bang frontier

One of the LHC's detectors, known as ALICE, is devoted to studying the stuff that the universe was made of less than a billionth of a second after the big bang. Earlier experiments have hinted that the stuff was a super-hot liquid consisting of subatomic particles known as quarks and gluons.

For one month out of every year, the LHC will switch from smashing protons to smashing heavy lead ions, in an effort to re-create that quark-gluon soup and let ALICE analyze the recipe.

Yet another detector, LHCb, will study the tracks of particles containing specific types of quarks and antiquarks. The Standard Model predicts that equal amounts of matter and antimatter should have been produced in the big bang — but today, we see hardly any antimatter in nature. That's a good thing, because matter and antimatter annihilate each other when they come in contact, leaving pure energy behind.

LHCb will follow up on earlier experiments that suggest matter won out over antimatter because they somehow decay in different ways.

And then there are the wild cards in the deck: Could the LHC really create black holes or exotic forms of matter? What about all these claims that the world is in peril?

Chapter 2: Discovery or doom? Collider stirs debate

Sept. 8, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24556999/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/discovery-or-doom-collider-stirs-debate/#.Ty_Re1xSQhJ)

Will the Large Hadron Collider save the world, or destroy it?

As the atom-smasher at Europe's CERN research center is readied for its official startup on Wednesday, researchers might wish that the general public was captivated by the quest for the Higgs boson, the search for supersymmetric particles and even the evidence for extra dimensions.

But if the feedback so far is any guide, the real headline-grabber is the claim that the world's most powerful particle-smasher could create microscopic black holes that some fear would gobble up the planet.

The black-hole scenario is even getting its day in court: Critics of the project have called for the suspension of work on the European collider until the scenario receives a more thorough safety review, filing separate legal challenges in U.S. federal court and the European Court of Human Rights.

The strange case of the planet-eating black hole serves as just one example showing how grand scientific projects can lead to a collision between science fiction and science fact. The hubbub also has led some to question why billions of dollars are being spent on a physics experiment so removed from everyday life.

Why do it?

Michio Kaku, a theoretical physicist at the City College of New York, acknowledged that people often ask about the practical applications of particle physics. Even if physicists figure out how a particle called the Higgs boson creates the property of mass in the universe, how will that improve life on Earth?

"Sometimes the public says, 'What's in it for Numero Uno? Am I going to get better television reception? Am I going to get better Internet reception?' Well, in some sense, yeah," he said. "All the wonders of quantum physics were learned basically from looking at atom-smasher technology."

Kaku noted that past discoveries from the world of particle physics ushered in many of the innovations we enjoy today, ranging from satellite communications and handheld media players to medical PET scanners (which put antimatter to practical use).

"But let me let you in on a secret: We physicists are not driven to do this because of better color television," he added. "That's a spin-off. We do this because we want to understand our role and our place in the universe."

About those black holes ...

The black holes that may (or may not) be generated by the Large Hadron Collider would have theoretical rather than practical applications.

If the collider's detectors turn up evidence of black holes, that would suggest that gravity is stronger on a subatomic scale than it is on the distance scales scientists have been able to measure so far. That, in turn, would support the weird idea that we live in a 10- or 11-dimensional universe, with some of the dimensions rolled up so tightly that they can't be perceived.

Some theorists say the idea would explain why gravity is so much weaker than the universe's other fundamental forces — for example, why a simple magnet can match the entire Earth's gravitational force pulling on a paper clip. These theorists suggest that much of the gravitational field is "leaking out" into the extra dimensions.

"It will be extremely exciting if the LHC did produce black holes," CERN theoretical physicist John Ellis said. "OK, so some people are going to say, 'Black holes? Those big things eating up stars?' No. These are microscopic, tiny little black holes. And they're extremely unstable. They would disappear almost as soon as they were produced."

Not everyone is convinced that the black holes would disappear. "It doesn't have to be that way," said Walter Wagner, a former radiation safety officer with a law degree who is one of the plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit. Despite a series of reassuring scientific studies, Wagner and others insist that the black holes might not fizzle out, and they fear that the mini-singularities produced by the Large Hadron Collider will fall to the center of the earth, grow larger and swallow more and more of Earth's matter.

Ellis, Kaku and a host of other physicists point out that cosmic rays in space are far more energetic than the collisions produced in the Large Hadron Collider, and do not produce the kinds of persistent black holes claimed by the critics. In the most recent report, CERN scientists rule out the globe-gobbling black holes and the other nightmares enumerated in the lawsuit, even under the most outlandish scenarios. Wagner remains unconvinced, however.

"I don't think the knowledge we are going to acquire by doing such an experiment outweighs the risk that we are taking, if we can't quantify that risk. ... We need to obtain other evidence," he said.

Strangelets, monopoles and more

Black holes aren't Wagner's only worry: He also is concerned that when the collider creates a soup of free-flying quarks, some of those quarks might recombine in a hazardous way — creating a stable, negatively charged "strangelet" that could turn everything it touches into more strangelets.

The lawsuit also suggests that magnetic monopoles — basically, magnets with only a north or a south pole, but not both — could be created in the collider and wreak havoc.

Physicists point out that such phenomena have never been seen, either in previous collider experiments or in the wide cosmos beyond Earth.

"The experiments that we will do with the LHC have been done billions of times by cosmic rays hitting the earth," Ellis said. "They're being done continuously by cosmic rays hitting our astronomical bodies, like the moon, the sun, like Jupiter and so on and so forth. And the earth's still here, the sun's still here, the moon's still here. LHC collisions are not going to destroy the planet."

But how will all those collisions benefit the planet?

"We don't justify CERN or other big particle accelerators on the basis of spin-offs or technology transfer," Ellis said. "Of course, we do have programs for that. Personally, I believe that the most important knowledge transfer that we can make is by training young people who then maybe go off and do something else. I think that's probably more important than some particular technological widget that we may develop.

"I think the primary justification for this sort of science that we do is fundamental human curiosity," Ellis said. "It's true, of course, that every previous generation that's made some breakthrough in understanding nature has seen those discoveries translated into new technologies, new possibilities for the human race. That may well happen with the Higgs boson. Quite frankly, at the moment I don't see how you can use the Higgs boson for anything useful."

Kaku takes a different view: He said physicists will have to do a better job of explaining the potential payoffs if they expect taxpayers to keep covering the multibillion-dollar cost of exploring the scientific frontier. He pointed to the example of the Superconducting Super Collider — a project planned for Texas that would have been bigger than the Large Hadron Collider, but was canceled by Congress after \$2 billion had been spent.

"After that cancellation, we physicists learned that we have to sing for our supper," Kaku said. "The Cold War is over. You can't simply say 'Russia!' to Congress, and they whip out their checkbook and say, 'How much?' We have to tell the people why this atom-smasher is going to benefit their lives."

Forecasting future benefits

If past physics experiments are any guide, the potential payoffs would likely come in three areas, Kaku said:

Telecommunications:

The challenge of dealing with all the data created by past experiments led to the creation of the World Wide Web at CERN in 1990. In a similar way, the Large Hadron Collider could usher in an era of global distributed computing and more efficient mass data storage. A better understanding of the subatomic world could lead to breakthroughs in quantum computing and super-secure communication.

Medicine:

Particle accelerators are already playing a fast-rising role in cancer treatment and medical imaging. New technologies developed for the Large Hadron Collider could well find their way into hospitals of the future. The ultrasensitive photon detector built for the LHCb experiment is a prime example, said the

project's deputy spokesperson, Roger Forty. "I think there will be some cross-pollination with medical applications," he told msnbc.com.

Energy:

Kaku suggested that the insights gained from the Large Hadron Collider could be applied to developing new energy sources in the decades ahead — such as controlled fusion power. Those microscopic black holes might even play a long-range role in the energy quest. "Some people think that maybe black holes in outer space may be a source of energy for future civilizations," he said.

Looking even farther ahead, Kaku noted that a deeper understanding of the universe has always led to technological leaps. Harnessing mechanical power led to the steam engine and the industrial revolution of the 19th century. The unification of electricity and magnetism led to computers, lasers and other 20th-century wonders. Unlocking the secrets of the atom led to the triumphs and terrors of the nuclear age.

"Human history has been shaped by the progressive unraveling of gravity, electricity and magnetism, and the nuclear force," Kaku said. "Now we are at the brink of the granddaddy of all such unifications ... the unification of all forces into a super force. We think the super force is superstring theory, a super force that drove the big bang, that created the heavens and the earth, that drives the sun, that makes all the wondrous technologies of the earth possible."

Will that great revelation come from the LHC? Even Kaku thinks that would be too much of a giant leap. "The Large Hadron Collider will not open up a gateway to another universe," he said. "It will not open up a hole in space. But it will try to nail down the equations which would allow perhaps an advanced civilization to do precisely that, to manipulate the fabric of space and time."

How will the machine do that? Ironically, it takes bigger and bigger machines to unlock the smallest subatomic mysteries — and the Large Hadron Collider is the biggest Big Bang Machine ever built. With its tangles of wiring, twists of plumbing and 17 miles of supercooled magnets, the machine may well rank as one of the engineering wonders of the 21st century.

Wednesday: Showtime for the Big Bang Machine

Chapter 3: Scientists turn on biggest 'Big Bang Machine'

Sept. 10, 2012, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26439957/ns/technology_and_science-science/t/scientists-turn-biggest-big-bang-machine/#)

After 14 years of preparation, a new scientific wonder of the world opened for business Wednesday with the official startup of Europe's Large Hadron Collider.

The \$10 billion particle accelerator is the biggest, most expensive science machine on earth, designed to probe mysteries ranging from dark matter and missing antimatter to the existence of extra, unseen dimensions in space.

Scientists, journalists and dignitaries watched from the control room at Europe's CERN particle-physics center on the French-Swiss border, near Geneva, as beams of protons were sent all the way around the collider's 17-mile (27-kilometer) underground ring of supercooled pipes for the first time.

"Today is a great day for CERN," the organization's director general, Robert Aymar, told the crowd in the control room as the startup process began.

Controllers checked the alignment of the beam as barriers were removed at each stage of the route. Applause and shouts greeted every report of progress along the 330-foot-deep (100-meter-deep) tunnel — climaxing when the beam made its first full clockwise circuit, less than an hour after it was turned on.

"It's a fantastic moment," Lyn Evans, the project leader for the Large Hadron Collider, said afterward. "We can now look forward to a new era of understanding about the origins and evolution of the universe."

As champagne flowed in the control room, former CERN chief Luciano Maiani noted that the money spent on the project over 14 years was a mere fraction of the \$40 billion that China spent for this summer's Olympic Games in Beijing. "These are the Olympics of science," CERN spokeswoman Paola Catapano replied during a Webcast interview.

Hours later, the LHC's counterclockwise proton beam made its first-ever circuit. The next steps in the process will be to fine-tune the beams and bring them together for their first collisions. It will take weeks for the collider to go through its commissioning process, and the LHC isn't expected to reach full power until next year.

'First Beam,' first celebration

Even though the first scientific results are months away, CERN used Wednesday's "First Beam" events as a high-profile occasion for celebration. For the more than 10,000 scientists, engineers and other workers involved in the project, the Large Hadron Collider represents a revolutionary new research opportunity as well as an unprecedented engineering achievement.

Video: The biggest physics experiment "The combination of the size, scale, complexity and technology — well, the comparison I always use is the pyramids," Peter Limon, a U.S. physicist from Fermilab who played a part in building the device, said during a pre-startup walkthrough. "This is what we do today comparable to the pyramids of 4,000 years ago."

The LHC is designed to do things the pyramid's builders never imagined.

Once the machine is in full operation, two streams of invisible protons will be whipped up in opposite directions around an underground racetrack to 99.999999 percent of the speed of light. When the two waves of protons slam into each other, scientists expect particles to melt into bits of energy up to 100,000 times hotter than the sun's core — a state that should replicate what the entire universe was like just an instant after it came into being.

How can the Large Hadron Collider possibly perform such feats? That's where the wonder begins.

Going down ...

No one was allowed in the underground tunnel for Wednesday's maiden run, but a visit during the final phases of the LHC's construction provided an inside look at the wonder at work.

During the seven-year construction phase, components of the collider and its detectors had to be lowered down piecemeal from CERN's assembly halls, then put together in underground caverns as big as cathedrals.

Although the scale of the project is impressive, these cathedrals are no gleaming shrines to science: Our trip felt more like going into the bowels of a well-worn power plant or subway system. That's because most of the facility was actually carved out in the 1980s for an earlier particle-smasher called the Large Electron Positron collider, or LEP. CERN has spent the past seven years remodeling the space for the Large Hadron Collider.

Steven Nahn, a physicist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, conducted research at CERN during the LEP era. "They stole our tunnel, that's the way I see it," Nahn joked as Limon showed us around.

For years, Nahn, Limon and thousands of other researchers have pitched in on the design and assembly of the LHC's instruments, forsaking quiet laboratories for the din of the construction site — as well as the occasional industrial mishap.

The LHC tunnel: Misbehaving magnets

Limon is a veteran of Fermilab's Tevatron, which had been the world's most powerful collider but is being dethroned by the LHC. At full power, the proton beams at the LHC will run into each other with the force of two 400-ton bullet trains going 100 mph. That amounts to 14 trillion electron volts, or about seven times the Tevatron's maximum power.

To bend those subatomic bullet trains into a circular path requires a chain of more than 1,800 superconducting magnets that have been chilled so close to absolute zero that they're colder than the average temperature of outer space (1.9 Kelvin, or 456.3 degrees below zero Fahrenheit).

Some of those magnets have to be collimated to focus the beams precisely at the ring's four collision points, like a telescope focusing light onto its mirrors. Drawing on its experience from Tevatron, Fermilab was put in charge of

providing many of those magnets. But back in March 2007, a design flaw led to a violent breakdown during a cool down test. The supports that held the magnet in place came loose with a loud bang and a cloud of dust.

"Everybody ducked about two seconds after it happened," Limon recalled.

The LHC's scheduled startup had to be delayed 10 months to install and test a fix for the faulty magnets. Even with the fix, there's no guarantee that the magnetic field will always hold. A runaway proton beam could blast right through its helium-cooled pipeline and kill anyone who got in its way. That's why the tunnel is sealed off for each run. If anything goes wrong, a computer-controlled system will shut down the collider and send the errant beam down a blind alley within milliseconds.

However, if everything goes right, each pulse of protons will whip around the ring 11,000 times a second, traveling the equivalent of a trip to Neptune and back before they slam into the protons going the other way at four points around the ring. Four main detectors will watch what happens next.

ATLAS and CMS: What the detectors do

For millennia, people have studied how things work by breaking them apart and watching what happens to the pieces. Physicists started doing that with atoms about 90 years ago, confirming that atoms were composed of electrons, protons and neutrons — plus a menagerie of other particles they never expected to find. (After the discovery of the muon, physicist Isidor Rabi famously exclaimed, "Who ordered that?")

Physicists determined that protons, neutrons and many of the other particles were built up from even more fundamental constituents known as quarks. The particles built up from quarks are classified as hadrons, and that's where the LHC's name comes from: It's a large collider that smashes hadrons together.

So what will come out of those tiny, trillion-degree smash-ups? The LHC will look for exotic high-energy particles that supposedly came into existence just after the big bang — for example, the Higgs boson (which is thought to give other particles their mass) or supersymmetric particles (which may account for much of the universe's dark matter).

These particles can't be detected directly, because they interact so weakly with ordinary matter. Instead, the LHC's detectors will track how those particles decay into more easily detectable particles as they fly out from the collision point.

It's like reconstructing the scene of a crime from forensic evidence: Scientists will try to track down the usual suspects (or, they hope, the extremely unusual suspects) by analyzing the subatomic evidence that the culprits leave behind.

To solve their mysteries, the LHC's scientific sleuths will use the latest and greatest tools of the trade, built at a cost of billions of dollars. The two main detectors — ATLAS (A Toroidal LHC Apparatus) and CMS (Compact Muon Solenoid) — are structured like the layers of an onion to spot different kinds of particles:

- Trackers: Both detectors have tracking devices at the center to follow the paths of short-lived particles.
- Calorimeters: The next layers are two different types of calorimeters that measure the energies of the particles given off. One captures electromagnetic energy, while the other captures the energy from particles such as protons, neutrons and pions.
- Magnets: Huge magnets are built into each detector to bend the paths of the particles so they can be identified by their charge.
- Muon detectors: The outer layers of the detector track the paths of muons, particles that can't be stopped by any of the inner layers.

Probing the smallest scales of matter requires some of the biggest machines ever devised. ATLAS is the largest of all detectors, measuring 151 feet long and 82 feet high — bigger than your typical apartment building.

"It has an awful lot of free space inside," CERN theoretical physicist John Ellis explained. "The reason for that is, they want to be able to measure particles which come out of the collision ... even if the interior of the detector is so clogged with collision products they can't measure them properly there."

Over on the other side of the LHC's ring, CMS takes up less than half as much space as ATLAS but weighs almost twice as much. It contains more iron than the Eiffel Tower, built into alternating magnetized layers with particle detectors like a metallic jelly roll. CMS' built-in magnets and its expensive fine-resolution silicon tracker are part of a different strategy to do the same things that ATLAS does.

"You get big arguments between the ATLAS guys and the CMS guys as to which is the best way to measure these particles," Ellis said. "ATLAS is going to bend them that way, CMS is going to bend them this way, and we'll see in a few years' time which is the better idea."

ALICE: The big bang in the machine

ATLAS and CMS get most of the attention, but the contraption that best merits the title of "Big Bang Machine" is about a mile (1.5 kilometers) down the road from ATLAS. The ALICE detector (A Large Ion Collider Experiment) is designed exclusively to study the stuff that the universe was made of less than a millionth of a second after the big bang.

ALICE will run for only about a month out of every year, conducting experiments that will require the collider to switch over from smashing protons to smashing lead ions, which are 100 times heavier than protons. The high-energy collisions should blast those ions so thoroughly that, for just an instant, they turn into a plasma of free-flying quarks plus gluons, the particles that usually bind quarks together.

Past experiments indicated that the quark-gluon plasma behaved like a liquid. When ALICE gets up and running, "then maybe we reach the gas phase," said Jurgen Schukraft, CERN's spokesperson for the ALICE experiment. That would be something never before seen in the cosmic scheme of things.

LHCb: The mystery of antimatter

The fourth detector is also designed to answer a specific cosmic question. LHCb will study particles containing particular "flavors" of quarks and antiquarks, known as B mesons and anti-B mesons, with the aim of figuring out why matter has a huge edge over antimatter in our universe.

Earlier studies revealed that the particles and antiparticles decayed differently, which runs counter to the idea that matter and antimatter should be in symmetry. LHCb will follow up on those studies, using a battery of high-tech detectors that are lined up on one side of the collision point. Among those instruments are a tracker that can locate particles with a precision of 10 microns, or a tenth the width of a human hair.

Two smaller experiments round out the ring: LHCf, which studies cosmic-ray-like events near ATLAS; and TOTEM, which measures the effective size of protons using a detector near CMS.

The Grid: Getting out the data

The LHC is designed to produce as many as 600 proton collisions per second, and that creates a flood of digital data that gushes out from the detectors' wiring. If you were to put all the data from one of the main detectors onto CDs, the stack of disks would pile up to the orbit of the moon in six months. The challenge is to pick out only the most promising readings.

Each of the detectors uses "triggers" to pick out the good stuff. Only about 100 events per second are sent to thousands of computers and tape drives at CERN for storage. It's like narrowing down that moon-high stack of CDs to a stack that's only 6 miles high — which is still high enough for a transcontinental jet to run into.

To get the data out to researchers around the world, CERN has set up a multi-tier computer network called the Grid. Digital information goes out to the "Tier 1" data centers on a fiber-optic network at a rate of up to 10 gigabits per second — or roughly 1,000 times the speed of a typical cable Internet connection.

If the system works, it could set the model for future computing — not only for physics but also for other high-end applications such as climate simulation, genetic analysis and petroleum prospecting. Just as the World Wide Web was the best-known spin-off from CERN's LEP experiment back in the 1990s, the Grid could well become the LHC's most visible legacy.

Magnet for innovation

Who will benefit the most from that legacy? The Grid may distribute the data across the world — but it's hard to argue with the idea that Europe's 21st-century wonder of the world will serve as a magnet for innovation over the next decade.

That has sparked more than a few cases of "collider envy" among American researchers, and some worry about the prospects of a reverse brain drain. Michio Kaku, a theoretical physicist at the City College of New York, is already noticing a trend in his colleagues' travel plans.

"They're going where the action is, and that is Europe," Kaku said.

Chapter 4: Europe leaps ahead on physics frontier

Adam Yurkewicz was born, raised and schooled in New York state, intending to become an engineer. But in 1996, during his junior year in college, he got hooked on quantum electrodynamics and other wild ideas from the frontiers of physics — and he's never been the same since.

To follow his vocation as a particle physicist, Yurkewicz has been a grad student in Michigan, an experimenter in Illinois, a postdoctoral researcher in New York, and other things in between. He is now working on the ATLAS experiment at the Large Hadron Collider, and living in France with his New York-born wife and their first child.

In short, Yurkewicz is a science nomad.

"I don't think I've lived in the same place for more than a year in the last 10," he said as he sat at a table outside the cafeteria at Europe's CERN particle-physics center, just outside Geneva.

There are a lot of brainy nomads hanging around CERN's cafeteria nowadays. The patrons hail from all over the United States, from Canada, from Russia, from Japan, from China, and of course from across Europe. "It's like a mini-U.N.," Yurkewicz said.

Changing of the guard

The buzz of activity at CERN's Swiss campus dramatically illustrates a changing of the guard on the frontier of physics, with Europe taking over from the United States. For the past 14 years, Europeans have taken the lead role in building and financing the \$10 billion Large Hadron Collider, which was started up on Wednesday. The U.S. federal government kicked in \$531 million for construction.

The LHC is just this week's most obvious example of Eurocentrism in science: Less than 200 miles (300 kilometers) away, an even costlier international physics project, the \$13 billion ITER fusion research center, is just getting started in southern France. And European officials are currently considering how to move forward with yet another fusion project, the \$1 billion HiPER laser-fusion facility.

Meanwhile, in the United States, physicists were shocked last December to see Congress pull back on research spending, to the tune of \$94 million. Financial support for ITER was virtually wiped out. It took months for some of that money to be restored in a supplemental funding bill — and while Congress dithered, scores of research positions were lost.

For decades, American know-how has benefited mightily from a "brain drain" of talent from Europe. It started in earnest when German physicist Albert Einstein and many of his colleagues fled the Nazi threat in Europe in the 1930s and relocated in the United States. That flow of expertise continued right through the space effort of the 1960s and '70s as well as the telecommunications revolution of the '80s and '90s.

Adam Yurkewicz, a postdoctoral researcher for Stony Brook University in New York, lives in France and works on the Large Hadron Collider's ATLAS experiment.

Today, the United States still ranks No. 1 in most science and engineering indicators, but recent figures from the National Science Foundation indicate that the U.S. lead is eroding. And it doesn't take a Ph.D. to figure out that when it comes to cutting-edge physics, all roads are currently leading to Europe.

Michio Kaku, a widely known author and theoretical physicist at the City College of New York, traces the reversal of fortunes back to the cancellation of the Superconducting Super Collider project in Texas.

"Let's be blunt about this: There could be a brain drain of some of our finest minds to Europe, because that's where the action is," Kaku said. "We had our chance, but Congress canceled our supercollider back in 1994. We're out of the picture. We can basically tag along after the Europeans, begging them for time on their machine — but really, the action is in Europe now."

Dutch physicist Jos Engelen, CERN's deputy director general and chief scientific officer, pretty much agrees with Kaku.

"People now talk of an inverse brain drain," he said. "That is, on these projects, our American colleagues have no difficulty finding other American colleagues who want to join us."

Engelen's boss, CERN Director General Robert Aymar, put it even more starkly during a news conference after Wednesday's startup: "Whatever happened, the competition was won by CERN."

The scientific spotlight's shift to Europe raises a dilemma for Yurkewicz and his wife, Katie, a physicist who works in CERN's communication office. For the sake of their 6-month-old son and their families back home, they'd love to move back to the United States when Adam's postdoctoral stint ends next year. But they both realize their job prospects are a lot better if they stay at CERN.

"Whether I'd want to stay ... I haven't decided on that yet," Adam Yurkewicz said a couple of months ago. "Right now, it looks like a big advantage to be here."

Commuters with computers

Not all of the 10,000-plus people involved in the LHC project are full-time residents like Yurkewicz. Most researchers spend just a few weeks at a time at CERN — checking in on their experiments (with graduate students in tow), then returning to their labs and classrooms back home.

"It's almost like commuting for those of us on the short term," said Karl Ecklund, a physics professor at the University of Buffalo who is part of the team behind the LHC's Compact Muon Solenoid detector, or CMS for short.

Another way that the LHC's researchers can be involved in the experiments without being there is to plug in through videoconferencing. Even before the final push to the collider's startup, it was difficult to reserve a spot for video linkups during the afternoons in CERN, which correspond with the morning's working hours in the United States.

Once the collider has been up and running for a while, some of the maintenance duties could be shifted thousands of miles away, thanks to high-speed network links that connect the control rooms at CERN with remote operations centers around the world.

"A lot of the shift work is just watching things. ... Shifting it to the U.S. is just a question of bandwidth," said Fermilab's Joel Butler, head of the U.S.-CMS Research Program. "I don't imagine they're going to let you 'drive' the lab, but you can at least read the map and tell what's going on."

Nevertheless, virtual reality has its limits — particularly now, when the multibillion-dollar machine's kinks have to be ironed out. "There's nothing like being there," Ecklund said.

The next big thing

Is the Large Hadron Collider a model for big science projects to come, or will it turn out to be the last of the big-science dinosaurs? Nearly everyone involved in the project says that the expense and the complexity required for doing grand scientific experiments have become greater than any one country could manage alone.

"Each facility of this scale is going to exist in one place in the world," Butler said.

So who decides how and where big science projects will be conducted? In the case of the Large Hadron Collider, CERN went ahead with its plan, and other nations gradually signed on. A slightly different model came into play for the ITER

fusion project — which is being organized and funded by Europe's atomic energy agency and six other nations, including the United States.

The concept behind ITER goes back to the Reagan-Gorbachev summits of the 1980s, but it took years of political machinations to nail down the details. Finally, in 2005, the partners struck a compromise that put ITER's research reactor in France and another research center in Japan. ITER's structure calls upon each of the partners to provide hardware according to a complicated formula, leading up to the scheduled start of operations in 2016.

Aymar, a French physicist who headed up the ITER project before he took on CERN's top job, is intimately familiar with both approaches. He said CERN can take advantage of a huge head start in future international science projects, just because it's been doing it successfully for more than 50 years.

"To start from zero ... I don't recommend for any international body just to start," Aymar said. "It's very, very difficult, because you have to provide everything, with no background."

Long-term and short-term futures

That doesn't mean CERN has a lock on the next Big Bang Machine. The United States and other nations are also interested in at least a piece of the action. That includes the rising stars in science and technology, such as China and India. Just last year, Beijing hosted an exploratory meeting for designing the International Linear Collider, the particle-physics project regarded as the successor to the LHC.

The ILC won't be built until sometime in the next decade — if it's built at all. That depends on whether the LHC is successful, and whether governments ultimately decide that the ILC's estimated \$6.7 billion cost (or whatever the full cost turns out to be) is worth it.

The amount of money and political will for doing grand physics projects is clearly limited, said physicist Barry Barish, director of the ILC's Global Design Effort. He estimated that the international community would be willing to fund a \$5 billion to \$10 billion international project every 10 to 20 years.

"Obviously, we can do one every one or two decades, and that's it, because of the cost," he said this year at a scientific conference. "So we have to do the right one."

Does cutting-edge physics really have to cost so much? Lawrence Krauss, a theoretical physicist at Case Western Reserve University, said many people assume that physicists get together and ask themselves, "How can we come up with something that costs the most?" But Krauss argued that the reality was exactly the opposite.

"If you want to do the challenge of fusion, if you want to understand the early universe or the fundamental structure of matter, there's just no other way. This is the least amount you can spend," Krauss said. "You just have to decide if it's worth it."

For Yurkewicz and thousands of other physicists, it's worth it — even if they have to journey to a foreign land. It's particularly worth it now, when the Big Bang Machine is starting up.

"The most exciting part of particle physics," he said, "is being in that control room and watching the data come in."

Chapter 5: Big bang sparks big reaction

Sept. 12, 2008, (<http://cosmiclog.msnbc.msn.com/news/2008/09/12/4351175-big-bang-sparks-big-reaction>)

Comments only and some good links at the end to other articles.

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20080910-01	19:53	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/05/08
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Dear Mike,

Are you telling me that cr*p like the article below doesn't make you sick? Well, it makes me sick. I'm tired of all the lies and these politicians, who are supposed to serve us instead of always selling us down the river. This McCain is one of the worst. He is a blatant liar and so is his VP candidate. That's the blunt truth, not a personal belief. [check out the "Keating Five" and his wife-cheating if you don't believe me, let alone this current presidential campaign and the "bridge to nowhere".] And I'm tired of the unjustified, unnecessary, wasteful war in Iraq. "100 years," my b*tt, John McCain!

I'll gladly not send you any more political emails, but how dare you lecture me as if I am not your elder and have no right to express my opinion, however offensive you might find that. No offense intended, but I find that highly insulting.

I have no right to express my opinion because "McCain got to this point for some reason" (so he must be a good guy? Is that what you mean? How naive!)? I have no right to express my opinion unless I run for office? Ridiculous!

This is your idea of "filth"? I send it to many women, with no complaints. Have you ever been to a bar or a baseball game or a pool hall or a locker room? I don't get it. Maybe you're being satirical?

I'm sorry if you are unable to read opinions that you don't agree with, even if they might contain the word "a*s", which is about the worst word used in my articles. If this is the case, I don't know how you're going to learn about both sides of campaigns or issues. You should read some of the blatantly racist, extreme right wing stuff some of my correspondents send to me. I certainly don't agree with either their language or their views, but I read a lot of it, just to know.

And do you mean to imply that I have no right to criticize politics or politicians because I'm going to be leaving the country? I am an American and I will always be an American. I love my country. My daughters and my grandson live here. My brothers live here. I'm living here and I shall always return here. I care what happens to America. Very much. How can you possibly ask why I care about "the candidates that only matter for 4 years"? Believe me, what they do in office matters a lot longer than four years, my young friend.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

If you think things are so wonderful in America right now, study a little history. We are on the brink of great troubles and something needs to be done about it. This is no time for more idiots like Bush and McCain running the country, believe me. And remember, I'm not a liberal Democrat; I'm a conservative Republican. But, as I've said, I'll take an honest, intelligent man over a lying fool any time.

Read the article below (and the short one after it). I don't think even the McCain campaign can accuse the Associated Press of the liberal bias they so liberally sling around, just as Hitler did. This may be America in the 21st Century, but that doesn't mean that evil does not walk among us, son-in-law. It's good sometimes to remember that and never to run away from it. Define it for yourself, but it is there for us all and must be faced and, hopefully, defeated.

Thanks for the compliments on my poetry. I continue to work hard, both on my writings and on my businesses. Again, I mean no offense, but I will defend my right to speak clearly and forcefully because so much is at stake, especially for you three.

"Obama Accuses McCain Campaign of 'Lies'" AP

Sept. 10, 2008, (http://www.oregonlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2008/09/obama_accuses_mccain_camp_of_l.html)

NORFOLK, Va.—Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama on Wednesday accused Republican John McCain's campaign of using "lies and phony outrage and Swift-boat politics" in claiming he used a sexist comment against vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

Calling it "the latest made-up controversy by the John McCain campaign," Obama responded to the Republicans' charge that he was referring to Palin when he used the phrase "lipstick on a pig" at a campaign stop Tuesday.

"I don't care what they say about me. But I love this country too much to let them take over another election with lies and phony outrage and Swift-boat politics. Enough is enough," he said.

Obama's reference was to the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, an outside group that in 2004 made unsubstantiated allegations about Democratic nominee John Kerry's decorated military record in Vietnam.

In his initial comments Tuesday, Obama was delivering a dissertation about McCain and President Bush when he used the lipstick aphorism—not Palin. In fact, his reference to the Alaska governor later on was a defense of her strong belief in religion.

The lipstick maxim is hardly new to either Obama or McCain. The Democrat has used it in the past, and McCain repeated the folksy metaphor when he criticized Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton on health care. McCain was never accused of being sexist when he uttered those words.

On Tuesday, Obama criticized McCain's policies as similar to those of President Bush, saying: "You can put lipstick on a pig. It's still a pig. You can wrap an old fish in a piece of paper called change. It's still going to stink after eight years."

The McCain campaign immediately jumped on the comments, arguing they were directed at Palin, the GOP's first woman on a presidential ticket. In her acceptance speech last week, she had referred to herself in a joke about lipstick being the only difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull.

Accusing Obama of "smearing" Palin in "offensive and disgraceful" comments, the McCain campaign demanded an apology. The McCain campaign on Wednesday issued an Internet ad that said Obama was talking about Palin and said of Obama: "Ready to lead? No. Ready to smear? Yes."

Obama's campaign has accused the GOP camp of engaging in a "pathetic attempt to play the gender card." The campaign noted two other instances of McCain using the phrase "lipstick on a pig" and its use by other Republicans such as House Minority Leader John Boehner and Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl. With the fight dominating television news shows Wednesday morning, Obama responded before beginning a discussion of education at a Norfolk high school.

"What their campaign has done this morning is the same game that has made people sick and tired of politics in this country. They seize on an innocent remark, try to take it out of context, throw up an outrageous ad because they know that it's catnip for the news media," Obama said.

Later in the appearance, a supporter asked Obama how he was going to avoid Kerry's fate of allowing lies to undermine his campaign. Obama responded that every day he will hammer away at the issues that matter in Americans' lives and make the argument that McCain offers the same policies as Bush. "This whole thing about lipstick, nobody actually believes that these folks are offended," he said. "Oh, we're shocked. Everybody knows it's cynical, everybody knows it's insincere."

McCain campaign spokesman Brian Rogers responded, saying: "Barack Obama can't campaign with schoolyard insults and then try to claim outrage at the tone of the campaign. His talk of new politics is as empty as his campaign trail promises."

McCain released a new TV ad Wednesday that suggests an Obama link to what the Web site FactCheck.org called "completely false ... misleading" attacks while failing to note that the source of the attacks were, according to the Web site, "Internet postings and mass e-mail messages," not the Obama campaign.

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This is from an article in one of our local Montana newspapers:

[This little article was submitted by Julie Hollar, a local veterinarian. She had been called to a house where a 10-year-old dog was sick. She found that it had cancer and should be put to sleep. The couple had a four-year-old son and thought he should witness their dogs last moments, to say good-bye, to learn about death, to know what was going on... — SteveB]

After the dog had died, the four of them were sitting around wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives. Shane [the little boy], who had been listening quietly, piped up, 'I know why.'

Startled, we all turned to him. What came out of his mouth next stunned me. I'd never heard a more comforting explanation.

He said, 'People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life—like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right?' The four-year-old continued, 'Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long.'

[20080912-01](#) 07:12 SteveG Fw: Candidates' Educational Backgrounds

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I guess some things matter more than others. Educational background of candidates:

Obama:

Occidental College—Two years.
Columbia University—B.A. political science with a specialization in international relations.
Harvard—Juris Doctor (J.D.) Magna Cum Laude

Biden:

University of Delaware—B.A. in history and B.A. in political science.
Syracuse University College of Law—Juris Doctor (J.D.)

McCain:

United States Naval Academy—Class rank 894 of 899

Palin:

Hawaii Pacific University—1 semester
North Idaho College—2 semesters—general study
University of Idaho—2 semesters—journalism
Matanuska-Susitna College—1 semester
University of Idaho—3 semesters—B.A. in journalism

[20080915-01](#) 20:40 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

It wasn't a very good day for you was it, Johnny Boy?

Just when the stock market and Wall Street are melting down or, Heaven help us, beginning to melt down, and one of the world's largest investment banks disappears overnight...

You're stating that the economy is fundamentally sound! Then trying to claim you meant that the American workers (those that are still employed, I take it) are fundamentally sound. Whew!

Then, fellow Republican Karl Rove, one of the dirtiest politicians to ever tell a lie and the man whose strategies your campaign emulates, Karl Rove, of all people, calls you a liar!

Johnny Boy, you can try to distract us with all the pretty girls and lies you want to, but the Republican mantras of deregulation, free trade, illegal immigration, tax cuts, and unnecessary war have all come home to roost and they are feeding on your soul, my friend, all bought and paid for by the big companies and lobbyists who have always been your buddies, Johnny Boy.

It is such a shameful public spectacle that you are too senile to even realize what is happening, Mr. POW.

[20080916-01](#) 08:28 SteveM "Spotting a New Leader"

"Spotting a New Leader" by Fred Smith, Christianity Today

Dec. 1, 2004, (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/churchhomeleadership/041201.html>)

The most gifted athletes rarely make good coaches. The best violinist will not necessarily make the best conductor. Nor will the best teacher necessarily make the best head of the department.

So it's critical to distinguish between the skill of performance and the skill of leading the performance, two entirely different skills.

It's also important to determine whether a person is capable of learning leadership. The natural leader will stand out. The trick is identifying those who are capable of learning leadership over time.

Here are several traits to help identify whether someone is capable of learning to lead:

1. **Leadership in the past.** The best predictor of the future is the past. When I was in business, I took note of any worker who told me he was superintendent of a school or a deacon in his church or a Boy Scout leader. If he showed leadership outside of the job, I wanted to find out if he had some leadership potential on the job.

2. **The capacity to create or catch vision.** When I talk to people about the future, I want their eyes to light up. I want them to ask the right questions about what I'm talking about. The founder of Jefferson Standard built a successful insurance company from scratch. He assembled some of the greatest insurance people by simply asking, "Why don't you come and help me build something great?" A person who doesn't feel the thrill of challenge is not a potential leader.

3. **A constructive spirit of discontent.** Some people would call this criticism, but there's a big difference in being constructively discontent and being critical. If somebody says, "There's got to be a better way to do this," I see if there's leadership potential by asking, "Have you ever thought about what that better way might be?" If he says no, he is being critical, not constructive. But if he says yes, he's challenged by a constructive spirit of discontent. That's the unscratchable itch. It is always in the leader. People locked in the status quo are not leaders. I ask of a potential leader, Does this person believe there is always a better way to do something?

4. **Practical ideas.** Highly original people are often not good leaders because they are unable to judge their output; they need somebody else to say, "This will work" or "This won't." Brainstorming is not a particularly helpful practice in leadership, because ideas need to stay practical. Not everybody with practical ideas is a leader, of course, but leaders seem to be able to identify which ideas are practical and which aren't.

5. **A willingness to take responsibility.** One night at the end of the second shift, I walked out of the plant and passed the porter. As head of operations, I had started my day at the beginning of the first shift. The porter said, "Mr. Smith, I sure wish I had your pay, but I don't want your worry." He equated responsibility and worry. He wanted to be able to drop his responsibility when he walked out the door and not carry it home. That's understandable, but it's not a trait in potential leaders. I thought about the porter's comment driving home. If the vice-president and the porter were paid the same money, I'd still want to be vice-president. Carrying responsibility doesn't intimidate me, because the joy of accomplishment—the vicarious feeling of contributing to other people—is what leadership is all about.

6. **A completion factor.** I might test somebody's commitment by putting him or her on a task force. I'd find a problem that needs solving and assemble a group of people whose normal responsibilities don't include tackling that problem. The person who grabs hold of the problem and won't let go, like a dog with a bone, has leadership potential. This quality is critical in leaders, for there will be times when nothing but one's iron will says, "Keep going." Dale Carnegie used to say, "I know men in the ranks who will not stay in the ranks. Why? Because they have the ability to get things done." In the military, it is called "completed staff work." With potential leaders, when the work comes in, it's complete. The half-cooked meal isn't good enough.

7. **Mental toughness.** No one can lead without being criticized or without facing discouragement. A potential leader needs a mental toughness. I don't want a mean leader; I want a tough-minded leader who sees things as they are and will pay the price. Leadership creates a certain separation from one's peers. The separation comes from carrying responsibility that only you can carry. Years ago, I spoke to a group of presidents in Columbus,

Ohio, about loneliness in leadership. One participant, president of an architectural firm, came up afterward and said, "You've solved my problem." "What's your problem?" I asked. "My organization's always confused," he said, "and I didn't know why. It's because I don't like to be lonely; I've got to talk about my ideas to the rest of the company. But they never know which ones will work, so everybody who likes my idea jumps to work on it. Those who don't, work against it. Employees are going backward and forward-when the idea may not even come about at all." Fearing loneliness, this president was not able to keep his ideas to himself until they were better formulated. A leader must be able to keep his or her own counsel until the proper time.

8. **Peer respect.** Peer respect doesn't reveal ability, but it can show character and personality. Trammell Crow, one of the world's most successful real estate brokers, said that he looks for people whose associates want them to succeed. He said, "It's tough enough to succeed when everybody wants you to succeed. People who don't want you to succeed are like weights in your running shoes." Maxey Jarmen used to say, "It isn't important that people like you. It's important that they respect you. They may like you but not follow you. If they respect you, they'll follow you, even if perhaps they don't like you."

9. **Family respect.** I also look at the family of a potential leader: Do they respect him or her? Fifteen years ago, my daughter said, "Dad, one thing I appreciate is that after you speak and I walk up, you are always attentive to me. You seem proud of me." That meant a lot to me. If respect isn't there, that's also visible. The family's feelings toward someone reveal much about his or her potential to lead.

10. **A quality that makes people listen to them.** Potential leaders have a "holding court" quality about them. When they speak, people listen. Other people may talk a great deal, but nobody listens to them. They're making a speech; they're not giving leadership. I take notice of people to whom others listen.

It's not enough for people to have leadership potential; they must have character and the right setting in which to grow. Before I give someone significant leadership responsibilities, I find it helpful to ask myself several questions:

1. **What will this person do to be liked?** It's nice to be liked, but as a leader it cannot be the controlling factor. The cause must be the prime motivator.

2. **Does this person have a destructive weakness?** There are only two things I need to know about myself: my constructive strength and any destructive weakness. A destructive weakness may not show up on a test; it's a character flaw. A destructive weakness may, for example, be an obsession. An obsession controls us; we don't control it. It only grows worse over time.

3. **Can I provide this person the environment to succeed?** It is so important, particularly in the early days of someone's leadership, that he or she be put into a congenial environment. I wouldn't want, for example, to put someone who requires mentoring with a leader who pays no attention to people. An environment that threatens our sense of security or well-being splits our concentration from the cause. Young leaders need an environment in which they can concentrate on leading.

20080916-02	12:38	SteveG	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08
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Dear SteveB,

I have been obsessed with the election this year, am bent a little if not more to the left, hear the senility of remarks by Johnny and the others, see the stupidity in their movements toward the elections, hear Karl, hear Sarah, and cannot for the life of me understand how Johnny keeps climbing in the polls.

20080916-03	13:01	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/15/08
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Dear SteveG,

I couldn't agree more. It's totally inexplicable to me. In fact, it even makes me think that we're not educated enough anymore, as a country, to be a working democracy. I worry about our future!

20080916-04 13:04 SteveB Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveM,

Good article. Thank you.

Jeez! Every one of these things seems to totally rule out Johnny Boy and Johnny Girl (Sarah) to me, and make Obama and Biden seem like manna from heaven! But that's just me...

20080916-05 14:08 SteveM Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveB,

REALLY???????????

Just give one GOOD example of leadership the black guy has demonstrated in the past?

When asked what his toughest decision in the past was, the self aggrandizing black guy said "whether or not to make a speech again the war". REALLY. I don't know about you but I have had to make the decision the "pull the plug" on human beings and loved pets, among other tough decisions that affect others and not just my political standing and so has McCain!

If you are in-capable of recognizing leadership in Palin and McCain, you are doomed to the socialist bent of Pelosi, Reid, and BHO, to run us into the ground like Jimmy did in the late 70's. You do remember that don't you?

20080916-06 15:48 SteveB Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveM,

What has Palin ever run without corruption? What has McCain ever run except a campaign? Palin is nothing but a stupid distraction.

Obama has run a successful campaign so far, and it is much cleaner and more honest than his competition's. My bet is that it will get him elected. If so, that will prove his management skills are superior. If not, then my hat's off to the lying lobbyists running the McCain campaign. These points you make are simply not valid in any way.

I'll take an honest, intelligent man any day over a bought-and-sold, lying, senile idiot. It's as simple as that. And the right-left-socialist labels you and the radio shock jocks hang on people are nothing but cr*p. Democrat-Republican...nothing but cr*p. It is the man that counts. Period! Don't be deceived by the right-wing lies.

McCain has proven himself to be a cheap liar. Obama has proven himself to be smart, honest, and adaptable—all qualities we need if we are to get out of this mess that idiot Bush, McCain, and the Republicans have put us in.

And I swear you have some kind of Pelosi-Reid complex. I never think about those people and don't need to. Who the hell cares, except the shock jocks! Why do you never mention the names Cheney or Rumsfeld, who will and already are going down in history as the evil villains they are.

You don't find it ironic that McCain tries to tell us everything is OK on the very day things fall apart? And fall apart because of Republican deregulation? Ridiculous! This man is a dangerous idiot! Being a POW didn't qualify him for anything except prison, where he should have gone for Keating-5!

20080916-07 19:08 SteveM Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveB,

How gullible you are, Carly stated that NONE of the Candidate could run a corporation, because it's private enterprise, you have to make a profit. But you beloved MSM edited it to suit their own plan and you bite!

Mar., 2005, McCain introduced a bill to "fix" Fannie and Freddie, because they were out of control and McCain stated that they could bring down the economy, Mar., 2005! The Democrats, including the black guy, voted it down and today tried to lay the blame at McCain. What a bunch of morons, they think all of us are too dumb to remember. [I believe this to be factual: <http://hotair.com/archives/2008/09/17/mccains-attempt-to-fix-fannie-mae-freddie-mac-in-2005/>. —SteveB]

You really need to start doing your homework or you're going to flunk out

20080916-08	20:31	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/16/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Johnny Boy! Today wasn't a very good day either, was it? I guess only you are too senile to see it, otherwise you would take your marbles and go home like the discredited, embarrassingly senile idiot that you are.

Today, one of your top economic advisors, Carly Fiorina, the former CEO of Hewlett-Packard (where she did a pretty poor, widely discredited job) had her own senile (or brilliant?) moment. She stated unequivocally that neither Palin or McCain were fit to run a major corporation. Later, she seemed to clarify her misstatement by claiming that the U.S. is much easier to run. LOL!!!!

In all fairness, she claimed as an afterthought that her opponents, Obama and Biden, also couldn't run a major corporation, but at the very least, these statement seem to place all four candidates at the same exact level of incompetence...both her employer and his enemies. Well said, Carly!

Meanwhile, Johnny Boy, you continue to babble on about the definition of America's economic "fundamentals"—which only you define as its workers (no offense intended)—and babbling about how you've always been a champion of the deregulation that got us into this mess. You have no solution, no proposals, no demonstration of a clear understanding of the problem. Of course not! You think the middle class is all people who have less than \$5,000,000!

Meanwhile, Obama's past legislation and legislation attempts were all in the right direction, and his current 6-point economic plan, which has been on the table for some time, seems very solid and would probably be a big help in our current situation.

Yes, not a very good day, Mr. War Hero! Please keep up the good work, Johnny Boy and your excellently managed and run campaign. LOL!

20080916-09	22:01	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/16/08—Addendum
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ADDENDUM TO TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

I was probably a little too easy on you today, Johnny Boy...

There was also your advisor, Douglas Holtz-Eakin's assertion that you invented the Blackberry, or were somehow responsible for it, even though it is made by a Canadian company. This in an absurd attempt to convince us that you (and Phil Gramm) somehow have the credentials to fix the current economic crisis that you and he largely laid the ground work for with your blind deregulation. Interesting that you could invent the Blackberry without knowing, as you have so proudly admitted, old geezer, "how to work the email."

Then, Mr. Self-Proclaimed War Hero, there was your brilliant solution to the aforementioned economic crisis...you will appoint a commission to figure out what you apparently don't even know how to say anything about.

Ah, yes, a commission! Just what we need to calm the markets and fix the immediate problems. If you had been the Roman Emperor, I'm sure you would have fiddled while Rome burned, a*s-wipe!

20080917-01 09:03 SteveB Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveM,

More bull cr*p! Wiggle. Wiggle. Wiggle.

In a democracy, the least fit to lead are the liars. That is why Nixon, the Clintons, and idiot Bush are so discredited and will go down in history as nothing but liars.

McCain is the biggest liar of them all. (Although Palin is starting to give him some competition.) I watched the entire video of Carly's interview, so what are you talking about MSNBC for? We know what she said and it was damning and definitely leveled the playing field. And how does some worthless b*tch like her get to be a spokesman for McCain anyway? What is she lobbying for, huh? The fact of the matter is that she couldn't run a major corporation either. Look it up.

What had Lincoln or Kennedy led before they became President? Nothing. What had Ronald Regan run before he became governor or California...almost as big and complicated a job at the time as the Presidency? Nothing. They simply possessed the qualities necessary for the job. In my estimation, so does Obama.

My friend, I can see that you are lost in a sea of lies and ideology, much like the Christian Fundamentalists. These discussions are getting us nowhere because you ignore all reasonable arguments. And I know what I know and see what I see and I believe I see clearly. Please leave me to my vision and I will leave you to Rush's.

20080917-02 10:07 SteveM Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveB,

MSN stands for main stream media. [Except...shouldn't that be MSM? —SteveB]

Lincoln started and lead the Republican party. [But very inexperienced when he ran for president. —SteveB]

Kennedy was a Naval Officer—LEADERSHIP. [And a junior Senator like Mr. O. —SteveB]

Get a grip, SteveB. I don't listen to RL, never have, why would I?

20080917-03 10:23 SteveB Re: "Spotting a New Leader"

Dear SteveM,

The labels Republican and Democrat don't mean cr*p to me! Believe me, running a PT boat (or an airplane that gets shot down) is nothing compared to running a Presidential campaign with thousands of staffers and millions of dollars which, like that rare corporation these days, must take in more money than it spends. Make a profit indeed!

You need to at least admit that, with Palin at the table (if not way before then!), all talk of who is qualified is rendered moot and beside the point.

Since you fail to concede even that least little point and move on to any discussion of issues, don't bother me with this cr*p any more, please. I give up! The whole world, minus the radical Right, seems to think Mr. Obama is qualified. And who are Republicans to argue otherwise, since they have a V.P. candidate much less qualified for the presidency than Barry. Your argument is *kaput!*

20080917-04 15:31 SteveB Fw: Defending Against the Republican Lies

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I'm a little confused. The Republican lies are just too much! Let me see if I have this straight.....

If you grow up in Hawaii , raised by your grandparents, you're 'exotic, different.' Grow up in Alaska eating mooseburgers, a quintessential American story.

If your name is Barack you're a radical, unpatriotic Muslim. Name your kids Willow, Trig, and Track, you're a maverick.

Graduate from Harvard law School and you are unstable. Attend 5 different small colleges before graduating, you're well grounded.

If you spend 3 years as a brilliant community organizer, become the first black President of the Harvard Law Review, create a voter registration drive that registers 150,000 new voters, spend 12 years as a Constitutional Law professor, spend 8 years as a State Senator representing a district with over 750,000 people, become chairman of the state Senate's Health and Human Services committee, spend 4 years in the United States Senate representing a state of 13 million people while sponsoring 131 bills and serving on the Foreign Affairs, Environment and Public Works and Veteran's Affairs committees, you don't have any real leadership experience.

If your total resume is: local weather girl, 4 years on the city council and 6 years as the mayor of a town with less than 7,000 people, 20 months as the governor of a state with only 650,000 people, then you're qualified to become the country's second highest ranking executive.

If you have been married to the same woman for 19 years while raising 2 beautiful daughters, all within Protestant churches, you're not a real Christian.

If you cheated on your first wife with a rich heiress, and left your disfigured wife and married the heiress the next month, you're a Christian.

If you teach responsible, age appropriate sex education, including the proper use of birth control, you are eroding the fiber of society.

If, while governor, you staunchly advocate abstinence only, with no other option in sex education in your state's school system, while your unwed teen daughter ends up pregnant, you're very responsible.

If your wife is a Harvard graduate lawyer who gave up a position in a prestigious law firm to work for the betterment of her inner city community, then gave that up to raise a family, your family's values don't represent America's.

If you're husband is nicknamed 'First Dude', with at least one DWI conviction and no college education, who didn't register to vote until age 25 and once was a member of a group that advocated the secession of Alaska from the U.S., your family is extremely admirable.

OK, much clearer now.

20080917-05 17:53 SteveM Fw: Presidential Candidate Comparison
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[Source of fwd. unknown. —SteveB]

Read carefully. It will be your dollars that pay for the "Changes" we're being promised if Obama wins.

2008 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMPARISON TALKING POINTS

ISSUES/POSITIONS:

Favors new drilling offshore U.S.?

McCain—Yes; Obama—No

Will appoint judges who interpret the law not make it?

McCain—Yes; Obama—No

Served in the U.S. Armed Forces?

McCain—Yes; Obama—No

Amount of time served in the U.S. Senate?

McCain—22 years; Obama—173 days

Will institute a socialized national health care plan?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Supports abortion throughout the pregnancy?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Would pull troops out of Iraq immediately?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Supports gun ownership rights?

McCain—Yes; Obama—No

Supports homosexual marriage?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Proposed programs will mean a huge tax increase?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Voted against making English the official language?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

Voted to give Social Security benefits to illegals?

McCain—No; Obama—Yes

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

MCCAIN 0% on home sales up to \$500,000 per home (couples). McCain does not propose any change in existing home sales income tax.

OBAMA 28% on profit from ALL home sales. (How does this affect you? If you sell your home and make a profit, you will pay 28% of your gain on taxes. If you are heading toward retirement and would like to down-size your home or move into a retirement community, 28% of the money you make from your home will go to taxes. This proposal will adversely affect the elderly who are counting on the income from their homes as part of their retirement income.)

DIVIDEND TAX

MCCAIN 15% (no change)

OBAMA 39.6%—(How will this affect you? If you have any money invested in stock market, IRA, mutual funds, college funds, life insurance, retirement accounts, or anything that pays or reinvests dividends, you will now be paying nearly 40% of the money earned on taxes if Obama becomes president. The experts predict that 'Higher tax rates on dividends and capital gains would crash the stock market, yet do absolutely nothing to cut the deficit.')

INCOME TAX—MCCAIN

(no changes)

Single making 30K—tax \$4,500

Single making 50K—tax \$12,500

Single making 75K—tax \$18,750

Married making 60K- tax \$9,000

Married making 75K—tax \$18,750

Married making 125K—tax \$31,250

INCOMETAX—OBAMA [These numbers are not real. —SteveB]

(reversion to pre-Bush tax cuts)
Single making 30K—tax \$8,400
Single making 50K—tax \$14,000
Single making 75K—tax \$23,250
Married making 60K—tax \$16,800
Married making 75K—tax \$21,000
Married making 125K—tax \$38,750

Under Obama, your taxes could almost double!

INHERITANCE TAX

MCCAIN—0% (No change, Bush repealed this tax); OBAMA—Restore the inheritance tax.

Many families have lost businesses, farms, ranches, and homes that have been in their families for generations because they could not afford the inheritance tax. Those willing their assets to loved ones will only lose them to these taxes.

NEW TAXES PROPOSED BY OBAMA

New government taxes proposed on homes that are more than 2400 square feet. New gasoline taxes (as if gas weren't high enough already) New taxes on natural resources consumption (heating gas, water, electricity) New taxes on retirement accounts, and last but not least....New taxes to pay for socialized medicine so we can receive the same level of medical care as other third-world countries!!!

You can verify the above at the following web sites:

<http://money.cnn.com/news/specials/election/2008/index.html>

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/issues/issues.taxes.html>

<http://elections.foxnews.com/?s=proposed+taxes>

http://bulletin.aarp.org/yourworld/politics/articles/mccain_obama_offer_different_visions_on_taxes.html

http://blog.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/candidates/barack_obama/

http://blog.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/candidates/john_mccain/

20080917-06	17:55	SteveM	Fw: "Sarah Palin is the U.S.'s Answer to Margaret Thatcher!"
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[Source of original email unknown. HILARIOUS! —SteveB]

Sarah Palin is the U.S.'s answer to Margaret Thatcher! Anyone who thinks she cannot handle the job or deal briskly and efficiently with ANY issue, including foreign governments well, will be mistaken.

Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska is exactly what she portrayed during her introduction and exactly what our U.S. Government needs. She is ethical to a fault (if there is such a thing), a refreshing change to the status-quo and as smart and determined a PERSON (gender really isn't an issue here as far as I'm concerned) as anyone could ask for at the head of government.

Sarah is no naive mall town mayor she just *started out* there. Btw, as Mayor of Wasilla, she brought this small town through a lot of GOOD changes and left it at the end of her term having grown to the 4th largest CITY in Alaska a lot of growth and a stronger economic base than ever before. As well as manager of the \$36 million budget and staff.

She has EXECUTIVE experience *running a government* (something NONE of the other candidates can actually boast, not even John McCain) as Governor of Alaska and got there by defeating the *incumbent* Republican Governor, who was

definitely part of the "old school" and who WAS very much in the pocket of the big oil companies. You want change you can believe in?

Sarah Palin is everything she looks to be and more. Her approval rating as Governor of Alaska has been as high as 95% and is currently leveled out consistently in the upper 80 percentile throughout the state (and in both parties)—the HIGHEST approval rating of ANY sitting Governor.

Sarah has been turning around corruption in the Legislature of Alaska—turning things on their ear for that matter; cutting spending in spite of the increased income the state is currently receiving due to the high oil prices—she has insisted on putting a huge amount of the "windfall" into savings for the future rather than spending, spending, spending—and has insisted from the get-go on what she refers to as "honest, ethical and transparent governing"—no more closed door meetings and dealings—the big oil companies thought she would be a pushover and have learned better to their chagrin.

She understands the "real people" and the economic issues we all face. Rather than passing useless "laws" or throwing money at pet projects, she (most recently) temporarily suspended the state gas tax (on gasoline at the pumps, fuel oil and natural gas for homes, etc.) and has ordered checks issued to ALL residents of Alaska this fall in an attempt to assist with the burden of high fuel costs for the upcoming winter.

She became Governor of Alaska by defeating the Incumbent Republican Governor and doing it *without* the money or the support of the Republican Party, which was amazing in itself—and she won by a landslide. The "powers that be" at that time totally underestimated Sarah and learned better the hard way. She has done exactly what she claimed she was going to do and is just as popular today as the day she was elected—perhaps more so—she works well with both sides in the Legislature.

As for worrying about what would happen if McCain were to die or step down or whatever ... Theta, up here in AK we've only been wondering how long we would be able to KEEP Sarah in Alaska and have seen her as our first woman President of the U.S. from the start. It's always been a matter of whether she would wait until the end of her TWO terms as Governor (no doubt at ALL that she would be reelected if she ran for a second term at the end of her current term) ... or end up in Washington sooner. She could do the job TODAY.

Personally, I feel a lot better about McCain now that I know he has someone as savvy, as strong, as ethical and as steady as Sarah at his back. She will be an excellent Vice President ... and my guess is will be our U.S. Republican Presidential candidate in four years.

20080917-07 18:05 SteveM Fw: "Obama's Not Exactlys"

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE SAND. TERRY ANDERSON, A BLACK LOS ANGELES TALK RADIO HOST, WENT DOWN A LIST OF THINGS SENATOR OBAMA HAS SAID THAT AREN'T EXACTLY CORRECT:

Obama's Not Exactlys

1. Selma March Got Me Born—NOT EXACTLY, your parents felt safe enough to have you in 1961—Selma had no effect on your birth, as Selma was in 1965. (Google 'Obama Selma' for his full Mar. 4, 2007, speech and articles about its various untruths.)
2. Father Was a Goat Herder—NOT EXACTLY, he was a privileged, well educated youth, who went on to work with the Kenyan Government.
3. Father Was a Proud Freedom Fighter—NOT EXACTLY, he was part of one of the most corrupt and violent governments Kenya has ever had.
4. My Family Has Strong Ties to African Freedom—NOT EXACTLY, your cousin Raila Odinga has created mass violence in attempting to overturn a legitimate election in 2007, in Kenya. It is the first widespread violence in decades. The current government is pro-American but Odinga wants to overthrow it and establish Muslim Sharia law. Your half-brother, Abongo Obama, is Odinga's follower. You interrupted your New Hampshire campaigning to speak to Odinga on the phone. Obama's cousin Odinga in Kenya ran for president and tried to get Sharia

Muslim law in place there. When Odinga lost the elections, his followers have burned Christians' homes and then burned men, women and children alive in a Christian church where they took shelter.. Obama SUPPORTED his cousin before the election process here started. Google Obama and Odinga and see what you get. No one wants to know the truth.

5. My Grandmother Has Always Been a Christian—NOT EXACTLY, she does her daily Salat prayers at 5am according to her own interviews. Not to mention, Christianity wouldn't allow her to have been one of 14 wives to 1 man.

6. My Name Is African Swahili—NOT EXACTLY, your name is Arabic and 'Baraka' (from which Barack came) means 'blessed' in that language. Hussein is also Arabic and so is Obama. Barack Hussein Obama is not half black. If elected, he would be the first Arab-American President, not the first black President. Barack Hussein Obama is 50% Caucasian from his mother's side and 43.75% Arabic and 6.25% African Negro from his father's side. While Barack Hussein Obama's father was from Kenya, his father's family was mainly Arabs. Barack Hussein Obama's father was only 12.5% African Negro and 87.5% Arab (his father's birth certificate even states he's Arab, not African Negro).

[http://www.arcadeathome.com/newsboy.phtml?Barack Hussein Obama - Arab-American, only 6.25%25 African](http://www.arcadeathome.com/newsboy.phtml?Barack_Hussein_Obama_-_Arab-American,_only_6.25%25_African)

7. I Never Practiced Islam—NOT EXACTLY, you practiced it daily at school, where you were registered as a Muslim and kept that faith for 31 years, until your wife made you change, so you could run for office. 4-3-08 Article 'Obama was 'quite religious in Islam'.

<http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=60559>

8. My School in Indonesia Was Christian—NOT EXACTLY, you were registered as Muslim there and got in trouble in Koranic Studies for making faces (check your own book). Feb. 28, 2008. Kristoff from the New York Times a year ago: Mr. Obama recalled the opening lines of the Arabic call to prayer, reciting them with a first-rate accent. In a remark that seemed delightfully uncalculated (it'll give Alabama voters heart attacks), Mr. Obama described the call to prayer as 'one of the prettiest sounds on Earth at sunset.' This is just one example of what Pamela is talking about when she says 'Obama's narrative is being altered, enhanced and manipulated to whitewash troubling facts.'

9. I Was Fluent in Indonesian—NOT EXACTLY, not one teacher says you could speak the language.

10. Because I Lived In Indonesia, I Have More Foreign Experience—NOT EXACTLY, you were there from the ages of 6 to 10, and couldn't even speak the language. What did you learn except how to study the Koran and watch cartoons.

11. I Am Stronger on Foreign Affairs—NOT EXACTLY, except for Africa (surprise) and the Middle East (bigger surprise), you have never been anywhere else on the planet and thus have NO experience with our closest allies.

12. I Blame My Early Drug Use on Ethnic Confusion—NOT EXACTLY, you were quite content in high school to be Barry Obama, no mention of Kenya and no mention of struggle to identify—your classmates said you were just fine .

13. An Ebony Article Moved Me to Run for Office—NOT EXACTLY, Ebony has yet to find the article you mention in your book. It doesn't, and never did, exist.

14. A Life Magazine Article Changed My Outlook on Life—NOT EXACTLY, Life has yet to find the article you mention in your book. It doesn't, and never did, exist.

15. I Won't Run on a National Ticket in '08—NOT EXACTLY, here you are, despite saying, live on TV, that you would not have enough experience by then, and you are all about having experience first.

16. Voting 'Present' Is Common in Illinois Senate—NOT EXACTLY, they are common for YOU, but not many others have 130 NO VOTES.

17. Oops, I mis-voted—NOT EXACTLY, only when caught by church groups and Democrats, did you beg to change your mis-vote.
18. I Was A Professor of Law—NOT EXACTLY, you were a senior lecturer ON LEAVE.
19. I Was a Constitutional Lawyer—NOT EXACTLY, you were a senior lecturer ON LEAVE.
20. Without Me, There Would Be No Ethics Bill—NOT EXACTLY, you didn't write it, introduce it, change it or create it.
21. The Ethics Bill Was Hard to Pass—NOT EXACTLY, it took just 14 days from start to finish.
22. I Wrote a Tough Nuclear Bill—NOT EXACTLY, your bill was rejected by your own party for its pandering and lack of all regulation—mainly because of your nuclear donor, Exelon, from which David Axelrod came.
23. I Have Released My State Records—NOT EXACTLY, as of Mar., 2008, state bills you sponsored or voted for have yet to be released, exposing all the special interests pork hidden within.
24. I Took On the Asbestos Altgeld Gardens Mess—NOT EXACTLY, you were part of a large group of people who remedied Altgeld Gardens. You failed to mention anyone else but yourself, in your books.
25. My Economics Bill Will Help America—NOT EXACTLY, your 111 economic policies were just combined into a proposal which lost 99-0, and even YOU voted against your own bill.
26. I Have Been a Bold Leader in Illinois—NOT EXACTLY, even your own supporters claim to have not seen BOLD action on your part.
27. I Passed 26 of My Own Bills in One Year—NOT EXACTLY, they were not YOUR bills, but rather handed to you, after their creation by a fellow Senator, to assist you in a future bid for higher office.
28. No One on My campaign Contacted Canada about NAFTA—NOT EXACTLY, the Canadian Government issued the names and a memo of the conversation your campaign had with them.
29. I Am Tough on Terrorism—NOT EXACTLY, you missed the Iran Resolution vote on terrorism and your good friend Ali Abunimah supports the destruction of Israel ...
30. I Want All Votes to Count—NOT EXACTLY, you said let the delegates decide.
31. I Want Americans to Decide—NOT EXACTLY, you prefer caucuses that limit the vote, confuse the voters, force a public vote, and only operate during small windows of time.
32. I passed 900 Bills in the State Senate—NOT EXACTLY, you passed 26, most of which you didn't write yourself.
33. I Believe in Fairness, Not Tactics—NOT EXACTLY, you used tactics to eliminate Alice Palmer from running against you.
34. I Don't Take PAC Money—NOT EXACTLY, you take loads of it.
35. I don't Have Lobbyists—NOT EXACTLY, you have over 47 lobbyists, and counting.
36. My Campaign Had Nothing to Do with the 1984 Ad—NOT EXACTLY, your own campaign worker made the ad on his Apple in one afternoon.
37. I Have Always Been Against Iraq—NOT EXACTLY, you weren't in office to vote against it AND you have voted to fund it every single time.
38. I Have Always Supported Universal Health Care—NOT EXACTLY, your plan leaves us all to pay for the 15,000,000 who don't have to buy it.

39. My Uncle Liberated Auschwitz Concentration Camp—NOT EXACTLY, your mother had no brothers and the Russian army did the liberating

[20080918-01](#) 14:30 B. Obama Solving Our Financial Crisis

Dear SteveB:

The economy hit a new low this week, and in every part of the country, people like you are feeling it.

The recent financial disasters—from the collapse of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to the historic drop in the stock market—are not just a string of bad luck. They are the result of years of bad decisions made in favor of big corporate special interests instead of America's working families.

More than 600,000 Americans have lost their jobs since January. Home foreclosures are skyrocketing, and home values are plunging. Gas prices are at an all-time high, and we're still spending more than \$10 billion every month on a war in Iraq that should never have been waged.

John McCain's campaign is doing everything it can to focus attention on false personal attacks and distractions—but there's too much at stake for that kind of politics.

I need your help to get the conversation back on track.

For eight years, Bush-McCain economic policies have favored reckless deregulation and huge tax loopholes for big corporations. Now, as these corporations crumble, American taxpayers are facing costly bailouts.

More of the same failed ideas are not going to solve our economic problems.

I'm calling for a \$1,000 tax break for middle-class families—not just because they need help dealing with the rising costs of gas, food, and health care, but also because our economy needs to be reinvigorated from the bottom up, not the top down.

I'm proposing a second stimulus package to save over one million jobs and provide immediate relief to struggling families.

And I'll end the "anything goes" culture on Wall Street with real regulation. We can see clearly that our economy is stronger when we protect investments and pensions, and avoid devastating bankruptcies and bailouts.

This is no ordinary time, and it shouldn't be an ordinary election. Help keep the discussion focused on the issues.

Thanks for helping to bring the change this country needs, Barack

[20080918-02](#) 20:50 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/18/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

WOW! This guy really is senile! And how does abject stupidity qualify a man to be President? After almost getting tarred and feathered at a GM auto plant in Michigan yesterday, McCain was interviewed by a Florida affiliate of Spain's Union Radio (Radio Caracol Miami).

Below is the transcript of that very frightening interview which shows McCain to be a complete ignoramus on foreign policy, the world, and even where friendly member countries of NATO are located:

Q: Senator, finally, let's talk about Spain. If you are elected president, would you be willing to invite President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to the White House to meet with you?

McCain: I would be willing to meet with those leaders who are friends and want to work with us in a cooperative fashion. And by the way, President Calderon of Mexico is fighting a very, very tough fight against the drug

cartels. I am glad we are now working in cooperation with the Mexican government on the Merida plan. And I intend to move forward with relations and invite as many of them as I can, of those leaders to the White House.

Q: Would that invitation be extended to the Zapatero government, to the president himself?

McCain: I don't, I, you know, honestly, I have to look at relations, and the situations, and the priorities but I can assure you I will establish closer relations with our friends, and I will stand up to those who want to do harm to the United States of America. I know how to do both.

Q: So you have to wait and see if he is willing to meet with you, will you be able to do it in the White House?

McCain: Well, again, I don't. All I can tell you is that I have a clear record of working with leaders in the hemisphere that are friends with us and standing up to those who are not. And that's judged on the basis of the importance of our relationship with Latin America and the entire region.

Q: Okay, what about you? I'm talking about the President of Spain.

McCain: What about me what?

Q: Okay, are you willing to meet with him if you are elected president?

McCain: I am willing to meet with any leader who is dedicated to the same principles and philosophy that we are for human rights, democracy, and freedom. And I will stand up to those that do not.

Check it out online for yourself. I don't make this stuff up. Who could? Not even Shakespeare. Nobody would believe it.

GEEZ! This senile old geezer is actually running for President? Of the U.S.? OMG! I don't think idiot Bush is even this stupid.

Oh, and Johnny Boy finally decided today that maybe the economy is not so great and maybe there is a crisis and maybe he would start firing people. He still couldn't offer any concrete proposals, let alone any solutions. What a sad state the Grand Old Party has fallen to!

20080919-01	10:03	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/18/08
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Dear SteveM,

Here is what I got back from my Senile Moment of yesterday from a friend:

The longer he talks, I am afraid to say, he makes even our old friend W look not half bad. He scares the shi*t out of me. He is just all over the place trying to get votes. Someone tends to come around the same or next day to clean up his messes. He doesn't make sense when he does talk and has zero plans about anything. He is just damn scary. Sarah Palin is also scary!!

Let's talk about what these people are actually doing to conduct their campaigns, what's happening now. There's no need to send me a bunch of lies from right-wing radicals that have already been discredited. Let's look at what these men are actually doing and saying, then you tell me if you still think McCain would make a good President. I'm being honest with you when I tell you that all the evidence I've seen—and this is what he says every day—makes me sure he's senile! Please actually READ yesterday's email and tell me this man is a foreign policy expert!

20080919-02	10:25	SteveB	Ideology
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Dear SteveM,

And try to put your ideology aside and try to look at all this stuff with more objectivity.

I have. I'm basically very conservative. I think the government should stay out of our lives and our pocketbooks as much as possible. I think government should help our people first, not other countries. We need to stop illegal immigration and keep jobs here, even if it means limits to free trade. We need regulation and tax incentives to curb greed and evil among our own people. We need real solutions to the energy crisis. I don't trust government to take our guns, tell women what they can do in their private lives with their own bodies, talk to me about their f*cking religions, tell local government how to educate our children, or interfere in our lives unless we're stepping on the rights of others. We need a balanced budget, achieved by being at peace with the world.

I'm not really a Democrat. I don't like communism and pretty much feel exactly the same way about Christianity. Political correctness be damned.

But I will NOT stand aside and let another IDIOT be put in the White House, especially at a time when we need clear thinking and fresh approaches to solve our myriad of problems.

John McCain may have been real damned great when he sat in prison, or when he graduated about dead last in his Naval Academy class, or how many little screwed-up commands his daddy got him, or when he cheated on his wives, or when he f*cked up the S&L scandal, but if that's the case, he's now a shadow of his former self. He proves over and over again that he is a blithering, lying, senile idiot. Just watch what he says and what he does.

The blatant, repeated lying is what I am most sick of. More Nixon. More Clinton. More Bush. This is not the way a President acts or how a Presidential candidate gets elected. The lipstick on a pick incident and flurry of McCain campaign lies is simply one of the most recent, and one I haven't even bothered to discuss in my postings, but it is one of the ugliest and most blatant. Without a shred of truth. This is your candidate?

He doesn't know the borders of Iran, he doesn't know how to handle Russia, he talks yesterday about how safe the offshore oil platforms are when there were, what, 139 destroyed in the recent hurricane (ya, what a dependable source of what is really a trickle oil—no solution to our problem!), he thinks Spain is an enemy in Latin America, not a NATO ally in Europe. How offensive!

And foreign affairs is his strong suit????????? He admits and shows every day that he understands economics about as well as he understands "the email."

He is an idiot and, proof of proofs: he chose another idiot as his VP candidate in a blatant attempt to get elected, not thinking of what is best for the American people in any way. If you ask me, that's been typical of his approach to politics his entire life. McCain first, country last!

This guy is bad, bad news and—mark my words—the American people are waking up to this fact. [This turned-out to be true. —SteveB]

20080919-03 12:42 SteveM Re: Ideology

Dear SteveB,

We will agree to disagree.

No matter what "kernel of truth" your arguments against McCain (a disabled veteran, who deserves better from you) and Palin, they will be better than then socialist puppet Obama! This morning the black guy repeated verbatim Pelosi's vote buying blackmail demands. I cannot in good conscience give control of the Presidency, the House and the Senate to Pelosi, Reid, and BHO. These are people who look down on you and believe that the only reason socialism hasn't worked, is because they haven't been ruining it.

I lived through the "Carter Admin" once, so to put a fine point on it, a dead John McCain, dragged around the campaign trail in a casket, like "Weekend at Bernie's" is better for the country than BHO. Or to use your ideology, "less worse". BHO, Biden and the Dem's in general offer negative leadership in theory and practice, (picking up the turd by the clean end).

As for people waking up, do not discount the angry women who feel betrayed by Donna Brazile and Howard Dean, who are going to "show you" when they're in the voting booth. Let's just hope the Chicago Machine doesn't try to steal this election like they did in '60.

So in parting, we will agree to disagree, and I predict, a McCain/Palin win, that Blacks will riot in multiple cities (do you think BHO we give a "can't we all get along" speech?), and Cook Co, Ill. will have ballot and voter fraud. Mark my words! [This prediction also turned-out to be wrong. —SteveB]

20080919-04	18:48	Charlie	Hello from Houston, TX; Blogs
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Dear SteveB,

Hello from Houston, TX. This is Charlie, a friend of Ben's.

Somehow I got on your EMAIL list (McCain Senior Moments). I hope you're keeping a blog or archive of these, they'd be fascinating historical references.

I'm a "hacktivist"—technoid who's also a political junkie. And very involved in a lot of different political activities both from an on-the-street perspective (marching, etc.) as well as building websites for political action.

Feel free to visit my blog:

<http://cyberchuck-video.homeip.net/wordpress/>.

See the DNCC '08 blog and pictures (I was in Denver at the stadium) and look at the "links" section for other blogs (including others I've done).

Do you have a blog somewhere? If you're not blogging you really ought to be.

20080919-05	19:07	SteveB	This Is the Week McCain Lost the Election
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This is the week McCain lost the Presidency by proving that he isn't competent to be President.

20080919-06	20:25	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/19/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Today, these were the lies Johnny Boy had to tell about the economic crisis (instead of offering any solution):

My friends, this is the problem with Washington. People like Senator Obama have been too busy gaming the system and haven't ever done a thing to actually challenge the system.

We've heard a lot of words from Senator Obama over the course of this campaign. But maybe just this once he could spare us the lectures, and admit to his own poor judgment in contributing to these problems. The crisis on Wall Street started in the Washington culture of lobbying and influence peddling, and he was square in the middle of it.

This was interjected into the problem while Obama was meeting with his seven top economic advisors. I thought Obama's response, given later, was brilliant:

This morning, Senator McCain gave a speech in which his big solution to this world wide economic crisis was to blame me for it.

This is the guy who spent nearly three decades in Washington and after spending the entire campaign saying I haven't been in Washington long enough, he apparently now is willing to assign me the responsibility for all of Washington's failures.

I think it's pretty clear that Sen. McCain is a little panicked right now. At this point he seems to be willing to say anything or do anything or change any position or violate any principle to try and win this election.

I think that's all fine and good but here's what I think. In the next 47 days you can fire the whole trickle-down, on-your-own, look-the-other way crowd in Washington who has led us down this disastrous path. Don't just get rid of one guy. Get rid of this administration. Get rid of this philosophy. Get rid of the do-nothing approach to our economic problem and put somebody in there who's going to fight for you.

20080919-07 21:40 SteveB Fw: George W. Bush's Resume

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

An Executive's Resume. This person needs a job. This individual seeks an executive position. He will be available in Jan., 2009, and is willing to relocate.

RESUME of GEORGE W. BUSH, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 20520

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE:

Law Enforcement: I was arrested in Kennebunkport, Maine, in 1976 for driving under the influence of alcohol. I pled guilty, paid a fine, and had my driver's license suspended for 30 days. My Texas driving record has been 'lost' and is not available.

Military: I joined the Texas Air National Guard and went AWOL. I refused to take a drug test or answer any questions about my drug use. By joining the Texas Air National Guard, I was able to avoid combat duty in Vietnam.

College: I graduated from Yale University with a low C average. I was a cheerleader.

PAST WORK EXPERIENCE:

I ran for U.S. Congress and lost.

I began my career in the oil business in Midland Texas , in 1975. I bought an oil company, but couldn't find any oil in Texas. The company went bankrupt shortly after I sold all my stock.

I bought the Texas Rangers baseball team in a sweetheart deal that took land using taxpayer money.

With the help of my father and our friends in the oil industry (including Enron CEO Ken Lay), I was elected governor of Texas.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS GOVERNOR OF TEXAS:

I changed Texas pollution laws to favor power and oil companies, making Texas the most polluted state in the Union. During my tenure, Houston replaced Los Angeles as the most smog-ridden city in America.

I cut taxes and bankrupted the Texas treasury to the tune of billions in borrowed money.

With the help of my brother, the governor of Florida , and my father's appointments to the Supreme Court, I became President of the United States, after losing by over 500,000 votes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS PRESIDENT:

I am the first President in U.S. History to enter office with a criminal record.

I invaded and occupied two countries at a continuing cost of over one billion dollars per week.

I spent the U.S. Surplus and effectively bankrupted the U.S. Treasury.

I shattered the record for the largest annual deficit in U.S. History.

I set an economic record for most private bankruptcies filed in any 12-month period.

I set the all-time record for most foreclosures in a 12-month period.

I set the all-time record for the biggest drop in the history of the U.S. Stock market.

In my first year in office, over 2 million Americans lost their jobs and that trend continues.

I'm proud that the members of my cabinet are the richest of any administration in U.S. History. My 'poorest millionaire,' Condoleezza Rice, has a Chevron oil tanker named after her.

I set the record for most campaign fund-raising trips by a U.S. President.

I am the all-time U.S. And world record—holder for receiving the most corporate campaign donations.

My largest lifetime campaign contributor, and one of my best friends, Kenneth Lay, presided over the largest corporate bankruptcy fraud in U.S. History, Enron.

My political party used Enron private jets and corporate attorneys to assure my success with the U.S. Supreme Court during my election decision.

I have protected my friends at Enron and Halliburton against investigation or prosecution. More time and money was spent investigating the Monica Lewinsky affair than has been spent investigating one of the biggest corporate rip-offs in history.

I presided over the biggest energy crisis in U.S. History and refused to intervene when corruption involving the oil industry was revealed.

I presided over the highest gasoline prices in U.S. History.

I changed the U.S. Policy to allow convicted criminals to be awarded government contracts.

I appointed more convicted criminals to my administration than any President in U.S. History.

I created the Ministry of Homeland Security, the largest bureaucracy in the history of the United States Government.

I've broken more international treaties than any President in U.S. History.

I am the first President in U.S. History to have the United Nations remove the U.S. from the Human Rights Commission.

I withdrew the U.S. from the World Court of Law.

I refused to allow inspectors access to U.S. 'prisoners of war' detainees and thereby have refused to abide by the Geneva Convention.

I am the first President in history to refuse United Nations election inspectors (during the 2002 U.S. election).

I set the record for fewest numbers of press conferences of any President since the advent of television.

I set the all-time record for most days on vacation in any one-year period. After taking off the entire month of August, I presided over the worst security failure in U.S. history.

I have set the all-time record for most people worldwide to simultaneously protest me in public venues (15 million people), shattering the record for protests against any person in the history of mankind.

I am the first President in U.S. history to order an unprovoked, pre-emptive attack and the military occupation of a sovereign nation. I did so against the will of the United Nations, the majority of U.S. Citizens and the world community.

I have cut healthcare benefits for war veterans and support a cut in duty benefits for active duty troops and their families in wartime.

In my State of the Union Address, I lied about our reasons for attacking Iraq and then blamed the lies on our British friends.

I am the first President in history to have a majority of Europeans (71%) view my presidency as the biggest threat to world peace and security.

I am supporting development of a nuclear 'Tactical Bunker Buster,' a WMD.

I have so far failed to fulfill my pledge to bring Osama Bin Laden to justice.

RECORDS AND REFERENCES

All records of my tenure as governor of Texas are now in my father's library, sealed and unavailable for public view. All records of SEC investigations into my insider trading and my bankrupt companies are sealed in secrecy and unavailable for public view. All records or minutes from meetings that I, or my Vice-President, attended regarding public energy policy are sealed in secrecy and unavailable for public review. I specified that my sealed documents will not be available for 50 years.

It does not bother me that three out of every four Americans disapprove of my handling of our country. They are really stupid anyway. They are so dumb that they elected me twice.

20080920-01 09:48 SteveB Republican Socialists: Bush & McCain

Dear SteveM,

I don't know if you realize what has happened, but your Republicans have become socialists overnight, and it's a damn good thing for the country that they did, because I think they may have avoided this century's Great Depression by doing so.

Even idiot Bush and his advisors and appointees, including SEC chairman, Christopher Cox, (whom neither Bush nor McCain can fire) obviously have a much better understanding of the kinds of problems the Phil Gramm/Republican deregulation of the banking system and Wall Street has led us into. Funny thing, we haven't heard much from McCain's Phil Gramm lately, have we?

McCain's senile idiocy: "The chairman of the S.E.C. serves at the appointment of the President and in my view, has betrayed the public's trust," he said at a rally in an airport hangar here. "If I were President today, I would fire him." "The fundamentals [duh, I mean the American workers and don't you dare insult them—even if they boo me at every rally) are strong." [Strange that "workers" are not what any economist or even McCain himself ever meant by "economic fundamentals" until his senile moment occurred. What a dirty liar our self-proclaimed war hero is. (You know, to me, a "war hero" is not a guy who crashes planes and sits in prison doing nothing. It is a man who sacrifices himself in some way to save the lives of others or win a battle. Even many veterans object to McCain calling himself a "war hero".)]

It appears that your Grand Old Party has sold you down the river more than your poor old nemesis Jimmy Carter ever conceived of.

And who cares if Lincoln was a Republican? My comment (unanswered by you) that his experience going into office was less than Obama's still applies. But maybe you think the Civil War was a big mistake and a communist plot too? Go Rebels!

20080920-02 11:06 SteveB Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs

Charlie,

Hello from the Bitterroot Valley, Montana. Good to hear from you. Ya, Ben and I go back to the Seventies when we taught high school together, before Ben went to dental school and I became an automation controls design engineer

(now retired). I did work in the U.S. (of course), Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, China, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico (even Houston and Huntsville).

I really liked your blog and am happy to know about it. I don't do a blog myself and don't really know much about it, but would like to learn more. I'm actually more of a poet and novelist than political hack, but I've just been getting so pi*sed—first by the Clintons, then by McCain, that I had to express myself, at least to my friends and acquaintances. I appreciate your positive comments on my emailings.

Ideologically, I'm more of a radical conservative than a Democrat, though I am pro-choice, antiestablishment, against election buying by special interest groups, for the legalization of marijuana, anti-Iraq war, anti-Afghan war, anti-state sponsored religion (especially fundamentalist—hello, Texas!), anti-tax and spend, anti-illegal immigration (though I am married to a Bolivian), against deficit spending and high taxes, but for a government that protects its citizens from attacks both foreign (a la 9/11 and illegals) and domestic (a la Wall Street greed and meltdown).

I guess that about sums it up...

I hope you'll stay in touch. Hope you rode out the hurricane well. Poor Galveston. I hope the government, etc. can help down there better than in New Orleans, even though people don't seem to be complaining as much. (Jeez...a lot of hopes in this paragraph...)

20080921-01	00:37	Charlie	Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs
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from SteveB:

Hello from the Bitterroot Valley, Montana. Good to hear from you. Ya, Ben and I go back to the Seventies when we taught high school together, before Ben went to dental school and I became an automation controls design engineer (now retired). I did work in the U.S. (of course), Canada, Mexico, Indonesia, China, Great Britain, and Puerto Rico (even Houston and Huntsville).

Dear SteveB,

Interesting.

I really liked your blog and am happy to know about it. I don't do a blog myself and don't really know much about it, but would like to learn more. I'm actually more of a poet and novelist than political hack, but I've just been getting so pi*sed—first by the Clintons, then by McCain, that I had to express myself, at least to my friends and acquaintances. I appreciate your positive comments on my emailings.

Blogging is just writing. If you can use MS Word and do EMAIL you can blog.

There are quite a few free blogs out there, two are:

<http://www.blogger.com/>.

<http://www.wordpress.com/>.

Ideologically, I'm more of a radical conservative than a Democrat, though I am pro-choice, anti-establishment, against election buying by special interest groups, for the legalization of marijuana, anti-Iraq war, pro-Afghan war, anti-state sponsored religion (especially fundamentalist—hello, Texas!), anti-tax and spend, anti-illegal immigration (though I am married to a Bolivian), against deficit spending and high taxes, but for a government that protects its citizens from attacks both foreign (a la 9/11 and illegals) and domestic (a la Wall Street greed and meltdown).

"Radical conservative"? Just about 80% of what you state I agree with, and if I have to have a label I'd say "Progressive Independent", although I think the Democrats (of the two parties) have more chance of moving to our shared directions than Republicans.

Part of the "20%" is "anti-tax and spend". I'd say that I am not against taxes per se .. I'm *for* taxes *if and only if* there's accountability on where the taxes go.

So, for example, I'm definitely opposed to this \$800 billion *taxpayer funded* bailout of the financial system. I'm *not* opposed to taxes to be used for building roads and bridges (provided the bridges *go* somewhere, not "nowhere" (I'm sure you know the reference)).

I guess that about sums it up...

Well, that sums up our first conversation. :-)

I hope you'll stay in touch. Hope you rode out the hurricane well. Poor Galveston. I hope the government, etc. can help down there better than in New Orleans, even though people don't seem to be complaining as much. (Jeez...a lot of hopes in this paragraph...)

Well, the responses seem to be much better coordinated. But if you notice there has been a near-complete media blackout for Galveston and NO ONE is allowed to go in there. Even flyover media flights (to get pictures) have been banned.

20080921-02 09:59 SteveB Fw: Donate to Planned Parenthood in Sarah Palin's Name

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Instead of (in addition to?) us all sending around emails about how horrible she is, let's all make a donation to Planned Parenthood. In Sarah Palin's name!

And here's the good part: when you make a donation to PP in her name, they'll send her a card telling her that the donation has been made in her honor. Here's the link to the Planned Parenthood website:

https://secure.ppaction.org/site/SPageServer?pagename=pp_ppol_Nondirected_HonoraryGiving

I guess the only problem would be finding out Sarah Palin's address Haha! Here's her new one in Arizona:

Sarah Palin
29005 N. 82nd St.
North Scottsdale, AZ 85266

20080921-03 11:53 KE Saavick Ford Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear SteveB:

Your question to Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson was directed to me. He has been impossibly busy lately and I have agreed to share the task of answering the many questions he receives daily.

In answer to your question, the Big Bang resulted in an expansion of space in our Universe in an explosion that is unlike any chemical explosion that you've seen (such as with fireworks). In a firework explosion, you see shrapnel moving away from the origin of the explosion. In effect, a firework explosion is an explosion of stuff within space. The Big Bang was an explosion of space itself.

The expansion of the Universe is based on observations of the space between galaxies growing (note that space within galaxies does not appear to be expanding- the mutual gravity of all the stars & planets in a galaxy is enough to overcome space expansion). If we track that expansion back in time, it seems that all of those galaxies must meet at a point some 13.7 billion years ago. So all of those distant galaxies as well as galaxies nearby & where you're sitting reading this were all at the same hot, dense start point, some 13.7 billion years ago at the beginning of our Universe.

Thank you for your interest,

K. E. Saavik Ford
Astrophysicist and Hayden Associate
Asst. Prof. of Astronomy
Borough of Manhattan Comm. College - CUNY

20080921-04 12:11 SteveM Fw: Chicago Information

Dear SteveB,

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Body count. In the last six months 292 killed (murdered) in Chicago, 221 killed in Iraq.

Sens. Barack Obama & Dick Durbin, Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., Gov. Rod Blagojevich, House leader Mike Madigan, Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan, Mayor Richard Daley.....our leadership in Illinois.....all Democrats. Thank you for the combat zone in Chicago. Of course they're all blaming each other. Can't blame Republicans, there aren't any!

State pension fund \$44 Billion in debt, worst in country. Cook County (Chicago) sales tax 10.25% highest in country. (Look 'em up if you want). Chicago school system one of the worst in country. This is the political culture that Obama comes from in Illinois. He's gonna "fix" Washington politics?

Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end.

20080921-05 12:55 SteveB Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear K. E. Saavik Ford:

Thank you so much for your reply to my question.

I guess I can try to understand how the Big Bang was "an explosion of space itself".

But if, as you say, "If we track that expansion back in time, it seems that all of those galaxies must meet at a point some 13.7 billion years ago." (which I believe to be true), where exactly is this point? And why does the universe seem so evenly distributed with matter? Can it be that some matter (which became galaxies) was thrown out of the singularity at higher rates of speed/acceleration than others? To me, this seems unlikely.

Therefore, if all we think we know is true, I still don't see why there isn't a big emptiness around where the original singularity existed.

Please pardon my ignorance if I seem so.

It seems to me that the facts that we are discussing are of immense importance in understanding the nature of existence and, in my readings, at least, seem to have been largely ignored by scientists.

Again, thank you so much for trying to help me understand this difficult subject. I hope you will keep trying. You are a good person.

20080921-06 14:17 SteveB Republican Party Loyalty

Dear SteveM,

I have to admit that I completely fail to understand your dogged loyalty to the Republican party!

Surely, you don't really think that one party is more socialist than the other (as recent events have proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that this is not the case). Both parties (not necessarily every single individual within them) have sold

the American people down the river in the interest of maintaining personal power, prestige, and ego. Almost anyone you talk to knows and admits that both parties are corrupt and have failed to live up to their ideals. Surely, you don't doubt this.

You maintain that you simply seek a balance of power. Does that mean that if you thought Congress was going to be in Republican hands, even veto-proof Republican hands, that you would break down and vote for the guy who has not proven himself to be a total lying senile b*stard—and vote instead for Obama instead of the lying idiot?

I doubt it.

If you think the GOP is a bunch of good guys with a unique, correct philosophy...you're living in a fictional past, not reality, my friend.

20080921-07 14:58 Trudy Fw: 143 Days of Experience

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

You couldn't be a new lawyer with 143 days of experience and become a partner in any law firm. You couldn't get a job at McDonalds and become district manager after 143 days of experience. You couldn't become chief of surgery after 143 days of experience of being a surgeon. You couldn't get a job as a teacher and be the superintendent after 143 days of experience. You couldn't join the military and become a colonel after a 143 days of experience. You couldn't get a job as a reporter and become the nightly news anchor after 143 days of experience.

BUT....

From the time Barack Obama was sworn in as a United State Senator, to the time he announced he was forming a Presidential exploratory committee, he logged 143 days of "experience" in the Senate. That's how many days the Senate was actually in session and working. After 143 days of work "experience," Obama believed he was ready to be Commander In Chief, Leader of the Free World 143 days. We all have to start somewhere. The senate is a good start, but after 143 days, that's all it is—a start.

AND, strangely, a large sector of the American public is okay with this and campaigning for him. We wouldn't accept this in our own line of work, yet some are okay with this for the President of the United States of America ? Come on folks, we are not voting for the next American Idol! Please, please forward this before it's too late!!!!

20080921-08 15:22 Trudy Fw: Change???

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Don't just delete it because you are a Democrat, explain it if you can. My guess is like Obama's legislative record, no one will be able to explain why. I don't need any more change myself.

This was sent to me by a good friend in DC.....take from it what you will.....

Hey guys...facts are facts!! This has to make you think a little bit, if not then keep your blinders on!

George Bush has been in office for 7 1/2 years. The first six the economy was fine. A little over one year ago:

1. Consumer confidence stood at a 2 1/2 year high;
2. Regular gasoline sold for \$2.19 a gallon;
3. the unemployment rate was 4.5%.
4. the DOW JONES hit a record high—14,000 +
5. American's were buying new cars, taking cruises, vacations o'seas, living large!...

But American's wanted 'CHANGE'! So, in 2006 they voted in a Democratic Congress & yep—we got 'CHANGE' all right. In the PAST YEAR:

1. Consumer confidence has plummeted.
2. Gasoline is now over \$4 a gallon & climbing!.
3. Unemployment is up to 5% (a 10% increase).
4. Americans have seen their home equity drop by \$1 2 TRILLION DOLLARS & prices still dropping.
5. 1% of American homes are in foreclosure.
6. as I write, THE DOW is probing another low~~11,100—\$2.5 TRILLION DOLLARS HAS EVAPORATED FROM THEIR STOCKS, BONDS & MUTUAL FUNDS INVESTMENT PORTFOLIOS!

YEP , IN 2006 AMERICA VOTED FOR CHANGE!...AND WE SURE AS HELL GOT IT!!!.....NOW OBAMA, the DEM'S CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT—AND THE POLLS SAY HE'S GONNA BE 'THE MAN'—CLAIMS HE'S GONNA REALLY GIVE US CHANGE!!.....JUST HOW MUCH MORE 'CHANGE' DO YA THINK YOU CAN STAND???...

20080921-09 15:42 Trudy Fw: "Bad American"

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

YES, I'M A BAD AMERICAN

I Am the Liberal-Progressives Worst Nightmare. I am an American.

I believe the money I make belongs to me and my family, not some Liberal governmental functionary be it Democratic or Republican!

I'm in touch with my feelings and I like it that way!

I think owning a gun doesn't make you a killer, it makes you a smart American.

I think being a minority does not make you noble or victimized, and does not entitle you to anything.

I believe that if you are selling me a Big Mac, do it in English.

I believe everyone has a right to pray to his or her God when and where they want to.

My heroes are John Wayne, Babe Ruth, Roy Rogers, and whoever canceled Jerry Springer.

I know wrestling is fake and I don't waste my time watching or arguing about it.

I've never owned a slave, or was a slave, I haven't burned any witches or been persecuted by the Turks and neither have you! So, shut up already.

I believe if you don't like the way things are here, go back to where you came from and change your own country! This is AMERICA.

If you were born here and don't like it you are free to move to any Socialist country that will have you.

I want to know which church is it exactly where the Reverend Jesse Jackson preaches, where he gets his money, and why he is always part of the problem and not the solution. Can I get an AMEN on that one?

I think the cops have every right to shoot your sorry rear if you're running from them..

I also think they have the right to pull you over if you're breaking the law, regardless of what color you are.

And, no, I don't mind having my face shown on my driver's license. I think it's good.....

And I'm proud that "God" is written on my money.

I think if you are too stupid to know how a ballot works, I don't want you deciding who should be running the most powerful nation in the world for the next four years.

I dislike those people standing in the intersections trying to sell me stuff or trying to guilt me into making "donations" to their cause.

I believe that it doesn't take a village to raise a child, it takes two parents.

I believe "illegal" is illegal no matter what the lawyers think.

I believe the American flag should be the only one allowed in AMERICA!

If this makes me a BAD American, then yes, I'm a BAD American.

If you are a BAD American too, please forward this to everyone you know.

We want our country back!

We NEED GOD BACK IN OUR COUNTRY!

[20080921-10](#) 16:37 SteveB Re: "Bad American"

Dear Trudy,

Oh my, NOT politically correct, but I can find nothing here to argue with. Mainly because these are "straw dog" positions created for the left, here. Let's take America back by electing Obama and firing every single member of Congress. If we fire ALL of them in the next 2 or 3 elections, maybe the stupid, selfish, power-hungry, lying, a*s-holes will begin to get the idea that we are fed-up!!!

You see, the tactic in your forwarded email is to divide by creating a lie about one side's position. "Liberal Progressives" are Americans too and want pretty much the same things as the Conservative writer of the email. Don't you think?

Let me give you a little example of something interesting. Here's a quote from the email: "If you were born here and don't like it you are free to move to any Socialist country that will have you."

Well, the writer of the email is obviously pretty darned unhappy about things, by his/her belligerent attitude. Does that mean the author will be heading to Cuba soon, as I guess he/she should? Is it impossible for a country to be on an erroneous path in at least one area, and responsible citizens not like what has become and want to change it? And would that mean they don't love America? See how ridiculous this gets? But a little subtle.

[20080921-11](#) 17:14 Trudy Re: "Bad American"

Dear SteveB,

I know that is the real way to do it, but they only give us two choices each time , the agendas are from sooooo long ago that I'm not too sure anyone can be just Republican or Democratic these days. Help!!!!

[20080921-12](#) 17:21 SteveB Re: "143 Days of Experience"

Dear Trudy,

Lincoln and Kennedy had almost no experience before becoming great Presidents. Ronald Reagan and Arnold had NO experience, except as actors, before becoming successful governors of California—a job almost as difficult as President, if you ask me.

McCain has zero executive experience too, just like Hillary Clinton did/didn't. Obama too. So what? It's an even playing field when it comes to experience. McCain's statements of the last few weeks and months prove that he is confused by foreign affairs (Georgia, Iran, Spain) and economics ("the fundamentals are sound").

McCain has proven by his words and actions that he is a liar and senile (see previous postings).

McCain finished almost last in his class at the Naval Academy and only graduated because his Daddy and Granpa were admirals. In the Navy, about all he did was crash airplanes (look it up). Again, Daddy finally got him a command—for a while. Obama's academic record is impeccable.

Basically, I'm a conservative, but as the current Wall St. crisis and the budget deficits and the jobs going to China and the illegal aliens have shown, the Republicans have sold the American people down the river just as much as the Democrats. They all are controlled by their greed, ambition, the big companies, the special interests, and even foreign governments. They ALL need to be sent home!

As I've said, I'll take an honest, intelligent man over a lying, stupid, senile one any day. Obama is that man, not McCain.

[20080921-13](#) 17:25 SteveB Re: Change???

Dear Trudy,

Except Congress did almost nothing during the Bush era. What we are reaping now are the fruits of Republican deregulation and selling-out to the highest bidder which began in the Republican-controlled Congress during the Clinton (still don't like that guy) era (Phil Gramm) and continued during Bush's first term, when the Republicans controlled everything, had their chance, and totally blew it.

[20080921-14](#) 18:01 SteveB Re: A Book of Lies

Dear SteveM,

Huh??? The stuff in this book has been completely discredited as BS! How is it possible that, "This should convince the fence sitters that the puppet BHO can't be entrusted to lead this great country!?" I suppose Obama wasn't born in the U.S. and his parents weren't his parents and he's a mole! As the song says, "Paranoia, big destoya!"

[20080922-01](#) 10:21 KE Saavick Ford Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear SteveB:

Keep in mind that how we measure things is by looking at 'space'. So if space itself is expanding, there is no 'outside' or 'inside' the big bang — it's all there — there is no origin point. Think of it as though we are all dots on the surface of a balloon, and the balloon is blown up - but we are restricted to exist on the surface of the balloon. All the dots are together, on top of each other at the beginning, before you blow the balloon up. When you blow it up, the space between the dots expands. The dots on the balloon all get further apart and if you look from the perspective of any one dot, the furthest dots travel furthest and fastest.

Switch your perspective to a new dot and the view is the same. This is called isotropy, a key discovery scientists have made by observing our universe. The relatively smooth, even distribution of galaxies in our universe is also a prediction of the big bang (we all start together and spread out evenly - called homogeneity), so we are aware of it and even pleased to see it. There's no hole. And that accords with our predictions.

Hope that helps,
KES Ford (K. E. Saavik Ford)

[20080922-02](#) 11:12 SteveB Re: "Bad American"

Dear Trudy,

That's why I don't care about Republican or Democrat and don't care so much about the agendas either. And maybe it's a little sad that we really only ever have two choices. I think I wish we had a solid third party, but if you look at other countries, multiple parties often lead to chaos, so I'm not sure I want to wish that on us.

After having Nixon, Clinton, and Bush look me and the American people in the eyes and lying out their a*s'es to us, lying is the one thing I can stand the least in a politician—to me, it is the unforgivable sin. The liars are the politicians who don't give a damn about us and want only power and all the things that go with it for themselves. They have sold their souls!

Hillary and McCain are the two biggest liars of them all, so, for me, the decisions there are easy. I have yet to catch Obama in a real lie. I catch McCain every single day.

For me the rest is easy, though not as effective unless everyone would do it. As long as the person who is out of office, trying to get in, is not a blatant liar, I will vote for them and against the incumbent. Regardless of party. Judges included.

I want them all to wake up to knowing who their bosses really are—we, the people! Then, once they have woken up, maybe we can convince them to reform the election system so that politicians cannot be bought and sold by whomever has the money—big companies, special interests, foreign governments, friends, all of them—out of luck! Anything less is total corruption of the system, and that's what we have now, and that's why the system is broken and doesn't work.

20080922-03 13:47 SteveB Re: Chicago Information

Dear SteveM,

These problems are the fault of drugs and no jobs and that has a lot to do with Republicans!

Legalize marijuana, tax the hell out of it, use that money to fight smugglers, growers, and dealers of cocaine, heroin, and crack, and to cure addicts and prevent more addicts (though the marijuana would go a huge way toward eliminating addict, dealers, etc.). The prisons would be almost empty and that would save a ton of money too. Eventually, a lot of cops could be laid-off and they could go back to being just a*s-holes. That would save a ton of money too.

People just want to get high and the idiot Republicans don't think they have the right to. If Republicans had their way, alcohol and sex would be illegal too!!!

To try to blame all the problems in the country or anywhere in the country on just Democrats is asinine and you know it!!! Way, way too simplistic and I'm ashamed of you for it.

20080922-04 20:32 SteveB Fw: "Don't Let Them Know..."

Dear SteveM,

Please rise above ideology on this one!

If McCain is such a great leader (as you keep trying to prove through references to the distant past), where is his leadership on this current financial crisis that Bush and his buddies and Phil Gramm and John McCain and their buddies have gotten us into?

What is the great leader's solution? Where is even straight, consistent talk from the great leader? Where is any hint that he even understands in the least what is going on? Blame Obama indeed! What a crock of you-know-what! This idiot should be tarred-and-feathered the way the GM autoworkers wanted to do.

Below is an email I just received from another conservative friend.

[Original source of email unknown. —SteveB]

Remember who you voted for back in 2000?

Since 2000, our national debt has roughly doubled. Following the ongoing financial bailout, the federal government will have borrowed \$10 trillion, mostly from foreign lenders. That's roughly \$100,000 per family. And that doesn't include any of the future promises to pay for Medicare and Social Security. The money for that will begin to come out of the Treasury's general fund in about 10 more years.

When you remember who you voted for, don't let the grandkids know!

20080922-05	22:41	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/22/08
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

With the Alaskan Troopergate scandal rapidly unraveling, I guess we now know why you picked Sarah Palin for you prospective VP, Johnny Boy. It turns out that she's just as big a liar as you are, Mr. Self-proclaimed War Hero.

Palin had publicly stated that her reason for firing Alaska's Public Safety Commissioner Walt Monegan was because, "He never had authorization to fly to DC!" [to work on obtaining federal money for investigating and prosecuting sexual assault cases, something you would think Palin would be all for]

However, the truth of the matter is slightly more complex, hinting more than strongly at a cover-up. Alaskan Democrats have turned-up a travel authorization document signed by Palin's Chief on Staff Mike Nizich on June 18. He had approved Monegan's trip to Washington for the purpose of meeting with Senator Lisa Murkowski.

So, this was the "insubordination" that led to Monegan's firing, not his refusal to fire a trooper as a personal favor to Palin and her family. Bull cr*p! I'm sure you're aware by now that Monegan has a nearly impeccable record as an Alaskan public official—that is, before Palin and the McCain campaign got ahold of him.

All this is why I predict that Palin will not make it to the election. If she does, I'll be surprised. I'm sure the McCain campaign is debating the issue now and trying to figure-out how they can best get out of this hellacious mess that Johnny Boy has gotten them into.

I would say that McCain might make the decision to cut her loose, but, if he did, that would be the first good, non-senile decision that I've seen him make this entire campaign, so I don't think he has the guts to make it, even if Palin costs him the election—which is looking more likely every day.

But, of course, McCain's stupid back-and-forth blubbering about the economy, Georgia, and Spain, etc., etc., isn't really proving to the American people that he's the expert on foreign affairs and the great leader he claims to be. Right, Johnny Boy?

20080923-01	15:37	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/23/08; "McCain Loses His Head"
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TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Maybe the Right is finally waking up from its wishfully-thinking, blinkerblind slumber. You can read the entire article below, but the basic argument today by respected conservative columnist George Will is the following sentences damning McCain:

It is arguable that, because of his inexperience, Obama is not ready for the presidency. It is arguable that McCain, because of his boiling moralism and bottomless reservoir of certitudes, is not suited to the presidency. Unreadiness can be corrected, although perhaps at great cost, by experience. Can a dismaying temperament be fixed?

You go, George!

"McCain Loses His Head" by George F. Will, *The Washington Post*

Sept. 23, 2008; (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/22/AR2008092202583_pf.html)

"The queen had only one way of settling all difficulties, great or small. 'Off with his head!' she said without even looking around."—*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Under the pressure of the financial crisis, one presidential candidate is behaving like a flustered rookie playing in a league too high. It is not Barack Obama.

Channeling his inner Queen of Hearts, John McCain furiously, and apparently without even looking around at facts, said Chris Cox, chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, should be decapitated. This childish reflex provoked the *Wall Street Journal* to editorialize that "McCain untethered"—disconnected from knowledge and principle—had made a "false and deeply unfair" attack on Cox that was "unpresidential" and demonstrated that McCain "doesn't understand what's happening on Wall Street any better than Barack Obama does."

To read the *Journal's* details about the depths of McCain's shallowness on the subject of Cox's chairmanship, see "McCain's Scapegoat" (Sept. 19). Then consider McCain's characteristic accusation that Cox "has betrayed the public's trust."

Perhaps an old antagonism is involved in McCain's fact-free slander. His most conspicuous economic adviser is Douglas Holtz-Eakin, who previously headed the Congressional Budget Office. There he was an impediment to conservatives, including then-Rep. Cox, who, as chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, persistently tried and generally failed to enlist CBO support for "dynamic scoring" that would estimate the economic growth effects of proposed tax cuts.

In any case, McCain's smear—that Cox "betrayed the public's trust"—is a harbinger of a McCain presidency. For McCain, politics is always operatic, pitting people who agree with him against those who are "corrupt" or "betray the public's trust," two categories that seem to be exhaustive—there are no other people. McCain's Manichaeic worldview drove him to his signature legislative achievement, the McCain-Feingold law's restrictions on campaigning. Today, his campaign is creatively finding interstices in laws intended to restrict campaign giving and spending. (For details, see *The Post* of Sept. 17; and the New York Times of Sept. 19.)

By a Gresham's Law of political discourse, McCain's Queen of Hearts intervention in the opaque financial crisis overshadowed a solid conservative complaint from the Republican Study Committee, chaired by Rep. Jeb Hensarling of Texas. In a letter to Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, the RSC decried the improvised torrent of bailouts as a "dangerous and unmistakable precedent for the federal government both to be looked to and indeed relied upon to save private sector companies from the consequences of their poor economic decisions." This letter, listing just \$650 billion of the perhaps more than \$1 trillion in new federal exposures to risk, was sent while McCain's campaign, characteristically substituting vehemence for coherence, was airing an ad warning that Obama favors "massive government, billions in spending increases."

The political left always aims to expand the permeation of economic life by politics. Today, the efficient means to that end is government control of capital. So, is not McCain's party now conducting the most leftist administration in American history? The New Deal never acted so precipitously on such a scale. Treasury Secretary Paulson, asked about conservative complaints that his rescue program amounts to socialism, said, essentially: This is not socialism, this is necessary. That non sequitur might be politically necessary, but remember that government control of capital is government control of capitalism. Does McCain have qualms about this, or only quarrels?

On "60 Minutes" Sunday evening, McCain, saying "this may sound a little unusual," said that he would like to replace Cox with Andrew Cuomo, the Democratic attorney general of New York who is the son of former governor Mario Cuomo. McCain explained that Cuomo has "respect" and "prestige" and could "lend some bipartisanship." Conservatives have been warned.

Conservatives who insist that electing McCain is crucial usually start, and increasingly end, by saying he would make excellent judicial selections. But the more one sees of his impulsive, intensely personal reactions to people and events, the less confidence one has that he would select judges by calm reflection and clear principles, having neither patience nor aptitude for either.

It is arguable that, because of his inexperience, Obama is not ready for the Presidency. It is arguable that McCain, because of his boiling moralism and bottomless reservoir of certitudes, is not suited to the Presidency. Unreadiness can be corrected, although perhaps at great cost, by experience. Can a dismaying temperament be fixed?

20080923-02 17:16 SteveB Re: Hello from Houston; Blogs

Dear Charlie,

Good to hear from ya. Ya, this government "bail-out" has me worried and now, apparently, a lot of Dems are giving it a second thought.

I'm not sure McCain has figured out yet that we might have a problem, so maybe in a month or two he'll be ready to give it his first thought...if he still has one and hasn't forgotten the subject. Unfortunately, a 21st Century Depression doesn't look impossible to me. Unfortunately, I'm not in gold, though I have friends who are!

What a bunch of asinine a*s-holes we've had running this country! I'm for tossing them all out—Republican and Democrat—and starting over fresh, but that won't happen. Somehow the buying and selling of all politicians has to be stopped. That's really our main problem, I think.

Take care and let's keep tryin' to do our part. I appreciate your efforts!

20080923-03 18:14 Ben Fw: "A Conservative for Obama" [duplicate, see 10/10/08]

Here's one of those independent voters—this one a lot like me. Republicans really should take the time to read this and maybe thoughtfully respond, regardless of who really wrote it. He does seem to be intelligent enough as to have "a clue" as to what he is doing. How is it that these are not valid points? Go Goldwater! McCain, you suck, you lyin' old geezer!

This was featured on the editorial page of the *Austin American Statesman* yesterday.

[Source of original email unknown. Debunked by Snopes.com. Wikipedia seems to think it's real. Email the same as forwarded by SteveM (Oct. 10, 2008) —SteveB]

"A Conservative for Obama" by Wick Allison, Editor-in-Chief, D Magazine

Sept. 20, 2008, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/A-Conservative-for-Obama-by-Wick-Allison-080920-563.html>)

(Former *National Review* publisher endorses Obama.)

(My party has slipped its moorings. It's time for a true pragmatist to lead the country.)

THE MORE I LISTEN TO AND READ ABOUT the most liberal member of the U.S. Senate, the more I like him. Barack Obama strikes a chord with me like no political figure since Ronald Reagan. To explain why, I need to explain why I am a conservative and what it means to me.

In 1964, at the age of 16, I organized the Dallas County Youth for Goldwater. My senior thesis at the University of Texas was on the conservative intellectual revival in America. Twenty years later, I was invited by William F. Buckley Jr. to join the board of *National Review*. I later became its publisher.

Conservatism to me is less a political philosophy than a stance, a recognition of the fallibility of man and of man's institutions. Conservatives respect the past not for its antiquity but because it represents, as G.K. Chesterton said, the democracy of the dead; it gives the benefit of the doubt to customs and laws tried and tested in the crucible of time. Conservatives are skeptical of abstract theories and utopian schemes, doubtful that government is wiser than its citizens, and always ready to test any political program against actual results.

Liberalism always seemed to me to be a system of oughts. We ought to do this or that because it's the right thing to do, regardless of whether it works or not. It is a doctrine based on intentions, not results, on feeling good rather than doing good.

But today it is so-called conservatives who are cemented to political programs when they clearly don't work. The Bush tax cuts, a solution for which there was no real problem and which he refused to end even when the nation went to war led to huge deficit spending and a \$3 trillion growth in the federal debt. Facing this, John McCain pumps his conservative credentials by proposing even bigger tax cuts. Meanwhile, a movement that once fought for limited government has presided over the greatest growth of government in our history. That is not conservatism; it is profligacy using conservatism as a mask.

Today it is conservatives, not liberals, who talk with alarming bellicosity about making the world safe for democracy. It is John McCain who says America's job is to defeat evil, a theological expansion of the nation's mission that would make George Washington cough out his wooden teeth.

This kind of conservatism, which is not conservative at all, has produced financial mismanagement, the waste of human lives, the loss of moral authority, and the wreckage of our economy that McCain now threatens to make worse.

Barack Obama is not my ideal candidate for president. (In fact, I made the maximum donation to John McCain during the primaries, when there was still hope he might come to his senses.) But I now see that Obama is almost the ideal candidate for this moment in American history. I disagree with him on many issues. But those don't matter as much as what Obama offers, which is a deeply conservative view of the world. Nobody can read Obama's books (which, it is worth noting, he wrote himself) or listen to him speak without realizing that this is a thoughtful, pragmatic, and prudent man. It gives me comfort just to think that after eight years of George W. Bush we will have a president who has actually read the *Federalist Papers*.

Most important, Obama will be a realist. I doubt he will taunt Russia, as McCain has, at the very moment when our national interest requires it as an ally. The crucial distinction in my mind is that, unlike John McCain, I am convinced he will not impulsively take us into another war unless American national interests are directly threatened.

"Every great cause," Eric Hoffer wrote, "begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket." As a cause, conservatism may be dead. But as a stance, as a way of making judgments in a complex and difficult world, I believe it is very much alive in the instincts and predispositions of a liberal named Barack Obama.

[I still say, not bad, even if we don't know who wrote it. —SteveB]

20080924-01	07:30	SteveM	Fw: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama
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[Source of original email unknown. I couldn't find anything on Snopes.com, but this email is well known as blatantly racist trash. I GUESS THE GUY IS SHOUTING, EY? Email the same as forwarded by SteveM (Oct. 5, 2008). —SteveB]

A pilot's perspective on Obama

DO I HAVE THIS STRAIGHT?

HIS FATHER WAS A BLACK AFRICAN MUSLIM FROM KENYA. WE HAVE SEEN PICTURES OF HIS AFRICAN FAMILY.

HIS MOTHER WAS A WHITE AMERICAN ATHEIST FROM KANSAS. WHERE ARE THE PICTURES OF HIS AMERICAN FAMILY?

[SEE — DICK - RUN. SEE - JANE - RUN. WHERE - ARE - THEY — GO - ING? Good writing! —SteveB]

HIS FATHER DESERTED HIS MOTHER WHEN HE WAS ONLY TWO YEARS OLD [Wow! Obama's father was young! — SteveB] AND WENT BACK TO AFRICA BY WAY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY. HOW? WAS HIS FATHER WEALTHY?

[Ah-ha! That is the question that is at the nub of it, was he wealthy? LOL. —SteveB]

HIS MOTHER MARRIED AN INDONESIAN MUSLIM AND THEN MOVED TO JAKARTA WHERE HE WAS ENROLLED IN A MUSLIM SCHOOL.

WHEN HE REACHED HIGH SCHOOL AGE HIS MOTHER SENT HIM TO HAWAII TO BE WITH HIS WHITE GRANDPARENTS AND HE WAS PUT INTO AN EXPENSIVE PRIVATE SCHOOL. HE LATER WENT TO HARVARD UNIVERSITY. HOW? WERE HIS GRANDPARENTS RICH?

[Jeez, Now I gotta know if they were rich too? I can't remember. —SteveB]

HE LIVES IN A \$1.4 MILLION HOUSE OBTAINED THROUGH A DEAL WITH A WEALTHY FUNDRAISER. HOW?

HE 'WORKED' AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST IN CHICAGO . HE HAS NEVER HELD A PRODUCTIVE JOB OR RECEIVED A PAY CHECK THAT WAS NOT GOVERNMENT-FUNDED AND/OR TAYPAYER SUPPORTED.

[What a sucking leech! —SteveB]

THE PRESIDENCY IS NOT A CIVIL RIGHTS POSITION, NOR IS IT SUBJECT TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SET ASIDES. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING WON'T CUT IT.

HE ENTERED POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL AND THEN THE NATIONAL LEVEL WHERE HE HAS MINIMAL EXPERIENCE.

HE IS PROUD OF HIS 'AFRICAN HERITAGE.' (A FATHER WHO GOT A WHITE GIRL PREGNANT AND DESERTED HER.)

[Double Jeez! And that father of his! But I thought he was rich, anyway? —SteveB]

WHERE IS THE PRIDE IN HIS 'WHITE HERITAGE'? (A MOTHER WHO FLAUNTED CONVENTION AND DID NOT BELIEVE IN GOD).

[My goodness, even his mother wasn't very good. How could the boy be anything but a bad President? —SteveB]

SOME MIGHT THINK THERE WAS NOT MUCH TO BE PROUD OF EITHER WAY.

HE BELONGS, AND HAS BELONGED FOR OVER 20 YEARS, TO AN 'AFRO-CENTRIC' CHURCH IN CHICAGO THAT HATES WHITES, HATES JEWS, AND BLAMES AMERICA FOR ALL THE WORLD'S PERCEIVED FAULTS. (INCLUDING CREATING THE AIDS VIRUS IN ORDER TO INFLICT IT ON AFRICANS.)

HE REPEATEDLY WHITEWASHES THE PASTOR, HIS CHURCH AND THE MEMBERS WHO CHEERED AFTER HEARING VITRIOLIC TIRADES AGAINST AMERICA.

HE COULD NOT CONFRONT HIS PASTOR BUT HE WANTS US TO BELIEVE HE CAN CONFRONT NORTH KOREA AND IRAN?

YEAH RIGHT!!

[Obama looks pretty damn good on this front, in my book! —SteveB]

DURING HIS VERY BRIEF TIME IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE HE HAS MANAGED TO AMASS THE NUMBER ONE ULTRA LIBERAL VOTING RECORD OUT OF THE ONE HUNDRED MEMBERS.

[Snopes.com does argue this point, but it could be approximately true. Maybe, though, he is just practical, as his Presidency has shown. —SteveB]

HE HAS VOTED CONSISTENTLY FOR BIGGER GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER TAXES. HE HAS VOTED FOR BIG ENTITLEMENTS AND LEGISLATION THAT WOULD SEVERELY CURTAIL AMERICA 'S ABILITY TO FIGHT TERRORISM AND TO PROTECT OUR BORDERS AND OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS AROUND THE WORLD.

[You kinda stole this line from George W., didn't 'ya? Whoa! Rattle those swords! Where's my damned saber? —SteveB]

BUT, HE IS A GOOD ORATOR. ISN'T THAT A COMFORT?

[Mar. 2012 — After Rick Perry and Herman Cain? Frankly, yes! —SteveB]

YEAH, I THINK I SEE HOW WELL HE COULD UNITE THE COUNTRY.

[But...I thought you were saying you were against Obama? Now you see how he could "unite the country well" (to paraphrase)? Oh, I get it! Sarcasm. You're being sarcastic! Well, how clever of you! And you were so serious until this moment...—SteveB]

I THINK THE TRUTH IS THAT HE HOPES NO ONE WILL PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER.

[Ah, now the truth comes out! —SteveB]

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, LET ME INTRODUCE YOU TO OUR NEW CHIEF PILOT. HE HAS NEVER FLOWN AN AIRPLANE. IN FACT, HE HAS NEVER EVEN SAT IN THE COCKPIT, BUT HE SAYS HE HAS RIDDEN ON PLANES BEFORE. WE ARE SURE HE WILL GUIDE US SAFELY THROUGH THE STORMS WE MAY ENCOUNTER ON THIS FLIGHT.

[More sarcasm, you clever pilot. Now you're talkin' my language. —SteveB]

PEOPLE WHAT ARE YOU THINKING? HAVE YOU NEVER HEARD THE STORY ABOUT THE WOLF, HIDING IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, SO HE CAN DESTROY THEM FROM WITHIN? THE HAND WRITING IS ON THE WALL. DO YOU NOT HAVE EYES TO SEE IT?

[Obama is going to destroy us from within? The Republican in sheep's clothing? Is this more sarcasm? What the hell is wrong with my eyes? Help! —SteveB]

THINK LONG AND HARD BEFORE YOU VOTE FOR THIS GUY! CONSIDER YOUR KIDS & GRANDKIDS. THEIR FUTURE IS IN OUR VOTING HANDS.

[Is this like a homework assignment? —SteveB]

Do you care enough to send this on? [No more SHOUTING? —SteveB]

[Actually, I'm too scared now to do anything but cringe in the corner with my .38, after realizing there are nuts like the writer of this email out there. —SteveB]

20080924-03	10:18	SteveB	"The Twelve Lies of Sarah Palin"
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"The Twelve Lies of Sarah Palin" by Andrew Sullivan, *The Atlantic*

Sept. 23, 2008, (<http://www.theatlantic.com/daily-dish/archive/2008/09/the-twelve-lies-of-sarah-palin/211322/>)

Just for the record, I asked an intern to go back and double fact-check the twelve documented lies that Sarah Palin has told on the public record. These are not hyperbolic claims or rhetorical excess.

They are assertions of fact that are demonstrably untrue and remain uncorrected. Every single one of the lies I documented holds up after several news cycles have had a chance to vet them even further. I know the MSM demands that we move on from the fact that someone who could be president next January has a list of public lies so extensive and indisputable that the McCain campaign has still not been able to rebut or even address any one of them, while fencing her off from the press and refusing to hold a press conference to clear the air on so many murky questions of fact that get to the core of whether this person is fit to be vice-president or president.

So for the record, let it be known that the candidate for vice-president for the GOP is a compulsive, repetitive, demonstrable liar. If you follow the links, here is the proof. I repeat: proof:

1. She has lied about the Bridge to Nowhere. She ran for office favoring it, wore a sweatshirt defending it, and only gave it up when the federal congress, Senator McCain in particular, went ballistic. She kept the money anyway and favors funding Don Young's Way, at twice the cost of the original bridge.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-08-31-palin-bridge_N.htm)

2. She has lied about her firing of the town librarian and police chief of Wasilla, Alaska.
3. She has lied about pressure on Alaska's public safety commissioner to fire her ex-brother-in-law.
4. She has lied about her previous statements on climate change.
5. She has lied about Alaska's contribution to America's oil and gas production.
6. She has lied about when she asked her daughters for their permission for her to run for vice-president.
7. She has lied about the actual progress in constructing a natural gas pipeline from Alaska.
8. She has lied about Obama's position on *habeas corpus*.
9. She has lied about her alleged tolerance of homosexuality.
10. She has lied about the use or non-use of a TelePrompter at the St Paul convention.
11. She has lied about her alleged pay-cut as mayor of Wasilla.
12. She has lied about what Alaska's state scientists concluded about the health of the polar bear population in Alaska.

You cannot trust a word she says. On anything.

[20080924-04](#) 11:13 SteveB Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveM,

What is important is that McCain is a senile idiot! He proves it every single day. TOP THAT!

[20080924-05](#) 12:23 SteveM Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveB,

Who gives a damn? This is the same old ridiculous, meaningless stuff! Don't care. Not important. None of it.

Funny, that's how I feel about your blind love affair with BHO, and attacks on McCain, Don't care! Guess that makes us even!

[20080924-06](#) 13:15 SteveB Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveM,

You will notice with a careful reading of my emails that I have NO love affair with Obama. None at all. He is simply NOT a lying, corrupt, senile idiot who can't run cr*p.

McCain can't even run himself in any kind of reasonable, logical, rational, consistent manner, so I know he isn't qualified to run the country. He really isn't qualified to run his mouth and, obviously, his campaign staff know this.

[20080924-07](#) 13:35 SteveM Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveB,

"He is simply NOT a lying, corrupt, idiot who can't run cr*p"

YOU are WRONG ON this regarding OBAMA and your continued insistence otherwise is indicative of a love affair.

Your continued savage attacks on an honorable, disabled veteran, as the only reason to vote for BHO, without ONCE presenting any examples of leadership, (138 votes of present), Executive experience and judgment (Resko, Wright, Ayers are examples of poor judgment) is indicative of a blind love affair with the oracle.

You were an American soldier with McCain and an educated man, who should be able to disagree with a candidate without the disagreeable personal attacks.

It's time for some serious self examination, SteveB. I'd tell you to head for the woods, but I'm afraid a bear would eat you, and I'd get the blame.

Waiting for my early ballot.

20080924-08 14:39 SteveB Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveM,

Bull cr*pola! I don't care how honorable and disabled he was—like so many others—that has nothing at all to do with being qualified to run the country. His entire career has proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is a lying, corrupt, wife-cheating, stupid, now-senile failure. And he can proclaim himself a war hero all he want, but I say that is an insult to true war heroes, which he is certainly not! And to say that he cannot be attacked on his record and character (read George Will) is simply an un-American position. Of course his character matters...as much as you would like that and his record not to matter...so that the only thing that would matter would be his time as a POW. Bull cr*p!

These are NOT personal attacks, merely proven statements that you, for some reason, disagree with. The proof is all there in the record and more proof becomes available daily as the old fart stumbles over his own tongue and half-mind time and time again.

He has never successfully run anything in his life! He can never lead America! HE IS SENILE! Face it! And that fact has nothing to do with his ideology or positions on anything.

I don't give a damn about Obama. He is simply the better of the two...without a doubt, and he will be elected. Get used to it. The country will survive nicely without idiot Bush or senile McCain at the helm.

20080924-09 15:07 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

Today's senile moments are huge, because sad, embarrassing, and ridiculous as they are, they show a man whose mind is basically gone...a man who, despite his huge crabby ego and ambition, is not fit to be President of these United States and proves it every day, almost every time he opens his mouth or makes a decision (those few decisions that are not made for him).

It's a little hard to find online (finally found at ABC News), but yesterday McCain finally gave his first news conference in more than 6 weeks. It was at a Freeland, MI Dow-Corning plant. McCain allowed five questions from the assembled press after having nothing to say about the solar energy work he went there to see.

I guess we know now why he gives so few news conferences, while Obama allows free access to the press. In fact, I guess it's been more than a month since McCain went back to the press section on his own airplane. Amazing! And sad! So much for the "straight talk express"! Good luck with those debates, Mr. Facile-with-the-answer McCain.

One thing McCain had to say (sounding more and more like the Democrats he can't resist imitating):

So it is essential, for our economy, to stimulate grown and grow this government...I...excuse me [laughs]...grow this economy, not grow the economy, er, government. We need to grow the economy.

This is an exact quote! Scary, huh? You'll get it yet, you old geezer...oops, too late!

He was asked (concerning the pending economic crisis bill aimed at fixing America's "strong fundamentals"): "If the fate of this bill...is in your hands, on your vote, could you and would you still vote against it?" [Seems like a simple question for a strong, clear-minded leader, right?—SteveB]

McCain's answer: "We'll [I guess he had a turd in his pocket—old joke, sorry—he didn't say "I'll".—SteveB] have to say that I hope that Democrats would recognize that this issue should not be in any way related to my vote. [Ah, leadership!] This issue should be—and their vote should be determined in how we can resolve this crisis and get America going again. This is a huge crisis, we know! ...the greatest financial crisis since World War II." [I guess somebody finally told him. Thanks Carly or Phil!] What a great leader! And, just last week, the great leader was telling us that there was no crisis, unlike Obama, who saw the problem coming and proposed a solution to it months ago. And whether you think that solution is good or not, McCain has now totally adopted it as his own. What a great leader!

In other, older, news headlines: "McCain seeks bailout opinions from Romney, business executives while in New York." Gee, if Sarah Palin is so qualified and experienced and is, after all, his VP choice, my didn't McCain seek her opinion too while she was in town? LOL!

Below: If not totally true, true in very large part.

posted on Mlive.com by nolimits3333 on 09/23/08 at 11:16 pm:

McCain's Economic Adviser is ex-Texas Sen. Phil Gramm. On Dec. 15, 2000, hours before Congress was to leave for Christmas recess, Gramm had a 262-page amendment slipped into the appropriations bill. It forbade federal agencies to regulate the financial derivatives that greased the skids for passing along risky mortgage-backed securities to investors. And that, my friends, is why everything's falling apart. That is why the taxpayers are now on the hook for the follies of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Bear Stearns and now the insurance giant AIG to the tune of \$700 billion.

20080924-10	15:54	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08—Bonus
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TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

AND NOWWW, FOLKS!!!!!!!!!!!!!! BIG NEWS!!!!!!

McCain seeks to postpone Friday's debate because of the financial crisis he didn't think existed!!!!!! Ya, Johnny Boy, the "fundamentals" are sound!

Johnny Boy, YOU COWARDLY IDIOT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

This guy is a worthless FOOL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

20080924-11	16:17	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/24/08—Bonus
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Yes! Good leadership, Johnny Boy!

That's the way to calm the markets, etc.! Act like we're in such a big disaster that you can't even hold a stupid debate.

That is sooooo far-fetched, you senile idiot!

I didn't think you had the nerve to stand beside a real man, let alone try to debate with him when your mind is essentially empty and your soul is beyond corrupt!

20080924-12 17:29 SteveB The Wounded POW Hero Ploy

Dear SteveM,

And... :-)

I'm really getting sick and tired of this old-fart being defended, or defending himself, by saying the American people don't have the right to criticize him...because he's a veteran and a former POW...and this does NOT equate to "war hero".

He's running for President of the greatest country on Earth, for heaven's sakes. I'm a veteran. I don't care if he's a veteran. It is fine and hunky-dory that he served his country...but that was a long time ago and, with two admirals in the family, it would have taken courage NOT to serve at that time. How much courage does it take to simply remain in prison and betray your country because you're tortured? It is of the utmost relevance and importance NOW if the man is not intelligent enough, experienced enough, non-senile enough, and of the right temperament to be President.

To me, he proves every single day that he is NOT! He lies every day! This is not academic, this is not ideological, because I am much closer to McCain's ideology than to Obama's (though that pro-life, pro-evangelical, pro-corruption, pro-lies and distortion, pro-cronyism, big-business-can-do-no-wrong cr*p will NEVER fly with me!).

If he were a veteran...even if he were a legitimate war hero—which he is not!—it would still be fare to judge the man based on his present abilities and lack of ideas and ideals. I didn't see Bush go easy on Kerry because he was a veteran, fer cryin' out loud!

As has been so eloquently stated by Keith Olbermann, "GROW UP, JOHN MC CAIN!"

20080924-13 17:52 SteveB Panic!!

The truth of the matter is that McCain is in a complete state of panic, just as Conservative George Will said the other day.

Obama is calm and in charge and getting ready to debate. He has a handle on the situation and knows what must be done and what he must do. He hasn't even been planning on going to Washington for the vote unless he's really needed, which will not be hard for him to calmly decide (whether to go or not).

McCain proved yesterday that, while he may have finally come to the conclusion that there is something wrong, he has no idea what it is or what to do about it. As he has stated so eloquently: he knows nothing about economics! Complete and utter panic! Of course he can't take the time to debate. He has to rush around like the idiot he is, steal Obama's talking points, and try to figure out what to do. He still doesn't even know, as the leader of his party (HA!), whether he will vote for what has been proposed or not.

This is exactly the kind of President McCain would make, just like we saw during the Georgia crisis. A panicky, bluster covering an empty mind and an emptier heart. He is a still-bitter, hollow man and he proves it every single day, with ever word and with every action. God help us if such a man were to get elected.

20080924-14 19:53 SteveB Media Bias

Dear SteveM & Pat,

I'll agree that MSNBS knows who they're for, and it ain't the Right.

And Fox? Fair and balanced? Haha! How could they be more Right?

But you say even CNN has a liberal bias. I can't detect it. Lou Dobbs? Right; Glenn Beck? Far Right.

Then you have Nancy Grace! And Greta Van Susteren was a CNN fixture for years.

So who's Liberal? Larry King? LOL! He's the only guy on TV who is a contemporary of McCain. Wolf Blitzer? He's the most even-handed guy in the media. I've watched him for years and I can't figure out if he's for Republicans, Democrats, or neither.

So where is this CNN Liberal bias? Could it be spelled "P-a-r-a-n-o-i-a induced by R-u-s-h L-i-m-b-a-u-g-h"?

20080925-01 09:55 SteveB "Lobbyists in 'Feeding Frenzy'"
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"Lobbyists in 'Feeding Frenzy'" by Fredreka Schouten, Ken Dilanian and Matt Kelley, USA TODAY

(http://www.netrootz.com/images/groups/group_30/Lobbyists_in_feeding_frenzy_over_700bln_bailout.pdf)

WASHINGTON—The financial services industry, which has spent billions on lobbying and campaign contributions over the last decade, is scrambling to make its case for a proposed \$700 billion bailout plan amid deep public skepticism.

Wall Street firms, commercial banks and insurers are lobbying on an array of issues—from beating back proposals to make it easier to reduce mortgage debts in bankruptcy courts to fighting, unsuccessfully so far, to retain control over executive pay.

"You have a feeding frenzy going on," said Ellen Miller, executive director of the Sunlight Foundation, a non-partisan watchdog group.

Camden Fine, head of the Independent Community Bankers of America, said he worked through the weekend to successfully extend the bailout plan to commercial banks. He hasn't stopped working the phones since. "If cell phones cause cancer, I'm in trouble," he said. The financial services industry has left its mark in other ways.

An early draft of the proposal had restricted the bailout to firms headquartered in the United States. Scott Talbott, the top lobbyist for the Financial Services Roundtable, said his group was among those that helped to expand that definition to firms with "a significant presence" here. The trade group's members include London-based Barclays.

The association was working to defeat a proposal to allow bankruptcy judges to reduce mortgage debts. Talbott said that would increase banks' risks and drive up mortgage costs. "It could price some people out of the (housing) market," he said.

Consumer groups say the bankruptcy measure would help reduce the number of foreclosures and ease the financial crisis. "Why is anyone listening to the people who brought us this problem?" asked Kathleen Day, a spokeswoman for the Center for Responsible Lending, which supports the bankruptcy change.

Government watchdogs and consumer groups say the political muscle of the industry helped it persuade Congress to change banking and bankruptcy laws in ways that contributed to the crisis.

Political action committees and individual employees of the financial services industry—which includes finance, insurance and real estate companies—have contributed \$2 billion to federal campaigns since 1989, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics (CRP).

The industry, for example, has contributed nearly a third of all the campaign money that has flowed to the chairmen of the House and Senate committees overseeing the bailout, according to the Sunlight Foundation, which analyzed CRP's campaign finance data.

"What is most troubling about this historic episode is that the problems were identified years ago," Common Cause, a watchdog group, said in a report on the influence of the industry's campaign contributions and lobbying. "Yet, thanks in part to the political power of the financial institutions ... the government refused to step in."

The report cited a 2005 amendment defeated in the Senate, 40-58, that would have curbed predatory lending. No Republicans supported it, Senate records show, and four Democrats voted against it, including Joe Biden, the Democratic vice presidential nominee. His running mate, Barack Obama, voted for it. Republican nominee John McCain voted against it.

In an interview, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who sponsored the amendment, noted that opponents warned that the measure would have driven Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac out of the business of subprime lending, which "could have averted this crisis." Durbin said the bill didn't pass because "there was a lot of money being made—and the people who were making money in this subprime mortgage mess, many of them were major contributors. That, unfortunately, is a major factor in the decision-making process in Washington."

But the financial meltdown has dented the industry's credibility in Congress, says John O'Neill, a lobbyist for the law firm Venable and former staffer for the Senate Finance Committee. That may explain its failure Wednesday to stop Congress from imposing limits on the salaries of executives whose firms seek assistance from the government.

"They're going to be viewed, parts of the financial industry, as a little bit radioactive by some folks up there," O'Neill says.

DONATIONS TO SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS [What election?]

<u>Subcommittee Chair or Ranking Member (RM)?</u>	<u>Total Contributions</u>	<u>Financial Services Contributions</u>	<u>% Finance Contributions of total</u>
Dodd, Chris, Chair. D Conn. Yes	\$43,344,186	\$13,163,356	30%
Shelby, Richard C., RM R Ala. Yes	\$20,741,533	\$4,240,502	20%
Johnson, Tim D S.C. Yes	\$16,364,546	\$2,782,143	17%
Hagel, Chuck R Neb. Yes	\$8,408,360	\$1,610,616	19%
Schumer, Charles D NY Yes	\$46,362,049	\$12,793,446	28%
Crapo, Mike R Idaho Yes	\$7,058,045	\$1,278,842	18%
Bayh, Evan D Ind. Yes	\$23,910,036	\$3,971,396	17%
Martinez, Mel R Fla. Yes	\$16,088,801	\$2,896,435	18%
Reed, Jack D R.I. Yes	\$13,147,550	\$2,686,232	20%
Allard, Wayne R Colo. Yes	\$9,103,388	\$1,447,500	16%
Carper, Tom R Del. Yes	\$8,306,428	\$2,097,718	25%
Bunning, Jim R Ky. Yes	\$17,402,562	\$2,417,585	14%
Menendez, Robert D N.J. No	\$26,087,972	\$3,820,822	15%
Akaka, Daniel D Hawaii No	\$6,428,013	\$549,095	9%
Brown, Sherrod D Ohio No	\$17,364,119	\$1,432,581	8%
Bennett, Robert F. R Utah No	\$10,546,194	\$1,864,292	18%
Enzi, Mike R Wyo. No	\$4,303,148	\$943,894	22%
Dole, Elizabeth R N.C. No	\$30,528,042	\$3,285,529	11%
Corker, Bob R Tenn. No	\$21,122,955	\$2,422,829	11%

DONATIONS TO HOUSE COMMITTEE MEMBERS [What election?]

<u>subcommittee chair or ranking member (RM)?</u>	<u>Total Contributions</u>	<u>Financial Services Contributions</u>	<u>% Finance Contributions of total</u>
Frank, Barney, Chair. D Mass. Yes	\$7,800,282	\$2,430,361	31%
Bacchus, Spencer, RM R Ala. Yes	\$8,478,461	\$3,579,199	42%
Kanjorski, Paul D Pa. Yes	\$6,526,370	\$2,718,472	42%
Pryce, Deborah R Ohio Yes	\$9,644,584	\$2,805,109	29%
Maloney, Carolyn D N.Y. Yes	\$8,206,424	\$2,390,461	29%
Biggert, Judy R Ill. Yes	\$4,812,163	\$1,300,677	27%
Waters, Maxine D Calif. Yes	\$3,687,508	\$359,445	10%
Capito, Shelley Moore R W.Va. Yes	\$9,471,708	\$1,442,572	15%
Gutierrez, Luis V. D Ill. Yes	\$3,629,409	\$661,907	18%
Paul, Ron R Texas Yes	\$50,054,595	\$1,659,559	3%
Watt, Melvin D N.C. Yes	\$3,784,876	\$780,278	21%
Miller, Gary G. R Calif. Yes	\$3,364,982	\$690,788	21%
Velazquez, Nydia M. D N.Y. No	\$5,400,152	\$1,165,525	22%
Ackerman, Gary L. D N.Y. No	\$9,395,930	\$1,504,140	16%
Sherman, Brad D Calif. No	\$7,839,873	\$1,462,636	19%

Meeks, Gregory W. D N.Y. No	\$3,657,984	\$1,015,432	28%
Moore, Dennis D Kan. No	\$10,545,735	\$1,934,779	18%
Capuano, Michael E. D Mass. No	\$4,402,712	\$813,176	18%
Hinojosa, Ruben D Texas No	\$4,100,872	\$735,536	18%
Clay, William Lacy D Mo. No	\$2,393,701	\$290,100	12%
McCarthy, Carolyn D N.Y. No	\$10,052,787	\$908,045	9%
Baca, Joe D Calif. No	\$4,124,421	\$460,832	11%
Lynch, Stephen F. D Mass. No	\$5,707,556	\$765,494	13%
Miller, Brad D N.C. No	\$4,652,256	\$770,481	17%
Scott, David D Ga. No	\$4,287,122	\$911,504	21%
Green, Al D Texas No	\$1,500,075	\$183,265	12%
Cleaver, Emanuel D Mo. No	\$2,589,538	\$313,549	12%
Bean, Melissa L. D Ill. No	\$8,913,613	\$1,573,756	18%
Moore, Gwen D Wis. No	\$2,086,326	\$254,879	12%
Davis, Lincoln D Tenn. No	\$4,366,497	\$482,275	11%
Hodes, Paul W. D N.H. No	\$1,618,766	\$259,522	16%
Ellison, Keith D Minn. No	\$1,138,378	\$90,365	8%
Klein, Ron D Fla. No	\$3,320,808	\$789,238	24%
Mahoney, Tim D Fla. No	\$2,553,626	\$495,415	19%
Wilson, Charles D Ohio No	\$609,691	\$146,819	24%
Perlmutter, Ed D Colo. No	\$1,419,818	\$341,185	24%
Murphy, Christopher S. D CT No	\$2,307,762	\$493,332	21%
Donnelly, Joe D Ind. No	\$1,580,631	\$219,956	14%
Foster, Bill D Ill. No	\$3,911,647	\$161,936	4%
Carson, Andre D Ind. No	\$1,306,787	\$137,400	11%
Speier, Jackie D Calif. No	\$1,290,807	\$183,099	14%
Cazayoux, Don D La. No	\$2,039,860	\$112,300	6%
Childers, Travis D Miss. No	\$1,315,736	\$68,050	5%
Castle, Mike R Del. No	\$7,591,986	\$2,328,012	31%
King, Peter R N.Y. No	\$6,709,578	\$1,271,665	19%
Royce, Edward R. R Calif. No	\$8,114,893	\$2,353,853	29%
Lucas, Frank D. R Okla. No	\$4,267,888	\$859,878	20%
LaTourette, Steven C. R Ohio No	\$8,637,211	\$1,196,373	14%
Manzullo, Donald A. R Ill. No	\$7,495,724	\$1,304,319	17%
Jones, Walter B. R N.C. No	\$6,452,439	\$961,533	15%
Shays, Christopher R Conn. No	\$12,760,606	\$2,876,206	23%
Feeney, Tom R Fla. No	\$5,705,257	\$1,260,480	22%
Hensarling, Jeb R Texas No	\$6,284,449	\$1,950,421	31%
Garrett, Scott R N.J. No	\$5,224,439	\$996,899	19%
Brown-Waite, Ginny R Fla. No	\$3,197,019	\$649,129	20%
Barrett, J. Gresham R S.C. No	\$3,553,083	\$691,667	19%
Gerlach, Jim R Pa. No	\$9,203,665	\$1,453,549	16%
Pearce, Steve R N.M. No	\$7,996,707	\$685,047	9%
Neugebauer, Randy R Texas No	\$5,515,655	\$1,151,274	21%
Price, Tom R Ga. No	\$5,628,466	\$796,743	14%
Davis, Geoff R Ky. No	\$9,372,768	\$1,547,657	17%
McHenry, Patrick T. R N.C. No	\$3,581,370	\$786,000	22%
Campbell, John R Calif. No	\$2,993,097	\$745,635	25%
Putnam, Adam R Fla. No	\$4,985,933	\$730,298	15%
Bachmann, Michele R Minn. No	\$2,176,100	\$363,705	17%
Roskam, Peter J. R Ill. No	\$1,806,944	\$431,766	24%
Marchant, Kenny R Texas No	\$1,921,414	\$449,813	23%
McCotter, Thaddeus R Minn. No	\$3,778,990	\$576,404	15%
McCarthy, Kevin R Calif. No	\$736,447	\$173,112	24%
Heller, Dean R Nev. No	\$1,242,583	\$190,252	15%

from a Republican for Obama, Charles E. Kanter, AMS, (<http://www.sailcopress.com>):

I am a Republican, but a very sad Republican. Somehow my party chose as its presidential nominee, a man who had very minimal qualifications for the presidency, but was a war hero; a very personal hero for me. Now things are happening. During all his public speaking, watch him carefully. He looks drawn and tired. He acts panicky. His short-term memory is obviously slipping. He is making wild unsubstantiated charges. He is definitely not following his own "non-partisan agenda." If he is acting this erratic now, what will he be like as president when the going really gets tough? The thought of having Sarah Palin as President is even more scary than John's actions. Not only is she completely unqualified, but her personal history and beliefs are downright terrifying.

20080925-03 20:28 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/25/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

You know, I have to honestly admit that I don't know what to do about the current economic crisis, but I know that it is a crisis for our great country and for its future. I don't know what compromises are occurring or what language the bill will take or any of those things. I guess I just hope that, somehow, intelligence will prevail and things will work out. Since we are talking about the federal government, I guess that hope is rather small.

But in this time of national emergency akin to 9/11, it is such a sad spectacle to watch John McCain, once again, place his Presidential ambitions ahead of the good of the country.

Everyone in Washington, even the Republicans, obviously knows that McCain knows nothing about these subjects and can contribute nothing. Yet, once an agreement had already been reached, he pretended he's parachuting onto the burning deck of an aircraft carrier to save the day. Instead of saving the day, he made the deal already reached fall apart.

This man is pathetic, lost in a non-existent past, selfish beyond belief, acting like a complete fool. This is what the Grand Old Party has come to, and the sooner the American people realize it, the better.

20080925-04 21:14 SteveB Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—09/25/08

Dear SteveM,

And you call Obama an empty suit?

Having suspended his campaign to go to Washington to put his ambition before the good of the country, as late as this afternoon,

MC CAIN HAD STILL NOT READ THE 2-1/2 PAGE \$700 BILLION PROPOSAL!

Does he have ADD or ADHD or dyslexia as well as senility? This is a US Senator and Presidential candidate?

How the hell did he think he was going to help the negotiations when he has no idea what they're negotiating?

Especially when he is accompanied all day by campaign personnel, while Obama has legislative personnel with him. You really think McCain is putting country first?

20081001-01 11:37 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/01/08

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

McCain and Obama on the same side with the bail-out! Bad news! McCain all over the press talking about what a big "crisis" we are in, but never any details from this bozo. And what exactly is the crisis, Mr. Self-proclaimed "War Hero"? Not quite able to spit that out, ar' ya'?

To me, this whole thing stinks to high heaven. The Treasury Secretary comes to the President for \$1 trillion (essentially) during the last moments of his Lame Duck Presidency. "Gee, sir, we know we've been wrong all through this mess, but just give us this money to do whatever we want with no accountability and we will solve this crisis. And, while you're at it, kiss my a*s, Mr. President."

If anything, and I guess I have to trust these jokers somewhat, I think we need a bottom up approach rather than the proposal's top down—which just gets the fat cats paid first, when they should be paid last.

If these bundles of stinky mortgages were mainly getting paid, the crisis could go away. Let's use the government's money and power to re-negotiate all the predatory-interest loans, and the ones going bad. Give the people as good an interest rate as you would give the big banks, extend the terms to 30 years, get your new and improved AIG to insure the mortgages. If people can make the payments on these new, favorable mortgages—and I trust them more than I trust the government or the fat cats—then everything suddenly becomes OK on down the line. Where even these mortgages can't be paid, people lose their houses and their credit ratings (now more carefully scrutinized) and the government, or their agent, sells the houses into a rising market (because the glut of foreclosed homes has been eliminated). And everything must be different going forward—actually regulated for the good of we the people.

This would be a less socialistic approach to solving the problem.

Ya, right, tell me it has less or more chance of working than whatever Congress is currently concocting.

The operative word in that "concocting" is "c*cking"!

20081002-01	10:07	SteveB	"Skepticism of Palin Growing, Poll Finds"
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"Skepticism of Palin Growing, Poll Finds" by Jon Cohen and Jennifer Agiesta, *The Washington Post*

Oct. 2, 2008, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/01/AR2008100103600.html>)

(Fewer than half of voters think she understands 'complex issues'.) [What about simple issues? —SteveB]

With the vice presidential candidates set to square off today in their only scheduled debate, public assessments of Sarah Palin's readiness have plummeted, and she may now be a drag on the Republican ticket among key voter groups, according to a new Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Tonight's heavily anticipated debate comes just five weeks after the popular Alaska governor entered the national spotlight as Sen. John McCain's surprise pick to be his running mate. Though she initially transformed the race with her energizing presence and a fiery convention speech, Palin is now a much less positive force: Six in 10 voters see her as lacking the experience to be an effective president, and a third are now less likely to vote for McCain because of her.

A month ago, voters rated Palin as highly as they did McCain or his Democratic rival, Sen. Barack Obama, but after weeks of intensive coverage and several perceived missteps, the shine has diminished. Nearly a third of adults in a new poll from the Pew Research Center said they paid a lot of attention to Palin's interviews with CBS News's Katie Couric, a series that prompted grumbling among some conservative commentators about Palin's competency to be the GOP's vice presidential standard-bearer. The Pew poll showed views of Palin slipping over the past few days alone.

In the new Post-ABC poll, Palin matches the Democratic vice presidential candidate, Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., on empathy, one of McCain's clear deficits against Obama, while fewer than half of voters think she understands "complex issues."

But it is the experience question that may prove her highest hurdle, particularly when paired with widespread public concern about McCain's age. About half of all voters said they were uncomfortable with the idea of McCain taking office at age 72, and 85 percent of those voters said Palin does not have the requisite experience to be president.

The 60 percent who now see Palin as insufficiently experienced to step into the presidency is steeply higher than in a Post-ABC poll after her nomination early last month. Democrats and Republicans alike are now more apt to doubt her qualifications, but the biggest shift has come among independents. In early September, independents offered a divided

verdict on Palin's experience; now they take the negative view by about 2 to 1. Nearly two-thirds of both independent men and women in the new poll said Palin has insufficient experience to run the White House.

Obama was able for the first time to crack the 50 percent mark, albeit barely, on whether he has the experience to be president following Friday's presidential debate, and the question is one of Palin's central challenges as she prepares to face Biden in prime time before a national television audience.

20081002-02	10:24	Trudy	Fw: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street"
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[Source of original email unknown. Debunked here: http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/barackobama/a/wall_street.htm & by Snopes.com: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/fanniemae.asp>. Email the same as forwarded by SteveM (Oct. 5, 2008). —SteveB]

Here is a quick look into 3 former Fannie Mae Executives who have played big on Wall Street.

Posted in the Hampton Forum, (<http://www.topix.com/forum/city/hampton-va/TB1O8JA3VTCRJGDQA>)

"Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street"

Be sure to read the "Where are they now?" at the bottom!! Here is a quick look into 3 former Fannie Mae executives who have brought down Wall Street.

Franklin Raines was a Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Fannie Mae. Raines was forced to retire from his position with Fannie Mae when auditing discovered severe irregularities in Fannie Mae's accounting activities. At the time of his departure The Wall Street Journal noted, "Raines, who long defended the company's accounting despite mounting evidence that it wasn't proper, issued a statement late Tuesday conceding that "mistakes were made" and saying he would assume responsibility as he had earlier promised. News reports indicate the company was under growing pressure from regulators to shake up its management in the wake of findings that the company's books ran afoul of generally accepted accounting principles for four years." Fannie Mae had to reduce its surplus by \$9 billion. Raines left with a "golden parachute valued at \$240 Million in benefits. The Government filed suit against Raines when the depth of the accounting scandal became clear.

<http://housingdoom.com/2006/12/18/fannie-charges/>

The Government noted, "The 101 charges reveal how the individuals improperly manipulated earnings to maximize their bonuses, while knowingly neglecting accounting systems and internal controls, misapplying over twenty accounting principles and misleading the regulator and the public. The Notice explains how they submitted six years of misleading and inaccurate accounting statements and inaccurate capital reports that enabled them to grow Fannie Mae in an unsafe and unsound manner." These charges were made in 2006. The Court ordered Raines to return \$50 Million Dollars he received in bonuses based on the miss-stated Fannie Mae profits.

Tim Howard was the Chief Financial Officer of Fannie Mae. Howard "was a strong internal proponent of using accounting strategies that would ensure a "stable pattern of earnings" at Fannie. In everyday English—he was cooking the books. The Government Investigation determined that, "Chief Financial Officer, Tim Howard, failed to provide adequate oversight to key control and reporting functions within Fannie Mae," On June 16, 2006, Rep. Richard Baker, R-La., asked the Justice Department to investigate his allegations that two former Fannie Mae executives lied to Congress in Oct., 2004 when they denied manipulating the mortgage-finance giant's income statement to achieve management pay bonuses.

Investigations by federal regulators and the company's board of directors since concluded that management did manipulate 1998 earnings to trigger bonuses. Raines and Howard resigned under pressure in late 2004. Howard's Golden Parachute was estimated at \$20 Million!

Jim Johnson is a former executive at Lehman Brothers, who was later forced from his position as Fannie Mae CEO. A look at the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight's May 2006 report on mismanagement and corruption inside Fannie Mae, and you'll see some interesting things about Johnson. Investigators found that Fannie Mae had hidden a substantial amount of Johnson's 1998 compensation from the public, reporting that it was between \$6 million and \$7 million when in fact it was \$21 million." Johnson is currently under investigation for taking illegal loans from Countrywide while serving as CEO of Fannie Mae. Johnson's Golden Parachute was estimated at \$28 Million.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

1. FRANKLIN RAINES — Raines works for the Obama Campaign as Chief Economic Advisor.
2. TIM HOWARD — Howard is also a Chief Economic Advisor to Obama.
3. JIM JOHNSON — Johnson hired as a Senior Obama Finance Advisor and was selected to run Obama's Vice Presidential Search Committee.

IF OBAMA PLANS ON CLEANING UP THE MESS—HIS ADVISORS HAVE THE EXPERTISE—THEY MADE THE MESS IN THE FIRST PLACE. Would you trust the men who tore Wall Street down to build the new Wall Street?!!

[I'd think you would trust them, SteveM—they're all Republicans! Email not true. No evidence these men ever served as advisors of any kind to Obama. —SteveB]

20081002-03	11:07	SteveB	Re: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street"
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Dear Trudy,

I can't find that any of these three people in your email advise Obama. McCain is putting a lot of lies out there. (See below.)

Obama's Economic Policy Advisors, June 3, 2008

Jason Furman (director of economic policy)
Austan Goolsbee (senior economic policy advisor), University of Chicago tax policy expert
Karen Kornbluh (policy director)
David Cutler, Harvard health policy expert
Jeff Liebman, Harvard welfare expert
Michael Froman, Citigroup executive
Daniel Tarullo, Georgetown law professor
David Romer, Berkeley macroeconomist
Christina Romer, Berkeley economic historian
Richard Thaler, University of Chicago behavioral finance expert
Robert Rubin, former Treasury Secretary
Larry Summers, former Treasury Secretary
Alan Blinder, former Vice-chairman of the Federal Reserve
Jared Bernstein, Economic Policy Institute labor economist
James Galbraith, University of Texas macroeconomist
Paul Volcker, Chairman of the Federal Reserve 1979-1987
Laura Tyson, Berkeley international economist, Bill Clinton economic adviser
Robert Reich, Berkeley public policy professor, former Secretary of Labor
Peter Henry, Stanford international economist
Gene Sperling, former White House economic adviser

Other prominent economists who support Obama

Brad DeLong, Berkeley macroeconomist
Joseph Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel laureate
Edmund Phelps, 2006 Nobel laureate
Ray Fair, Yale macroeconomist
Dan McFadden, 2000 Nobel laureate
Robert Solow, 1987 Nobel laureate

Prominent finance people who support Obama (not actually economists)

William Donaldson, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chair 2003-05

Arthur Levitt, SEC chair 1993-2001
David Ruder, SEC chair 1987-1989
Warren Buffet, investor, richest person in world

"McCain Charges Obama with Taking Advice from Raines" by Howard Kurtz, *Washington Post*

Sept. 19, 2008, (http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2008/09/19/the_ad_obama_has.html)

The Ad: Obama has no background in economics. Who advises him? The Post says it's Franklin Raines, for "advice on mortgage and housing policy." Shocking. Under Raines, Fannie Mae committed "extensive financial fraud." Raines made millions. Fannie Mae collapsed. Taxpayers? Stuck with the bill. Barack Obama. Bad advice. Bad instincts. Not ready to lead.

Analysis: This John McCain ad is based on a disputed premise.

There's no dispute that Obama has no background in economics—but then, neither does McCain, which makes this an odd charge for the Arizona senator to hurl.

Fannie Mae did collapse, requiring a government takeover, and Raines, its former chairman, paid \$25 million in April to settle a case brought by federal authorities investigating his role in the agency's accounting problems. But he has never been a close adviser to Obama.

The commercial's main charge is based on an April story in *The Washington Post* that said Raines has "taken calls from Barack Obama's presidential campaign seeking his advice on mortgage and housing policy matters." Reporter Anita Huslin says Raines told her that during an in-person interview.

An Obama spokesman called the ad's contention "a flat-out lie," saying Raines has "never advised Senator Obama about anything, ever." But Raines did not claim to have advised the Illinois senator personally. In an accompanying statement, Raines said he never "provided his campaign with advice on housing or economic matters." That contradicts what he told Huslin five months ago.

Whether viewers will somehow hold Obama responsible for the Fannie Mae collapse because of what is at best a slight association with its former head is open to question. The commercial seems intended as a response to an earlier Obama spot charging that McCain can't clean up Washington because seven of his top campaign officials are former lobbyists.

20081005-01	17:57	SteveB	"The Dumbing Down of the GOP" (Palin), "Guess Who's Not Coming to Dinner" (McCain)
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I would like to refer you to two very good articles today:

"The Dumbing Down of the GOP" by Joe Conason, Reuters/Slate

Oct. 4, 2008 (<http://www.salon.com/2008/10/04/dumb/>)

(Why aren't more conservatives disgusted that their party nominated a person devoid of qualifications for the vice presidency (again)?)

Sarah Palin's debate performance should signal the beginning of the end of her fad. But for the moment it is worth looking at the meaning of her nomination, without the protective varnish of what conservatives usually dismiss as political correctness.

Why should we pretend not to notice when Gov. Palin's ideas make no sense? Having said last week that "it doesn't matter" whether human activity is the cause of climate change, she said in debate that she "doesn't want to argue" about the causes. It doesn't occur to her that we have to know the causes in order to address the problem. (She was very fortunate that moderator Gwen Ifill didn't ask her whether she truly believes that human beings and dinosaurs inhabited this planet simultaneously only 6,000 years ago.)

Why should we ignore her inability to string together a series of coherent thoughts? As a foe of Wall Street greed and a late convert to the gospel of government regulation, along with John McCain, Palin promised to clean up and reform business. But when her programmed talking points about "getting government out of the way" and protecting "freedom" conflicted with that promise, she didn't notice.

Why should we give her a pass on the most important issues of the day? Supposedly sharing the fears and concerns of the average families who face the burdens of mortgages, healthcare and economic insecurity, Palin simply refused to discuss changes in bankruptcy law and proved that she didn't know the provisions of McCain's healthcare plan.

All the glaring defects so blatantly on display in her debate with Joe Biden—and that make her candidacy so darkly comical—would be the same if she were a hockey dad instead of a "hockey mom." In fact, the cynical attempt to foist Palin on the nation as a symbol of feminist progress is an insult to all women regardless of their political orientation.

There was a time when conservatives lamented the dumbing down of American culture. Preservation of basic standards in schools and workplaces compelled them—or so they said—to resist affirmative action for women and minorities. Qualifications mattered; merit mattered; and demagogic appeals for leveling were to be left to the Democrats. Not anymore.

Actually, the Palin phenomenon is the culmination of a trend that can be traced back to Dan Quayle, the undistinguished Indiana senator whose elevation onto the Republican ticket in 1988 had nothing to do with intellect or experience and everything to do with the youthful appeal of a handsome blond frat boy. (That was how Republican strategists thought they would attract female voters back then, which must be why they believe Palin represents progress.) Quayle too was unable to articulate, let alone defend, the policy positions for which he was supposed to be campaigning. He too had to undergo the surgical stuffing of stock phrases into his head as a minimal substitute for knowledge and thought. And in the same sad way, he too benefited from the drastically reduced expectations applied to anyone whose inadequacy is so obvious.

Quayle deserved more pity than scorn, however, because he seemed to know that he was fighting far above his weight class. Palin evokes no such sympathy, with her jut-jawed, moose-gutting confidence in her own overrated "common sense" and her bullying insistence that only "elitists" would question her expertise.

As Biden showed quite convincingly when he spoke about his modest background and his continuing connection with Main Street, perceptive, intelligent discourse is in no way identical with elitism. Palin's phony populism is as insulting to working- and middle-class Americans as it is to American women. Why are basic diction and intellectual coherence presumed to be out of reach for "real people"?

And why don't we expect more from American conservatives? Indeed, why don't they demand more from their own movement? Aren't they disgusted that their party would again nominate a person devoid of qualifications for one of the nation's highest offices? Some, like Michael Gerson and Kathleen Parker, have expressed discomfort with this farce—and been subjected, in Parker's case, to abuse from many of the same numbskulls whom Palin undoubtedly delights.

The ultimate irony of Palin's rise is that it has occurred at a moment when Americans may finally have grown weary of pseudo-populism—when intelligence, judgment, diligence and seriousness are once again valued, simply because we are in such deep trouble. We got into this mess because we elected a man who professed to despise elitism, which he detected in everyone whose opinions differed from his prejudices. That was George W. Bush, of course. Biden was too polite and restrained to say it, but the dumbing down is more of the same, too.

"Guess Who's Not Coming to Dinner" by Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*

Sept. 28, 2008, (<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080928/commentary/809289997>)

I do not like you, John McCain. My feeling has nothing to do with issues. It has to do with common courtesy. During the debate, you refused to look Barack Obama in the eye. Indeed, you refused to look at him at all. Even when the two of you shook hands at the start, you used your eyes only to locate his hand, and then gazed past him as you shook it.

Obama is my guy. If you are rude to him, you are rude to me. If you came to dinner at my house and refused to look at or speak with one of my guests, that would be bad manners and I would be offended. Same thing if I went to your house. During the debate, you were America's guest.

What was your problem? Do you hold this man in such contempt that you cannot bear to gaze upon him? Will you not even speak to him directly?

Do you think he doesn't have the right to be running for President?

Were you angry because after you said you wouldn't attend the debate, he said a President should be able to concern himself with two things at the same time? He was right. The proof is, you were there. Were you angry with him because he called your bluff?

During the debate, Jim Lehrer repeatedly called upon both candidates to speak directly to each other. Obama looked at you. He addressed you as "John," which as a fellow senator is his privilege. His body language was open. You stared straight ahead, or at Lehrer, or into space. Your jaw was clinched. You had a tight little smile, or a grimace, or a little shake of your head.

I had to do two things at once while watching the debate. I had to listen to what was being said. And I had to process your rigid and contemptuous behavior. If you were at a wedding and the father of the groom refused to look at or speak to the bride, how would that make you feel? Especially if you were the father of the bride?

You made a TV commercial showing the moments Obama agreed with you. Everybody knows he did. Did his agreement show honesty, or weakness? It is significant that you said it proved he was not ready to lead.

What is the better leadership quality: (1) Willingness to listen to your opponent, and keep an open mind? (2) Rigidly ignoring him? Which of the two of you better demonstrated the bipartisan spirit you say you represent? Was there anything he said that you agreed with? Could you have brought yourself to say so?

I'm not the only one who noticed your odd, hostile behavior. Just about everybody did. I'm sure many of your supporters must have sensed the tension. Before the debate, pundits were wondering if you might explode in a display of your famous temper. I think we saw that happen, all right, but it was an implosion. I have instructed my wife to exclude you from any future dinner parties.

20081006-01 05:06 SteveB Re: A Pilot's Perspective on Obama

Dear SteveM,

I "care enough" to throw this old bull-sh*t in the can!

Wake up! Watch what's going on around you. Obama has led like a President in a real crisis...McCain ran around like a mean, blustering, old chicken with its lying head cut off.

Just goes to prove that these "experience" arguments don't work. Nor do the character assassinations of a man who is the only one of the two to prove that he has character.

That's what's happenin' out there in the real world, right now!

The end is near for your Mr. Self-Proclaimed War Hero.

20081006-02 05:16 SteveB Re: No "Change" for Him! [10/5 duplicate]

Dear SteveM,

Do you really believe that everything is fine in America right now?

Do you not see that a lot of fundamental, complex things need to change and change soon if we are to prosper in the future? Surely you see this—energy, immigration, business regulation, war, taxes, balancing the budget, health care, education, infrastructure, jobs going to China, India, Mexico, campaign finance reform, etc. Lots of problems and everyone sees them. (but notice that I don't list gun rights, religious freedom, or abortion—not problems!).

Do you really think a 72-year-old senile has-been is going to change anything? We don't even have the time for him to learn all the cr*p he so obviously doesn't know!

Watch what is going on around you right now. History is unfolding and it's not looking good for your new idiots.

20081006-03 05:29 SteveB Re: "Three Men Who Brought Down Wall Street" [10/5 duplicate]

Dear SteveM,

Again, old news. Turns out...these guys don't work for Obama or really even have much to do with him, but McCain's campaign is full of guys who took money from Fannie and Freddy and all the rest. Why not talk about that, if these kinds of associations are really so intolerable for you?

Show me something more useful, like a coherent plan for how McCain would run the country. Show me something that indicates the man understands what's going on around him in the world right now...not 1950.

Why waste time and energy on all this stupid attack, attack stuff that totally fails to hide or divert from the fact that the man doesn't have brain-one left and has no solutions or proposals...other than "I'm going to form a commission"...["with," I guess, "all these high-priced brainiacs on it. Real geeks who know lots of stuff. I figure in a few months, they'll figure it all out, and get back to me with their report. I'll, um...get that great big report read real soon...and then we'll be on our merry way." But, what precisely do you see as the problem, Johnny? That's what we never hear, because there is no understanding. I'm serious. Unfortunately.]

Ya, Johnny Boy, that really inspires confidence!

20081006-04 19:03 D. Plouffe Just Released: Full McCain/Keating Video

Dear SteveB:

John McCain wants you to forget about his role in our country's last major financial crisis and costly bailout: the savings and loan crisis of the late '80s and early '90s. But voters deserve to know that the failed philosophy and culture of corruption that created the savings and loan crisis then are alive in the current crisis—and in John McCain's plans for our economic future.

We just released a short documentary about John McCain's role in that financial crisis—watch it now and share it with your friends:

<http://my.barackobama.com/keatingvideo>

Voters should know the facts about John McCain's poor judgment—judgment that has twice placed him on the wrong side of history.

Over the weekend, John McCain's top adviser announced their plan to stop engaging in a debate over the economy and "turn the page" to more direct, personal attacks on Barack Obama.

In the middle of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, they want to change the subject from the central question of this election. Perhaps because the policies McCain supported these past eight years and wants to continue are pretty hard to defend.

But it's not just McCain's role in the current crisis that they're avoiding. The backward economic philosophy and culture of corruption that helped create the current crisis are looking more and more like the other major financial crisis of our time.

During the savings and loan crisis of the late '80s and early '90s, McCain's political favors and aggressive support for deregulation put him at the center of the fall of Lincoln Savings and Loan, one of the largest in the country. More than 23,000 investors lost their savings. Overall, the savings and loan crisis required the federal government to bail out the savings of hundreds of thousands of families and ultimately cost American taxpayers \$124 billion.

Sound familiar?

In that crisis, John McCain and his political patron, Charles Keating, played central roles that ultimately landed Keating in jail for fraud and McCain in front of the Senate Ethics Committee. The McCain campaign has tried to avoid talking about the scandal, but with so many parallels to the current crisis, McCain's Keating history is relevant and voters deserve to know the facts—and see for themselves the pattern of poor judgment by John McCain.

And this time, McCain's bankrupt economic philosophy has put our economy at the brink of collapse and put millions of Americans at risk of losing their homes.

It's no wonder John McCain would rather spend the last month of this election smearing Barack's character instead of talking about the top priority issue for voters. But if we work together, we can make sure the focus stays on the economy—and how to fix it.

Please forward this email to everyone you know. Thanks.

David Plouffe, Campaign Manager, Obama for America

Paid for by Obama for America.

20081010-01 13:29 Dennis Fw: "How Wall Street Works"
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Once upon a time, in a village, a man appeared and announced to the villagers that he would buy monkeys for \$10 each.

The villagers, seeing that there were many monkeys around, went out to the forest and started catching them. The man bought thousands at \$10 and, as supply started to diminish, the villagers stopped their effort. He further announced that he would now buy at \$20 for a monkey.

This renewed the efforts of the villagers and they started catching monkeys again.

Soon the supply diminished even further and people started going back to their farms. The offer increased to \$25 each, and the supply of monkeys became so small that it was an effort to even find a monkey, let alone catch it. The man now announced that he would buy monkeys at \$50! However, since he had to go to the city on some business, his assistant would now buy on behalf of him.

In the absence of the man, the assistant told the villagers. "Look at all these monkeys in the big cage that the man has collected. I will sell them to you at \$35, and when the man returns from the city, you can sell them to him for \$50 each."

The villagers rounded up all their savings and bought all the monkeys back from the man's assistant.

They never saw the man nor his assistant again, only monkeys everywhere!

Now you have a better understanding of how Wall Street works.

20081010-02 13:43 SteveB The Great Awakening
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Seems like people are finally leaving McCain in droves to declare their intentions to vote for Obama. It's very refreshing, in a way, to see that the American public still has a little bit of sense, when push comes to shove. Maybe there is hope for us yet!

We have, perhaps, been very lucky to have this crisis right now. It sums up the legacy of the effectiveness of the Bush Presidency in destroying rather than improving people's lives. The entire Republican "way" has been starkly proven wrong!

And events have shown one candidate who would be firm at the reins, yet creative, intelligent, and open minded. A leader. These same events have shown the other to be a tired old has-been, skittering here and there, trying his best to come to some understanding of this mess that is not a total embarrassment to his senile self. Solutions? McCain? Forget it. This guy is full of bad ideas and always has been.

Democracy is lookin' fine! Let the People speak! And then let's start working on all these problems the Republicans either created or facilitated.

20081010-03	20:20	SteveB	"Can General Motors & Ford Survive?"
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Dear SteveM,

Truly sad days. What a shame. And this is not something that you can point to Pelosi and Reid and Obama and blame. This is just part of the terrible price we are having to pay because BOTH parties sold us down the river! This is no time for partisanship or ideology. This is the time to seek leaders of clarity, honesty, understanding, energy, fairness, and courage and let's make some fundamental changes. Everyone can now see that many are needed. This is a crisis that makes 9/11 look tiny.

"Can General Motors and Ford survive?" *Business Week*

Oct. 10, 2008, (<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/Extra/can-general-motors-and-ford-survive.aspx?page=1>)

The automakers are staggering, burning through thin cash reserves even as their shares tank. But no one knows when consumers will start buying new vehicles again.

At the close of business on Friday, General Motors' (GM) market capitalization stood below what it was in 1929 and down more than 94% from its 2000 peak of \$52.4 billion.

At its low, GM's market cap stood at \$2.6 billion. It was about \$4 billion (or \$48 billion in today's dollars) when the stock market crashed in 1929. GM closed at \$4.89 Friday on the New York Stock Exchange. Over the past 52 weeks, GM's high was \$43.20.

GM was not alone. The Dow Jones Industrial Average (\$INDU) closed down 128 points, to 8,451.19, on Friday. Ford Motor (F) closed at \$1.99. Ford's 52-week-high was \$9.24. Balance-sheet issues

The automakers' shares have been hammered because their balance sheets and cash burn were a problem even before the investment calamity that forced the U.S. government to approve a controversial \$700 billion bailout. The financial crisis has since spread to European and Asian markets.

GM, its dealers, and would-be car buyers are all suffering from lack of access to credit. "Action to establish some normalcy to credit markets is important to our industry, period," said GM President Frederick Henderson.

Rating agency Standard & Poor's said Thursday it was reviewing GM and Ford for further downgrades based on grim forecasts by firms like J.D. Power & Associates that the industry will sell 2 million fewer vehicles to consumers in 2008 than last year and that the cratering of demand for new vehicles will last through next year.

The ratings being reviewed by S&P include the B- long-term corporate credit ratings for both Ford and GM, along with the B- long-term counterparty credit ratings for the two companies' respective financing arms, GMAC and Ford Motor Credit. The ratings already indicate the companies' debts are below investment grade.

"While the global automotive industry is clearly experiencing a slowdown in 2008, the global market in 2009 may experience an outright collapse," said Jeff Schuster, J.D. Power's executive director of automotive forecasting. (Like BusinessWeek, S&P and J.D. Power are divisions of The McGraw-Hill Cos.)

Consumers are key

The wild card, executives at J.D. Power say, is how long consumers will stay out of the car-buying market. "Buying a new car is something that can be put off indefinitely," says J.D. Power Senior Vice President Gary Dilts, who used to be the top sales executive at Chrysler. "When people start looking at their 401(k) statements and looking to conserve cash, they could stay out another a year or more."

Besides an overall decline in sales, GM and Ford are especially hurting from a drop-off in demand for their pickups and full-size sport-utility vehicles. Those models have historically provided the companies with most of their profit. The spike in demand for small cars, from which the companies earn only about one-fifth as much profit, is not enough to compensate for the slowdown in the sales of bigger vehicles.

Auto dealers struggle to stay afloat [many already aren't]

More than 70% of car dealerships are losing profits, forcing many to lay off employees and shorten their business hours.

S&P believes that both automakers have enough cash for at least the rest of 2008, but that rapidly worsening industry conditions will make things tough for them in 2009. Fitch Ratings said this week that Ford could be down to \$8 billion to \$10 billion in cash by the second half of 2009, which is the minimum a car company the size of Ford needs to fund day-to-day activities.

No help from financing arm

GM lost a stunning \$15.5 billion in the second quarter, and its cash stood at \$24 billion. At that time, it was burning \$1 billion a month of its reserves, but the rate of burn is thought to have increased in the recent Wall Street meltdown. The next 60 days will be critical, said GM's Henderson, who is watching to see whether the credit markets will loosen up after the U.S. government rescue package starts taking effect and European government actions kick in.

The automaker is searching the corporate equivalent of couch cushions for cash. It is, for example, trying to borrow between \$250 million and \$500 million from Detroit city pension funds using its corporate headquarters building as collateral. That amount of money is not enough to fund even one vehicle program.

Besides facing falling demand for cars and trucks, GM does not have the backstop of its GMAC finance arm, which for years earned huge money from auto and home loans. To raise money, GM sold a controlling stake in the finance subsidiary to Cerberus Capital Management, and the credit arm has also been hit by the subprime loan problem that has rocked Wall Street and world markets.

Hummer division on the block

GM is running out of assets to sell to raise money, and the ones it has for sale now are having a hard time finding buyers. It is trying to unload its Hummer division, as well as its commercial-vehicle business.

If it can't mortgage its building in downtown Detroit, it says it will try to sell it and lease the space back. Even at fire-sale prices, the availability of capital and credit is so tight for would-be buyers that GM isn't finding attractive offers.

In an indication of how fast GM is falling, it was only in May that the automaker bought the headquarters building for \$626 million. Previously, it had leased the space it occupies on the Detroit waterfront.

To raise additional cash, GM has floated the idea of selling the public stock in its European operations, which could be spun off. But the success of that strategy is now in question, given the spread of U.S. economic problems to Europe and Asia.

The Bush administration approved a package of \$25 billion in federal loans to automakers and suppliers to offset investments in building cleaner, greener vehicles. Federal officials recently said the money will likely not be available to automakers until the end of 2009. But Michigan legislators have said they will move to speed up the process to rescue their largest employers.

(This article was written and reported by David Kiley from *Business Week's* Detroit bureau.)

More bad news for the McCain campaign:

Sarah Palin has been found to have abused her powers in the firing of that dude up there. Doesn't say much for McCain's judgment and leadership, does it?

What exactly can the guy do right? It doesn't seem like he's done anything right, or made a wise decision in years and years. His mortgage proposal is a disaster. His drill drill drill is no solution to the problem. Getting rid of the gas tax for the summer would have been a tragedy. The "fundamentals" (to be defined later in a very strange way) of the American economy are strong. GM is not gonna go bankrupt. Uhh, gee, I guess we got a crisis on our hands here, my friends, but never fear, I'm temporarily suspending my personal smear campaign against Senator Obama for a couple days to go to Washington to ram something (anything, cause I don't get any of it) down those eggheads' throats so I can look like a big hero...I hope, I hope, I hope, pant, pant, pant...Then he sits there like a lump of coal while the fight rages on around him, without him. He made himself look like a powerless, unnecessary fool. He made it look pretty certain that, even if he were elected, he would have very little Presidential power at a time when we need a strong Presidency.

And I'm really getting sick of the lying, insulting, insultingly stupid attacks that McCain and Palin mount unceasingly against their rivals because they see no other hope of winning except in trying to destroy. Sometimes the Obama camp will respond in kind, but it is always a response and never even close to 1 for 1, more like 1 defensive attack back for each 10 attacks McCain delivers. I love it that they're finally starting to raise the Keating Five issue against McCain. Maybe McCain should have kept his ugly mouth shut in his stupid "Obama the Terrorist" attack bull cr*p, rather than bring this on himself unnecessarily. Again, no judgment!

I can't wait for both McCain and Palin to just go away with their stupid, divisive, petty politics and egotistical posturing, so that their betters can start sitting down and getting to serious work on the problems that surround and threaten us.

Thank you, John McCain, if you will just step aside and stay out of the way, Sir...see...you'd really rather retire to one of your, how many?, houses with your still-a-little-cute-but-old wife, instead of having to do a bunch of homework (like reading the Treasury Secretary's two page proposal last week, for cryin'- out-loud! How the hell were you going to ride in and save the day if you hadn't even read the frickin' proposal?) and try to understand all this economic mumbo jumbo and this diplomacy rigmarole and this trying not insult fellow NATO allies like Spain, which is kind of the law and the official foreign policy of the U.S., conducted legally by the President and the State Dept., not by a grandstanding Senator running for the Presidency, especially if it is a relationship as delicate as that of ours with Russia that is at stake.

Where exactly is that wisdom and judgment and leadership that all McCain's vast experience is supposed to have somehow granted him, despite the fact that he has shown nothing but the poorest of judgment all his life? How many planes did he crash? 5? He got mixed up in the middle of a banking scandal and learned nothing? He fantasizes that he was exonerated, but he was not. He cheated on his first wife? Maybe the second. He didn't look good enough campaigning against George Bush to get even close to the nomination, yet now he somehow looks good enough to replace his close buddy and total failure, George Bush, the Stupid??? Give me a break.

True colors...true colors...

I thought the Right were such huge believers in Freedom and Free Speech and the Constitution and the Founding Fathers and Ronald Reagan and guns and pro-life because "the people and their rights must be protected". But somehow Obama doesn't have the right to stand up and run for President without calls that he be killed? I'm sick of this frickin' cr*p, America! I thought y'all were better than this!

Well, I got news for 'ya McCain and Palin and all your ilk: "WE WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN. NO NO! WON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN!" [CRASHING GUITARS!!!] Go crawl in a hole somewhere, you pin-headed right-wing a*s-holes! Your time in the sun has been an abject failure and is coming to a fitting end— out in the flames of a society burned at the stake of giant ego, greed, and power. Both political parties are at fault. The system has been proven corrupt.

Anyone who only wants to point fingers at this time is not a true American. I am empowered by my mother to arbitrarily make that call and I do.

Where's the famous McCain "economic solution" he suspended his campaign for? LOL!!!! I think McCain's idea of an economic solution is a double martini!

I hope we have the wisdom to learn from our mistakes and never make the same ones again (not that that will probably help us much, come to think of it!).

"Anti-Obama Anger Erupts at McCain Events" by AP

Oct. 10, 2008, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27123224/>) (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27123224/ns/politics-decision_08/t/anti-obama-anger-erupts-mccain-events/#.TxQT229SQhI)

(Taunts, jeers noticeably louder when VP candidate Palin appears.)

(LA CROSSE, Wis.) Some of the anger is getting raw at Republican rallies and John McCain is mostly letting it flare.

A sense of grievance spilling into rage has gripped some GOP events as McCain supporters see his presidential campaign lag against Barack Obama. They're making it personal, against the Democrat. Shouts of "traitor," "terrorist," "treason," "liar," and even "off with his head" have rung from the crowd at McCain and Sarah Palin rallies, and gone unchallenged by them.

Presidential candidates are accustomed to raucous rallies this close to Election Day and welcome the enthusiasm. But they are also traditionally monitors of sorts from the stage. Part of their job is to leaven proceedings if tempers run ragged and to rein in an out-of-bounds comment from the crowd. Not so much this week, at GOP rallies in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Florida and other states.

When a visibly angry McCain supporter in Waukesha, Wis., on Thursday told the candidate "I'm really mad" because of "socialists taking over the country," McCain stoked the sentiment. "I think I got the message," he said. "The gentleman is right." He went on to talk about Democrats in control of Congress.

The anti-Obama taunts and jeers are noticeably louder when McCain appears with Palin, a big draw for GOP social conservatives. She accused Obama this week of "palling around with terrorists" because of his past, loose association with a 1960s radical. If less directly, McCain, too, has sought to exploit Obama's Chicago neighborhood ties to William Ayers, while trying simultaneously to steer voters' attention to his plans for the financial crisis.

More subdued without Palin

The Alaska governor did not campaign with McCain on Friday, and his rally in La Crosse was much more subdued than those earlier in the week when the two campaigned together. Still, one woman shouted "traitor" when McCain told voters Obama would raise their taxes.

Volunteers worked up chants from the crowd of "U.S.A." and "John McCain, John McCain," in an apparent attempt to drown out boos and other displays of negative energy.

Palin, at a fundraiser in Ohio on Friday, told supporters "it's not negative and it's not mean-spirited" to scrutinize Obama's iffy associations.

McCain campaign manager Rick Davis said Friday the outbursts weren't a "big deal," but acknowledged considerable frustration among some of the candidate's supporters.

"Political rallies have always attracted people who are emotionally connected to the outcome of the election," Davis said, adding, "I'm confident it has nothing to do with what our candidates are doing or saying right now."

Obama disputed that assessment at a campaign rally in Chillicothe, Ohio, on Friday. "It's easy to rile up a crowd by stoking anger and division," Obama said. "In the last couple of days, we've seen a barrage of nasty insinuations and attacks."

The Obama campaign has kept up a daily drumbeat about McCain's "lies" and the Democratic candidate himself has routinely distorted his rival's record and agenda. Obama calls McCain "erratic" in a subtle but unmistakable attempt to exploit questions about the Republican's age and temperament. But his rallies and rhetoric have lacked the personal venom coming at him from the other side.

Secret Service investigates

The Secret Service confirmed Friday that it had investigated an episode reported in *The Washington Post* in which someone in Palin's crowd in Clearwater, Fla., shouted "kill him," on Monday, meaning Obama. There was "no indication that there was anything directed at Obama," Secret Service spokesman Eric Zahren said. "We looked into it because we always operate in an atmosphere of caution."

Fitting with McCain's theme that people don't know enough about Obama, his co-chairman Frank Keating broached a subject Thursday that got one of Hillary Rodham Clinton's advisers removed from her inner circle during her Democratic primary campaign.

Keating described Obama as a "guy of the street" who should be more candid about his drug use as a young man. Obama wrote about his teenage experimentation with drugs and alcohol in his memoirs. The McCain campaign began running a new television ad criticizing Obama for his relationship with Ayers, a founder of the violent Weather Underground group during the Vietnam War era. Obama and Ayers are neighbors in Chicago, and the two once served together on a charity board. Ayers held a house party for Obama when he was launching his career in Chicago politics, but the two are not close friends.

"When convenient, he worked with terrorist Bill Ayers," the ad says. "When discovered, he lied." In two events this week, warm-up speakers at GOP rallies have used Obama's middle name, Hussein, to seed doubts about the Democrat, a tactic meant to draw attention to the false rumors that Obama is a Muslim, as well as to belittle him. "On Nov. 4, let's leave Barack Hussein Obama wondering what happened," a sheriff told Palin's Florida rally.

McCain once stepped forward directly to denounce that tactic. This week, his campaign merely issued a lukewarm criticism that tried to score a political point in the same breath: "We do not condone this inappropriate rhetoric which distracts from the real questions of judgment, character and experience that voters will base their decisions on this November."

Some of the frustration at McCain's rallies is from people who want the candidate to go harder after Obama. In Waukesha, when a voter begged McCain to take a more combative tone toward Obama, McCain instead talked about the financial crisis.

"Could I just say very quickly, yes, I'll do that," McCain said. "But I also, my friends, want to address the greatest financial challenge of our lifetime with a positive plan for action."

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20081011-01	09:13	SteveB	Re: "Anti-Obama Anger Erupts at McCain Events"
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McCain at Dead End

It looks to me like the morally bankrupt McCain campaign has finally had its chickens come home to roost.

Yesterday, before an unruly crowd that wanted to lynch Obama—thanks to McCain campaign tactics—McCain finally had to admit that Obama is qualified to be President and that this is not something to be feared, and that he is not an Arab or a Muslim. He appeared to be rather horrified by what he was hearing repeated back from the crowd. Ya, Johnny Boy, this is the way to run a campaign, teach the voters to hate and fear the opponent, rather than teach them who is the better leader and better on the issues. What an evil you have done your country, old man!

An amazing turn of events. But is it McCain's good heart finally showing itself, or is this jailhouse conversion just more campaign tactics?

Well, you also might notice that in the last debate McCain was unwilling to call Obama a terrorist to his face or even mention the stupid Ayres thing. Is he getting soft-hearted?

Or does he just realize finally that all the lying is not working this time around. Obama is now 11% ahead in polls. McCain and his campaign know that the old man doesn't understand any of this 21st Century economic mumbo-jumbo. 86% of the people in the country say they are dissatisfied with the state of the nation and its direction. (Big surprise!)

So—if Obama is not a scary Muslim terrorist, there goes McCain's entire campaign and all its premises and mistakes, up in smoke. What a beautiful thing justice can be.

20081011-02 09:33 SteveB Overheard Conversation: John McCain & Rush Limbaugh

Rush Limbaugh: Senator McCain, maybe you should consider suspending your campaign at this grave juncture to take some time to think about what to do next to defeat that unholy, drug-dealin', pimpin', rapin', burglarizin', terrorist, black b*stard.

John McCain: Maybe that's not a bad idea. But haven't I suspended my campaign once already?

Limbaugh: So you do remember a few things? Ya, but don't worry, none of those idiots out there will notice. Only the goddamn liberal press!

McCain: That's the ticket!

Limbaugh: Then, with some time (hmmm, wonder if we could get the election postponed because of the, uh, yes, financial crisis!), maybe you can figure out a way to get that stiff, right-wing spine back again so you can go on the attack like a white-haired old pit-bull. Man, how could you possibly utter the words, "Senator Obama is a decent man."?

McCain: Well, he is a decent man, it seems to me, my friend. I think I'm tired of all the lies.

Limbaugh: Then you will never be President, Senator McCain! Especially since the stupid Palin thing doesn't seem to be going our way at all. It's more important than ever that you go out there like the rest of us, every day, and LIE! LIE! LIE! to make America free and safe.

McCain: Gee, you're kind of a scary guy, you know it?

20081011-03 17:47 SteveB "IMF Warns of Global Financial Meltdown"

Essentially, Bush f*cked McCain. Bush couldn't keep the economy rolling a few more measly weeks, until after the election. Then McCain might have had a fighting chance.

Come to think of it, Bush has hurt McCain in other ways: negotiating with Iran after Obama said we should and McCain said no, talking about more resources in Afghanistan after Obama said they were needed, negotiating a troop withdrawal timetable with Iraq when McCain was saying that would be foolhardy.

Mmmmm...Bush and McCain haven't gotten along since Bush shut down McCain's 2000 Presidential hopes and dreams....Naw! Surely Bush wouldn't go this far to make sure McCain never gets elected...right?

Meantime, folks, we ourselves, the American people, are now f'ed in so many ways! You will see them unfold and they are unfolding now. Better hope you can hang on to that retirement stock a good long time. Better hope you're not trying to run a business or even a government. Better hope you're not trying to keep a job that provides for you. Better hope you ain't tryin' to get some job you ain't got cause you ain't gonna get it! Gee...that's just about all of us isn't it? And that's not to mention somebody's grandkids who are going to be poor as they fight to pay off these massive debts, though I hope not.

Read the article below for more, stunning, details.

And who is to blame, in the end, except our politicians—both parties of them—who have sold us down the river, essentially in exchange for money to run the campaigns that maintain them in power. I expect nothing but heartless greed from businessmen...that is their purpose in life, and rightfully so. But it is the duty of government to protect us from their excesses. Government has failed us, again (or, more appropriately, *de nouveau*).

And, of course, we, their bosses have failed, because we, the people, didn't make the politicians reform a corrupt system, and we kept re-electing the bums instead of throwing them out! There's another convenient opportunity coming up soon.

"IMF Warns of Global Financial Meltdown" MSNBC

Oct. 11, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27129830/ns/business-stocks_and_economy/t/imf-chief-warns-global-financial-meltdown/#.Txc1aG9SQhI)

(Bush urges patience in crisis fix; rich nations vow to fight credit crunch.)

(WASHINGTON) The International Monetary Fund warned Saturday that debt-ridden banks were pushing the global financial system to the brink of meltdown and rich nations had so far failed to restore confidence.

President Bush appealed for patience as world leaders raced to stabilize financial markets and avert the deepest global recession in decades, but the 185-nation IMF said more steps would be needed in the coming months.

"Intensifying solvency concerns about a number of the largest U.S.-based and European financial institutions have pushed the global financial system to the brink of systemic meltdown," IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn said.

President Bush huddled with economic chiefs from the G-7—Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada—and officials from the IMF and World Bank, and said top industrial nations grasped the gravity of the crisis and would work together to solve it.

"In an interconnected world, no nation will gain by driving down the fortunes of another. We are in this together. We will come through it together," Bush said. "There have been moments of crisis in the past when powerful nations turned their energies against each other or sought to wall themselves off from the world. This time is different."

"I'm confident that the world's major economies can overcome the challenges we face," Bush said, adding that Washington was working as fast as possible to implement a \$700 billion financial bailout package approved a week ago.

Yet there was no concrete offer of new moves when Bush spoke on a Rose Garden stage just after daybreak, flanked by representatives from nearly a dozen nations and international organizations.

Resolving the crisis

The fresh message of the day was Bush's plea that nations work together to address the crisis, avoiding the go-it-alone protectionist trade strategies that worsened conditions during the Great Depression. "We will do what it takes to resolve the crisis and the world's economy will emerge stronger as a result," he said.

White House spokesman Tony Fratto said Bush's commitment to collaborative action was repeated and agreed to by every official and minister who took part in a private White House meeting before the statement. Participating in that session with the president were top officials from the G-7, as well as from the European Union, World Bank and IMF.

Bush did not mention any specific action that prompted his call. But Ireland recently moved to guarantee all bank deposits, triggering similar actions in Germany and other countries concerned that nervous depositors would move their bank accounts to Ireland.

The president barely referenced a significant new step from his administration—partial nationalization of some banks. After days of speculation this move was coming, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson announced late Friday night that the government would buy part ownership in an array of American banks.

Intense market turmoil

President Hoover tried something like that in 1932 during the Great Depression. No detail was provided about how the new approach would work, only that it was similar to Britain's move to pour cash into its troubled banks in exchange for stakes in them. The U.S. government would use an unspecified portion of the \$700 billion approved by Congress a week ago to purchase stocks in a wide variety of banks and other financial institutions.

The rescue program originally was sold to Congress and the public as a plan to buy mortgage-related loans from financial institutions. The goal was to remove troubled assets from those institutions' books and inspire them to restart more normal lending operations.

Congress passed the massive and hard-fought legislation, and Bush signed it. The government raised the amount of bank deposits it insured. Billions of dollars of reserves have gone into banking systems in the U.S. and other countries. Yet credit, the economy's lifeblood, has remained virtually frozen.

This paralysis in the credit markets has translated into intense turmoil in the stock markets. The Dow Jones industrial average just completed its worst week in history, plummeting more than 18 percent. Over the past year, people in the U.S. have watched \$8.4 trillion drain from investment accounts and retirement savings.

So the administration decided to use the bailout bill to pump equity directly into the banks—an idea never mentioned during the congressional debate. The administration says it is authorized in an obscure corner of the 400-page legislation.

Officials are not saying how long it will take to get this program under way—just as is the case with the even more complicated effort to buy mortgage-backed securities.

Bush seemed to acknowledge that the lag is feeding anxiety on Wall Street. "These extraordinary efforts are being implemented as quickly and as effectively as possible," Bush said. "The benefits will not be realized overnight."

The White House session with Bush followed a three-hour meeting Friday night of G-7 finance ministers. The president largely echoed their terse statement, saying the nations have together pledged to "do what it takes to resolve this crisis."

Among their promises are preventing the failure of major banks, unfreezing credit markets, bolstering deposit insurance programs, getting the battered mortgage financing system to operate more normally and working with poorer but fast-growing nations that also are feeling the pinch.

To address this last pledge, Paulson scheduled a meeting Saturday evening of the Group of 20 countries—which include the G-7 plus the world's biggest developing countries such as China, Brazil and India—to explain recent actions by the U.S. and other wealthy allies.

French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde said she saw the discussions as a way to help emerging market countries understand actions by wealthier nations so they can be included in solutions and "if they wish, adopt the same principles."

In a briefing for the IMF's policy-setting board, Paulson said that after the immediate crisis "we must turn our attention to longer-term reforms to modernize our outdated financial regulatory structure."

Addressing the crisis

It was the 22nd day among the past 27 that Bush had spoken about the financial crisis, since evidence first arose that the year-old subprime mortgage mess was evolving into a broader and more calamitous meltdown. After the almost 40-minute meeting and his six-minute statement, the president left the White House for a nearly two-hour mountain bike ride in the nearby Virginia woods.

Bush also addressed the crisis in his weekly radio address, as did Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden in delivering his party's response.

Biden criticized Republican nominee John McCain's proposal to solve the problem in part by having the government buy bad home-loan mortgages at full face value and renegotiate them at a reduced price. Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama focused on words of calm.

"I know these are difficult times. I know folks are worried," he was to say at a rally in Philadelphia, according to prepared remarks released by his campaign. "But I also know that now is not the time for fear or panic. Now is the time for resolve and steady leadership. Because I know we can steer ourselves out of this crisis."

20081013-01	13:21	SteveB	"The Man Behind the Whispers About Obama"
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What if McCain is really a "Manchurian candidate"! He was held and brainwashed and seems to have an unquenchable ambition to be President. Weird! LOL!

The truth always pretty much prevails...

"The Man Behind the Whispers About Obama" by Jim Rutenberg, *New York Times*

Oct. 12, 2008, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/13/us/politics/13martin.html?pagewanted=all>)

The most persistent falsehood about Senator Barack Obama's background first hit in 2004 just two weeks after the Democratic convention speech that helped set him on the path to his presidential candidacy: "Obama is a Muslim who has concealed his religion."

That statement, contained in a press release, spun a complex tale about the ancestry of Mr. Obama, who is Christian. The press release was picked up by a conservative Web site, FreeRepublic.com, and spread steadily as others elaborated on its claims over the years in e-mail messages, Web sites and books. It continues to drive other false rumors about Mr. Obama's background.

Just last Friday, a woman told Senator John McCain at a town-hall-style meeting, "I have read about him," and "he's an Arab." Mr. McCain corrected her.

Until this month, the man who is widely credited with starting the cyber-whisper campaign that still dogs Mr. Obama was a secondary character in news reports, with deep explorations of his background largely confined to liberal blogs.

False claims

But an appearance in a documentary-style program on the Fox News Channel watched by three million people last week thrust the man, Andy Martin, and his past into the foreground. The program allowed Mr. Martin to assert falsely and without challenge that Mr. Obama had once trained to overthrow the government.

An examination of legal documents and election filings, along with interviews with his acquaintances, revealed Mr. Martin, 62, to be a man with a history of scintillating if not always factual claims. He has left a trail of animosity—some of it provoked by anti-Jewish comments—among political leaders, lawyers and judges in three states over more than 30 years.

He is a law school graduate, but his admission to the Illinois bar was blocked in the 1970s after a psychiatric finding of "moderately severe character defect manifested by well-documented ideation with a paranoid flavor and a grandiose character."

Though he is not a lawyer, Mr. Martin went on to become a prodigious filer of lawsuits, and he made unsuccessful attempts to win public office for both parties in three states, as well as for president at least twice, in 1988 and 2000. Based in Chicago, he now identifies himself as a writer who focuses on his anti-Obama Web site and press releases.

'I'm a colorful person'

Mr. Martin, in a series of interviews, did not dispute his influence in Obama rumors. "Everybody uses my research as a takeoff point," Mr. Martin said, adding, however, that some take his writings "and exaggerate them to suit their own fantasies."

As for his background, he said: "I'm a colorful person. There's always somebody who has a legitimate cause in their mind to be angry with me."

When questions were raised last week about Mr. Martin's appearance and claims on "Hannity's America" on Fox News, the program's producer said Mr. Martin was clearly expressing his opinion and not necessarily fact.

It was not Mr. Martin's first turn on national television. The CBS News program "48 Hours" in 1993 devoted an hour-long program to what it called his prolific filing of frivolous lawsuits. He has filed so many lawsuits that a judge barred him from doing so in any federal court without preliminary approval. He prepared to run as a Democrat for Congress in Connecticut, where paperwork for one of his campaign committees listed as one purpose "to exterminate Jew power." He ran as a Republican for the Florida State Senate and the United States Senate in Illinois. When running for president in 1999, he aired a television advertisement in New Hampshire that accused George W. Bush of using cocaine. In the 1990s, Mr. Martin was jailed in a case in Florida involving a physical altercation.

Those from his past amazed

His newfound prominence, and the persistence of his line of political attack—updated regularly on his Web site and through press releases—amazes those from his past.

"Well, that's just a bookend for me," said Tom Slade, a former chairman of the Florida Republican Party, whom Mr. Martin sued for refusing to support him. Mr. Slade said Mr. Martin was driven like "a run-over dog, but he's fearless."

Given Mr. Obama's unusual background, which was the focus of his first book, it was perhaps bound to become fodder for some opposed to his candidacy. Mr. Obama was raised mostly by his white mother, an atheist, and his grandparents, who were Protestant, in Hawaii. He hardly knew his father, a Kenyan from a Muslim family who variously considered himself atheist or agnostic, Mr. Obama wrote. For a few childhood years, Mr. Obama lived in Indonesia with a stepfather he described as loosely following a liberal Islam.

Theories about Mr. Obama's background have taken on a life of their own. But independent analysts seeking the origins of the cyberspace attacks wind up at Mr. Martin's first press release, posted on the Free Republic Web site in Aug., 2004.

Its general outlines have turned up in a host of works that have expounded falsely on Mr. Obama's heritage or supposed attempts to conceal it, including "Obama Nation," the widely discredited best seller about Mr. Obama by Jerome R. Corsi. Mr. Corsi opens the book with a quote from Mr. Martin.

"What he's generating gets picked up in other places," said Danielle Allen, a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University who has investigated the e-mail campaign's circulation and origins, "and it's an example of how the Internet has given power to sources we would have never taken seriously at another point in time."

Ms. Allen said Mr. Martin's original work found amplification in 2006, when a man named Ted Sampley wrote an article painting Mr. Obama as a secret practitioner of Islam. Quoting liberally from Mr. Martin, the article circulated on the Internet, and its contents eventually found their way into various e-mail messages, particularly an added claim that Mr. Obama had attended "Jakarta's Muslim Wahhabi schools. Wahhabism is the radical teaching that created the Muslim terrorists who are now waging jihad on the rest of the world."

Mr. Obama for two years attended a Catholic school in Indonesia, where he was taught about the Bible, he wrote in *Dreams From My Father*, and for two years went to an Indonesian public school open to all religions, where he was taught about the Koran.

Mr. Sampley, coincidentally, is a Vietnam veteran and longtime opponent of Mr. McCain and Senator John Kerry, both of whom he accused of ignoring his claims that American prisoners were left behind in Vietnam. He previously portrayed Mr. McCain as a "Manchurian candidate." Speaking of Mr. Martin's influence on his Obama writings, Mr. Sampley said, "I keyed off of his work."

'Secret' Muslim allegations

Mr. Martin's depictions of Mr. Obama as a secret Muslim have found resonance among some Jewish voters who have received e-mail messages containing various versions of his initial theory, often by new authors and with new twists.

In his original press release, Mr. Martin wrote that he was personally "a strong supporter of the Muslim community." But, he wrote of Mr. Obama, "it may well be that his concealment is meant to endanger Israel." He added, "His Muslim religion

would obviously raise serious questions in many Jewish circles." Yet in various court papers, Mr. Martin had impugned Jews.

A motion he filed in a 1983 bankruptcy case called the judge "a crooked, slimy Jew who has a history of lying and thieving common to members of his race." In another motion, filed in 1983, Mr. Martin wrote, "I am able to understand how the Holocaust took place, and with every passing day feel less and less sorry that it did."

In an interview, Mr. Martin denied some statements against Jews attributed to him in court papers, blaming malicious judges for inserting them. But in his "48 Hours" interview in 1993, he affirmed a different anti-Semitic part of the affidavit that included the line about the Holocaust, saying, "The record speaks for itself."

When asked Friday about an assertion in his court papers that "Jews, historically and in daily living, act through clans and in wolf pack syndrome," he said, "That one sort of rings a bell." He said he was not anti-Semitic. "I was trying to show that everybody in the bankruptcy court was Jewish and I was not Jewish," he said, "and I was being victimized by religious bias."

'Moderately severe personality defect'

In discussing the denial of his admission to the Illinois bar, Mr. Martin said the psychiatric exam listing him as having a "moderately severe personality defect" was spitefully written by an evaluator he had clashed with.

Mr. Martin, who says he is from a well-off banking and farming family, is clearly pleased with his newfound attention. But, he said, others have added to his work in "scary" ways. "They Google 'Islam' and 'Obama' and my stuff comes up and they take that and kind of use that—like a Christmas tree, and they decorate it," he said. For instance, he said, he did not necessarily ascribe to a widely circulated e-mail message from the Israeli right-wing activist Ruth Matar, which includes the false assertion, "If Obama were elected, he would be the first Arab-American president."

He said he had at least come to "accept" Mr. Obama's word that he had found Jesus Christ. His intent, he said, was only to educate.

(Kitty Bennett contributed reporting. Copyright © 2008 *The New York Times*)

20081014-01	12:11	SteveB	Fw: "Sorry, Dad, I'm Voting for Obama"
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[Confirmed OK by Snopes.com. —SteveB]

"Sorry, Dad, I'm Voting for Obama" by Christopher Buckley

Oct. 10, 2008, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2008/10/10/the-conservative-case-for-obama.html>)

(The son of William F. Buckley has decided—shock!—to vote for a Democrat.)

Let me be the latest conservative/libertarian/whatever to leap onto the Barack Obama bandwagon. It's a good thing my dear old mum and pup are no longer alive. They'd cut off my allowance.

Or would they? But let's get that part out of the way. The only reason my vote would be of any interest to anyone is that my last name happens to be Buckley—a name I inherited. So in the event anyone notices or cares, the headline will be: "William F. Buckley's Son Says He Is Pro-Obama." I know, I know: It lacks the throw-weight of "Ron Reagan Jr. to Address Democratic Convention," but it'll have to do.

I am—drum roll, please, cue trumpets—making this announcement in the cyberpages of *The Daily Beast* (what joy to be writing for a publication so named!) rather than in the pages of *National Review*, where I write the back-page column. For a reason: My colleague, the superb and very dishy Kathleen Parker, recently wrote in *National Review* Online a column stating what John Cleese as Basil Fawlty would call "the bleeding obvious": namely, that Sarah Palin is an embarrassment, and a dangerous one at that. She's not exactly alone. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who began his career at NR, just called Governor Palin "a cancer on the Republican Party."

As for Kathleen, she has to date received 12,000 (quite literally) foam-at-the-mouth hate-emails. One correspondent, if that's quite the right word, suggested that Kathleen's mother should have aborted her and tossed the fetus into a Dumpster. There's Socratic dialogue for you. Dear Pup once said to me sigh fully after a right-winger who fancied himself a WFB protégé had said something transcendently and provocatively cretinous, "You know, I've spent my entire life time separating the Right from the kooks."

Well, the dear man did his best. At any rate, I don't have the kidney at the moment for 12,000 emails saying how good it is he's no longer alive to see his Judas of a son endorse for the presidency a covert Muslim who pals around with the Weather Underground. So, you're reading it here first.

As to the particulars, assuming anyone gives a fig, here goes:

I have known John McCain personally since 1982. I wrote a well-received speech for him. Earlier this year, I wrote in *The New York Times*—I'm beginning to sound like Paul Krugman, who cannot begin a column without saying, "As I warned the world in my last column..."—a highly favorable Op-Ed about McCain, taking Rush Limbaugh and the others in the Right Wing Sanhedrin to task for going after McCain for being insufficiently conservative. I don't—still—doubt that McCain's instincts remain fundamentally conservative. But the problem is otherwise.

McCain rose to power on his personality and biography. He was authentic. He spoke truth to power. He told the media they were "jerks" (a sure sign of authenticity, to say nothing of good taste; we are jerks). He was real. He was unconventional. He embraced former anti-war leaders. He brought resolution to the awful missing-POW business. He brought about normalization with Vietnam—his former torturers! Yes, he erred in accepting plane rides and vacations from Charles Keating, but then, having been cleared on technicalities, groveled in apology before the nation. He told me across a lunch table, "The Keating business was much worse than my five and a half years in Hanoi, because I at least walked away from that with my honor." Your heart went out to the guy. I thought at the time, God, this guy should be president someday.

A year ago, when everyone, including the man I'm about to endorse, was caterwauling to get out of Iraq on the next available flight, John McCain, practically alone, said no, no—bad move. Surge. It seemed a suicidal position to take, an act of political bravery of the kind you don't see a whole lot of anymore.

But that was—sigh—then. John McCain has changed. He said, famously, apropos the Republican debacle post-1994, "We came to Washington to change it, and Washington changed us." This campaign has changed John McCain. It has made him inauthentic. A once-first class temperament has become irascible and snarly; his positions change, and lack coherence; he makes unrealistic promises, such as balancing the federal budget "by the end of my first term." Who, really, believes that? Then there was the self-dramatizing and feckless suspension of his campaign over the financial crisis. His ninth-inning attack ads are mean-spirited and pointless. And finally, not to belabor it, there was the Palin nomination. What on earth can he have been thinking?

All this is genuinely saddening, and for the country is perhaps even tragic, for America ought, really, to be governed by men like John McCain—who have spent their entire lives in its service, even willing to give the last full measure of their devotion to it. If he goes out losing ugly, it will be beyond tragic, graffiti on a marble bust.

As for Senator Obama: He has exhibited throughout a "first-class temperament," pace Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.'s famous comment about FDR. As for his intellect, well, he's a Harvard man, though that's sure as heck no guarantee of anything, these days. Vietnam was brought to you by Harvard and (one or two) Yale men. As for our current adventure in Mesopotamia, consider this lustrous alumni roster. Bush 43: Yale. Rumsfeld: Princeton. Paul Bremer: Yale and Harvard. What do they all have in common? Andover! The best and the brightest.

I've read Obama's books, and they are first-rate. He is that *rara avis*, the politician who writes his own books. Imagine. He is also a lefty. I am not. I am a small-government conservative who clings tenaciously and old-fashionably to the idea that one ought to have balanced budgets. On abortion, gay marriage, et al, I'm libertarian. I believe with my sage and epigrammatic friend P.J. O'Rourke that a government big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take it all away.

But having a first-class temperament and a first-class intellect, President Obama will (I pray, secularly) surely understand that traditional left-politics aren't going to get us out of this pit we've dug for ourselves. If he raises taxes and throws up tariff walls and opens the coffers of the DNC to bribe-money from the special interest groups against whom he has

(somewhat disingenuously) railed during the campaign trail, then he will almost certainly reap a whirlwind that will make Katrina look like a balmy summer zephyr.

Obama has in him—I think, despite his sometimes airy-fairy “We are the people we have been waiting for” silly rhetoric—the potential to be a good, perhaps even great leader. He is, it seems clear enough, what the historical moment seems to be calling for.

So, I wish him all the best. We are all in this together. Necessity is the mother of bipartisanship. And so, for the first time in my life, I’ll be pulling the Democratic lever in November. As the saying goes, God save the United States of America.

(Christopher Buckley’s books include *Supreme Courtship*, *The White House Mess*, *Thank You for Smoking*, *Little Green Men*, and *Florence of Arabia*. His journalism, satire, and criticism has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and *Esquire*. He was chief speechwriter for Vice President George H.W. Bush, and the founder and editor-in-chief of *Forbes* FYI.)

20081015-01	09:29	SteveB	“McCain's Mission Impossible”
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Johnny Boy, this "fighter" cr*p isn't going to work either. This economic crisis does not require an empty-headed, angry, fighter; it calls for a calm, intelligent, cool hand. The solution will be found by a mature leader, not by a lying old man who bustles around like a teenage kid who understands zero of what is going on around him. Maybe you should finally try to deliver on some of those concrete economic proposals (that make sense, this time, I hope), Johnny Boy. Oh...I see, your dog ate your homework, or, oh, you say you can't remember which house you left your homework at? I see. So who are you going to fight, a*s-wipe, the banks? Wall Street? Fate? You mean you aren't going to "reach across the aisle in a bipartisan fashion"? Is fighting the only analogy you know, the only role you know how to take? Then what are you doing running for President of these United States? Grow up!

“McCain's Mission Impossible” by John Dickerson, Slate

Oct. 14, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2008/10/mccains_mission_impossible.html)

(Wednesday's debate may be his last chance to win this race.)

To get a sense of what John McCain is going through on the eve of the last presidential debate with 20 days before Election Day and Barack Obama leading in the polls, I decided to put some pressure on myself: I delayed working on this story until 45 minutes before my deadline. To approximate the string of people in McCain's ear offering advice, I turned on Fox News and Rush Limbaugh. Be the happy warrior! Attack! Talk about Ayers! Don't mention Ayers! Fire your campaign staff! ACORN! I then put Wagner on my iTunes.

I'm finding it very hard to concentrate. If we're all lucky, I may just give up and end this piece right here.

OK, maybe not.

I'm sure McCain finds it hard to concentrate, too. He is tough and likes challenging situations. But for McCain, Wednesday's debate comes with a degree of difficulty perhaps beyond the capacity of human achievement. That sounds like the obligatory hyperbole required to create false drama for the debate (so that we might justify our hyperbole after the debate is over). But after doing the tabulations, this is where I come down.

Wednesday night is McCain's last big chance to reach a wide national audience without the media filter.

Obama is ahead in the national and state polls. By Pollster.com's tabulation, Obama is comfortably ahead in states that would give him 256 electoral votes. By that measure, he needs only 14 more electoral votes to win. Obama is ahead in polls in states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, and New Mexico, which could give him that magic number. And the picture looks no better nationally: As John Harwood of the New York Times noted recently, only Ronald Reagan in 1980 came back from the deficit McCain faces. This isn't to say that McCain can't come back. It's just that the weather looks really bad for him.

After the debate, there will be only 19 days left to campaign. After about Oct. 21st—13 days before Election Day—there will be more states to go to than there will be days left to go to them. Without a big debate moment, McCain might be able to dismantle his opponent through advertisements, local media, visits to battleground states, and luck in the news cycle. But that would require a level of precise execution his campaign has not yet shown. Given that unlikelihood, the debate is a big opportunity.

Of course, McCain could just present himself as a nice guy and hope for the best. Sure, there are ways he could win, but they are increasingly fantastical—and they are all out of McCain's hands: All those new Democrats that have been registering in battleground states could stay home on Election Day. There could be a news development, like the discovery of Bush's DUI charge late in 2000 or the Osama Bin Laden tape that surfaced late in 2004, that knocks the race on its ear. A huge bout of buyer's remorse could kick in after it appears that Obama has the race locked up.

If McCain wants to take his destiny into his own hands, he has to knock Obama back. The problem for McCain is that pulling off an effective attack in a debate is like making a soufflé in a highway median. (The honking alone makes it very difficult.) It's hard to be aggressive in a debate because the format is so regulated and the risk of coming off as a brute is so high.

And, historically, the candidate who goes negative in a debate almost always comes off poorly. Bob Dole may have secured Gerald Ford's defeat when, in the 1976 vice-presidential debate, he got nasty and blamed Democrats for a string of wars. Jimmy Carter looked cold and snippy in 1980 next to Ronald Reagan. Lloyd Bentsen was the only candidate who successfully got off an attack line with his crack about his friend Jack Kennedy in his 1988 vice-presidential debate against Dan Quayle.

Even if McCain could overcome history and avoid Obama's effort to portray him as intemperate and erratic, he also has to overcome his recent ineffectiveness. According to the most recent *Washington Post*/ABC poll, as McCain has increased his attacks on Obama, two poll numbers have also increased: McCain's negatives and Obama's positives. Voters now give Obama the edge on leadership for the first time in the election, and they consider McCain the riskier choice.

Obama is hardly invincible. He has dodged questions, for example, by giving unrealistic answers about how his priorities would shift given the current economic crisis. He has also been less than candid about his thinking on Iraq in light of developments in the last few months. He has overstated his abilities as a bipartisan deal-maker and truth-teller. (And his campaign isn't terribly transparent.) It's hard to see, though, how McCain could take advantage of these issues in a way that changes the dynamic of the race.

McCain's other challenge is that Obama is not his only target. He's got to do something to improve his lot with voters who care about the economy. Despite "suspending his campaign" to assist in forming a financial rescue package (or perhaps because of it), McCain continues to trail his opponent badly when voters are asked to evaluate the candidates on the economy.

As the two candidates head into the debate, both have unveiled new programs aimed at helping regular Americans in a financial pinch. McCain has also offered a new pitch about character: He's a fighter. The message is actually a cleaner version of his acceptance speech. (Perhaps the editors were barred from the room this time.) It's also the message Hillary Clinton offered at the end of her campaign—but Clinton was far more effective in explaining how she was going to fight on behalf of the middle class.

McCain never really explains why his ability to fight, to buck his party, or to do unpopular things is going to improve anyone's life. Yes, he's been tested more, and endured more in life, than Barack Obama. But voters want to know: How's that help me? McCain has got one more night to make the case.

20081015-02	09:45	SteveB	Say Something Positive, John McCain
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Tonight...why don't you tell us what you truly do believe in, John McCain? If you can remember what that is.

I mean, right now, you seem to be saying you're a liberal conservative, a non-believer in government regulation who wants to regulate, a tax cutter warrior who wants to bankrupt the nation, a "maverick" (haha) reformer surrounded by lobbyists and the Washington establishment and everything that entails, and, most confusing of all, you claim to be a man who knows nothing about economics who is going to magically solve our economic woes without bothering to understand them.

So tonight, instead of continually telling stupid, irrelevant, dirty lies about Mr. Obama, why don't you spend this precious time (especially for you, pin-head) telling the American people about what it is—beside ambition, greed, hunger, revenge, lies, and anger—that you believe in and that would make us want to vote for you?

I hope you will be able to remember something positive, something honorable, something that is not destructive.

Otherwise, why do you keep wasting our time, John McCain?

20081015-03 10:58 SteveB Fw: "The Party's Over"

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says this piece was actually written by Patrick J. Buchanan, Sept. 19, 2008: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/partysover.asp>]

About Linda Monk: Linda R. Monk, J.D., is a constitutional scholar, journalist, and nationally award-winning author. A graduate of Harvard Law School, she twice received the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award, its highest honor for law-related media. Her books include *The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution, Ordinary Americans: U.S. History Through the Eyes of Everyday People*, and *The Bill of Rights: A User's Guide*. For more than 20 years, Ms. Monk has written commentary for newspapers nationwide, including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Chicago Tribune*

"The Party's Over" by Linda Monk

The Crash of 2008, which is now wiping out trillions of dollars of our people's wealth, is, like the Crash of 1929, likely to mark the end of one era and the onset of another.

The new era will see a more sober and much diminished America. The "Omnipower" and "Indispensable Nation" we heard about in all the hubris and braggadocio following our Cold War victory is history. Seizing on the crisis, the left says we are witnessing the failure of market economics, a failure of conservatism.

This is nonsense.

What we are witnessing is the collapse of Gordon Gecko ("Greed Is Good!") capitalism. What we are witnessing is what happens to a prodigal nation that ignores history, and forgets and abandons the philosophy and principles that made it great.

A true conservative (Rep or Dem) cherishes prudence and believes in fiscal responsibility, balanced budgets and a self-reliant republic. He believes in saving for retirement and a rainy day, in deferred gratification, in not buying on credit what you cannot afford, in living within your means. Is that really what got Wall Street and us into this mess—that we followed too religiously the gospel of Robert Taft and Russell Kirk?

"Government must save us!" cries the left, as ever. Yet, who got us into this mess if not the government—the Fed with its easy money, Bush with his profligate spending, and Congress and the SEC by liberating Wall Street and failing to step in and stop the drunken orgy? For years, we Americans have spent more than we earned.

We save nothing.

Credit card debt, consumer debt, auto debt, mortgage debt, corporate debt—all are at record levels. And with pensions and savings being wiped out, much of that debt will never be repaid. Our standard of living is inevitably going to fall. For foreigners will not forever buy our bonds or lend us more money if they rightly fear that they will be paid back, if at all, in cheaper dollars.

We are going to have to learn to live again within our means.

THE PARTY'S OVER!

Up through World War II, we followed the Hamiltonian idea that America must remain economically independent of the world in order to remain politically independent.

But this generation decided that was yesterday's bromide and we must march bravely forward into a Global Economy, where we all depend on one another.

American companies morphed into "Global Companies" and moved plants and factories to Mexico, Asia, China and India, and we began buying more cheaply from abroad what we used to make at home: shoes, clothes, bikes, cars, radios, TVs, planes, computers.

As the trade deficits began inexorably to rise to 6 percent of GDP, we began vast borrowing from abroad to continue buying from abroad.

At home, propelled by tax cuts, war in Iraq and an explosion in social spending, surpluses vanished and deficits reappeared and began to rise. The dollar began to sink, and gold began to soar.

Yet, still, the promises of the politicians come. Barack Obama will give us national health insurance and tax cuts for all but that 2 percent of the nation that already carries 50 percent of the federal income tax load.

John McCain is going to cut taxes, expand the military, move NATO into Georgia and Ukraine, confront Russia and force Iran to stop enriching uranium or "bomb, bomb, bomb," with Joe Lieberman as wartime consigliere.

Who are we kidding?

What we are witnessing today is how empires end. The Last Superpower is unable to defend its borders, protect its currency, win its wars or balance its budget. Medicare and Social Security are headed for the cliff with unfunded liabilities in the tens of trillions of dollars. What we are witnessing today is nothing less than a Katrina-like failure of government, of our political class, and of democracy itself, casting a cloud over the viability and longevity of the system. Notice who is managing the crisis.

Not our elected leaders.

Nancy Pelosi says she had nothing to do with it. Congress is paralyzed and heading home. President Bush is nowhere to be seen.

Hank Paulson of Goldman Sachs and Ben Bernanke of the Fed chose to bail out Bear Sterns but let Lehman go under.

They decided to nationalize Fannie and Freddie at a cost to taxpayers of hundreds of billions, putting the U.S. government behind \$5 trillion in mortgages. They decided to buy AIG with \$85 billion rather than see the insurance giant sink beneath the waves.

An unelected financial elite is now entrusted with the assignment of getting us out of a disaster into which an unelected financial elite plunged the nation. We are just spectators.

What the Greatest Generation handed down to us—the richest, most powerful, most self-sufficient republic in history, with the highest standard of living any nation had ever achieved—the baby boomers, oblivious and self-indulgent to the end, have frittered away.

How do WE THE PEOPLE put the villains who are responsible under oath and sit them down at public hearings to determine whose necks should meet the guillotine?

Hypocritically, those who had oversight responsibility such as Senator Chris Dodd [Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee] and Barney Frank [Chairman, House Financial Services Committee] who helped get us into this mess are on every TV channel voicing their righteous indignation and pompously sitting on their elevated platform glaring down at those they are chastising and grilling, trying to pass the blame to others.

WE THE PEOPLE should be on the elevated platform in judgment and execution of the likes of Chris Dodd, Barney Frank and the rest of the band of thieves and conspirators who are responsible for the financial collapse of the U.S.

To name just a few of the culprits: Henry Paulson Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, Alan Greenspan & Ben Bernanke, Chairman Federal Reserve & Christopher Cox, SEC Chairman.

But not to worry—YOUR PUBLIC SERVANTS who fear being voted out of office will take their self-awarded Golden Parachute Congressional

Retirement, give WE THE PEOPLE the finger one last time and head for their safe havens as the World Citizens they are.

However, before they waddle off into the sunset, they will go on record one last time denouncing corporate greed, lavish salaries and bonuses for their key felons at Fannie May, Freddie Mac, Lehman Brothers & AIG.

Meanwhile, WE THE PEOPLE fiddle while Rome burns and are too lazy and indifferent to vote the scum out of office.

20081015-04	18:52	SteveB	"The Risk of McCain's Health Plan"
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And his Social Security "ideas" scare the hell out of me too!

"The Risk of McCain's Health Plan" by Ron Brownstein, *National Journal* and MSNBC

Oct. 10, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27121059/ns/politics-national_journal/t/risk-mccains-health-plan/)

(Obama not exaggerating when calling his opponent's plan 'radical'.)

(WASHINGTON) This week's most important debate wasn't the meandering town hall duel between Barack Obama and John McCain. That encounter was understandably scored by polls and most pundits as a win for Obama, who seemed steadier than an over-caffeinated McCain. But lackluster questions and a constrictive format meant it did little to clarify the decision facing voters.

Far more instructive was the argument Obama instigated with McCain last week over health care. In several speeches, Obama accurately framed the central contrast between the nominees' approaches. The bedrock goal of Obama's plan is to reinforce the sharing of risk and cost between healthy and sick, young and old. By contrast, McCain, hoping to expand choice, would erode risk-sharing and accept sharper distinctions between the healthy and sick in both the availability and cost of coverage. One plan prizes solidarity; the other, autonomy.

Most Americans now receive their health insurance at work. That system promotes risk-sharing because employers don't vary the premiums based on a worker's age or health: The old and sick are subsidized by the young and healthy, who are then subsidized as they age.

McCain would upend that system. Today employers can deduct as a business expense the contributions they make to a worker's health insurance premiums. Workers, though, are not taxed on the value of their employer's contribution. That "exclusion" provides a powerful tax incentive for work-based coverage. McCain would end the exclusion so that workers pay taxes on their employer's premium contribution. Instead, he would provide a tax credit (\$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families) that workers could apply to the cost of obtaining health insurance. In an ad this week, the Obama campaign described that trade as "the largest middle-class tax increase in history."

That's flat wrong. For all but the highest earners with the most-expensive insurance plans, the credit would more than offset the additional taxes workers would face from ending the exclusion, the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center calculates. The real problem with McCain's idea is that, without the economic incentive provided by the exclusion, more employers might stop offering coverage. And even employers who want to continue could find it difficult because younger workers would be likely to use their credit to buy stripped-down, cheaper coverage on their own. That would leave employers covering only older and sicker workers, which could quickly swell premiums to unaffordable levels. That concern prompted the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable to criticize McCain's plan in an eye-opening *New York Times* article on Tuesday.

McCain's camp insists that his proposal would not undermine employer-based coverage. But few experts agree. Several studies have projected that his plan would move about 20 million people from employer-based coverage to the individual

insurance market. And in that market, older or sicker consumers face much higher costs than the healthy—if they can buy coverage at all.

McCain would further deregulate the individual market by allowing any insurance policy approved in any state to be sold in every state. He says that would provide consumers more choices, but it would also undercut state laws requiring insurers to cover specific treatments, like cervical or breast cancer screening for women. An insurer could locate in the one state that does not require it to fund mammograms (Utah) and sell in all 50 states. Even more worrisome, notes health economist Jonathan Gruber, is that insurance companies offering more-comprehensive policies for individuals would face the same risk as employers—losing healthy young workers to cut-rate plans from the least-regulated states. That would further unravel risk-sharing and increase prices for the sick.

Obama's goals couldn't differ more. Through incentives for (and mandates on) employers, the expansion of government programs, and new nationwide rules for insurers (such as requiring them to cover all applicants, regardless of their health), he wants to insure more Americans through large pools that promote risk-sharing.

McCain's approach would save people money when they are young but expose them to greater financial and health risks as they age. It repudiates the essence of insurance, which aims to spread risk not only across the population but across an individual's lifetime. Obama is wrong to portray McCain's plan as a tax hike. And the Democrat's alternative raises its own tough questions, especially about cost. But Obama does not exaggerate when he says that his rival is offering a "radical" new vision of how Americans can safeguard their health.

20081018-01	19:28	SteveB	"Cracking the ACORN Case"
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Notice...none of the cr*p about Obama has proven to be true so far! Strange, huh?

"Cracking the ACORN Case" by Andrew Romano, *Newsweek*

Oct. 15, 2008, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/blogs/stumper/2008/10/15/cracking-the-acorn-case.html>)

(Acorn + Mickey Mouse = The Most Adorable Political "Scandal" in Recent Memory. It may also be one of the most pointless.)

In recent days, conservative activists and right-leaning media outlets like FOX News and Matt Drudge—who led his influential site with the Mickey Mouse story yesterday afternoon—have tried to raise a ruckus over the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, a liberal nonprofit/lobbying group—it typically fights on behalf of poor people for free school lunches and government housing—that also spearheaded one of this cycle's largest (and most controversial) voter registration drives. Unless I'm mistaken, the conspiracy theory goes something like this: Obama "has ties" to Acorn; Acorn is trying to steal the election; therefore, by the transitive property, Obama is also trying to steal the election. To see why this makes no sense, it'll be helpful to break the equation down into three bite-sized pieces.

I. Obama Has Ties to ACORN: This is true. As the New York Times recently reported, "in 1995, Obama was on a team of lawyers that represented Acorn in a lawsuit to compel Illinois to comply with federal laws intended to enhance access to the polls"; the Justice Department "was on the same side as ACORN in the lawsuit." Later, "Obama conducted two leadership training sessions of roughly an hour each for ACORN's Chicago affiliate over a three-year period." Finally, the Obama campaign made (in February) a \$832,598 payment to Citizens Services, Inc., a consulting firm affiliated with ACORN; Chicago initially reported that the money was for "staging, sound, lighting" before amending its FEC reports to reflect the fact that it was spent on get-out-the-vote efforts. About \$80,000 of the \$832,598 went to ACORN.

Of course, there's no proof here that Team Obama coordinated with ACORN on registering voters or anything. Still, if ACORN were committing voter fraud, that large February payment would certainly land the candidate in hot water—deservedly so. The key word, however, is "if." Which brings us to...

II. ACORN Is Trying to Steal the Election. This is not even remotely true. To date, there has been no shortage of charges against ACORN: Ohio in 2004; Colorado in 2005; Kansas City, Missouri in 2006 and Washington state in 2007. This year alone, authorities are investigating the organization's branches in Lake County, Indiana; Cuyahoga County, Ohio; Michigan; Nevada and Missouri. But not a single case alleges that ACORN is attempting to influence the outcome of the election. So why all the fuss? Because people are confusing voter fraud (a dangerous offense) with voter registration

fraud (a petty crime). ACORN stands accused of the latter. The Politico's Ben Smith explains nicely: The former would be, say, voting the cemeteries or stuffing the ballot boxes.

This has happened occasionally in American history, though I can think of recent instances only in rare local races. Practically speaking, this can most easily be done by whoever is actually administering the election, which is why partisan observers carefully oversee the vote-counting process. The latter is putting the names of fake voters on the rolls, something that happens primarily when organizations, like Acorn, pay contractors for new voter registrations. That can be a crime, and it messes up the voter files, but there's virtually no evidence these imaginary people then vote in November. The current stories about Acorn don't even allege a plan to affect the November vote.

I'll use Mickey Mouse to demonstrate how ACORN has engaged in voter registration fraud. In Florida, ACORN pays local workers \$8 an hour to gather 20 voter registrations a day. One of these workers, seeking to meet his quota and snap up his paycheck, wrote down "Mickey Mouse," forged a signature and turned his form; others have submitted forms with made-up names, repeated names, "unreadable handwriting, missing information, signatures that didn't match those on file, altered dates of birth or Social Security numbers." Following protocol, ACORN has tried to find the incomplete, duplicate or bogus forms and fire the employees who submitted them. But before sending every application to the state—which is required by law—the group unfortunately failed to flag a few.

This has undoubtedly made life more difficult for the local officials tasked with verifying applications, and ACORN should be held accountable. But it can't possibly change who's voting on Election Day. Mickey Mouse isn't going to show up at the polls. Voters can't vote if they don't exist. People who are registered twice will only be allowed to vote once. Annoying as they are, these inconsistencies can't affect the outcome of the election. They can only cause headaches.

For voter registration fraud to become voter fraud, ACORN would have to be engaged in a widespread, covert effort to flood the polls with ineligible voters impersonating their eligible peers. That would require a lot of top-down coordination: identifying willing impersonators, forging documents, etc. No one has accused ACORN of anything remotely like this. In fact, ACORN seems to have the opposite problem; the fact that it failed to filter some obviously fake registration forms from its 1.3 million applications suggests, if anything, a lack of organization. That's one reason actual voter fraud is extremely rare. As Art Levine reports, "only 24 people were convicted of illegal voting in federal elections between 2002 and 2005—and nobody was even charged by Justice with impersonating another voter.

(The Justice Department declined to answer questions about more recent fraud prosecutions.) And despite the anti-immigrant frenzy fueling photo-ID laws, only 14 noncitizens were convicted of illegally voting in federal elections from 2002 through 2005—mostly because of their ignorance of election law." Even then, it's a stretch to say the group that registered a lawbreaking voter should be held responsible for his or her actions.

III. Obama is Trying to Steal the Election: Back to the transitive property. If Obama has ties to ACORN but ACORN ISN'T trying to steal the election, how could Obama possibly be cheating? If Obama wins on Nov. 4, expect his opponents to claim that he climbed to victory on a mountain of fraudulent votes. But don't believe them—unless you believe that Mickey Mouse actually exists. And votes. Without anybody stopping him.

20081019-01 08:25 SteveB Fw: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?" [defense]
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This provides a little perspective!

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

What if the candidates lives were reversed?

What if John McCain were a former president of the Harvard Law Review?

What if Barack Obama finished fifth from the bottom of his graduating class?

What if McCain were still married to the first woman he said 'I do' to?

What if Obama were the candidate who left his first wife after she no longer measured up to his standards?

What if Michelle Obama were a wife who not only became addicted to pain killers, but acquired them illegally through her charitable organization? What if Cindy McCain graduated from Harvard?

What if Obama were a member of the Keating-5? (as if it were a rock band or a club)

What if McCain were a charismatic, eloquent speaker?

If the above questions reflected reality, do you really believe the election numbers would be as close as they are?

You are The Boss... which team would you hire? With America facing historic debt, 2 wars, stumbling health care, a weakened dollar, all-time high prison population, mortgage crises, bank foreclosures, etc.

Educational Background—OBAMA/BIDEN:

Obama: Columbia University—B.A. Political Science with a Specialization in International Relations.
Harvard—Juris Doctor (J.D.) Magna Cum Laude

Biden: University of Delaware—B.A in History and B.A. in Political Science.
Syracuse University College of Law—Juris Doctor (J.D.)

Educational Background—McCAIN/PALIN:

McCain: United States Naval Academy—Class rank: 894 of 899

Palin:

Hawaii Pacific University—1 semester
North Idaho College—2 semesters—general study
University of Idaho—2 semesters—journalism
Matanuska-Susitna College—1 semester
University of Idaho—3 semesters—B.A. in Journalism

Now, which team are you going to hire?

Oh, and by the way: What if Barack Obama had an unwed, pregnant teenage daughter...

20081019-02 10:32 SteveM Re: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?"

Dear SteveB,

What if McCain didn't have to walk on eggs for fear of being called a racist only to have that allegation raised to elicit the "white liberal guilt" anyway, particularly when Obama supporters don't want to answer the charges. It's always a conversation stopper.

What if BHO had taken public money like he said he would?

20081019-03 13:10 SteveB Overheard Conversation: John McCain & Rush Limbaugh, Part 2

Rush Limbaugh: Johnny Boy, tell me about this Colin Powell thing, please? How could he turn commie like this?

John McCain: Believe me, he's lyin' out his a*s! He's been pullin' for me all along, like any Right wing conservative should do. And he knows that I got this foreign policy down pat! So it's just more typical lies from the Obama campaign.

Limbaugh: But Powell isn't in the Obama campaign.

McCain: Whatever, same thing. I will not talk to our enemy, Spain, under any conditions other than complete surrender. If they want to fight, they'll see what a fighter I am. I'll fight 'em. I'm not kidding either. Bam! Down they go! 'Bomb bomb Iran!' Heeheehee.

Limbaugh: But he also said that Obama is fully qualified to be President and that he could hit the ground running on the famous "Day 1". He also ensured his future sequestration in hell by stating that Sarah Palin, the goddess of the, ah, "twin goddesses" isn't qualified for squat! There goes your entire "He ain't qualified!" campaign that had the redneck population just confused enough for us to gain a few votes. (Frankly, they were understanding it better than the "Hey, he's a star!" campaign or even the usually unbeatable "He's a terrorist and I'm a redneck!" campaign.

McCain: [rising, knocking over microphone and chair, guards are being called, there is chaos in the studio] Wait till I get my hands on that traitor Colin Powell. Everybody knows that he's "palled around with known terrorists" for years. That's the connection between him and Obama and all true believers know it. Everyone who is not a Muslim, that is. Hey! Get your hands off me! I'm the President of the United States. Who are you gonna believe, me or a black man?

Limbaugh: (whispers) Get me out of here!

Sorry, Johnny Boy, but I think we're all finding your blizzard of lies to be just so much dog cr*pola and smoke screen, but we see ya' back there tryin' to move them levers.

20081019-04 13:24 SteveB Re: "What If the Candidates Lives Were Reversed?"

Oooooo...[said in baby talk] Barry didn't take the public money like he said he would? Oooooo...so better suspend your campaign and take your marbles and go to one of your ?# homes, Johnny Boy.

Did Obama break the law? No.

Did he do something unethical? Obviously not.

Did he make a smarter decision and pursue a better strategy than McCain? You betcha.

Did he do something that would allow special interests to gain more control of his campaign and/or the government? No, the opposite.

This is the real world and we play like big boys, John McCain. But at least, totally unlike yourself, we play fair!

I guess, if you don't think so and want to keep whining about nonsense, it just proves that you're not fit to run the American government, let alone any major corporation, Mr. Self-proclaimed war hero.

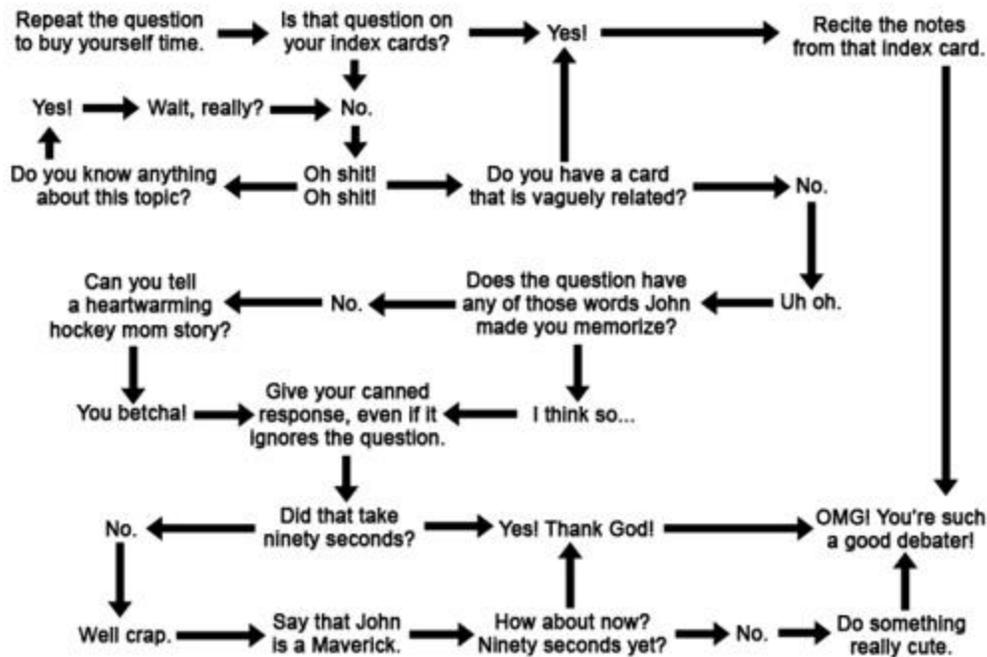
So what exactly is the point here? I guess exactly the same as the point to saying Obama associates with terrorists. These are not actual charges. They are stupid innuendo and harmful to the initiator, not the intended victim.

20081020-01 18:14 SteveB Fw: Sarah Palin Debate Flow Chart

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Sarah Palin Debate Flow Chart

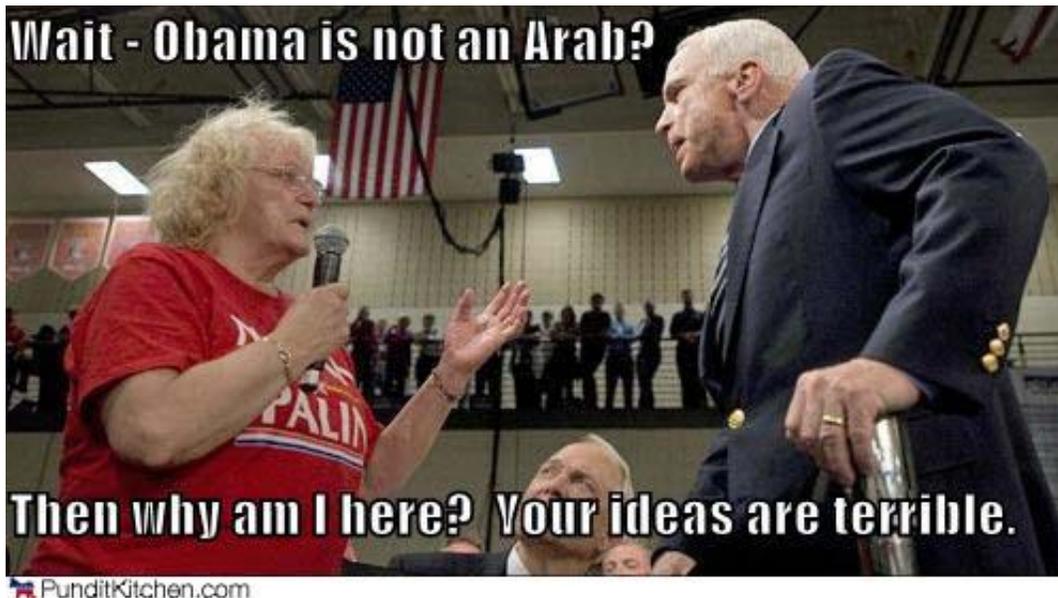
www.adennak.com



20081020-02 18:16 SteveB Fw: Joe the Plumber / Obama the Muslim [defense]

[Source of fwd. unknown. —SteveB]





20081021-01 14:36 Phil Fw: Illinois Politics

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Chicago Politics:

Body count in the last six months:

292 Murdered in Chicago
221 Killed in Iraq

Our leadership in Illinois (all Democrats):

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama
U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin
U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr.
Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich
Illinois House Leader Mike Madigan
Illinois Atty. Gen. Lisa Madigan
Chicago Mayor Richard Daly

Thank you for the combat zone in Chicago. Of course, they are blaming each other—can't blame the Republicans, because there aren't any!!!!

State Pension Fund: \$44 Billion in debt (worst in the nation)
Cook County (Chicago) Sales Tax: 10.25% (highest in the nation)
Chicago School System: one of the worst in the nation

This is the political machine that Obama says he comes from Illinois. And now Obama says he's gonna 'fix' Washington politics!!!!

Spread the word! Save America!

20081021-02 17:00 SteveB "In Endgame, Metrics Are Adding Up for Obama"

"In Endgame, Metrics Are Adding Up for Obama" by Charlie Cook, *National Journal*

Oct. 21, 2008, (<http://www.nationaljournal.com/columns/off-to-the-races/in-endgame-metrics-are-adding-up-for-obama-20081021>)

(Several key factors don't look too good for McCain.)

(WASHINGTON) One of the most unsettling aspects of this campaign is that for an election cycle so turbulent, with so many surprising twists and turns, over the last few days it suddenly has had the feel of concrete setting. Just seven or eight weeks ago, Sen. Barack Obama had a lead over Sen. John McCain, but it hardly seemed sure; we wondered, is this lead real, is it durable?

But today it seems very unlikely that the focal point of this election is going to shift away from the economy. And as long as the economy is the focal point, it's difficult to see how this gets any better for Republicans up or down the ballot. It's sobering to think of the magnitude an event would have to have to pull voters' minds off the economy, the credit markets that have seized up, the stock market that has been pummeled, the values of their 401(k) and other retirement plans that have plummeted. How can an election that was so volatile now suddenly seem to be so inevitable?

At this point it would be difficult to see Republican losses in the Senate and House to be fewer than seven and 20 respectively. A very challenging situation going into September turned into a meltdown last month, the most dire predictions for the GOP early on became the most likely outcome.

1. The metrics of this election argue strongly that this campaign is over, it's only the memory of many an election that seemed over but wasn't that is keeping us from closing the book mentally on this one. First, no candidate behind this far in the national polls, this late in the campaign has come back to win. Sure, we have seen come-from-behind victories, but they didn't come back this far this late.
2. Early voting has made comebacks harder and would tend to diminish the impact of the kind of late-breaking development that might save McCain's candidacy. With as many as one-third of voters likely to cast their ballot before Election Day, every day more are cast and the campaign is effectively over for them. The longer Obama has this kind of lead and the more votes are cast early, the more voters are out of the pool for McCain.
3. Considering that 89 percent of all voters who identified themselves as Democrats voted for John Kerry four years ago and 93 percent of Republicans cast their ballots for George W. Bush, the switch from parity between the parties to a 10-point Democratic advantage would seem to almost seal this outcome irrespective of the candidates fielded on each side. The unprecedented surges seen in Democratic party registrations in those states that require party affiliations confirm that.
4. Just look at the money and spending. With Obama now outspending McCain routinely by margins of 3- and 4-to-1 in advertising in so many states, it's hard to see how the Arizonan's campaign can drive a message. For a time, Obama was matching McCain one for one in negative advertising, then spending double or triple on top of that in positive advertising. Now Obama seems primarily doing positive ads, probably the right move given his lead going into this final stretch. Organizationally, it's hard to find any state where McCain is organized as well as President Bush was four years ago or Obama is today, a product of both money and enthusiasm.
5. While many are talking about the so-called "Bradley effect," voters telling pollsters that they will vote for an African-American candidate when they won't, putting aside the question of whether it ever existed, it hasn't been seen in at least 15 years and the likely surge in turnout among African-American and young people seems sufficient to offset it anyway.
6. Finally there are the states. Obama is now leading in every state that Al Gore and John Kerry both won, including Michigan, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and he is ahead in Iowa, New Hampshire and New Mexico, the three states that went once but not twice for Democrats in 2000 and 2004. He is also ahead in Florida, Colorado and Virginia. If that weren't enough (and it is), he's running basically even in Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina and Ohio, and even threatening in Montana, North Dakota and West Virginia.

As things are going now, this election would appear to be on a track to match Bill Clinton's 1992 5.6 percent margin over President George H.W. Bush, the question is whether it gets to Bush's 1988 7.7 percent win over Michael Dukakis or Clinton's 8.5 percent win over Robert Dole in 1996.

Maybe some cataclysmic event occurs in the next two weeks that changes the trajectory of this election, but to override these factors, it would have to be very, very big.

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[20081022-01](#) 09:55 SteveM Joe Biden Gaffe: "Obama Will Be Tested by Russia"

Dear SteveB,

Sunday morning, at Mustang Corners on my way to Tombstone, I told my riding pals that Russia was going to "try Obama on for size if elected." And now I find that Joe Biden is arguing, again, why Americans should not elect Barack Obama president of the United States but, instead, should pull the lever for John McCain:

"Mark my words," the Democratic vice presidential nominee warned at the second of his two Seattle fundraisers Sunday. "It will not be six months before the world tests Barack Obama like they did John Kennedy. The world is looking. We're about to elect a brilliant 47-year-old senator president of the United States of America. Remember I said it standing here if you don't remember anything else I said. Watch, we're gonna have an international crisis, a generated crisis, to test the mettle of this guy."

"I can give you at least four or five scenarios from where it might originate," Biden said to Emerald City supporters, mentioning the Middle East and Russia as possibilities.

So SteveB, who's lives and what city(s) do you propose to sacrifice to assuage your guilt?

[Mar. 2012, Don't know, but Russia must have wisely decided not to tangle with Barry. Biden, dumb remark. —SteveB]

[20081022-02](#) 10:19 SteveB "Sarah Palin Flunks a 3rd Grader's Question"

Dear SteveM,

OH MY GOD! was certainly my reaction. So the woman cares so little about the job that in all these weeks she hasn't even brushed up on the Constitution or asked one of the Bush handlers around here what the job description is?

This woman is a complete idiot! Not for not knowing the answer to the question (which is bad enough) but for not even caring enough about America to learn about the job.

An "F" for you, Mrs. Palin. Now, please go back home to Alaska and leave us the hell alone!

"Sarah Palin Flunks a 3rd Grader's Question" Oct. 21, 2008, AP

3rd Grader Question: What does the Vice-President do?

Palin: "They're in charge of the U.S. Senate ... really get in there with the senators and make a lot of good policy changes..."

America: "Oh. My. God!"

[20081022-03](#) 11:56 SteveB Re: Illinois Politics

Dear Phil,

But it doesn't turn out that Obama had anything, really, to do with any of these negatives.

What does have to do with them...is that poor people are often black, unemployed, prone to drugs and crime, not too much fun to be around, and oftentimes not too good looking either. :-)

But all people are still our brothers, right? And, to the black ones, we owe rock 'n' roll and a hell of a lot else, even some of our freedom.

Do you really believe the Bush Presidency has done anything to preserve and bring jobs for these people? This would cost almost nothing...just some tax incentives and less free trade. But N-0-0-0-0-0, millions of our best jobs, especially for uneducated or undereducated workers—our former backbone of factories—have been shipped to China and Mexico!

And now small business is being strangled so big business can thrive on government bail-outs? Oh...just the Republican way, I forgot.

20081022-04 13:37 SteveB Re: Joe Biden Gaffe

Dear SteveM,

My God! (again) Do you think they wouldn't test the old fart? My God, he almost got us in trouble with Russia already, and us with no troops available except maybe you and your riding buddies. And I'm sure you'd give 'em hell and I'd be very grateful for your efforts, but this is not a scenario we desire. What would frighten the hell out of me, and apparently most Americans, is the thought of that senile maniac running around like a rooster with its head cut off, or, even worse, that idiot Palin trying to run things during some international crisis.

How can you dare to even hint at an allegation that Obama is inexperienced and/or not ready when we have seen him master a crisis like McCain could not do, and when you have that blithering idiot Palin on the ticket?

How can you dare talk about problems Obama could not handle when you have a senile 72-year-old and Palin? After all we've learned, you would sleep better with Palin in charge? Insane.

The one f*cking point in the known universe that you should be able to come to terms with and agree with is that Obama (or that fake Joe the Plumber, for that matter) would make a better President than Palin. You won't even go for "at least as good", will you b*t-hole? Totally unfair and unjust! No idiot, not even a woman idiot, can make as good a President as an intelligent man. Period.

Get serious, dude! And say hi to Tombstone for me.

20081022-05 14:01 SteveB Editorial Endorsement: "Barack Obama for President"

Obama—not inexperienced...now tried and tested and vetted to be your President! That other guy...he didn't really seem like the kind of leader you'd want in a crisis, did he? And that Palin! What the hell was the old guy thinking? [And the constant attacks and lies from the McCain campaign, what the hell was that all about? What a strategy! What vaunted Republican integrity! What maverickism! Phooee!]

—The American People

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* traditionally favors the Republican party. It is interesting and noteworthy that it has endorsed a candidate three weeks before the election. Missouri remains a toss-up state, very much in play.

"Barack Obama for President" by *St. Louis Post Dispatch* Editorial Board

date? (<http://www.aftguild.org/hot-topics/St-Louis-Post-Dispatch.html>)

Nine Days before the Feb. 5 presidential primaries in Missouri and Illinois , this editorial page endorsed Barack Obama and John McCain in their respective races. We did so enthusiastically. We wrote that either Mr. Obama's message of hope or Mr. McCain's independence and integrity offered America "the chance to turn the page on 28 years of contentious, greed-driven politics and move into a new era of possibility."

Over the past nine months, Mr. Obama, the junior senator from Illinois , has emerged as the only truly transformative candidate in the race. In the crucible that is a presidential campaign, his intellect, his temperament and equanimity under pressure consistently have been impressive. He has surrounded himself with smart, capable advisers who have helped him refine thorough, nuanced policy positions. In a word, Mr. Obama has been presidential.

Meanwhile, Mr. McCain, the senior senator from Arizona , became the incredible shrinking man. He shrank from his principled stands in favor of a humane immigration policy. He shrank from his universal condemnation of torture and his condemnation of the politics of smear. He even shrank from his own campaign slogan, "County First," by selecting the least qualified running mate since the Swedenborgian shipbuilder Arthur Sewall ran as William Jennings Bryan's No. 2 in 1896.

In making political endorsements, this editorial page is guided first by the principles espoused by Joseph Pulitzer in The *Post-Dispatch* Platform printed daily at the top of this page. Then we consider questions of character, life experience and intellect, as well as specific policy and issue positions. Each member of the editorial board weighs in.

On all counts, the consensus was clear: Barack Obama of Illinois should be the next president of the United States. We didn't know nine months ago that before Election Day, America would face its greatest economic challenge since the Great Depression. The crisis on Wall Street is devastating, but it has offered voters a useful preview of how the two presidential candidates would respond to a crisis. Very early on, Mr. Obama reached out to his impressive corps of economic advisers and developed a comprehensive set of recommendations for addressing the problems. He set them forth calmly and explained them carefully.

Mr. McCain, a longtime critic of government regulation, was late to recognize the threat. The chief economic adviser of his campaign initially was former Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, who had been one of the architects of banking deregulation. When the credit markets imploded, Mr. McCain lurched from one ineffectual grandstand play to another. He squandered the one clear advantage he had over Mr. Obama: experience. Mr. McCain first was elected to Congress in 1982 when Mr. Obama was in his senior year at Columbia University . Yet the younger man's intellectual curiosity and capacity—and, yes, also the skills he developed as a community organizer and his instincts as a political conciliator—more than compensate for his lack of more traditional Washington experience.

A presidency is defined less by what happens in the Oval Office than by what is done by the more than 3,000 men and women the president appoints to government office. Only 600 of them are subject to Senate approval. The rest serve at the pleasure of the president. We have little doubt that Mr. Obama's appointees would bring a level of competence, compassion and intellectual achievement to the executive branch that hasn't been seen since the New Frontier. He has energized a new generation of Americans who would put the concept of service back in "public service."

Consider that while Mr. McCain selected as his running mate Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska , a callow and shrill partisan, Mr. Obama selected Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware . Mr. Biden's 35-year Senate career has given him encyclopedic expertise on legislative and judicial issues, as well as foreign affairs. The idea that 3,000 bright, dedicated and accomplished Americans would be joining the Obama administration to serve the public—as opposed to padding their resumé's or shilling for the corporate interests they're sworn to oversee—is reassuring. That they would be serving a president who actually would listen to them is staggering.

And the fact that Mr. Obama can explain his thoughts and policies in language that can instruct and inspire is exciting. Eloquence isn't everything in a president, but it is not nothing, either. Experience aside, the 25-year difference in the ages of Mr. McCain, 72, and Mr. Obama, 47, is important largely because Mr. Obama's election would represent a generational shift. He would be the first chief executive in more than six decades whose worldview was not formed, at least in part, by the Cold War or Vietnam . He sees the complicated world as it is today, not as a binary division between us and them, but as a kaleidoscope of shifting alliances and interests. As he often notes, he is the son of a Kenyan father and a mother from Kansas , an internationalist who yet acknowledges that America is the only nation in the world in which someone of his distinctly modest background could rise as far as his talent, intellect and hard work would take him.

Given the damage that has been done to America 's moral standing in the world in the last eight years—by a preemptory war, a unilateralist foreign policy and by policies that have treated both the Geneva Conventions and our own Bill of Rights as optional—Mr. Obama's election would help America reclaim the moral high ground. It also must be said that Mr. Obama is right on the issues. He was right on the war in Iraq . He is right that all Americans deserve access to health care and right in his pragmatic approach to meeting that goal. He is right on tax policy, infrastructure investment, energy policy and environmental issues. He is right on American ideals.

He was right when he said in his remarkable speech in March in Philadelphia that "In the end, then, what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand: that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Let us be our brother's keeper, Scripture tells us. Let us be our sister's keeper. Let us find that common stake we all have in one another, and let our politics reflect that spirit as well."

John McCain has served his country well, but in the end, he may have wanted the presidency a little too much, so much that he has sacrificed some of the principles that made him a heroic figure in war and in peace. In every way possible, he has earned the right to retire. Finally, only at this late point do we note that Barack Obama is an African-American. Because of who he is and how he has run his campaign, that fact has become almost incidental to most Americans. Instead, his countrymen are weighing his talents, his values and his beliefs, judging him not by the color of his skin, but the content of his character. That says something profound and good—about him as a candidate and about us as a nation.

20081022-06 15:14 SteveB Re: No "Change" for Him! [to 10/22 duplicate]

Dear Phil,

Change? Let's change all the politicians in both parties who have sold the American people down the river. Toss them all out! Now, that's truly change we can live with!

Plus ++++++ this email below is real old now...because we have now seen both men tested by two crises.

And maybe it would have been logical to predict that the experienced old self-proclaimed "war hero" would do a better job and give you a more comfortable, safer feeling than a seemingly inexperienced young black guy out of Illinois.

But what actually happened is that the junior Senator handled both crises with wise maturity and leadership. He didn't interfere with the President's foreign policy in George, but he did state what he thought our goals should be in the region. I thought they sounded prudent, reasonable, and in our interest. McCain started acting like he was running the country and got the Russians pi*sed off. Getting angry solves nothing in national affairs! And foreign policy was supposed to be McCain's strong point? Doesn't look like it in any way. Plus he doesn't know where Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are, doesn't know Suni from Shiit, doesn't know Spain is in Europe and is our ally not a terrorist nation in this hemisphere.

Then we have the much bigger economic crisis. I have famously (haha) pointed-out McCains many missteps and blunders and freak-outs all during this whole, sordid affair. But the most shocking thing of all is that blank look in McCain's eyes whenever he talks about the economy. He has absolutely no grasp of it all, so a McCain administration would be more Bush policies, more doing what the people with money tell the President to do because he doesn't serve the people because he doesn't know how to and because he owes so many people and companies and governments his job.

In short, in both crises, McCain ran around like a rooster with his head chopped off. Not good in a leader.

Then, added into all that is the astounding Palin misjudgment and miscalculation after all the lies of putting country first. Amazing!

20081023-01 12:27 SteveB John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08. "My Friends, That's Change That We Can't Not Believe in Disagreeing With"

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

I really wish I could make-up stuff this good! Yes, today's little tidbit is quite a juicy one, folks. And, Johnny Boy, I think you need to realize that if you botch things this badly very many times, you start to look like a senile, old clown instead of a serious Presidential contender.

This is the actual text from a speech McCain gave in Reading, PA yesterday, in what will probably end up being one of the most important electoral states. I have transcribed the remarks, but you will also find the actual—unbelievable—video at this location:

A MAVERICK MISSPEAKS

"My Friends, That's Change That We Can't Not Believe in Disagreeing With" by Oliver Burkeman, *Manchester Guardian*

Oct. 22, 2008, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/oliverburkemanblog/2008/oct/22/uselections2008-johnmccain>)

See the amazing video: McCain Agrees with MNRtha in Moon, PA:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLVSURIFoQs&feature=player_embedded)

Oh, dear, here's a confused chap — later identified as "John McCain" — grabbing hold of a podium in western Pennsylvania yesterday and speaking a whole bunch of words that he doesn't seem to have planned in advance, by the end of which he has accidentally agreed with Democratic congressman John Murtha's portrayal of western Pennsylvania as a "racist area". Note the expert way he attempts to rescue himself from the error by repeating some of the same words in a different combination in the hope that something will stick — a rhetorical technique plainly borrowed from Sarah Palin. Nevertheless, by the time the debacle is over he has managed to describe the region as "the most patriotic part" of America, so the basic divisive mission of the speech is still achieved.

"On case [?].I think...you may have noticed that Senator Obama's supporters have been saying some pretty nasty things about Western Pennsylvania lately.

And you know? I couldn't agree with them more! [huh?]

[Quickly] I couldn't disagree with you...I couldn't agree with you more...than the fact that Western Pennsylvania is the most patriotic, most God-loving, most, uh...patriotic part of America. This is a great part of the country!"
[Thank you, FOX News and *Manchester Guardian*! —SteveB]

It's very instructive to watch the technique McCain uses to try to get himself out of the mess he creates—a false appeal to patriotism. For how can it be more than stock, fake patriotic lines when the purpose is simply to distract an audience from a catastrophe? Other than that, this little speech speaks for itself and leaves me speechless.

[In this first paragraph, I don't really know what kind of probably lying, snide accusation he's trying to make. It doesn't seem likely, with PA being such an important swing state, that the Obama people would be bad-mouthing PA. Is he referring to that one time Obama misspoke about PA people and their guns and religion, forever ago? —SteveB]

Gee...we couldn't have some, say...SENILITY problems here, could we, Johnny Boy? And if you're just tired, being the actual President has to be just as tiring (look at how the hair of Presidents goes grey or white so quickly once they get in office).

Notice that the way McCain handles his little personal crisis here in this speech is just how he handled the Georgia and economic crises and the current crisis he is facing in his campaign's apparently losing strategies—with distraction and lies, not with leadership and solutions!

I really don't think this is the kind of penetrating, mature, intelligent wits we want our President to have about him. But, of course, there is always the intellectual giant of the ticket...Ms. Palin!

20081023-02	12:36	SteveG	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08
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Dear SteveB,

NOONTIME REPORT ON THE POLLS: OBAMA IS UP 10 POINTS IN INDIANA, A SWING STATE THAT HASN'T GONE DEMOCRATIC SINCE 1964!

20081023-03	13:07	SteveB	John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08—Bonus; "McCain Says Obama Will 'Say Anything' to Win"
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TODAY'S BONUS SENILE MOMENT:

Below is a great one and another good example of how the McCain campaign executes its strategies of lies and deceptions.

The rule is, any of what you presume to be your weaknesses or shortcomings, must be impugned to the opposition and attacked mercilessly. What this means is that if you have the habit of, say, putting your campaign ambitions ahead of the national interest (instances cited previously) then accuse Obama of not loving his country or not putting America first or some cr*p to that effect. If you fear that being accused of having no executive experience and of being told that POW (read failed soldier) experience does not qualify one to be President, attack Obama's experience.

Here, McCain was already embarrassed after he was called down on the lie he's been telling that poor people who pay no taxes will get a tax refund. So he attacks.

But by telling what he knows are huge lies about Obama's tax plan and that it's socialist and wants to "redistribute the wealth" in ways not done by current tax law (a lie, by the way), McCain is the one proving that it is he who will "say anything" to win! He will tell any lie! Over and over! Yet it is his own personal failing that he lashes out to accuse Obama of. Ironic, huh? Are you distracted enough to vote for this monster?

"McCain Says Obama Will 'Say Anything' to Win" by Glen Johnson, AP

Oct. 23, 2010, (http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/2008-10-22-2824987828_x.htm)

(ORMOND BEACH FL) Republican John McCain, kicking off a cross-state bus tour aimed at keeping vote-rich Florida from swinging to the Democrats, on Thursday accused rival Barack Obama of saying "anything to get elected."

The Arizona senator said Obama had added a work requirement to his proposal to grant a 10 percent universal mortgage credit. A top Obama aide said the campaign added the requirement two weeks ago to avoid charges that the proposal provided "welfare" to non-working Americans.

"Thirteen days to go, and he changed his tax plan because the American people had learned the truth about it and they didn't like it," McCain told a crowd at lumber yard. "It's another example that he'll say anything to get elected."

An Obama spokesman accused McCain of distortion and said the Democrat's plan always included a work requirement, although it was discussed only within the campaign or to reporters who inquired about the particulars of the plan.

"Last week, Sen. McCain called Obama's tax cuts for working people welfare. Today he's claiming Sen. Obama doesn't do enough to help the unemployed," said Obama spokesman Tommy Vietor. "The only thing consistent about these attacks is how dishonest they are. All of Sen. Obama's tax credits only go to workers and they always have."

20081023-04	14:38	SteveB	Re: John McCain's Senile Moment of the Day—10/23/08
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Dear SteveG,

I was disappointed with my Hoosiers when they didn't pick Obama over Hillary, but they could totally make-up for it by going for Obama now!

Out of all my correspondents, only two remain staunchly pro-McCain. They are both pretty big racists from Indiana and they sure ain't a gonna go vote for no black Marxist Muslim who wasn't born in the U.S.

If McCain were that dead guy from the movie, Bernie?, the corpse that those, like, college guys carried around everywhere, trying to make it look just alive enough so that they didn't get arrested? I'm not remembering it very well...anyway, if that were McCain, they'd still vote for him on ideological reasons. He's further Right.

So McCain being proven senile is no big deal to these guys. I love 'em though, big dummies! (Your family is given to you by God and your friends are given to you by God.)

Maybe the electorate ain't so dumb, though, after all...or maybe we're just lucky sometimes...but, really, I think people are tired of the same old cr*p and worried, maybe even scared, so they have come out of their stupor and opened their eyes a little more than usual, and, for now, seem to be coming to Obama in droves.

TODAY'S SENILE MOMENT:

There are just so many! I can hardly pick and choose any more. And there have been so many juicy ones lately that seem to indicate so clearly that there is something wrong with McCain. And, after recent events, could things get any worse for our hero (make that self-proclaimed war hero)?

So much fertile ground...including Ms. Palin (now ain't that the truth!)...I know what I'll write about today! I'll go back to one of those continuing senile moments that stretch on forever. One I've been wanting to discuss.

McCain wants to privatize Social Security!!!!!!

Now, that would have worked out wonderfully during the current market crashes, wouldn't it! What would the government (or some "private" entity like Fanny Mae or Freddie Mac?) have been into? Government bonds? I doubt it? Gold? Also way down. Currency? Commodities? Lehman? AIG? Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac? What if there had not only been the mortgage, interest, debt, stock market, banking crises, but also the government losing trillions in the stock market? Unable to send out the checks people need to live and that are basically, owed, to them. Wonderful, Johnny Boy! Intelligent!

And this is a guy who needs to win my alternative home state of Florida where many people depend on Social Security. Even though many of the retired folks there must be able to identify with McCain's senility and, I guess, just general oldness, but his support is slipping there too, even though Obama has not hit this Social Security thing nearly hard enough. McCain's constant, lying attacks pretty much prevent an effective, intelligent dialog between the candidates on the issues.

(Has anyone except me noticed that, in his speeches, McCain is able to list things, grimace, rotate around, give that awful glare, and that's about it? He never goes below the "headlines" to the underlying 2nd, 3rd, or nth layers of an issue, as Obama can do. He is unable, apparently, to do more than just list a bunch of cr*p he has been told to say. He's simply after those few key words that ignite the "base"—terrorist, the "real" America, socialist, communist, redistribute the wealth (which I'll have more on in an upcoming posting), tax increase, etc.) In a Presidential candidate, this seems rather stupid, doesn't it, America? One would certainly hope that it can never seem intelligent enough to lead to victory.

But...I have a good feeling that justice will be served soon. You might want to be on the lookout for that, Johnny Boy.

Dear GaryC & Dale,

Progressive taxation is hardly socialistic, or McCain and Bush are socialists too.

"McCain's Hero: More Socialist Than Obama!" by Timothy Noah, Slate

Oct. 23, 2008

http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/chatterbox/2008/10/mccains_hero_more_socialist_than_obama.html

(McCain can call Obama a socialist or he can all Teddy Roosevelt his hero. He can't do both.)

Imagine that instead of telling Joe "the Plumber" Wurzelbacher that "when you spread the wealth around it's good for everybody," Barack Obama had said the following: We grudge no man a fortune in civil life if it is honorably obtained and well used. It is not even enough that it should have been gained without doing damage to the community.

We should permit it to be gained only so long as the gaining represents benefit to the community. ... The really big fortune, the swollen fortune, by the mere fact of its size, acquires qualities which differentiate it in kind as well as in degree from what is possessed by men of relatively small means. Therefore, I believe in a graduated income tax on big

fortunes, and ... a graduated inheritance tax on big fortunes, properly safeguarded against evasion, and increasing rapidly in amount with the size of the estate.

The *New York Post's* Page One would blare: "OBAMA: I'LL SEIZE 'SWOLLEN FORTUNES'!" Bill Kristol would demand to know, in his New York Times column, what godly powers enabled Obama to discern precisely whose wealth—David Geffen's? George Soros'?—would "benefit the community." On Fox News, Bill O'Reilly would start to say something, then sputter, turn purple, and keel over backward in a grand mal seizure.

John McCain, meanwhile, would have to stop saying that Teddy Roosevelt is his hero, because the passage quoted above is from T.R.'s "New Nationalism" speech of 1910. Either that, or McCain would have to quit calling Barack Obama a socialist. [Or he would have to confess to being a Socialist himself! LOL!] T.R. justified progressive taxation straightforwardly as a matter of equality. In his 1907 State of the Union address, Roosevelt said:

Our aim is to recognize what Lincoln pointed out: The fact that there are some respects in which men are obviously not equal; but also to insist that there should be an equality of self-respect and of mutual respect, an equality of rights before the law, and at least an approximate equality in the conditions under which each man obtains the chance to show the stuff that is in him when compared to his fellows.

Obama is constrained by a very different political climate to justify his sole proposed tax hike—on incomes above \$250,000—by stating its benefit to commerce. Here's his "spread the wealth around" comment in context (for a more complete transcription, click here):

I do believe that for folks like me, who have worked hard but, frankly, have also been lucky, I don't mind paying just a little bit more than the waitress who I just met over there who, things are slow, and she can barely make the rent. My attitude is that if the economy's good for folks from the bottom up, it's going to be good for everybody. If you've got a plumbing business, you're going to be better off if you've got a whole bunch of customers who can afford to hire you. And right now, everybody's so pinched that business is bad for everybody. And I think when you spread the wealth around it's good for everybody.

In a radio address on Oct. 18, McCain said that to the "straight-talking," "plainspoken" Wurzelbacher, words like "spread the wealth around" sounded a lot like socialism. "And a lot of Americans are thinking along those same lines. ... At least in Europe, the Socialist leaders who so admire my opponent are up front about their objectives. They use real numbers and honest language. And we should demand equal candor from Senator Obama."

In an Oct. 22 speech in Manchester, N.H., McCain expostulated further: "Joe and guys like him will earn the wealth. Barack and politicians like him will spread it."

Joe didn't really like that idea, and neither did a lot of other folks who believe that their earnings are their own. After all, before government can redistribute wealth, it has to confiscate wealth from those who earned it. And whatever the right word is for that way of thinking, the redistribution of wealth is the last thing America needs right now. In these tough economic times, we don't need government "spreading the wealth"—we need policies that create wealth and spread opportunity.

When T.R. spoke of "swollen fortunes" and "malefactors of great wealth," socialism was a genuine force in American politics, perceived by many to pose a serious threat to the social order. When T.R. first called for a "graduated income tax" in his 1907 State of the Union, he was proposing a measure that the Supreme Court had ruled unconstitutional. Indeed, the federal income tax struck down by the Court wasn't even "graduated," or progressive; it was a flat-rate tax. Today, McCain demagogically attacks Obama's purported "socialism" knowing that socialism is a dead letter in the United States. He feigns shock at progressive taxation

("confiscate wealth") nearly a century after the states ratified the 16th Amendment, enabling Congress to enact a progressive income tax, and nearly a decade after he himself scolded a town-hall questioner on MSNBC's *Hardball* who cried "socialism" about the rich having to pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes. "Here's what I really believe," McCain said. "When you are—reach a certain level of comfort, there's nothing wrong with paying somewhat more."

In his book *The Great Tax Wars*, Steven Weisman, formerly of the *New York Times*, writes that T.R.'s previous experience as police commissioner of New York City made him worry "about anarchy arising from gross economic inequality." Today, the income gap between the top 0.01 percent of families in the United States and the bottom 90 percent is greater than it was in T.R.'s day. The last time it was anywhere near so great was in 1929. The top marginal income-tax rate,

meanwhile, is near its historic low in the late 1920s. Those of you seeking a cause to the current financial meltdown may draw your own conclusions. (For more on taxes and historic patterns of inequality in the United States, click here.)

T.R., of course, was no socialist. Indeed, his purpose was largely to prevent socialists from coming to power. But the trust buster got called a socialist a lot more often than Obama ever will. He writes in his autobiography:

Because of things I have done on behalf of justice to the workingman, I have often been called a Socialist. Usually I have not taken the trouble even to notice the epithet.... Moreover, I know that many American Socialists are high-minded and honorable citizens, who in reality are merely radical social reformers. They are opposed to the brutalities and industrial injustices which we see everywhere about us.

T.R. then goes on to outline his strong differences "with the Marxian Socialists" and their belief in class warfare and the inevitable demise of capitalism. Later, he returns to his earlier theme: Many of the men who call themselves socialists today are in reality merely radical social reformers, with whom on many points good citizens can and ought to work in hearty general agreement, and whom in many practical matters of government good citizens can well afford to follow.

There were, however, limits to T.R.'s tolerance. "I have always maintained," he concluded, "that our worst revolutionaries today are those reactionaries who do not see and will not admit there is any need for change."

20081024-03 16:44 SteveB "This Is Not a Test"

As long as the lies continue, they must be set straight!

"This Is Not a Test" by Fred Kaplan, Slate

Oct. 23, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2008/10/this_is_not_a_test.html)

(Sitting on an aircraft carrier deck in 1962 didn't prepare John McCain for the Presidency.)

In the last few days, Sen. John McCain has told crowds that he's "been tested" when it comes to dealing with international crises, and as proof he cited the big enchilada of crises, the showdown over Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962. "I had a little personal experience in that," McCain said in Ohio. "I was there."

Tom Blanton wondered what would have happened if the Cuban Missile Crisis hadn't been a secret. Warren Bass argued that the crisis was scarier than we thought. Christopher Beam described why the McCain camp rejoice when the senator's war record is attacked, and Fred Kaplan explained why Gen. Wesley Clark questioned whether McCain's military experience was relevant to the presidency. No, he was the pilot of a naval attack plane on an aircraft carrier in the Caribbean. As he put it at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, "I sat in the cockpit on the flight deck of the U.S.S. Enterprise, off of Cuba. I had a target." Then he added: "My friends, you know how close we came to nuclear war. Americans will not have a president who needs to be tested. I've been tested, my friends."

I mean no disrespect for carrier pilots, especially those poised for combat. The job requires a special sort of skill, nerve, and bravery that few of us have ever faced. (Certainly I never have.) But it is not at all clear how this experience tested McCain—or any of the other pilots on the four aircraft carriers off the coast of Cuba—for the job of making strategic decisions in a crisis, any more than working an assembly line tests someone to be president of a major manufacturing corporation.

As a 26-year-old Navy lieutenant in Oct., 1962, John McCain was prepared to follow orders, fly his plane along a predetermined path to a preselected target, drop his preloaded bombs, and fly back. Again, this is not to be minimized. But neither does it constitute being "tested" to be—either then or 46 years later—the president of the United States.

Here's what the president at the time, John F. Kennedy, did during the crisis.

The confrontation began when U-2 spy planes detected the Soviets surreptitiously shipping missile launchers and nuclear warheads to Cuba and, in some cases, already setting them up on Cuban bases. Kennedy assembled all his top advisers in the Cabinet Room to discuss how to respond. (Lucky for historians, he secretly tape-recorded all these deliberations.

You can buy copies of the tapes from the JFK Library or read Sheldon Stern's book *Averting The Final Failure: John F. Kennedy and the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings*, an excellent account.)

On the first day of deliberations, Kennedy figured that he would have to bomb the missile sites. McNamara suggested blockading the island as an interim measure to buy some time. Kennedy agreed. By the third day of the crisis, Kennedy was musing about Soviet motives and wondering what kind of "face-saving" gesture he might offer to get them to back off. One possibility, he said, might be a trade: We'd withdraw the missiles we had in Turkey—on the Soviet Union's southern border—if they withdrew the missiles they had in Cuba. None of the advisers reacted to this remark.

On Oct. 26, the 13th and final day, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a telegram offering just such a trade. Kennedy favored taking the deal. "To any man at the United Nations or any other rational man," he can be heard on the tapes saying, "it will look like a very fair trade. ... Most people think that if you're allowed an even trade, you ought to take advantage of it."

All of Kennedy's advisers—his brother Robert Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon Johnson, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff—vociferously opposed the deal. All of them at this point—even McNamara—urged Kennedy to bomb the missile sites. They protested that trading the missiles in Turkey would amount to appeasement; it would wreck NATO, betray the Turks, advertise our weakness. On the tapes, they sound hysterical; you can hear the quivering in their voices.

Kennedy remained preternaturally cool. He recalled that the attack plan, drawn up a few days earlier by the Joint Chiefs and endorsed by McNamara, was calling for 3,500 conventional bombing sorties against the Soviet missile sites and air bases in Cuba—500 sorties a day for seven days—followed by an invasion of the island.

"I'm just thinking," Kennedy said, with remarkable calm, "about what we're going to have to do in a day or so ... 500 sorties ... and possibly an invasion, all because we wouldn't take missiles out of Turkey.

And we all know how quickly everybody's courage goes when the blood starts to flow, and that's what's going to happen in NATO ... when we start these things and the Soviets grab Berlin" in retaliation, "and everybody's going to say, 'Well, this Khrushchev offer was a pretty good position.' " At another point, Kennedy noted that if we went to war and it was later learned that this deal had been on the table and we had rejected it, it was "not going to be a good war."

At the end of the day, without telling more than a handful of his advisers, President Kennedy ordered his brother to tell the Soviet ambassador that he accepted Khrushchev's deal—as long as it was kept a total secret, as indeed it was until the tapes came out 20 years later. (Not wanting to appear weak, Kennedy himself contrived the cover story—and ordered his palace historians, Arthur Schlesinger and Ted Sorensen, to perpetrate the myth—that he'd stared the Russians down.)

And so, the point is even more clear-cut than it might seem at first glance: Just because John McCain sat in a cockpit on a flight deck during the tensest five days of the Cuban Missile Crisis, that doesn't mean he absorbed the slightest bit of wisdom about how to handle a crisis from the top. What about Sen. Barack Obama—has he ever been tested for a crisis of this sort? There's no evidence that he has. In this sense, former President Bill Clinton's evasive remark a few months ago when he was asked about Obama's qualifications—"You can argue that nobody is ready to be president"—may well be true.

[Of course, both men have been recently tested by the little international crisis in Georgia and the huge financial crisis everywhere. McCain is also facing an additional crisis that allows us to witness his tested character—his losing campaign. Most voters, it seems, have liked what they have seen of Obama's leadership in difficult situations.]

The lesson of Kennedy's performance in the Cuban Missile Crisis is that a president should be coolheaded, ask the right questions, listen to a wide range of advice, then exercise his own judgment.

With this history in mind, which of the two candidates—McCain or Obama—seems best-suited to handle a crisis? That's the appropriate question.

20081025-01	10:29	SteveB	Why Are So Many Republicans Endorsing Obama?
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I wonder why all these Republicans keep coming out and endorsing Obama? Especially with him being a Muslim socialist terrorist. LOL! I don't think I've heard of one prominent Democrat endorsing McCain.

Could be significant...maybe these Republicans are looking beyond ideology, to who would make the best President?

20081025-02 10:52 SteveB McCain's Message of Change

I think McCain should think-up his own campaign strategies and slogans—instead of stealing Obama's! LOL!

How desperate for power is that? Notice below, he always gets that "fight" in there, to remind us he's a violent, self-proclaimed war hero.

10/24/08...in an address at a campaign rally in Denver

"We cannot spend the next four years as we have spent much of the last eight: hoping for our luck to change at home and abroad," he said. "We have to act. We need a new direction, and we have to fight for it."

20081026-01 20:44 SteveB Barack Obama Quote: "The Real America"

"There are no real or fake parts of this country. We are not separated by the pro-America and anti-America parts of this nation—we all love this country, no matter where we live or where we come from. There are patriots who supported this war in Iraq and patriots who opposed it, patriots who believe in Democratic policies and those who believe in Republican policies. The men and women from Indiana and all across America who serve on our battlefields may be Democrats and Republicans and Independents, but they have fought together and bled together and some died together under the same proud flag. They have not served a red America or a blue America—they have served the United States of America."—Barack Obama, Indianapolis, Oct. 23, 2008.

20081026-02 21:34 Larry Fw: "Straight Talk" to Republicans & Democrats

[Source of original email unknown, but this article is widely reprinted on the web. For instance: http://forums.fishusa.com/m_124008/mpage_1/key_/tm.htm. Snopes.com seems to know nothing. —SteveB]

(If you do a little searching, you'll find this letter on a Web page where Mr. Lear—whose father invented the Lear jet and much, much more—has included other information by which he can be contacted; I just didn't feel comfortable including it here, though.)

A Humble Plea to McCain and Obama Supporters:

Dear friends,

I am truly astonished by the ignorance Obama supporters have displayed in their quest to get someone—ANYONE—into the White House. Now, wait a minute. I can well understand your dislike or even hatred of our clown, GWB, but he is not the root cause of all of our problems. Our Congress is. And a change there would be welcomed by all. You ain't gonna get it done with Obama. You gotta fire the whole damnable crooked Congress. (Read my book, *Bernie's War!*).

Perhaps I'm looking at all of this from a different perspective than you because my life experiences have been so different from yours. I'm 80 years old and have traveled the world where I've seen a great deal. I spent five years on active duty as a fighter pilot in the U.S.A.F. and another seven years flying with the Air National Guard in California and Texas as well as a few years flying in the U.S.A.F. Reserve. I spent three years on active duty in Germany flying Czech border patrol with 'cold guns' in aircraft inferior to the MIG during the Korean 'Police Action' when it was thought that Korea was a diversion for a Soviet invasion of Western Europe.

I lived abroad for a total of 28 years. Three years in Germany, twenty years in Switzerland and five years in Great Britain where I was based doing 'spook' work for the U.S. behind the Iron Curtain before it fell. During that era of the Cold War I ventured to Moscow, Prague, Warsaw, Bucharest, Peshawar, Pakistan and Bulgaria posing as a Swiss French speaking arms dealer purchasing weapons we surreptitiously supplied to the Afghani Mujahedeen in their successful fight against the Soviets, all of which came back to haunt us.

I've been there and done that and have had close associations with top government people in Germany, the Netherlands and Great Britain. I've had more foreign affair experience than Obama could ever dream of and, yet, wouldn't have the temerity to deign myself 'Presidential' material; although I feel eminently more qualified to judge who would NOT be best for our country. My long-time world experience should count for something in my plea to you to abandon this miscreant flake. You will only be doing yourself and our country an enormous disservice if you persist in your support of this flash-in-the-pan opportunist. On this, you MUST trust me. I've associated closely with European royalty and African politicians. I've traveled to the Far East to observe their cultures. My point is that Obama, although formally well educated and a brilliant orator, is a neophyte when it comes to understanding the world and is uniquely unqualified for the job as President of these great United States. His knowledge of economics is nil and his tax proposals absurd and life-threatening to the U.S. not only in economic terms but in preserving our national security as well. I don't want a 'citizen of the world' to be President, I want a citizen of the good old USA to be President.

Screw the rest of the world as they have well and truly screwed us. The time has come for us to awaken and start looking after ourselves. Now THAT would be CHANGE if that's what you're looking for.

While McCain has abstained from playing 'the race-card', Obama is playing it to the hilt even though he's technically not an African-American. To qualify for this distinction you must be at least one-sixth black. Obama is only one-eighth. His father would be, as he was one-sixth. No, Obama is more Muslim than black yet he trades on his blackness.

The larger question I have about him is that we really don't know much about him other than what HE tells us, what we read on blogs and from some serious non-partisan investigators whose factual reports are, unfortunately, generally ignored and which receive precious little media exposure.

I, as a registered Independent, a military veteran and a patriot, beseech you to put aside party considerations and vote for the lesser of the two evils. Yes, I am NOT a McCain supporter, but he is, at least, not a flake, doesn't carry Muslim baggage and is a PROVEN hero and patriot WITH experience. It's not a party issue. It's all about electing the best we can trust with what we've got to work with. Mr. Obama is NOT that guy. Please, please rethink your voting position.

Thanks for reading my innermost thoughts. I care about all of you, but I care more about our country. Please help me to do both.

William P. (Bill) Lear, Jr., lear@cfl.rr.com, (386) 763-5051

20081027-01	10:00	SteveB	Re: "Straight Talk"
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Dear Larry,

Thanks for sending this, but this guy is just dead wrong (and I don't care where his daddy took him when he was a little boy, Mr. Lear has zero foreign policy experience either).

1. Few incoming presidents have had much foreign policy experience. You can really only get it in the Executive branch, so neither Obama or McCain have any official foreign policy experience whatsoever. McCain lies about his experience, Obama doesn't. McCain is both border-line senile and stupid, so he ain't gonna learn it. Obama is intelligent and will learn it. At least Obama knows where Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Spain are! McCain has gotten all this confused on several recorded occasions, and even thought Spain was a terrorist enemy in the Western Hemisphere. Frightening! (And these things about McCain being stupid and uneducated are things I have seen with my own eyes during the campaigns. Does anybody think I am going to believe lies over what I see with my own eyes, and anyone can see if they will just look through eyes unclouded by petty ideology?) I choose not to trust Mr. Lear.

2. I was reading this and kept thinking "racist?" Sure enough, towards the end he amazingly asserts that Obama is not black (yet we are supposed to treat his as if her were a stupid, uneducated black man, for some reason, while the white man must automatically, for no reason, be OK). To me his definitions are ridiculous in 2008, but what is this stuff about Obama being only 1/8 black? His father looks to me as close to 100% as it is possible to get. I mean, he is the color of coal, for Heaven's sakes, and his mother looks as close to 100% white as possible. By my calculations, this makes him 50% black, or as we say in 2008, black. What is the point anyway? Only a racist would care.

3. Is this guy telling me that because Obama is black (no other coherent reasons given. Does he think McCain knows more about economics?), I should vote for the proven liar instead of the proven honest man? The idiot over the near-genius? The oldie looking back over the younger man looking forward?

4. Obama has not played any race card in this campaign, even one time, that I know of. The "factual reports" on the internet are pure BS. Obama was born in America, etc. It's been proven to everyone's satisfaction except the crazies.

5. McCain was not a war hero. He was a failure as a soldier. He is a "self-proclaimed" war hero. His experience in the Navy has nothing to do with the duties of Commander-in-Chief. This is all just another big lie!

No, thanks. I think I'll stick with Barack!

20081027-02 10:12 Phil Re: Illinois Politics

Dear SteveB,

This is all true, but less relevant than Obama sitting in Wright's congregation for 20 years listening to his message.

20081027-03 10:20 SteveB Re: Illinois Politics

Dear Phil,

Not to worry! At least Wright didn't seem to turn Obama into a freakin' low-life habitual dirty liar the way something has made McCain.

At this point in the McCain campaign, nearly every single sentence is a lie. This morning, I heard him say that the polls are lying and he is really ahead and climbing. See what I mean? Delusional!

If Wright made Obama into some kind of America-hating, terrorist or racist, it sure doesn't seem to show through very well, does it? I've been looking very closely, and all I see is a good, intelligent man who wants to do good. A man like that...we rarely have a chance to vote for!

20081027-04 13:07 SteveM "Investors: Obama Rise Is Tanking the Stock Market"

Dear SteveB,

If the election is over (based on polls) and the Stock Market is supposed to be a predictor of the future economy, why is the Stock Market plummeting? Does that mean that Obama hasn't a clue how to fix the economy or at least those who know doesn't think he does? I think investors are pulling their money out and hiding it from Pelosi, Reid and the Marxist BHO

If Obama is elected, how will he and Barney fix economy? By raising taxes to kill private investment and new jobs and doing whatever will bring him campaign money and buy him votes, consistent with whichever way the polls tell him to go?

How will McCain fix economy? By not doing anything stupid, for one. Second, doing whatever is in the best interest of the country aside from political interests.

Friends, there is no magic bullet and tough times are ahead. Forget wishful thinking based on Obama-Nada. The Obama bubble won't help any more than the housing bubble.

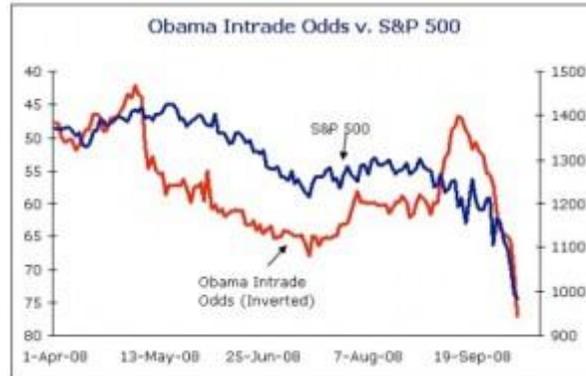
Eventually the economy will recover if we take right action and don't screw it up further.

"Political correctness is a doctrine, fostered by a delusional, illogical minority, and rabidly promoted by an unscrupulous mainstream media, which holds forth the proposition that it is entirely possible to pick up a turd by the clean end."

"Investors: Obama Rise is Tanking the Stock Market" by MacRanger, Macsmind Blog

Oct. 9, 2008, (<http://macsmind.com/wordpress/2008/10/09/investors-obama-rise-is-tanking-the-stock-market/>)

I took the day off to visit three local firms that deal in the stock market to ask them if in fact they think the rise of Obama in the polls is corresponding with the drop of the DOW and the S&P. The response was nearly unanimous.



Much of the meteoric dive of the markets since September 15th have been blamed on the credit crisis, the housing crisis, but one can't deny that the market is in part also reacting to the possibility of a business tax happy Barack Obama. Additionally Democrats are squawking about more regulation and over sight — the lack of which on their part led to the crisis in the first place.

Today I talked with several Obama supporters at work who constantly talk about having to cut corners and pinch pennies. I asked them what would they think if they knew that an Obama administration would sharply raise their taxes after taking office.

Much of the response had to do with the Obama talking points that he would not raise taxes except on those who make \$250,000 or more, and I explained — and showed them how that is not true. That Obama will have no choice but to raise taxes across the board to pay for all the programs he's talking about starting. Not to mention — but I did — of how the Democratic congress has already did away with the Bush tax cuts and that beginning in 2010 — even if Obama didn't raise taxes — they would see an average of \$3500 more tacked on to their annual tax bill.

In short if they think the economy is bad now just wait until Obama takes the reins of power. The average America isn't tuned to the buck like investors are, but they are seeing the light and the spiraling market is the solid proof of that. More proof is that a recent survey of CEO's in America by CEO magazine found that a whopping 74% of them feel that Barack Obama will be a disaster to the economy.

We all remember the last far left "new" democratic kid on the block, Jimmy Carter and the disaster he was to the American economy. In comparison many I've talked to believe that Barack Obama would make Carter look like Reagan after all is said, done and destroyed.

It's time to wake up America!

20081027-05 13:33 SteveB Re: "Investors: Obama Rise Is Tanking the Stock Market"

Dear SteveM,

LOL! Good one. I can't stop laughing...we all know the 1984 *Brave New World* opposite of this is true.

At least, most of us do.

A good Republican should stand up and take the blame for this mess—including the stock market crash. Who do you think brought us here? George "Idiot" Bush and John "Senile" McCain and their ilk (roughly speaking, of course. McCain has always been pretty ineffectual in his efforts)!

You talk loosely of "Marxists" (a word which adds no credibility to your arguments...socialist is already more connotative than necessary), but what could be more Marxist than the recent economic schemes dreamed up by your Republican administration and approved by your McCain.

Just as Palin shredded the "inexperience" argument, these actions by the Republicans annihilate the "socialist" argument. How dumb can your team be?

Myself...I'm pretty sure I'll saddle-up a fresher horse before I venture out across the looming wasteland.

20081027-06 16:26 SteveB "Sand Stolen Across Caribbean for Construction" Environment
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from "Sand Stolen Across Caribbean for Construction" by Harold Quash, AP

Oct. 27, 2008, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27400598>)

('We will lose our beaches' unless crime is taken seriously, one official says.)

(SAN JUAN, PR) Ahh, the Caribbean. Sun, surf. But in some places, people are asking: "Where's the sand?"

It is disappearing at alarming rates as thieves feed a local construction boom.

Caribbean round grains, favored in creating smooth surfaces for plastering and finishing, are being hauled away by the truckload late at night. On some islands not much bigger than Manhattan, towns and ecologically sensitive areas are now exposed to tidal surges and rough seas.

In Puerto Rico, thieves once mined the dunes in the northern coastal town of Isabela, said Ernesto Diaz of the Department of Natural Resources. But now they are stealing the beaches of the tiny island of Vieques — 52 square miles where the U.S. military only recently halted its controversial bombing practice.

Among the hardest hit is Grenada, where officials are building a \$1.2 million seawall to protect the 131-square-mile island. Large sand thefts have exposed north coast towns to rough seas, said Joseph Gilbert, the minister of works and environment.

One of the region's largest sand thefts targeted Jamaica, where nearly 100 truckloads were swiped from private property in the northwest, exposing protected mangroves and a limestone forest to wind and waves.

20081027-07 18:19 SteveB I Read the News Today, Oh Boy!

I read the news today, oh boy...

"This campaign [guess which one?] is in total melt-down."

"If you can't run a Presidential campaign, you probably can't run the country."

"...infighting between Palin and McCain. Palin is looking ahead to 2012."

And, most interesting of all, McCain was all over the news today complaining that Obama is winning and has attracted enough money to put-on his 1/2 hour TV special on Wednesday—before the election, instead of waiting until he's elected, like McCain would do.

Huh? L-O-L !!!

McCain: "Those Obama pricks! There has to be something wrong with this guy...hasn't anybody else noticed that he's...black!" [in my imagination, of course]

20081027-08	21:45	SteveB	Republicans for Obama
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<http://www.republicansforobama.org/>

20081027-09	12:12	SteveB	Needed: A Populist Party of the Center
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Many of us agree that we need a true 3rd party here in the U.S. Historically, that has meant a party to the right of Republicans or to the left of Democrats. That is the problem.

What we need is a populist party of the middle that will do what is practical and works. They will shy away from excesses by both current parties.

20081028-01	06:45	SteveM	"W Ketchup Exhorts Americans to Defend the Constitution"
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

PRESS RELEASE (Oct. 27., 2008)

(For media inquiries contact Bill Zachary (917) 733-3038. If you are having trouble reading this press release, please go to this link: <http://www.wketchup.com/newsreleases/081027.php>.)

"W Ketchup (<http://www.wketchup.com/>) Exhorts Americans to Defend the Constitution"

(Eagle Bridge, NY) Last week, W Ketchup called on Democratic nominee Barack Obama to release his records so Americans could make an informed decision in next week's elections. Although Obama has refused, this morning some of Obama's hidden past came to light.

In a 2001 radio interview on Chicago's WBEZ, while he was a state senator, Obama said: "The Supreme Court never ventured into the issues of redistribution of wealth and more basic issues of economic and social justice in this society. And to that extent, as radical as I think people try to characterize the Warren Court, it wasn't that radical; it didn't break free from the essential constraints that were placed by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution."

Essential constraints in the Constitution include: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated," and "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

Dan Oliver, CEO of W Ketchup, reacted: "Obama's shocking quote suddenly clarifies his past and gives context to his remark to 'Joe the Plumber' that he wants to 'spread the wealth around.' This man comes from the Marxist backwaters of academia and advocates overthrowing the essential liberties guaranteed by the Constitution to take property forcibly from one man and give it to another. We suggest voters consider the fates of Soviet Russia and Red China before pulling the lever for Obama."

In the 2001 interview, Obama continues: "One of the tragedies of the civil rights movement was because the civil rights movement became so court focused, there was a tendency to lose track of the political and community organizing activities on the ground that are able to put together the actual coalitions of power through which you bring about redistributive change. I am not optimistic about bringing major redistributive change through the courts. [Redistributive change] is essentially administrative and takes a lot of time."

Senator Obama began his community service by working as a leadership trainer with ACORN, an ultra-left wing community group. Among other activities, ACORN specializes in menacing the families of bankers at their homes and flooding bank lobbies with protesters in order to coerce banks to give risky loans to low income, inner city applicants. The

Obama campaign recently gave ACORN \$800,000 for a voter registration drive. Currently, ACORN is under investigation by the FBI in 15 states for voter fraud.

Bill Zachary, Chairman of W Ketchup, commented: "Steve Cohen (D-TN) has claimed that 'Barack Obama was a community organizer like Jesus,' but we don't recall biblical stories of the disciples threatening the families of Roman officials or shaking down the money lenders for extra cash. From his own words, we see that Obama did not organize the poor to help them create their own wealth and improve their lives, but as a power base to confiscate property from the America's wealth producers: redistributive change you'd better believe in."

Zachary added: "The Presidency of the United States is the most powerful position in history. Unlike in Rome and the great empires of history, we the people have the power to choose who occupies that august position. Despite what the polls say, we do not believe Americans will elect a closet Marxist, however mellifluous his rhetoric. This man is not a Democrat with whom we can respectfully disagree, but a Manchurian candidate set to overthrow our system of government and to destroy our way of life."

20081028-02 08:08 SteveB Lies & Damned Lies [defense]

Here's a little one for you.

I just saw Rudy Giuliani on TV this morning. Now there's a guy with a lot of credibility left! He was repeating the standard McCain campaign line that Obama is not just a liberal Democrat, he's way to the left, he's the most liberal Democrat in the Senate, and his voting record proves it. Now think about how tricky and deceitful this lie really is.

If a guy, anyone, is in the Senate, and let's say he's a Democrat. He's there voting on various bills with Republicans and Democrats. If the guy is a faithful Democrat, then he's voting with that group most of the time. Unless there are votes where a Senator is the only vote in the Senate for or against a bill (which almost never or never happens), there is no good way to measure which Senator is the most liberal based on his voting record.

Now McCain and Giuliani might consider Obama to be the most liberal member of the Senate, but to say that he's way left of other Democrats based on his voting record...It's all subjective, desperate BS! This is just another foul Republican lie and scare tactic! Boo! It's Halloween.

The other biggest lie? Obama is a socialist or Marxist because his tax plan is a little different than McCain's. What desperate BS!

Come on, next Tuesday! Let's bring down the curtain on this cr*p and this cr*p's champion, "hero", and "fighter"—Johnny Boy McCain! Until then, McCain's campaign might be better served discussing his (non-existent?) solutions to our problems, instead of constantly trying to find new ways to bring down a good man.

20081028-03 08:19 SteveB Redistributing the Wealth Is a Bipartisan Activity

Dear Mr. McCain:

In your long and storied (by you) career, you have voted many times to "redistribute" the wealth through a graduated, progressive tax. It's there in your voting record, Johnny Boy! Your proposed tax is a graduated, progressive tax (not flat) and so is Obama's. They're not much different except that Obama's favor's the middle class, yours doesn't. I suppose this makes you and your buddies (and almost all members of Congress going back to the 30's) socialists, Marxists, and "redistributors of wealth"?

A little ridiculous, don't you think?

20081028-04 10:02 SteveB Re: "W Ketchup Exhorts Americans to Defend the Constitution"

Dear SteveM,

OMFG! This is absolutely hysterical stuff!!! This piece is so frickin' insane it's like Monte Python to me! Keep sending me wacko stuff like this, 'cause I need a good laugh and something to wipe my b*tt with (figuratively).

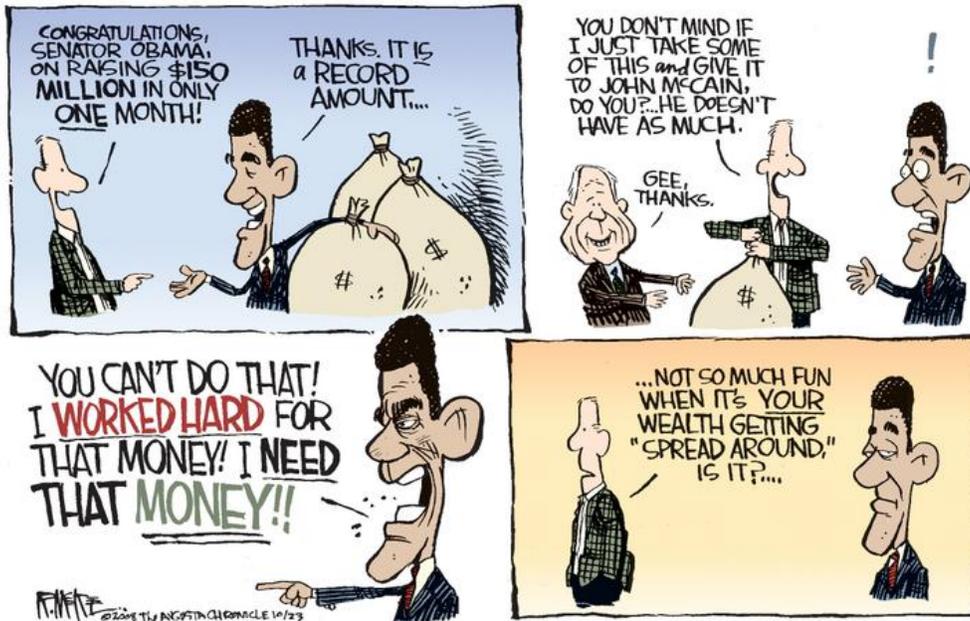
"Defend the Constitution" (from Democrats? Not idiot Bush?) indeed! F'ed up! Period. Fact!

"W Ketchup" indeed! I think the author got a little on his clean white Fundamentalist wacko right-wing shirt. F'ed up! Period. Fact!

This petty name-calling is not the cr*p we need. We need real solutions to real problems. McCain obviously has none.

Palin has all her "ideas" whispered into her ear by God (or her minister, or the 1st Dude, or Dick Cheney), but do you really want to trust that? Obviously, the rest of us don't.

20081028-05 16:40 SteveM Redistributing Obama's Wealth



20081028-06 17:00 SteveB Fw: Disunited States—Red & Blue

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Dear Red States,

If you manage to steal this election too we've decided we're leaving. We intend to form our own country, and we're taking the other Blue States with us. In case you aren't aware, that includes California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois and all the Northeast. We believe this split will be beneficial to the nation, and especially to the people of the new country of New California.

To sum up briefly: You get Texas, Oklahoma and all the slave states. We get stem cell research and the best beaches. We get the Statue of Liberty. You get Dollywood. We get Intel and Microsoft. You get WorldCom. We get Harvard. You get Ole' Miss. We get 85% of America's venture capital and entrepreneurs. You get Alabama.

We get two-thirds of the tax revenue, you get to make the red states pay their fair share.

Since our aggregate divorce rate is 22% lower than the Christian Coalition's, we get a bunch of happy families. You get a bunch of single moms. Please be aware that Nuevo California will be pro-choice and anti-war, and we're going to want all our citizens back from Iraq at once. If you need people to fight, ask your evangelicals. They have kids they're apparently

willing to send to their deaths for no purpose, and they don't care if you don't show pictures of their children's caskets coming home. We do wish you success in Iraq , but we're not willing to spend our resources on Bush's Quagmire.

With the Blue States in hand, we will have firm control of 80% of the country's fresh water, more than 90% of the pineapple and lettuce, 92% of the nation's fresh fruit [Without Florida, Texas, and Georgia? Hard to believe. —SteveB], 95% of America's quality wines, 90% of all cheese, 90% of the high tech industry, 95% of the corn and soybeans (thanks Iowa!), most of the U.S. low-sulfur coal, all living redwoods, sequoias and condors, all the Ivy and Seven Sister schools plus Stanford, Cal Tech and MIT.

With the Red States, on the other hand, you will have to cope with 88% of all obese Americans (and their projected health care costs), 92% of all U.S. mosquitoes, nearly 100% of the tornadoes, 90% of the hurricanes, 99% of all Southern Baptists, virtually 100% of all televangelists, Rush Limbaugh, Bob Jones University, Clemson, and the University of Georgia. We get Hollywood and Yosemite, thank you.

Additionally, 38% of those in the Red states believe Jonah was actually swallowed by a whale, 62% believe life is sacred unless we're discussing the war, the death penalty or gun laws, 44% say that evolution is only a theory, 53% that Saddam was involved in 9/11 and 61% of you crazy b*stards believe you are people with higher morals than we lefties.

Finally, we're taking the good pot, too. You can have that dirt weed they grow in Mexico.

Peace out, Blue States

20081028-07	18:34	Mike	What Do You Like About Obama?
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Dear SteveB,

Just curious, what's your top 5 list of reasons as to why Obama is your candidate?

20081028-08	19:01	Mike	Fw: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

A little girl goes gets all dressed up for Halloween and decides that she is going to every house in the neighborhood to get candy. Her efforts were very successful. Later that night she sat down and proceeded to count her efforts, one by one. Upon counting all her candy, she approached her father with her glorious earnings and was looking for a praise of some sort. What she got from her father just might sum up Obama's extreme economic policies.

Her father "Obama" ask her to split her enormous earnings into 2 piles. One pile at 40% and the other pile at 60%. Then the father scooped up the 40% pile and placed it into a bag marked "Obama" and proceeded out the door.

An hour went by and the father returned with an empty bag. The daughter was most frustrated. She asked her daddy what had happened to the candy that she had worked so hard for? The father "Obama" went on to explain that he was penalizing her for her efforts and felt that he needed to take her hard earned candy and pass it out to those kids in the neighborhood that didn't go out to get it on their own. Not only did he hand out her 40% to the kids that did nothing to get their own candy, but he gave them the impression that he himself gathered up all the candy on his own, thus giving his own daughter no credit for her efforts. All the kids that did nothing loved her dad.

This guy really is a sucker to think that you can take from the rich simply because you think that spreading it around to less fortunate lazy individuals is going to create jobs? I own my own business and I take full responsibility for my health insurance, work ethic, and money. I will not hire a single person for as long as this guy is in office. His party is taking advantage of weak minded individuals who are too used to getting a silver spoon from mommy and daddy. So much for bailing us out of the very thing Jimmy Carter got us into with his slack jawed policies.

I like the interview they had on the radio with a black woman on the streets of Brooklyn. when asked who she would vote for she said "Obama of course". When asked what she thought of his running mate for V.P. she replied "I love his choice for Sarah Palin for V.P." I about died laughing.

I will vote for McCain who will unfortunately lose out to the Dem's. But it wasn't because of Obama's wit, charm and good sense of what matters. It was because he found a way to convince the weak-minded that "Change" is worth fighting for. He can keep the "Change" because I want the "Dollars".

20081028-09 20:30 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Mike,

Now, these are the best arguments yet! No wonder Obama isn't further ahead in the polls.

20081028-10 21:59 Bob Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear SteveB,

I have been receiving from you many emails smashing McCain and praising Obama, via somebody on your mailing list. However I have noted that you are very much for Obama and very much against McCain.

I am not saying McCain is the best choice by no means, by the way where is Ross Perot now when we really need him!!!! The U.S. needs to be ran like a business not a world bank and world police. The U.S. needs to put back its pride and forget about what the rest of the world says or thinks.

.....could go on and on, but I won't!

However you really need to look at world history and look at every country in the world that has been under a white president and then turned over to a n*gger. Every country where this has happened that n*gger has ran the country into a sh*t hole bigger than ever.

Also it is one thing that he is a n*gger, but also he is an Islamic f*cking n*gger which is even worse. Do you know the extreme Muslims are looking to destroy the U.S. from the inside out not from the outside in???? Especially with a name like Obama!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Come on people wake the f*ck up!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

But anyway I see the USA quickly catapulting to the sewer the way it is, but if people are really as stupid as they seem and if they do vote for this extreme Muslim n*gger well I hope you are all ready to pay the consequences.

So I hope you really think about this and don't vote for the rag head n*gger!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And if you do well get ready for the consequences.

All of the best regards.

20081028-11 22:54 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Bob,

Nice to hear from you. You sound serious. Seriously demented. :-)

Based on what you have to say, I'm happy I don't know you.

Have a nice life, Mr. Hater.

20081029-01 11:00 SteveB Re: What Do You Like About Obama?

Dear Mike,

Why I'm voting for Barack Obama? Easy, read my emails. And...

1. HONESTY—what could be more important after Nixon, Clinton, and Bush? I will not have a President that lies to me. McCain has proven himself to be the biggest liar of all (read my emails for proof).
2. Intelligence, not senility—not old, not pushing for stuff proven in the past to not work. Not nearly last in his class at the Naval Academy. He has proven his mastery of the subjects of Iraq, Afghanistan, Georgia, Israel, economics, etc. McCain is a rooster with his head cut off—all bluster, no substance at all. We have lately proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that stupidity is the last thing the country needs in a President.
3. He's a loving family man, not an adulterer (like McCain).
4. He has shown McCain the respect McCain never returned. In other words, he's a good guy.
5. His tax plan, healthcare proposal, energy proposal, and economic plans are far superior to McCain's, which are largely unknown, and formulated not by McCain, but by unknown people like Dick Cheney.
6. (I'll give you a bonus) He's black and there will be music and dancing and children in the White House.
7. (one contrary point) Ideologically, except for abortion, I'm probably more aligned with McCain's professions of smaller government, balancing the budget, etc., but, like Bush, I don't see how he would be able to accomplish anything with a Democratic Congress—hence, given the current crisis, disaster! And even with a Republican Congress, like Bush had, McCain would not know what to do. How could he, he's stupid.
8. (another bonus) Obama is pro-life and I will not let the government go back to making criminals and corpses out of women who want or need an abortion, even though, like Obama, I wish there were fewer abortions, but without good sex education in the schools, forget that, Republicans. We don't really know McCain's position, he's flip-flopped so much.
9. (still another bonus) He is obviously interested in bringing people together to solve problems, not split them apart for personal gain as McCain is trying to do. "Socialist" indeed! LOL!
10. Maybe he'll stop the wars, if anybody can.

Hope that helps.

20081029-02	11:14	SteveB	Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!
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Dear Mike,

How many "dollars" do you think you're going to get in the Republican created recession?

The country is in trouble. Realize it and plan accordingly.

Quit listening to the Republican lies. Study history! We have been a "socialist" nation to the degree Obama wants since the 1930's, and, in my lifetime, I have seen this situation supported and expanded by Republicans just as much as Democrats. In the current context, this scare word is ridiculously meaningless. McCain is nothing but the dirtiest of liars!

McCain's tax plan is just as "socialist". Study it. He's not asking for a flat tax or no tax, right? In fact, McCain opposed the current Bush tax cuts. Like all his other plans, it is also stupid!

Obama is no more socialist than McCain. For cryin' out loud—we're talking about Republicans and Democrats here! One could also say that McCain is more fascist than Obama, and Obama would have a legitimate right to say that, but he knows there are more important issues that need solutions, stupid senseless name-calling is not going to bring us to those solutions. McCain is divisive, Obama is not. Of course, the Democrats are a little more liberal than the Republicans, but if what you think is good is the right-wing fanaticism of Sarah Palin—against peace, abortion, public schools, and freedom of religion—then have at it.

"Socialist" indeed!

20081029-03 11:20 Bob Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear SteveB,

I would be the first to agree with you about me being demented!!!!

However I am not a n*gger hater at all, I have many n*gger friends including many white n*gger friends, I also love black women who are so hot. Also I believe that after the civil war all n*ggers should have been shipped back to Africa, however it was a Democratic congress that decided it would be to expensive to send them all back, has anybody tallied what the cost of this mistake has cost the U.S. and you??????

Also I do believe America needs change.

I am just saying don't jump from the frying pan to the fire!

And you should look at other countries around the world that thought a n*gger or a an Indian would make better changes, and how these countries have been sent on a downhill plunge.

Maybe look at just a few..... Nigeria (N), South Africa(N), Rhodesia(Zimbabwe, Zambia)(N), Venezuela(N), Bolivia(I) Haiti (N) and many many more..... Can you name me any that have success stories??????????????

Have you ever been out of the U.S.? Or are you like 99% of all the American sheep that only sit at home watching the boob tube CNN and think they know what is happening in the world.

All of the best my dear friend

20081029-04 11:27 Dennis Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

from Bob:

Still waiting for the list!!!!

Dear Bob,

Okay, Bozo Bob. What's your definition of "n*gger"? Are you using the word as a derisive pejorative for inferiority or blindly as a racial epithet? Do you consider all non-whites "n*ggers" out of some pseudo-scientific rationale or do you just toss it around to illustrate something about your own pathetic lack of self worth?

20081029-05 11:34 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Bob Hitler,

Have you ever been out of the U.S., Bob?

Are you sure you are the one who knows what's happening (and, apparently, what has historically happened) in the world? Do you speak a foreign language? Have you ever studied history? Have you ever read anything? It seems to me that, if you have read anything, you would understand that, unless we are black, we modern Americans of the 21st Century do not refer to black people as "n*ggers". Take my word for it, because used to be a conservative myself, but I am one who is tired of the Republican lies. They have sold Americans down the river. Black people have not.

Long live President Obama!

P.S. South Africa has done better under black administrations than white, which brought them pariah status. Since I know a little about Bolivia, I can tell you that they have never had a black President—there are about two black people in the entire country. Does this mean you think Indians are the same thing as blacks? Identical low-life scum?

Then the Japanese, Chinese, and Indian people—not being white Anglo-Saxon Protestants—must also be "n*ggers", right? They seem to be doing quite well—maybe better than we are right now—without Gringos in their governments.

Gee...there goes your beautiful (evil) racist argument...

20081029-06	11:34	SteveM	"Iowa Meatpacker Fined \$10M after Immigration Raid"
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Dear SteveB,

I dare you to share this with your liberal friends back east, who think Immigrant Identity theft is harmless, 'cause "they just want to work picking food".

"Iowa Meatpacker Fined \$10M after Immigration Raid" by AP

Oct. 29, 2008, (http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-10-29-immigration-raid_N.htm)

(DES MOINES, Iowa) On Wednesday fined a kosher meatpacking plant that was targeted by a federal immigration raid nearly \$10 million for alleged violations of state labor laws.

Labor Commissioner Dave Neil assessed the civil penalties against Agriprocessors in Postville for what he called repeated violations of Iowa's wage laws from Jan., 2006 to June, 2008.

The alleged violations included illegally deducting sales tax and miscellaneous costs, and failing to pay dozens of workers their last paycheck after the May raid by federal immigration agents.

The civil penalties total more than \$9.9 million.

An Agriprocessors spokesman didn't immediately return a telephone call seeking comment.

Also on Wednesday, a human resources employee of Agriprocessors changed her plea to guilty for her role in helping illegal workers use false documents to work at the plant.

Laura Althouse, 38, of Postville, appeared in federal court in Cedar Rapids to enter her plea to charges of conspiracy to harbor undocumented immigrants for financial gain and aggravated identity theft. She originally faced the conspiracy charge as well as charges of aiding and abetting document fraud and aiding and abetting aggravated identity theft.

Her lawyer didn't immediately respond to calls seeking comment.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Althouse remains free on bail pending sentencing, which will be scheduled after a presentence investigation report is completed. She faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on the conspiracy charge, and up to two years in prison and a \$250,000 fine on the aggravated identity theft charge.

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20081029-07	12:43	SteveB	Re: Redistributing Obama's Wealth
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Dear SteveM,

Thanks for the cartoon.

I think it's McCain's wealth and that of his buddies the Republicans don't want touched. They don't believe they should have to pay their fair share.

And you know that under the current tax law, many rich people still avoid a lot of taxes? Or do you want a flat tax and pay a lot more than you do now?

Not me! I say a guy making \$250,000 or a gal like Cindy making \$4,000,000 should pay a greater percentage tax than, say, you and I do, making less. I've made more and paid more at other times in my life. Why shouldn't everyone? It has never seemed unfair to me.

But, now, suddenly, I guess it does seem unfair somehow to a rich old politician who is in the middle of a humiliating, monumental, history-changing a*s-kicking!

McCain isn't proposing a flat tax. Therefore, McCain is a Marxist-socialist redistributor of wealth! True! Right?

20081029-08 13:11 Bob Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Dennis,

Good morning to you too.

I would say probably both as a derisive pejorative for inferiority and as a racial epithet!!!

However I do know many white n*ggers too!

But for your list to make it easier for you, let's just say black people. Hurry up with the list because once you provide it to me that's where I am going.

All my loving best.

20081029-09 13:39 Dennis Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear SteveB,

Here's the latest from the twit. Want to gang up on him?

My reply will be:

So, Whitey Redneck Bob, you think Blacks are inferior. I suppose you play golf better than Tiger Woods, play basketball better than Michael Jordon, display the moral courage of Nelson Mandela, have more integrity than Colin Powell, have made more scientific discoveries than Booker T. Washington, have any of the eloquence and intellectual acumen of our next president Barack Obama, et al?

As for African governments, did you know that Botswana has the least corruption of any government in the world, and is one of the fastest developing? South Africa, where I've traveled five times—four since the end of Apartheid—is developing pretty damn well too. I am always amazed at how the narrow minded can filter the facts to fit their prejudices. Did you learn stupidity from your parents, or have you acquired it through the diligent self denial of reality?

20081029-10 14:39 Charlie Re: Needed: A Populist Party of the Center

Dear SteveB,

Well, about that .. I heard an NPR show (podcast, I think it was, "To The Point"), where the guest was arguing that liberals should vote for McCain "to avoid having a single party in power".

I actually agree with this to a point: he was arguing that an all-Democratic government would enact laws & policies that favor their "base" and hence disenfranchise the "other side" (Conservatives, Republicans, whatever).

Well, a few thoughts there:

1. Bad policies and politics aren't limited to just Republicans.

2. Unethical politicians aren't just Republicans either.
3. New ideas can come from many places.

If I had been able to call in, I would have said that yes, a single party in charge (according to the guest) is a Bad Thing.

But what about VIABLE third parties? I'm a Green at heart and philosophically in many cases, but I'm voting Democratic because there is no viable alternative to our two-party system.

And to me, this is a possible way out of the "single party" (DUAL party!) system we have now.

My \$.04 (adjusted for inflation).

20081029-11 14:49 SteveB Re: "Iowa Meatpucker Fined \$10M after Immigration Raid"

Dear SteveM,

We don't want illegal immigrants in this country. Period. We want the laws enforced.

We wish McCain and Obama weren't too chicken-sh*t to even talk about the problem. McCain is a total traitor on this issue.

And...I was driving earlier today...listening to Rush for a while on the radio...he really is such a big, stupid idiot...thinking...

...every time the Republicans get into trouble and it looks like they might get the a*s-kicking they deserve, they break out all the big boogie men they can think of to try to control the American people. That's when we hear: Terrorists! Socialists! Communists! Baby-Killers! Redistributors of Wealth (ha!)

The American people are about to prove that no lie, no matter how clever and deceitful, works forever. The GOP is about to suffer the worst defeat in, perhaps, its history. It is the stupidity and lies of Bush and McCain that have gotten us here. It will be something different, something I suspect rather refreshing, that will take us back onto the path of strength and prosperity, freedom and respect from which we have strayed so far.

20081029-12 15:03 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Dennis,

I like your answer! Notice that he didn't seem to sense that I gave him China, India, and Japan as, I thought, appropriate answers to his question, but maybe that means it's just the blacks and not Muslims or atheists or anybody else that this guy hates.

OK, so maybe he's a decent guy after all. LOL!

I think you and I have him on the worldliness angle, huh? At least I didn't hear any more about that. :-) And how 'bout Booker T & the MG's too? "Hey, mon, pass me dat frod okra. Ah loves it!"

20081029-13 16:00 SteveB Re: Needed: A Populist Party of the Center

Dear Charlie,

Actually, divide and conquer has always been my philosophy—since reading the *Foundation* trilogy in the 60's.

And, as I've said, I'm more of a conservative than a liberal, and I think I wish we had more than two parties...though that can go badly too. Maybe we're lucky to have just two and the grass is always greener...?

And, as you say, good ideas can come from anywhere. I think most of us would agree that our idea of an ideal government would have many attributes picked from both parties, at least. Obama seems like a reasonable enough guy to put together a reasonable synthesis of the best ideas and make a decision based on what works best, not ideology. He will do this while magically reaching consensus. This is what a good leader does.

McCain is only an ideologue, at best. To me, it is such a shame that the GOP ended up in his foul hands.

I also say, kick out every incumbent! Come on, I dare you! I did on my ballot. Even judges.

For me, though, based on everything I've seen and thought, both during these campaigns and during my life, every single time...give me an honest, intelligent man over a lying, senile idiot!

20081029-14 19:53 Bob Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

My dear SteveB and all my new Friends,

Yes SteveB, I have lived outside of the U.S. for 42 years, going on 43. Also am proud to say I have never once voted for any president election due to I believe they are all lying, thieving, pilfering, conniving SOB's. And besides the fact it doesn't really matter who you vote for because the bankers will put in the guy that sucks the best cock anyway. So the joke is really on you..... thinking that your vote really makes a difference!!!!

Also you don't think Obama is a liar?????? F*ck dude come on!!!! He has been lying since day one, about everything.... please never forget he is a politician and that is one requisite for politicians they all must be able to lie with a straight face.

And unlike you I have actually lived on all 6 continents for years at a time, not just visited for a month or two while eating at Mc Donald's every day. I actually now live in Africa and have for the last 14 years. And yes I speak read and write French, Spanish, Russian, Thai, Urdu, not to mention Bantu and Bapanu, Patan and smatterings of other languages, and you what languages do you speak fluently? If you ever want to see what the real world is like and not just the plastic world you and your yuppie friends live in drop me a note, and come on over to Congo and let's see how smart you really are. This goes for Clark and DTox your buddies who think they are world travelers. I will compare passports with anybody.

Actually I am a high school dropout who left my home in Alabama at 11 with 20\$ in my pocket. I now have \$20+ million in the bank and travel mostly to Asia from Africa 6 times a year. Unlike all these yuppie educated idiots I see on your list. Again this is probably part of the problem with the U.S. is the old hippies all turned into yuppies who have totally f*cked up the U.S.

Oh and by the way here in Congo I can call n*ggers N*GGERS all day long and nobody minds..... And also for your information you need to travel to SA and see for yourself if it is better now!!!! I have recently been back and it is a sh*t hole compared to what it once was. Same with Nigeria, when I was there 40 years ago it was a great place and beautiful and clean and organized. Now it is a sh*thole. Congo has always been a sh*thole so I can not say anything about it except it has mostly been ran by n*ggers too.

As for Bolivia, to show how smart you really are there is more than 2 n*ggers there..... Actually there is a area there called Las Yungas it is all n*ggers probably close to 200,000 or more, so you are not as smart as you think you are. Maybe you need to read a little more before you try to BS people as of how smart you really aren't..... Also the Indian who is now president there is running the country deeper in the sewer then anyone before him. And Chavez is a n*gger too who has a huge national revenue, but the people have no medicine, rice, sugar, coffee, paper etc. And what about Haiti???? Now there is a great example, how do you like clay cookies to eat????

So while you guys sit there looking at the boob tube watching CNN and thinking that you are so in tune with the world?????? Well think again!!! All the very best. Hugs and Kisses.

20081029-15 21:24 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear Bob,

It's interesting. Most of us who have seen the rest of the world, the world you don't seem to have anything good to say about, usually come to appreciate and respect and love the U.S. more for having seen the alternatives, even though we might love many of the alternatives.

You seem awfully bitter for a successful man. I would have figured you for a laid-off union autoworker from Tennessee. I guess I didn't have the state far wrong. :-)

You don't live in the U.S. You don't vote in the U.S. I guess you don't even like the U.S., otherwise you would spend more time here. I don't think you have spent much time here. I don't think you know the U.S. very well. Especially the U.S. of 2008. And you are a bigot.

So I don't really think we have anything in common. Thanks for sharing your perspective with us. Till next time.

20081030-01	12:27	SteveB	"McCain Camp Trying to Scapegoat Palin"
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"McCain Camp Trying to Scapegoat Palin" by Roger Simon, Politico/Reuters

Oct. 30, 2008, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1008/15073.html>)

John McCain's campaign is looking for a scapegoat. It is looking for someone to blame if McCain loses on Tuesday. And it has decided on Sarah Palin.

In recent days, a McCain "adviser" told Dana Bash of CNN: "She is a diva. She takes no advice from anyone." Imagine not taking advice from the geniuses at the McCain campaign. What could Palin be thinking? Also, a "top McCain adviser" told Mike Allen of Politico that Palin is "a whack job."

Maybe she is. But who chose to put this "whack job" on the ticket? Wasn't it John McCain? And wasn't it his first presidential-level decision? And if you are a 72-year-old presidential candidate, wouldn't you expect that your running mate's fitness for high office would come under a little extra scrutiny? And, therefore, wouldn't you make your selection with care? (To say nothing about caring about the future of the nation?)

McCain didn't seem to care that much. McCain admitted recently on national TV that he "didn't know her well at all" before he chose Palin. But why not? Why didn't he get to know her better before he made his choice?

It's not like he was rushed. McCain wrapped up the Republican nomination in early March. He didn't announce his choice for a running mate until late August. [Once again, as in not reading the Wall St. bailout plan—2 pages—McCain seems lazy to do the work required to be President.]

Wasn't that enough time for McCain to get to know Palin? Wasn't that enough time for his crackerjack "vetters" to investigate Palin's strengths and weaknesses, check through records and published accounts, talk to a few people, and learn that she was not only a diva but a whack job diva?

But McCain picked her anyway. He wanted to close the "enthusiasm gap" between himself and Barack Obama. He wanted to inject a little adrenaline into the Republican National Convention. He wanted to goose up the Republican base.

And so he chose Palin. Is she really a diva and a whack job? Could be. There are quite a few in politics. (And a few in journalism, too, though in journalism they are called "columnists.")

As proof that she is, McCain aides now say Palin is "going rogue" and straying from their script. Wow. What a condemnation. McCain sticks to the script. How well is he doing?

In truth, Palin's real problem is not her personality or whether she takes orders well. Her real problem is that neither she nor McCain can make a credible case that Palin is ready to assume the presidency should she need to.

And that undercuts McCain's entire campaign.

This was the deal McCain made with the devil. In exchange for energizing his base by picking Palin, he surrendered his chief selling point: that he was better prepared to run the nation in time of crisis, whether it be economic, an attack by terrorists or, as he has been talking about in recent days, fending off a nuclear war.

"The next president won't have time to get used to the office," McCain told a crowd in Miami on Wednesday. "I've been tested, my friends, I've been tested."

But has Sarah Palin? [And, of course, McCain is referring to the fact that he thinks he's been "tested" because he sat on an aircraft carrier during the Cuban missile crisis back in 18...er...196? and made no decisions whatsoever, but somehow, that qualifies him as having Presidential-level experience in time of crisis—the only way I know that you could say you've been "tested". Again, everything McCain says is a lie.]

I don't believe running mates win or lose elections, though some believe they can be a drag on the ticket. Lee Atwater, who was George H.W. Bush's campaign manager in 1988, told me that Dan Quayle cost the ticket 2 to 3 percentage points. But Bush won the election by 7.8 percentage points.

So, in Atwater's opinion, Bush survived his bad choice by winning the election on his own.

McCain could do the same thing. But his campaign's bad decisions have not stopped with Sarah Palin. It has made a series of questionable calls, including making Joe the Plumber the embodiment of the campaign.

Are voters really expected to warmly embrace an (unlicensed) plumber who owes back taxes and complains about the possibility of making a quarter million dollars a year?

And did McCain's aides really believe so little in John McCain's own likability that they thought Joe the Plumber would be more likable?

Apparently so. Which is sad.

In the end, it comes down to two candidates slugging it out. Either McCain pulls off a victory in the last round or he doesn't. And if he doesn't, he has nobody to blame but himself.

20081030-02	20:31	SteveB	"Raising Arizona"
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"Raising Arizona" by Richard Wolffe, *Newsweek*

Oct. 29, 2008, (http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x7674003)

Running against any other GOP candidate, the state of Arizona would be a natural battleground for Barack Obama, alongside other Western states that lean toward him, like New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada. But with John McCain as the Republican nominee, a serious push to win Arizona was off the table.

Until now.

Obama's senior aides are intrigued by several late polls that show a narrowing of the presidential contest in Arizona. Most recently, on Tuesday a Cronkite-Eight poll (named for Arizona State University's journalism school and the local PBS channel) showed the state a statistical tie, with the Arizona senator just 2 points ahead of Obama. That poll suggests Arizona is too close to call, with Obama making significant gains among women and independents.

The campaign is now seriously examining a late surge into the state. That may include ramping up TV advertising, on-the-ground staff or even deploying the candidate to stop there. Obama is scheduled to make a Western swing late this week, making an Arizona visit possible.

According to Pollster.com's averages, Arizona is a 6 point race in McCain's favor, compared to Pennsylvania—McCain's best hope of picking up a blue state—which is an 11-point race in Obama's favor. That means Obama has more reason to travel to Arizona than McCain does to Pennsylvania, no matter how far-fetched it once seemed to try to win McCain's home state.

Dear SteveM,

"Obama the Unruffled" by Anna Quindlen, *Newsweek*

Oct. 17, 2008, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2008/10/17/obama-the-unruffled.html>)

(Americans look for the character trait that the times require. There's no question: this moment cries out for stability.)

When the term "character issue" first became the political lexicon's most persistent cliché, it seemed to mainly denote the seven deadly sins of presidential wannabes: drink, drugs, gambling, adultery, perjury, payola and an unsuitable spouse. But as elections have come and gone and imperfect people have done good things, even if they once smoked marijuana or danced with a lobbyist's lampshade on their heads, the issue has become more nuanced. Perhaps all along, without quite knowing it, voters sought a person who embodied in his character what was most needed in the country.

Franklin Roosevelt projected strength at a time when the nation required strength. John Kennedy epitomized vigor at a moment when America needed a second wind. Bill Clinton, for all his shortcomings, was a man who truly felt the pain of a country that was awash in therapy-speak and self-help books.

This effect explains how Barack Obama has captured the attention and the approval of even those who, a year ago, would have been skeptical or hostile. The guy is steady. His campaign has now made the word its mantra, and, boy, has he earned the right. There has rarely been a moment when the United States needed an unflappable leader more, and there has rarely been a candidate who has so steadfastly refused to rattle.

For nearly two years the man has played his own methodical game, ignoring the cries of pundits or party regulars. During those times when it looked as though he were faltering or fading, most conspicuously after the Republican convention, when Sarah Palin seemed like a bright idea instead of a "Saturday Night Live" skit, the Greek chorus rose: Strike out! Fight back! Be tough! Be rough! Obama proceeded apace.

Instead it was John McCain who steered in response to the potholes, and so drove into the ditch. What happened to the much-vaunted straight shooter? He found himself the headliner at what seemed to be reunions of the John Birch Society, forced to correct those who shouted that his opponent, child of Kansas, reared in Hawaii, living in Illinois, was an Arab or a terrorist. And at a moment when Wall Street seemed built on quicksand, Senator McCain was as unpredictable as the Dow, ricocheting from one set of talking points to another, abruptly dropping them when they got no traction.

The most useless line the McCain campaign tried was the existential question "Who is the real Barack Obama?" Despite attempts by the right wing to create a piñata Obama, improbable parts ambition, danger and socialism, the answer is clear: for whatever reason, he's a smart and temperate person who is really comfortable in his own skin. It's weird that this should be so, given his past. A teenage mother, an absent father, a peripatetic childhood, a black man raised by a white family, a blueprint for insecurity and anger. As a parent I would love to understand how instead he became someone conspicuously secure.

This was not how the play of personalities was supposed to go in this race. Obama started out as the shake-'em-up change agent, the newbie who hop scotched his way to the top. McCain was supposed to be the veteran with the steady hand who'd worked his way up the electoral ladder, a man of granite for rocky times. Those roles have now completely reversed. During the third debate the younger man appeared infinitely more mature than the elder. Obama was unshakable, almost preternaturally so, considering that his opponent interrupted him repeatedly, smirked at his answers and grimaced so oddly that at times he seemed deranged.

McCain has always been irascible and angry—his short fuse and barbed comebacks, more than his voting record, account for the "maverick" label—but rarely have voters seen this on such conspicuous display. As he rolled his eyes and chuckled bitterly at much of what the man across the table said, it was disconcerting to think of him doing the same with the leaders of Russia or Iran. When he ate up precious debate time complaining that his feelings had been hurt by criticism from an Obama supporter, it seemed that he thought the race was not about the people's business, but his.

The question now is "Who is the real John McCain?" For the sake of victory he sold his soul to the devil, to the Mephistophelean tactics of Karl Rove, which consist mainly of throwing mud until it sticks.

Americans are giddy believers in progress, but our presidential elections always seem to be fighting the last war; the post-Rovean era is upon us, and McCain was the last to know. When the smears revved up, his approval ratings sank. The red-meat Republicans yelling imprecations at McCain-Palin rallies are still stuck in the culture wars. Here's the thing: the culture wars are over. The liberal side won. How else to explain the spectacle of a conservative vice presidential candidate moved to confide during a debate that some of her best friends are gay?

In every election there is something intangible that speaks to voters apart from issues and positions. They search for a sense of how a candidate's character matches the times. Eight years ago, when things were booming, they decided to take a chance on a guy who seemed like a boffo guest at a barbecue, and they got burned. Now they are searching for a person who will remain unflappable in the face of crisis, who can deal calmly with the extraordinary challenges he will face in January. That is why John McCain has faltered in this race. That is why Barack Obama has surged.

[20081031-01](#) 16:15 SteveB "The Low Road Don't Lead to Nowhere"

They need a new country music song, "The Low Road Don't Lead to Nowhere".

from an AP story on the wire about Obama's speech in Youngstown, Ohio, today:

The Illinois senator said he admired a presidential candidate who said in 2000, "I will not take the low road to the highest office in this land."

"Those words were spoken eight years ago by my opponent, John McCain," Obama said. "But the high road didn't lead him to the White House then, so this time, he decided to take a different route."

[20081031-02](#) 16:32 SteveG Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear SteveB,

What happened to Bob, the demented?

[20081031-03](#) 17:37 SteveB Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Dear SteveG,

I hope he [Bob] just quietly went away. I wonder where any of that "n*gger" thinking could ever get you that would be a good place? Even if people were vastly more different than we are...maybe picture us like dogs...all colors, all sizes, all abilities, a very uneven distribution of abilities because of breeding, we'd all still be just people and still be here on this unique island planet in this unique universe, coping with the same problems and joys. And every one of those dogs would be full of love for their masters and could easily learn to be full of love for each other, not matter race, creed, or color. Our neighbors have a big boxer and a little Chihuahua (that look amazingly alike—just completely different size scales), and they get along great...really love each other. Yet strange dogs will also rip each other to pieces too, so this is just a rough analogy here. I'm just saying that we really aren't very different from each other at all, and we really should be able to get along well even if we were as different from each other as those dogs. And this "n*gger" thinking comes from so far in the deep, dark pre-history of man, when anything different could be a threat, so you had to be the most ultra conservative possible, and react negatively, maybe violently, to that perceived threat. Maybe the threat was even a Neanderthal, or some terrible extinct monkey, or a saber tooth tiger, or just someone from a different tribe.

Here we are, now victims of this now largely useless set of inborn ways of dealing with, well, differentness. We need to evolve to where we would be like all those dogs, but, for some reason, for many of us it's a tough battle. It's interesting that it is the most conservative elements of our society that have clung to this "conservative" set of reactions the longest and the hardest.

[20081031-04](#) 20:57 SteveB "Palin Misreads First Amendment; Eagleburger: 'Palin's not ready!'"

Dear Brian,

The campaign is fallin' apart and Palin still hasn't read the Constitution!

In case you forgot, the 1st Amendment to the Constitution reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

"Palin Misreads First Amendment; Eagleburger: 'Palin's not ready!'" posted by jgarofoli, *San Francisco Chronicle*

Oct. 31, 2008, (<http://blog.sfgate.com/nov05election/2008/10/31/palin-misreads-first-amendment-eagleburger-palins-not-ready/>)

First, she misstated the Vice President's role in the Senate, now Gov. Sarah Palin is misreading the First Amendment. That's OK—she was wrapping it in a criticism of the "mainstream media" so all is forgiven, right?

Is there a civics teacher in the house? We've got a code red.

Palin told a conservative radio host Friday that it's not a negative attack when she criticizes Obama's associations with 1960s radical Bill Ayers and the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Instead, says Sarah P., journalists are threatening her free speech if they say she's going negative when she makes those assertions.

"If [the media] convince enough voters that that is negative campaigning, for me to call Barack Obama out on his associations," Palin told host Chris Plante, "then I don't know what the future of our country would be in terms of First Amendment rights and our ability to ask questions without fear of attacks by the mainstream media."

[So...she thinks the 1st Amendment protects her from criticism from the press. Welcome to the real world, Sarah. — SteveB]

Oh, Lordy. The beauty of the First Amendment is that the governor can say whatever she wants about The O and the press is free to point out—if necessary—any errors in what she says. Or critique her, without fear of retribution.

Salon's Glen Greenwald's reaction: "According to Palin, what the Founders intended with the First Amendment was that political candidates for the most powerful offices in the country and Governors of states would be free to say whatever they want without being criticized in the newspapers. The First Amendment was meant to ensure that powerful political officials would not be 'attacked' in the papers. Is it even possible to imagine more breathtaking ignorance from someone holding high office and running for even higher office?"

Perhaps that's why Lawrence Eagleburger, during what was billed an ahem, "making the case" appearance for McCain Friday on NPR, dissed Palin. When asked if Palin was ready to step in as Prez, Larry—one of the five secretaries of state McCain loves to tout that endorsed him—went rogue: "It is a very good question," he said, pausing a few seconds, then adding with a laugh: "I'm being facetious here. Look, of course not."

[Ya, I'd laugh too, a*s-wipe! —SteveB]

"I don't think at the moment she is prepared to take over the reins of the presidency," he said. "I can name for you any number of other vice presidents who were not particularly up to it either. So the question, I think, is can she learn and would she be tough enough under the circumstances if she were asked to become President, heaven forbid that that ever takes place?"

"Give her some time in the office and I think the answer would be, she will be [pause] adequate. I can't say that she would be a genius in the job. But I think she would be enough to get us through a four year... well I hope not... get us through whatever period of time was necessary. And I devoutly hope that it would never be tested."

[Yes, we will be devoutly hoping...but, by God, I might even go him one further and outright pray, that this thoughtless, selfish, unpatriotic, lazy disaster never holds national office. —SteveB]

I know it's *The New York Times*, but this has some interesting insights into what Americans are thinking—especially undecided ones.

"Sheepish, Proud or Set to Flip a Coin, They're Still Undecided" by Mark Leibovich, *The New York Times*

Nov. 1, 2008, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/us/politics/02undecided.html>)

(Holdouts still wrestle with 'Who are you voting for?' question.)

(WASHINGTON) Senators Barack Obama and John McCain have stood (or sat) for 36 debates, endured thousands of interviews, and spent hundreds of millions of dollars on advertisements and the better part of two years trying to convince voters that they are worthy of the presidency, or at least a vote. But with only days left until Election Day, a small cluster of holdouts—4 percent, according to a *New York Times*/CBS News poll—are still wrestling with the "Who are you voting for?" question.

Which raises a follow-up: What is up with these people?

"I do not like being an 'undecided,' " said a sheepish Doug Finke, a 66-year-old executive at an international relocation service in Louisville, Ky. "Last time at this point, I definitely was decided. Not this time. I find it unnerving."

Mr. Finke, a Republican, voted twice for George W. Bush. He describes himself as an economic conservative and said he had been "very impressed" with Senator John McCain. It sure sounds as if Mr. Finke is leaning toward Mr. McCain, the Arizona Republican, right? Not so fast.

"I'm socially more liberal," Mr. Finke said. "I think Obama is bright and has been very steady in this campaign." He added that it would be "very exciting for the United States to elect a black president." Besides, he does not think Mr. McCain's running mate, Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska, would be ready to step into the top job if something happened to Mr. McCain (who, Mr. Finke pointed out, "is pretty old"). Where does this leave Mr. Finke? "I plan on doing a lot of reading this weekend," he said.

The gray states

If the country is divided between red and blue, Mr. Finke resides in a gray state, along with a proud— or embarrassed— corps of undecideds. They are a shrinking cohort of confused, procrastinating, indifferent or just plain indecisive consumers of democracy.

Mr. Finke lives in a red state, Kentucky, with his wife, Shelley, who is also a gray state citizen. She works out of their home, where she helps manage her husband's second career as a jazz trombonist. "I tend to be a procrastinator," said Ms. Finke, 44, who said she operated best with deadlines.

She voted for Mr. Bush twice and describes herself as "a conservative person at heart." At the beginning of the campaign, she was suspicious of Mr. Obama "because of the whole Hollywood thing," but she has since warmed to him. "My opinion of Obama has definitely risen during this campaign," Ms. Finke said. "And my opinion of McCain has fallen."

So it sure sounds as if Ms. Finke is moving toward Mr. Obama, the Illinois Democrat, right?

Not so fast.

"I'd say I'm leaning towards McCain," she said. "For as awful as things are with this Republican administration, there's something about the whole conservative thing that appeals to me." Put her down as "leaning McCain" then. "But maybe I'll vote for Obama," she said. "How many days are left?"

Two, as of Sunday. While many people in this campaign-saturated country are relieved that the election will soon be over, some of the undecideds figure, What's the rush?

"Just an election"

"I might flip a coin," said Vasilios Gerovasiliou, 64, of Concordville, Pa. His two grown sons—like him, veterinarians—are split along party lines. His wife, Helen, said she was "disgusted with both sides." Mr. Gerovasiliou, who emigrated from Greece 35 years ago, said there were things he liked about both Mr. McCain and Mr. Obama. But he also believes that "neither of the candidates always speaks the truth" and that "none of them will be able to do all of the things they are promising."

Mr. Gerovasiliou supported Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, loved Bill Clinton and pretty much vowed to support anyone not named Barack Obama after he defeated Mrs. Clinton in the Democratic primaries. But the Clintons' endorsement of Mr. Obama went a long way. "Time healed things," Mr. Gerovasiliou said. Plus, he likes Mr. Obama's running mate, Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr. of neighboring Delaware, who is "friends with a lot of the Greeks around here" and patronizes the local Greek diners. He likes Mr. McCain, too, however. He admires his service, patriotism, and grit, and also likes that Ms. Palin comes from a small town, just as he did from one in Greece.

Would he really flip a coin? No, he would not. "I will just have to make a decision," Mr. Gerovasiliou said. By the end of a 15-minute phone interview, he sounded a little closer to making one. "I think I am leaning a little bit to someone now," he said.

And that would be?

"Biden."

Chatting = confusion

Talking does not necessarily bring undecideds closer to deciding. "The more I chat, the more confused I get," said Laura Wolpo, a Brooklyn native who lives in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. She was fresh from a golf outing that was filled with political conversation and left her head spinning. "People get so wacky about this stuff," she said.

Ms. Wolpo, 76, has usually picked a candidate by the end of the conventions. That was the Democrats Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004.

Mr. Obama? "I have great misgivings," she said. "We are of the Jewish faith," she said, "and I don't really know his stance on the Middle East and Israel." She also worries about his "share the wealth ideas" and says that Michelle Obama comes on a little too strong. ("And someone should teach her how to dress, too.")

McCain? "I like the man," she said. "I have a great deal of respect for him." But she has problems with him, too, some big ones. First, she is a strong believer in abortion rights (which Mr. McCain is not.) "The government does not belong in our bedroom," she said.

And then there is Ms. Palin. "Oh, my God," Ms. Wolpo said. "Some of what she says is very stupid."

Ms. Wolpo vows to vote Tuesday. She raises the possibility of a "toss of the coin," but then rejects the notion. When pressed, Ms. Wolpo said there was probably a 60 percent chance she would support Mr. McCain. She does not buy the Obama campaign argument that Mr. McCain is just like Mr. Bush. "McCain knows in his heart that Bush is a loser," she said.

Either way, Ms. Wolpo said her decision did not keep her awake at night. "I have enough to worry about," she said, explaining that her youngest son, who is in his 40s, suffered a stroke last spring. He has good days and bad days, she said, and that puts everything else in perspective.

"This other thing is just an election," she said.

20081102-02	08:34	SteveB	"Spread It Around"
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"Spread It Around" by Jacob Weisberg, Slate

Nov. 1, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/the_big_idea/2008/10/spread_it_around.html)

(Barack Obama favors redistributing wealth. So does John McCain.)

In the last lap of his limping campaign, John McCain is claiming that Barack Obama "believes in redistributing wealth." The problem with this charge is not that it's untrue. It's that McCain—and most of his supporters—favor redistribution, too.

Government redistributes wealth to some extent by its very existence, since it's impractical for citizens to pay for or benefit from it in equal proportion, even if that were desirable. So long as you have a system of taxation and a spending on public goods like education and roads, some people will do better in the bargain than others. The real questions are whether public policy consciously tries to affect the distribution of wealth, how much it tries to change it, and in what direction.

Redistribution has a "from" side—taxation—and a "to" side—spending. On the "from" side, the notion that government should use taxation to increase rather than decrease equality is hardly Marxist. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith begins his section on taxation with the following maxim: "The subjects of every state ought to contribute towards the support of the government, as nearly as possible, in proportion to their respective abilities." To ask otherwise, Smith writes, would be obviously unfair.

Until the 20th century, the bulk of government revenues came from tariffs, which are regressive, meaning that they redistribute income away from the poor. The progressive principle was enshrined in American practice with the arrival of the federal income and inheritance taxes. The champion of these policies was none other than John McCain's hero, Teddy Roosevelt. We got progressive income taxes with the passage of the 16th Amendment in 1913. The federal estate tax we have today came in 1916.

Even in his current proposals, McCain adheres to his hero's principles. Unlike George W. Bush, John McCain supports the retention of an estate tax (he favors reducing it to 15 percent on estates above \$5 million). McCain opposes the Flat Tax, which would repudiate progressivity (though with a \$46,000 exemption, it would still redistribute income). Some of us still remember the John McCain who opposed Bush's 2001 tax cut on the argument that it was unfairly tilted toward the rich.

On the "to" side of the ledger, large-scale redistributive policies owe their existence to the other President Roosevelt. The biggest and most important of these is Social Security. FDR understood that an income support program that was too explicitly redistributionist would be unlikely to survive politically, which is why everyone who works and pays into the system has a right to benefits. But the Social Security Administration does quietly shift money from relatively richer to relatively poorer—even if recent research indicates that it may do so less than intended, largely because poor people have shorter life expectancies.

Curiously, the most prominent proponents of more-aggressive wealth redistribution have been Robin Hoods of the right. Milton Friedman is considered the father of the negative income tax, a 1960s-era proposal to simply give cash to the poor. Richard Nixon proposed a version of this plan in 1973. The idea was that simply writing checks would be preferable to more bureaucratic programs like welfare.

Our most explicit redistributive program today is probably the Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC], which supplements the incomes of people who work but don't earn enough to escape poverty on their own. Gerald Ford signed this bill into law, and Ronald Reagan greatly expanded it. [And what an incredibly efficient way to distribute help to the people who need it most. I'd like to see private enterprise concoct a more efficient system. —SteveB]

John McCain has long favored the EITC, calling it "a much-needed tax credit for working Americans." McCain doesn't support the repeal of Social Security, or Medicare, or a raft of other wealth-spreading programs like food stamps. McCain also supports new redistributive measures, such as a tax credit to help people with lower incomes purchase health insurance.

McCain might respond by saying it is not the principle of redistribution that makes Obama's policies objectionable but rather the extent of them. Socialistic Sweden, with its generous social benefits and a government consuming around 55 percent of GDP, exists on the same continuum with the mildly distributive United States, where you can't get by on welfare payments and where total government spending is in the range of 30 percent of GDP. McCain is trying to argue that an Obama presidency would lead us toward the Swedish model.

Perhaps, but there's little in Obama's background or writings to suggest that he favors more-ambitious redistributive policies. His most expensive new social program is an expansion of health care coverage that would not create a universal entitlement (as many Democrats want to do). It has been credibly priced at less, or only slightly more than McCain's plan. There's little reason to think that Obama would depart from the bipartisan consensus that has favored federal spending at approximately the same level for the past 40 years.

What has changed in that period is the way the market has distributed wealth. Since the 1970s, income inequality in the United States has increased dramatically. Obama, like a lot of his fellow liberals, wants to find ways to reverse that trend without diminishing overall economic growth. The old John McCain worried about that problem, too. We may see that guy again after the election.

20081103-01	07:59	SteveM	Fw: "The Standard Obama Response: 'I Didn't Know'"
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[Source of original email unknown. Nothing found on Snopes.com —SteveB]

"The Standard Obama Response: 'I Didn't Know'", posted by Mondoreb

Nov. 2, 2008, (<http://deathby1000papercuts.com/2008/11/barack-obama-senator-i-didnt-know/>)

(Barrack Hussein must be senile or have Alzheimer's.)

Obama and Unpleasant Revelations

1. Zeituni Onyango

Barack Obama's aunt, who attended Obama's U.S. Senate swearing-in ceremony, was discovered living in a Boston slum. She's living in the U.S. illegally in public housing. Living in poverty, she still had the means to make a donation to her nephew's campaign—which was returned when the story got publicity.

Obama's response? "Senator Obama has no knowledge of her status but obviously believes that any and all appropriate laws be followed."

That was the Obama campaign's stock answer to any unpleasant news which makes its way into the Mainstream Media—a feat in itself.

The Associated Press found that Obama's aunt had been instructed to leave the country four years ago by an immigration judge who rejected her request for asylum from her native Kenya. The woman, Zeituni Onyango (zay-TUHN on-YANG-oh), is living in public housing in Boston and is the half-sister of Obama's late father.

Obama says he didn't know aunt's illegal status. The answer has been used before and seems to satisfy any MSM curiosity about Barack Obama's family and friends.

2. Rev. Jeremiah Wright

"No no no! God damn America!"

"The U.S. of K.K.K.A."

"We bombed Hiroshima, we bombed Nagasaki, and we nuked far more than the thousands in New York and the Pentagon, and we never batted an eye."

"We have supported state terrorism against the Palestinians and black South Africans, and now we are indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost." [Sept., 2001]

"Racism is how this country was founded and how this country is still run!...We [in the U.S.] believe in white supremacy and black inferiority and believe it more than we believe in God." "Hillary is married to Bill, and Bill has been good to us. No he ain't! Bill did us, just like he did Monica Lewinsky. He was riding dirty."

"The Israelis have illegally occupied Palestinian territories for over 40 years now. Divestment has now hit the table again as a strategy to wake the business community and wake up Americans concerning the injustice and the racism under which the Palestinians have lived because of Zionism."

The above are famous quotes by Rev. Jeremiah Wright, who for 20 years was Barack Obama's pastor— until Wright became politically inconvenient.

A Wright sermon called "The Audacity to Hope" inspired Barack Obama's remarks at the 2004 Democratic Convention and provided the title of Obama's second book.

Obama's response? "I didn't know about all these statements. I knew about one or two of these statements that had been made."

3. Bill Ayers

Bill Ayers was one of the leaders of the Weather Underground, a group that bombed the Pentagon and police stations. Ayers remains convinced that he "didn't do enough" during his bombing days.

Barack Obama worked with Bill Ayers for years. Obama was hired by Ayers. Obama helped Ayers distribute millions of dollars to many radical recipients. Ayers held one of the first fund-raisers for Barack Obama's Illinois state senate race.

When news of Obama's association and friendship with Ayers surfaced. The Obama responses were disingenuous.

"Just one of the thousands of people I know."

"Just some guy from the neighborhood."

Obama has lied repeatedly about his relationship with the unrepentant domestic terrorist. He spent years working for Ayers, promoting Ayers' causes. Even CNN won't buy the Obama line any longer. —CNN: Obama's lying about William Ayers

Obama's latest responses to the issue of Bill Ayers?

"When he went he certainly didn't know the history [of Ayers' domestic terrorism]." —chief Obama strategist David Axelrod to CNN—arguing for the first time since the story surfaced early this year that Obama was unaware of Ayers' past.

There have been other instances of Barack Obama pleading ignorance about unpleasant information once its reported (Father Michael Pflieger, for one). Which may lead some to affectionately refer to Barack Obama as "Senator I-Didn't-Know." On his release of medical, college and university records, Obama's answer is silence. When speaking of the future and his plans, Obama's rhetoric is precise. On information unearthed about his past, his response has many times been, "I didn't know."

20081103-02	12:20	SteveB	Re: "The Standard Obama Response: 'I Didn't Know'"
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Dear SteveM,

This is the lowest quality one yet, Stevie Boy!

And what do all these lies matter?

One man is smart and mature enough for the job, the other is...well...not!

One man is going to defeat the other in a landslide tomorrow, the other is...well, finally going to have to shut his lying mouth and go how to his however many houses and count his money and lament about how he lost even though he's a "hero" and the other guy was black! LOL!

20081104-01	07:17	SteveB	"If Obama Had Campaigned Like McCain..." [defense]
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Keith at his best...

"If Obama Had Campaigned Like McCain..." by Keith Olbermann, MSNBC

Nov. 3, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27522443/ns/msnbc_tv-countdown_with_keith_olbermann/t/if-obama-had-campaigned-mccain/)

If Obama had campaigned like McCain...

Olbermann: The Democratic candidate would not have fared well.

I ask you to imagine an alternative universe where the candidates are the same, but what each has said and done, has been reversed. What would be happening tonight if Sen. Obama had stumbled, over everything from arcane details, to sweeping policies of the utmost importance, and not just once or twice, but endlessly? What if Sen. Obama couldn't tell Iran from Iraq? Iraq from Afghanistan? Sunni from Shi'a? Somalia from Sudan? What if Sen. Obama had gotten up before a crowd and started off by saying:

OBAMA: You know, I think you may have noticed that Sen. McCain's supporters have been saying some pretty nasty things about Western Pennsylvania lately.

And finished by saying,

OBAMA: I could not agree more. I could not disagree with him more. But I could not agree more with the explanation Sen. McCain offered a few weeks ago.

What would we be asking ourselves about his capabilities, if it had been Sen. Obama who had identified Gen. David Petraeus as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff? And Vladimir Putin as the President of Germany? And Spain as a country in Latin America?

What if it had been Sen. Obama who not only used his POW experience at every turn, but wrote of giving to his captors, not the names of his fellow servicemen, but of the offensive line of the Green Bay Packers football team, only to, when he spoke in Western Pennsylvania, change the story so that he gave to his captors, the names of the offensive line of the Pittsburgh Steelers football team?

What if it had been Sen. Obama who, out of nowhere, had blurted out an inexplicable, perhaps Freudian, slip, while intending to say "My Fellow Americans?"

OBAMA: To Chairman Dean and the Senior Senator from Illinois Dick Durbin, and to my fellow prisoners I accept your nomination for president of the United States.

And what would be happening tonight in the minds of tens of millions of voters if it had been Sen. Obama who had his people negotiate, behind the scenes and off the record, to force favorable coverage of his campaign at three television networks?

Or if it had been Sen. Obama repeatedly mocking a research study on the DNA of bear until he was suddenly reminded he had voted for it?

Or if Sen. Obama had an advisor who claimed that Sen. Obama's work on a sub-committee had led to the invention of the blackberry?

Or if Sen. Obama had tried to get one of the presidential debates postponed or cancelled...and threatened to boycott another one, the Town Hall, because he didn't like the network the moderator worked for, all the while complaining that the other guy wouldn't debate him or agree to ten Town Halls.

What would be happening tonight in the souls of a nation, if after all that, at the first debate, it had been Sen. Obama who would not as much as look at Sen. McCain, and then finally addressed him, at the second one, in a weird and cryptic manner?

OBAMA: If we could have intervened in the Holocaust, who among us would say that we have a moral obligation not to go in? That one.

What would a country heading into the most important vote in its modern history be thinking tonight, if it had been Sen. Obama who viewed a collapsing economy and insisted that if in office, he would fire the head of the SEC (even though a president cannot) and then the next day tried to correct himself by calling on the head of the FEC to resign?

What if it had been Sen. Obama who, on Sept. 24th, had after having insisted that there was little wrong?

OBAMA: The truth is, the fundamentals of the economy are strong. We are just suffering from a mental recession, you nation of whiners.

Where would America's collective head be tonight, if it had been, in the middle of a campaign in part focused on elitism and celebrity and personal wealth, Sen. Obama who couldn't remember, or wouldn't admit, how many houses he owned?

QUESTION: How many houses do you have?

OBAMA: Uh, you know I think that's a good question to address to my staff...ah ah ah, I mean, you'd have to ask my staff.

What if Sen. Obama had deflected all serious questions about the troubled finances of a worried nation, by virtually concocting a preposterous every-man, a fictional character, a plumber without a license, a small businessman who owned no business, an average Joe who had a lawyer, a book agent, a publicist, and maybe a recording contract?

OBAMA: I would love to see the next three weeks devoted to talking about Joe the Plumber who is an American hero.

MCCAIN: No, he's not.

OBAMA: Yes, he is.

What would the national psyche be like tonight if it had been Sen. Obama who had sung a mocking song about "bombing Iran?"

What would be happening if Sen. Obama had accepted the endorsement of Pastor John Hagee, or Pastor Rod Parsley, or had a running mate who attributed their big break in politics to the laying on of hands by a minister who began his career in Kenya by slandering a woman as a "witch" and hounding her out of her home?

What would we be thinking if it had been Sen. Obama who, at a critical moment, exaggerated a public claim about the "suspension" of his campaign, and lied to a national television figure about it? And what if it had been Sen. Obama who had been somehow nominated by his party, months and months ago, even though it had been he who had not reproached the use of the rankest of sexist terms, in public, about Sen. Hillary Clinton?

OBAMA: Let's go to this lady here.

LADY: How do we beat the b*tch? That's why I have that stick!

We all know exactly what would be happening tonight if Sen. Obama had made all those mistakes, contradictions, gaffes, Freudian slips, and hypocritical pronouncements. He would have long since ceased to be taken seriously by any measurable part of the voting public, as a viable, responsible, self-aware, mentally vigorous, non-dangerous, non-risk.

We'd all be going home to our beds well before midnight tomorrow night. But while all that is hypothetical, this is not: This cascade of incompetence and irresponsibility I have enumerated tonight, all the sound bites, all the foot-in-mouth moments, all the no-brainers gone-wrong—all these, John McCain has said.

No hyperbole and no hypotheses are required. This is who John McCain has showed us he is.

20081105-01	08:55	SteveB	"Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"
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Goodbye, Joe the Plumber, nice not knowin' ya!

"Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election" by Daniel Gross, Slate

Nov. 4, 2008, (http://www.slate.com/articles/business/moneybox/2008/11/sept_24_2008.html)

For Bill Clinton in 1992, it was the economy, stupid. For John McCain in 2008, it was the stupid economy. Exit polls showed that 62 percent of the electorate said the economy was the most important issue.

But when, precisely, did John McCain lose the narrative on the economy? Was it last July, when economic adviser Phil Gramm, discussing the "mental recession," noted that "we've sort of become a nation of whiners"? Perhaps it was back in Dec. 2007, when McCain said, "The issue of economics is not something I've understood as well as I should." Or was McCain's economic goose cooked long before the campaigns started? Ray Fair, the Yale professor who plugs macroeconomic data into an election-predicting model, said that "since Nov., 2006, the model has consistently been predicting that the Democratic candidate would get about 52 percent of the two-party vote."

McCain managed to give Obama a run for the money through mid-September. The polls began to turn (decisively, it turns out) against him when the global financial system suffered a run on the money. And with the acuity bestowed by six weeks of hindsight, I think it's possible to pinpoint three dates—Sept. 15, Sept. 24, and Oct. 15—that mark crucial turning points in the campaign.

On Sept. 15, Lehman Bros., having failed to convince the government it was worthy of a bailout, filed for bankruptcy. The same day, McCain proclaimed: "I think, still, the fundamentals of our economy are strong." A twin killer. Lehman's failure triggered a ferocious and unpredictable series of events—the freezing of money-market funds, a global credit seizure—that made it clear that 1) the fundamentals of our economy were anything but strong and 2) volatility was here to stay. McCain's ill-timed line, a longtime presidential staple, showed he had no intuitive feel for how to talk about the economy at large or about the crisis at hand.

On Sept. 24, as talks about a Washington bailout intensified, McCain announced he would suspend his campaign and fly to Washington. The theory: McCain would put country first, force Obama off the campaign trail, forge a bipartisan compromise, and alter the dynamics of the race. But McCain didn't have a game plan to triangulate effectively between the Republican gentry (the Bush administration, Wall Street, corporate America), who ardently demanded a bailout, and the pitchfork-toting peasants (House Republicans), who opposed it. He ended up leaving town and resuming campaigning without an agreement in place.

While McCain seemed detached, Obama caucused with financial graybeards and kept his campaign plane on the tarmac to get updates from his new speed-dialing buddy, Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson. Self-serving? You betcha. But doggone successful. And the passage of the bailout bill, which McCain grudgingly supported, neutered the increasingly ideological economic warfare McCain waged in the closing weeks. At a time when the Bush administration was nationalizing big portions of the (grateful) financial services sector, charges that Obama was a socialist, the redistributor-in-chief, the second coming of Eugene V. Debs, failed to gain traction.

The third fatal date? Oct. 15, when the third debate took place. Throughout the fall, Obama had rounded up financial icons such as former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and Warren Buffett to serve as surrogates. They could reassure Wall Street and Main Street that Obama could steer the nation through treacherous financial waters. Rather than enlist a respected businessperson such as Mitt Romney or former eBay CEO Meg Whitman as his chief economic surrogate, McCain turned to an unlicensed plumber from Ohio. McCain mentioned "Joe the Plumber" seven times in the Oct. 15 debate. In the ensuing weeks, McCain routinely trotted out Samuel J. Wurzelbacher's economic folk wisdom as gospel.

Warren the Investor and Paul the Central Banker vs. Joe the Plumber was never going to be much of a fair fight. Given the macroeconomic backdrop of recent years and the microeconomic disasters of recent weeks, neither was the presidential campaign, which is why Obama has won the White House.

20081105-02 11:47 Dennis Re: "Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"

Dear SteveB,

Congratulations on helping me deliver Indiana! I know at least a couple of my relatives voted for Obama.

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

—George Carlin

20081105-03 12:54 Charlie "Living History"

Reading this through happy tears.

Hope you find this as inspiring as I (and the person who forwarded it to me) are. Of all I've read so far today about last night's victory... this is the best.

"Living History" by Anna Quindlen, *Newsweek*

Nov 17, 2008, (<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-188748506.html>)

(Occasionally America turns out to be every bit as good as its hype. It's thrilling to be around to witness one of those moments.)

The American Museum of Natural History threw a spectacular party on New Year's Eve 1999, but perhaps the millennium really arrived there just a few weeks ago. A group of New York City schoolchildren were at an event marking the 150th birthday of Theodore Roosevelt, naturalist and president, and at the end of the visit one of the kids raised his hand.

"I have a question," he said. "Was he black?"

History will record that on Nov. 4, 2008, Barack Hussein Obama was elected the first black president of the United States. It is impossible to overstate what that means to this nation.

America is as much a concept as it is a country, but it is a concept too often honored in the breach. The Statue of Liberty welcomes with the words "Give me your tired, your poor." Yet generation after generation of immigrants arrived here to face contempt and hatred until the passage of time, the flattening of accents, turned them into tolerated natives. The Declaration of Independence states unequivocally that all men are created equal. Yet for years the politicians and the powerful seemed to take the gender of that noun literally and denied all manner of rights to women.

But no injustice or prejudice brought to bear by this country against its own people can compare with how it has treated black men and women. Humiliation, degradation, lynchings, beatings, murders. The rights the United States pretended to confer upon all were unthinkingly and consistently denied them: the right to the franchise, to representation, to protection by the justice system.

Literal ownership gave way to something not so different: "When we are moved to better our lot," Richard Wright wrote in 1941, "we do not ask ourselves 'can we do it?' but 'will they let us do it?'" Henry Louis Gates Jr., in the memoir "Colored People," says simply, "For most of my childhood, we couldn't eat in restaurants or sleep in hotels, we couldn't use certain bathrooms or try on clothes in stores." Alice Walker left home for college on a bus and was ordered to move after a white woman complained that she was too near the front.

None of this was so very long ago.

Time passed. Things changed. John Lewis, a boy who loved books but was not permitted to enter the public library, a man whose skull was fractured by Alabama state troopers when he led a peaceful march across a bridge, now sits in Congress. Gates is a professor at Harvard, Walker a revered writer. Segregation as a matter of law has given way to segregation as a matter of class and custom. As President-elect Obama said when he gave a speech about race earlier this year, speaking of systemic poverty, bad schools and broken families, "Many of the disparities that exist in the African-American community today can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of slavery and Jim Crow."

But Obama said something else in that speech, something both simpler and more profound that has special resonance now that his improbable candidacy has prevailed. He made the political spiritual. "In the end, then," he said, "what is called for is nothing more, and nothing less, than what all the world's great religions demand—that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us." He asked the American people to be fair and just, to be kind and generous, to put prejudice behind them and be one people because that is, not a legal or social imperative, but a moral one.

There will be learned discussion in the years to come about the specific meaning of this moment, about whether it will be more symbolic than substantive, about whether having a black president will lull Americans into believing that racism is a thing of the past. But for just a moment consider this small fact: for a long time a black man in many parts of the United States was denied even the honorific "Mister" by the white community, and was instead called by his first name, like a child, no matter how elderly and esteemed he might be.

Now a black man will be called Mr. President.

They never thought they would see the day, people said, especially the older ones, who could remember the murders of Martin Luther King Jr., Medgar Evers and Malcolm X. They wept, some of them, and so did I. Perhaps it was because this man seems so young and vigorous in a nation that seems old and tired. Perhaps it is because he promises change and hope, and both are so badly needed. He is the president for our children's generation, a more tolerant and diverse society, so insensible of bright dividing lines that one of them would idly wonder whether Theodore Roosevelt was a black man. They belie a time when there was a crayon labeled "flesh" in my Crayola box, a crayon that was a pale pink.

But I suspect that, like many others, I wept for myself, too, because I felt I was part of a country that was living its principles. Despite all our prejudices, seen and hidden, millions of citizens managed, in the words of Dr. King, to judge Barack Obama by the content of his character and not the color of his skin. There were many reasons to elect him president, but this was one collateral gift: to be able to watch America look an old evil in the eye and to say, no more. We must be better than that. We can be better than that. We are better than that.

20081106-01	08:33	SteveB	"Rifts Divided McCain, Palin Camps"
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And these fools were going to unite the U.S. and solve our problems? LOL!

My favorite quote from today's article is this:

"If you can't run a campaign, how are you going to run the country?"

"Rifts Divided McCain, Palin Camps" by Elisabeth Bumiller, *New York Times*

Nov. 6, 2008, (<http://tipggita32.wordpress.com/2008/11/06/nyt-rifts-divided-mccain-palin-camps/>)

(Republican's running mate appeared to have been catalyst for infighting.)

(PHOENIX) As a top adviser in Senator John McCain's now-imploded campaign tells the story, it was bad enough that Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska unwittingly scheduled, and then took, a prank telephone call from a Canadian comedian posing as the president of France. Far worse, the adviser said, she failed to inform her ticketmate about her rogue diplomacy.

As a senior adviser in the Palin campaign tells the story, the charge is absurd. The call had been on Ms. Palin's schedule for three days and she should not have been faulted if the McCain campaign was too clueless to notice.

Whatever the truth, one thing is certain. Ms. Palin, who laughingly told the prankster that she could be president "maybe in eight years," was the catalyst for a civil war between her campaign and Mr. McCain's that raged from mid-September up until moments before Mr. McCain's concession speech on Tuesday night. By then, Ms. Palin was in only infrequent contact with Mr. McCain, top advisers said.

"I think it was a difficult relationship," said one top McCain campaign official, who, like almost all others interviewed, asked to remain anonymous. "McCain talked to her occasionally."

But Mr. McCain's advisers also described him as admiring of Ms. Palin's political skills. He was aware of the infighting, they said, but it is unclear how much he was inclined or able to stop it.

The tensions and their increasingly public airing provide a revealing coda to the ill-fated McCain-Palin ticket, hinting at the mounting turmoil of a campaign that was described even by many Republicans as incoherent, negative and badly run.

For her part, Ms. Palin told reporters in Arizona on Wednesday morning that "there is absolutely no diva in me."

Later in the day, she refused to address the strife within the campaigns. "I have absolutely no intention of engaging in any of the negativity because this has been all positive for me," she said, adding that it was time to savor President-elect Barack Obama's victory and "not let the pettiness or maybe internal workings of a campaign erode any of the recognition of this historic moment."

As the ticketmate with a potentially brighter political future, Ms. Palin has more at stake going forward than Mr. McCain, whose aides now have an interest in blaming outside factors for their loss, making Ms. Palin a tempting target. And even as the votes from the election were still being counted, there were new recriminations, with Mr. McCain's aides suggesting that a Palin aide had leaked damaging information about them to reporters. The tensions were described in interviews with top aides to the two campaigns who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they did not want to be seen as disloyal to Mr. McCain's effort at a difficult time.

Finger-pointing at the end of a losing campaign is traditional and to a large degree predictable, as Mr. McCain himself acknowledged in a prescient interview in July. "Every book I've read about a campaign is that the one that won, it was a perfect and beautifully run campaign with geniuses running it and incredible messaging, etcetera," Mr. McCain said then. "And always the one that lost, 'Oh, completely screwed up, too much infighting, bad people, etcetera.' So if I win, I believe that historians will say, 'Way to go, he fine-tuned that campaign, and he got the right people in the right place and as the campaign grew, he gave them more responsibility.' If I lose," people will say, "That campaign, always in disarray."

The disputes between the campaigns centered in large part on the Republican National Committee's \$150,000 wardrobe for Ms. Palin and her family, but also on what McCain advisers considered Ms. Palin's lack of preparation for her disastrous interview with Katie Couric of CBS News and her refusal to take advice from Mr. McCain's campaign.

But behind those episodes may be a greater subtext: anger within the McCain camp that Ms. Palin harbored political ambitions beyond 2008.

As late as Tuesday night, a McCain adviser said, Ms. Palin was pushing to deliver her own speech just before Mr. McCain's concession speech, even though vice-presidential nominees do not traditionally speak on election night. But Ms. Palin met up with Mr. McCain with text in hand. She was told no by Mark Salter, one of Mr. McCain's closest advisers, and Steve Schmidt, Mr. McCain's top strategist.

On Wednesday, two top McCain campaign advisers said that the clothing purchases for Ms. Palin and her family were a particular source of outrage for them. As they portrayed it, Ms. Palin had been advised by Nicolle Wallace, a senior McCain aide, that she should buy three new suits for the Republican National Convention in St. Paul in September and three additional suits for the fall campaign. The budget for the clothes was anticipated to be from \$20,000 to \$25,000, the officials said.

Instead, in a public relations debacle undermining Ms. Palin's image as an everywoman "hockey mom," bills came in to the Republican National Committee for about \$150,000, including charges of \$75,062 at Neiman Marcus and \$49,425 at Saks Fifth Avenue. The bills included clothing for Ms. Palin's family and purchases of shoes, luggage and jewelry, the advisers said.

The advisers described the McCain campaign as incredulous about the shopping spree and said Republican National Committee lawyers were likely to go to Alaska to conduct an inventory and try to account for all that was spent.

Ms. Palin has defended her wardrobe as the idea of the Republican National Committee and said that she would give it back.

"Those clothes, they are not my property," she said. "Just like the lighting and the staging and everything else that the R.N.C. purchased."

Advisers in the McCain campaign, in suggesting that Palin advisers had been leaking damaging information about the McCain campaign to the news media, said they were particularly suspicious of Randy Scheunemann, Mr. McCain's top foreign policy aide who had a central role in preparing Ms. Palin for the vice-presidential debate.

As a result, two senior members of the McCain campaign said on Wednesday that Mr. Scheunemann had been fired from the campaign in its final days. But Rick Davis, the McCain campaign manager, and Mr. Salter, one of Mr. McCain's closest advisers, said Wednesday that Mr. Scheunemann had in fact not been dismissed. Mr. Scheunemann, who picked up the phone in his office at McCain campaign headquarters on Wednesday afternoon, responded that "anybody who says I was fired is either lying or delusional or a whack job."

Mr. Scheunemann was referring to widely disseminated criticism by Mr. McCain's advisers in the final days of the campaign that Ms. Palin, as first reported in Politico, was a "whack job."

Whatever the permutations, the advisers said they strongly believed that Mr. Scheunemann was disclosing, as one put it, "a constant stream of poison" to William Kristol, the editor of the conservative *Weekly Standard* and a columnist for *The New York Times*.

Mr. Kristol, who wrote a column on Oct. 13 calling on Mr. McCain to fire his campaign because it was "close to being out-and-out dysfunctional," said in a telephone interview on Wednesday that the campaign advisers were paranoid. Mr. Kristol has been a strong supporter of Ms. Palin.

"I wasn't writing poison," Mr. Kristol said. He added: "Randy Scheunemann is a friend of mine and I think he did a good job. I talked to him, but I talked to a lot of people at the campaign."

The McCain camp was further upset about Ms. Palin's interview with Ms. Couric, which was broadcast at a time when Ms. Palin was meeting with foreign leaders at the United Nations and trying to establish some foreign policy credentials. Ms. Palin's wobbly and tongue-tied performance was mocked in an iconic impersonation on "Saturday Night Live" by Tina Fey.

Ms. Palin, who had prepared for and survived an initial interview with Charles Gibson of ABC News, did not have the time or focus to prepare for Ms. Couric, the McCain advisers said. "She did not say, 'I will not prepare,'" a McCain adviser said. "She just didn't have a bandwidth to do a mock interview session the way we had prepared before. She was just overloaded."

One of the last straws for the McCain advisers came just days before the election when news broke that Ms. Palin had taken a call made by Marc-Antoine Audette. Mr. Audette and his fellow comedian Sebastien Trudel are notorious for prank calls to celebrities and heads of state.

Ms. Palin appeared to believe that she was talking to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, even though the prankster had a flamboyant French accent and spoke to her in a more personal way than would be protocol in such a call. At one point, he told Ms. Palin that she would make a good president some day. "Maybe in eight years," she replied.

Julie Bosman and Michael Cooper contributed reporting.

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20081108-01	08:55	SteveB	Re: "Sept. 24, 2008: The Day John McCain Lost the Election"
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Dear Dennis,

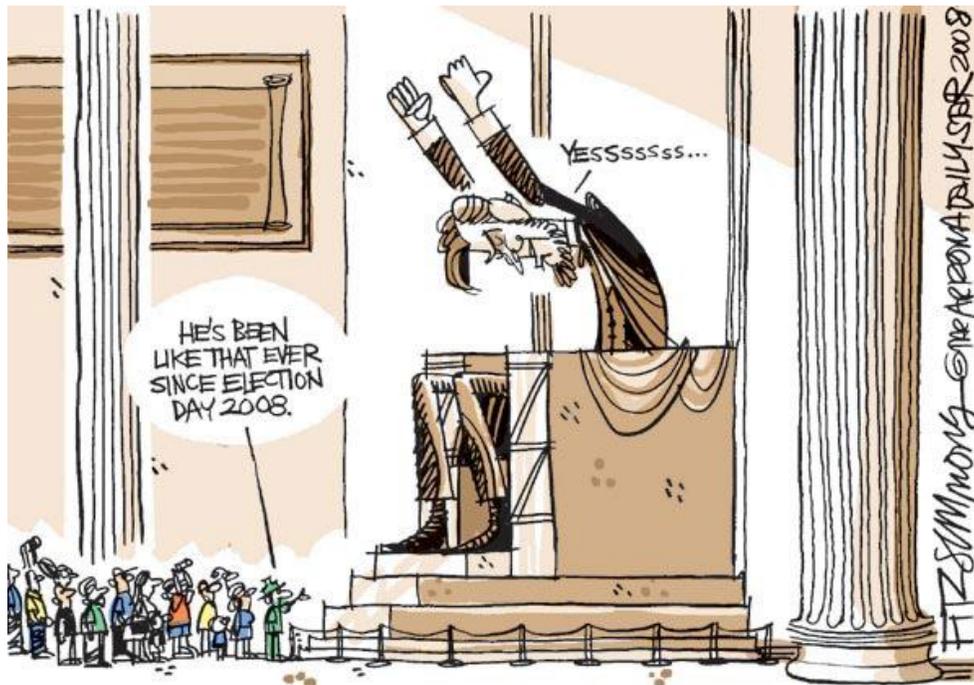
Hey, I worked on 'em! Good job there in Michigan and Indiana! We almost pulled-out Montana here. Montana is very conservative in a good way, but that tends to also make it conservative in a bad way sometimes. I guess they're a little like Alaska in that regard, huh?

Now, instead of trying to protect ourselves against the excesses of the Republicans, we'll have to start doing the same with the Democrats.

The nation has more serious problems than probably at any time in our lives. We baby boomers were handed the world, f*cked it up, and handed it off to the next generation. Ain't we slick? (That may be a bit of an oversimplification, but anything to highlight the truth.)

We have the right guy at the top, I think, but it's sure gonna be a long, hard road.

20081110-01 12:45 Ben Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II



20081111-01 10:31 SteveM Re: Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II

[In response to cartoon, above, I forwarded to SteveM from Ben. —SteveB]

Dear SteveB,

Wrong again. Once again your lack of research (along with cartoonist and the original sender) and your lack of knowledge of history past and current has let you down. (See below.)

Secondly, Obama's not a descendant of slaves, nor was his WHITE mother, nor his African-Arabic Father. And neither were his grandparents who raised him! Perhaps Lincoln's raised arms in the Cartoon you sent below, are a justification of Lincoln's strongly held beliefs, that it takes a white women to raise a politely acceptable black leader and that Jesse Jackson's tears on election night were his own realization of that fact! And that Jesse's enabling the victimization mentality of his constituency has and continues to the wrong way to social and politically integrate the races.

I expect better from you.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Abraham Lincoln, as cited in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy Basler, ed. 1953 New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press:

I will say, then, that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races—that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races from living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.

Many Americans think of Abraham Lincoln, above all, as the president who freed the slaves. Immortalized as the "Great Emancipator," he is widely regarded as a champion of black freedom who supported social equality of the races, and who fought the American Civil War (1861-1865) to free the slaves.

While it is true that Lincoln regarded slavery as an evil and harmful institution, it also true, as this paper will show, that he shared the conviction of most Americans of his time, and of many prominent statesmen before and after him, that blacks could not be assimilated into white society. He rejected the notion of social equality of the races, and held to the view that blacks should be resettled abroad. As President, he supported projects to remove blacks from the United States.

On Aug. 14, 1862, Lincoln received a deputation of free Negroes at the White House to which he said, "But for your race there could not be war... It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated". He advocated colonization in Central America and promised them help in carrying out the project.

"What I would most desire would be the separation of the white and black races." From a speech in Springfield, IL, July 17, 1858

"Such separation ... must be effected by colonization ... to transfer the African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be." —from a speech delivered in Springfield, IL, June 26, 1857.

20081111-02	11:57	SteveM	"White Guilt Is Dead"
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"White Guilt Is Dead" by Tom Adkins, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Nov. 11, 2008 (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2130168/posts>)

Look at my fellow conservatives! There they go, glumly shuffling along, depressed by the election aftermath.

Not me. I'm virtually euphoric. Don't get me wrong. I'm not thrilled with America 's flirtation with neo-socialism.. But there's a massive silver lining in those magical clouds that lofted Barak Obama to the Presidency. For today, without a shred of intellectually legitimate opposition, I can loudly proclaim to America:

The Era of White Guilt is over.

This seemingly impossible event occurred because the vast majority of white Americans didn't give a fluff about skin color, and enthusiastically pulled the voting lever for a black man. Not just any black man. A very liberal black man who spent his early career race-hustling banks, praying in a racist church for 20 years, and actively worked with America-hating domestic terrorists. Wow! Some resume! Yet they made Barak Obama their leader.

Therefore, as of Nov 4th, 2008, white guilt is dead.

For over a century, the millstone of white guilt hung around our necks, retribution for slave-owning predecessors. In the 60s, American liberals began yanking that millstone while sticking a fork in the eye of black Americans, exacerbating the racial divide to extort a socialist solution. But if a black man can become President, exactly what significant barrier is left? The election of Barak Obama absolutely destroys the entire validation of liberal white guilt. The dragon is hereby slain.

So today, I'm feeling a little uppity, if you will. From this day forward, my tolerance level for having my skin color hustled is now exactly ZERO.. And it's time to clean house. No more Reverend Wright's God Damn America , Al Sharpton's Church of Perpetual Victimization , or Jesse Jackson's rainbow racism.

Cornell West? You're a fraud. Go home. All those black studies programs that taught kids to hate whitey? You must now thank Whitey. And I want that on the final. Congressional Black Caucus? Irrelevant. Maxine Waters? Shut up. ACORN? Outlawed. Black Panthers? Go home and pet your kitty. Black separatists? Find another nation that offers better dreams. Go ahead. I'm waiting.

Gangsta rappers? Start praising America . Begin with the Pledge of Allegiance. And please no more Ebonics. Speak English, and who knows where you might end up? Oh, yeah, pull up your pants. Your underwear is showing. You look stupid.

To those Eurosnots who forged entire careers hating America? I'm still waiting for the first black French President.

And let me offer an equal opportunity whooping. I've always despised lazy white people. Now, I can talk smack about lazy black people. You're poor because you quit school, did drugs, had three kids with three different fathers, and refuse to work. So when you plop your Colt 45-swilling, Oprah watching butt on the couch and complain Da Man is keeping me down, allow me to inform you: Da Man is now black. You have no excuses.

No more quotas. No more handouts. No more stealing my money because someone's great-great-great-great grandparents suffered actual pain and misery at the hands of people I have no relation to, and personally revile.

It's time to toss that massive, obsolete race-hustle machine upon the heap of the other stupid 60s ideas. Drag it over there, by wife swapping, next to dope smoking. Plenty of room right between free love and cop-killing. Careful don't trip on streaking. There ya go, don't be gentle. Just dump it. Wash your hands. It's filthy.

In fact, Obama's ascension created a gargantuan irony. How can you sell class envy and American unfairness when you and your black wife went to Ivy League schools, got high-paying jobs, became millionaires, bought a mansion, and got elected President? How unfair is that??? Now, like a delicious O'Henry tale, Obama's spread-the-wealth campaign rendered itself moot by its own victory! America is officially a meritocracy. Obama's election has validated American conservatism!

So, listen carefully Wham!!!

That's the sound of my foot kicking the door shut on the era of white guilt. The rites have been muttered, the carcass lowered, dirt shoveled, and tombstone erected. White guilt is dead and buried.

However, despite my glee, there's apparently one small, rabid bastion of American racism remaining. Black Americans voted 96% for Barak Obama. Hmmm. In a color-blind world, shouldn't that be 50-50. Tonight, every black person should ask forgiveness for their apparent racism and prejudice towards white people. Maybe it's time to start spreading the guilt around.

Tom Adkins is the publisher of CommonConservative.com, 610-888-7970.

20081111-03	16:17	SteveB	Re: Cartoon: Emancipation Proclamation, Part II
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Dear SteveM,

You don't get it! We are all the descendents of slaves of one type or another (royalty excluded)...you just have to go back further in some people's family trees than in others. And nobody's saying that it makes any difference at all, at this point in time. Slavery is not the problem, social injustice is, whether the victim is black or Hispanic or white.

Racial problems are the smallest problems, by far, that America is facing right now, in my opinion. In fact, we seem to be kind of overcoming them a little (duh...don't we have a...oh my God, black President?). I don't consider race to be any kind of issue at all. Maybe, what? 10th or 12th on the list? 20th?

Dear SteveM,

This is pure trash, not worth the paper it's written on. Come to think of it, it isn't written on paper, or anything.

All the more reason why it isn't worth even as much as the cost of the paper it's written on. \$0.00

Despite this, I'm still optimistic. Guardedly so.

"America the Illiterate" by Chris Hedges, TruthDig

Nov. 10, 2008, (http://www.truthdig.com/report/page2/20081110_america_the_illiterate/)

We live in two Americas. One America, now the minority, functions in a print-based, literate world. It can cope with complexity and has the intellectual tools to separate illusion from truth. The other America, which constitutes the majority, exists in a non-reality-based belief system. This America, dependent on skillfully manipulated images for information, has severed itself from the literate, print-based culture.

It cannot differentiate between lies and truth. It is informed by simplistic, childish narratives and clichés. It is thrown into confusion by ambiguity, nuance and self-reflection. This divide, more than race, class or gender, more than rural or urban, believer or nonbeliever, red state or blue state, has split the country into radically distinct, unbridgeable and antagonistic entities.

There are over 42 million American adults, 20 percent of whom hold high school diplomas, who cannot read, as well as the 50 million who read at a fourth- or fifth-grade level. Nearly a third of the nation's population is illiterate or barely literate. And their numbers are growing by an estimated 2 million a year. But even those who are supposedly literate retreat in huge numbers into this image-based existence. A third of high school graduates, along with 42 percent of college graduates, never read a book after they finish school. Eighty percent of the families in the United States last year did not buy a book.

The illiterate rarely vote, and when they do vote they do so without the ability to make decisions based on textual information. American political campaigns, which have learned to speak in the comforting epistemology of images, eschew real ideas and policy for cheap slogans and reassuring personal narratives. Political propaganda now masquerades as ideology. Political campaigns have become an experience. They do not require cognitive or self-critical skills. They are designed to ignite pseudo-religious feelings of euphoria, empowerment and collective salvation.

Campaigns that succeed are carefully constructed psychological instruments that manipulate fickle public moods, emotions and impulses, many of which are subliminal. They create a public ecstasy that annuls individuality and fosters a state of mindlessness. They thrust us into an eternal present. They cater to a nation that now lives in a state of permanent amnesia.

It is style and story, not content or history or reality, which inform our politics and our lives. We prefer happy illusions. And it works because so much of the American electorate, including those who should know better, blindly cast ballots for slogans, smiles, the cheerful family tableaux, narratives and the perceived sincerity and the attractiveness of candidates. We confuse how we feel with knowledge.

The illiterate and semi-literate, once the campaigns are over, remain powerless. They still cannot protect their children from dysfunctional public schools. They still cannot understand predatory loan deals, the intricacies of mortgage papers, credit card agreements and equity lines of credit that drive them into foreclosures and bankruptcies. They still struggle with the most basic chores of daily life from reading instructions on medicine bottles to filling out bank forms, car loan documents and unemployment benefit and insurance papers.

They watch helplessly and without comprehension as hundreds of thousands of jobs are shed. They are hostages to brands. Brands come with images and slogans. Images and slogans are all they understand. Many eat at fast food

restaurants not only because it is cheap but because they can order from pictures rather than menus. And those who serve them, also semi-literate or illiterate, punch in orders on cash registers whose keys are marked with symbols and pictures. This is our brave new world.

Political leaders in our post-literate society no longer need to be competent, sincere or honest. They only need to appear to have these qualities. Most of all they need a story, a narrative. The reality of the narrative is irrelevant. It can be completely at odds with the facts. The consistency and emotional appeal of the story are paramount. The most essential skill in political theater and the consumer culture is artifice. Those who are best at artifice succeed. Those who have not mastered the art of artifice fail.

In an age of images and entertainment, in an age of instant emotional gratification, we do not seek or want honesty. We ask to be indulged and entertained by clichés, stereotypes and mythic narratives that tell us we can be whomever we want to be, that we live in the greatest country on Earth, that we are endowed with superior moral and physical qualities and that our glorious future is preordained, either because of our attributes as Americans or because we are blessed by God or both.

The ability to magnify these simple and childish lies, to repeat them and have surrogates repeat them in endless loops of news cycles, gives these lies the aura of an uncontested truth. We are repeatedly fed words or phrases like /yes we can/, /maverick/, /change/, /pro-life/, /hope/ or /war on terror./ It feels good not to think. All we have to do is visualize what we want, believe in ourselves and summon those hidden inner resources, whether divine or national, that make the world conform to our desires. Reality is never an impediment to our advancement.

The Princeton Review analyzed the transcripts of the Gore-Bush debates, the Clinton-Bush-Perot debates of 1992, the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960 and the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. It reviewed these transcripts using a standard vocabulary test that indicates the minimum educational standard needed for a reader to grasp the text. During the 2000 debates George W. Bush spoke at a sixth-grade level (6.7) and Al Gore at a seventh-grade level (7.6). In the 1992 debates Bill Clinton spoke at a seventh-grade level (7.6), while George H.W. Bush spoke at a sixth-grade level (6.8), as did H. Ross Perot (6.3). In the debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon the candidates spoke in language used by 10th-graders. In the debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas the scores were respectively 11.2 and 12.0. In short, today's political rhetoric is designed to be comprehensible to a 10-year-old child or an adult with a sixth-grade reading level. It is fitted to this level of comprehension because most Americans speak, think and are entertained at this level. This is why serious film and theater and other serious artistic expression, as well as newspapers and books, are being pushed to the margins of American society. Voltaire was the most famous man of the 18th century. Today the most famous "person" is Mickey Mouse.

In our post-literate world, because ideas are inaccessible, there is a need for constant stimulus. News, political debate, theater, art and books are judged not on the power of their ideas but on their ability to entertain. Cultural products that force us to examine ourselves and our society are condemned as elitist and impenetrable. Hannah Arendt (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/arendt.htm>) warned that the marketization of culture leads to its degradation, that this marketization creates a new celebrity class of intellectuals who, although well read and informed themselves, see their role in society as persuading the masses that "Hamlet" can be as entertaining as "The Lion King" and perhaps as educational.

"Culture," she wrote, "is being destroyed in order to yield entertainment. There are many great authors of the past who have survived centuries of oblivion and neglect, but it is still an open question whether they will be able to survive an entertaining version of what they have to say."

The change from a print-based to an image-based society has transformed our nation. Huge segments of our population, especially those who live in the embrace of the Christian right and the consumer culture, are completely unmoored from reality. They lack the capacity to search for truth and cope rationally with our mounting social and economic ills. They seek clarity, entertainment and order. They are willing to use force to impose this clarity on others, especially those who do not speak as they speak and think as they think. All the traditional tools of democracies, including dispassionate scientific and historical truth, facts, news and rational debate, are useless instruments in a world that lacks the capacity to use them.

As we descend into a devastating economic crisis, one that Barack Obama cannot halt, there will be tens of millions of Americans who will be ruthlessly thrust aside. As their houses are foreclosed, as their jobs are lost, as they are forced to declare bankruptcy and watch their communities collapse, they will retreat even further into irrational fantasy. They will be led toward glittering and self-destructive illusions by our modern Pied Pipers, our corporate advertisers, our charlatan

preachers, our television news celebrities, our self-help gurus, our entertainment industry and our political demagogues who will offer increasingly absurd forms of escapism.

The core values of our open society, the ability to think for oneself, to draw independent conclusions, to express dissent when judgment and common sense indicate something is wrong, to be self-critical, to challenge authority, to understand historical facts, to separate truth from lies, to advocate for change and to acknowledge that there are other views, different ways of being, that are morally and socially acceptable, are dying. Obama used hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign funds to appeal to and manipulate this illiteracy and irrationalism to his advantage, but these forces will prove to be his most deadly nemesis once they collide with the awful reality that awaits us.

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(Chris Hedges is a leading writer on the subjects of religion, war and empire. His critically acclaimed books, such as "American Fascists," can be found here (<http://www.truthdig.com/bazaar/author/70>). Hedges' Truthdig column appears every Monday.)

"The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding."—Justice Louis Brandeis

20081114-01	13:34	Charlie	"The New Liberal Order"
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The road ahead... Wow. Deep stuff.

A number of friends have suggested that I (and maybe a group) collect some of the emailed articles (and our discussions on them) into a blog somewhere. It would be difficult to do with copyrighted material (such as I assume this piece is) but it would be a fascinating and interesting collection.

Nov. 13, 2008, ...as seen by Peter Beinart, usually of *The New Republic* but writing here for *Time*. I too have thought of the odd but exhilarating symmetry involving Chicago's Grant Park at opposite ends of a dramatic, *traumatic* arc in the country's political culture. What a difference 40 years makes! Plenty of great historical context here for rumination—and ACTION.

"The New Liberal Order" by Peter Beinart, TIME

Nov. 13, 2008, (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1858873,00.html>)

The death and rebirth of American liberalism both began with flags in Grant Park. On Aug. 28, 1968, 10,000 people gathered there to protest the Democratic Convention taking place a few blocks away, which was about to nominate Lyndon Johnson's Vice President, Hubert Humphrey, thus implicitly ratifying the hated Vietnam War. Chicago mayor Richard Daley had warned the protesters not to disrupt his city and denied them permits to assemble, but they came anyway. All afternoon, the protesters chanted and the police hovered, until about 3:30, when someone climbed a flagpole and began lowering the American flag.

Police went to arrest the offender and were pelted with eggs, chunks of concrete and balloons filled with paint and urine. The police responded by charging into the crowd, clubbing bystanders and yelling "Kill! Kill!" in what one report later termed a "police riot." Across the country, Americans watching on television gave their verdict: Serves the damn hippies right. Democrats, who had won seven of the previous nine presidential elections, went on to lose seven of the next 10.

Forty years later, happy liberals mobbed Grant Park, invited by another mayor named Richard Daley, to celebrate Barack Obama's election. This time the flags flew proudly at full mast, and the police were there to protect the crowd, not threaten it. Once again, Americans watched on television, and this time they didn't seethe. They wept.

The distance between those two Grant Park scenes says a lot about how American liberalism fell, and why in the Obama era it could become—once again—America's ruling creed. The coalition that carried Obama to victory is every bit as sturdy as America's last two dominant political coalitions: the ones that elected Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. And the Obama majority is sturdy for one overriding reason: liberalism, which average Americans once associated with upheaval, now promises stability instead.

The Search for Order

In America, political majorities live or die at the intersection of two public yearnings: for freedom and for order. A century ago, in the Progressive Era, modern American liberalism was born, in historian Robert Wiebe's words, as a "search for order." America's giant industrial monopolies, the progressives believed, were turning capitalism into a jungle, a wild and lawless place where only the strong and savage survived. By the time Roosevelt took office during the Great Depression, the entire ecosystem appeared to be in a death spiral, with Americans crying out for government to take control. F.D.R. did—juicing the economy with unprecedented amounts of government cash, creating new protections for the unemployed and the elderly, and imposing rules for how industry was to behave. Conservatives wailed that economic freedom was under assault, but most ordinary Americans thanked God that Washington was securing their bank deposits, helping labor unions boost their wages, giving them a pension when they retired and pumping money into the economy to make sure it never fell into depression again. They didn't feel unfree; they felt secure. For three and a half decades, from the mid-1930s through the '60s, government imposed order on the market.

The jungle of American capitalism became a well-tended garden, a safe and pleasant place for ordinary folks to stroll. Americans responded by voting for F.D.R.-style liberalism—which even most Republican politicians came to accept—in election after election.

By the beginning of the 1960s, though, liberalism was becoming a victim of its own success. The post-World War II economic boom flooded America's colleges with the children of a rising middle class, and it was those children, who had never experienced life on an economic knife-edge, who began to question the status quo, the tidy, orderly society F.D.R. had built. For blacks in the South, they noted, order meant racial apartheid. For many women, it meant confinement to the home. For everyone, it meant stifling conformity, a society suffocated by rules about how people should dress, pray, imbibe and love. In 1962, Students for a Democratic Society spoke for what would become a new, baby-boom generation "bred in at least modest comfort," which wanted less order and more freedom. And it was this movement for racial, sexual and cultural liberation that bled into the movement against Vietnam and assembled in Aug., 1968 in Grant Park.

Traditional liberalism died there because Americans—who had once associated it with order—came to associate it with disorder instead. For a vast swath of the white working class, racial freedom came to mean riots and crime; sexual freedom came to mean divorce; and cultural freedom came to mean disrespect for family, church and flag. Richard Nixon and later Reagan won the presidency by promising a new order: not economic but cultural, not the taming of the market but the taming of the street.

The Receding Right

Flash forward to the evening of Nov. 4, and you can see why liberalism has sprung back to life. Ideologically, the crowds who assembled to hear Obama on election night were linear descendants of those egg throwers four decades before. They too believe in racial equality, gay rights, feminism, civil liberties and people's right to follow their own star.

But 40 years later, those ideas no longer seem disorderly. Crime is down and riots nonexistent; feminism is so mainstream that even Sarah Palin embraces the term; Chicago mayor Richard Daley, son of the man who told police to bash heads, marches in gay-rights parades. Culturally, liberalism isn't that scary anymore. Younger Americans—who voted overwhelmingly for Obama—largely embrace the legacy of the '60s, and yet they constitute one of the most obedient, least rebellious generations in memory. The culture war is ending because cultural freedom and cultural order—the two forces that faced off in Chicago in 1968—have turned out to be reconcilable after all.

The disorder that panics Americans now is not cultural but economic. If liberalism collapsed in the 1960s because its bid for cultural freedom became associated with cultural disorder, conservatism has collapsed today because its bid for economic freedom has become associated with economic disorder. When Reagan took power in 1981, he vowed to restore the economic liberty that a half-century of F.D.R.-style government intrusion had stifled. American capitalism had become so thoroughly domesticated, he argued, that it lost its capacity for dynamic growth.

For a time, a majority of Americans agreed. Taxes and regulations were cut and cut again, and for the most part, the economic pie grew. In the 1980s and '90s, the garden of American capitalism became a pretty energetic place. But it became a scarier place too. In the newly deregulated American economy, fewer people had job security or fixed-benefit pensions or reliable health care. Some got rich, but a lot went bankrupt, mostly because of health-care costs. As Yale University political scientist Jacob Hacker has noted, Americans today experience far-more-violent swings in household income than did their parents a generation ago.

Starting in the 1990s, average Americans began deciding that the conservative economic agenda was a bit like the liberal cultural agenda of the 1960s: less liberating than frightening. When the Gingrich Republicans tried to slash Medicare, the public turned on them en masse. A decade later, when George W. Bush tried to partially privatize Social Security, Americans rebelled once again. In 2005 a Pew Research Center survey identified a new group of voters that it called "pro-government conservatives." They were culturally conservative and hawkish on foreign policy, and they overwhelmingly supported Bush in 2004. But by large majorities, they endorsed government regulation and government spending. They didn't want to unleash the free market; they wanted to rein it in. Those voters were a time bomb in the Republican coalition, which detonated on Nov. 4. John McCain's promises to cut taxes, cut spending and get government out of the way left them cold. Among the almost half of voters who said they were "very worried" that the economic crisis would hurt their family, Obama beat McCain by 26 points.

The public mood on economics today is a lot like the public mood on culture 40 years ago: Americans want government to impose law and order—to keep their 401(k)s from going down, to keep their health-care premiums from going up, to keep their jobs from going overseas—and they don't much care whose heads Washington has to bash to do it.

Seizing the Moment

That is both Obama's great challenge and his great opportunity. If he can do what F.D.R. did—make American capitalism more stable and less savage—he will establish a Democratic majority that dominates U.S. politics for a generation. And despite the daunting problems he inherits, he's got an excellent chance. For one thing, taking aggressive action to stimulate the economy, regulate the financial industry and shore up the American welfare state won't divide his political coalition; it will divide the other side. On domestic economics, Democrats up and down the class ladder mostly agree. Even among Democratic Party economists, the divide that existed during the Clinton years between deficit hawks like Robert Rubin and free spenders like Robert Reich has largely evaporated, as everyone has embraced a bigger government role. Today it's Republicans who—though more unified on cultural issues—are split badly between upscale business types who want government out of the way and pro-government conservatives who want Washington's help. If Obama moves forcefully to restore economic order, the Wall Street Journal will squawk about creeping socialism, as it did in F.D.R.'s day, but many downscale Republicans will cheer. It's these working-class Reagan Democrats who could become tomorrow's Obama Republicans—a key component of a new liberal majority—if he alleviates their economic fears.

Obama doesn't have to turn the economy around overnight. After all, Roosevelt hadn't ended the Depression by 1936. Obama just needs modest economic improvement by the time he starts running for re-election and an image as someone relentlessly focused on fixing America's economic woes. In allocating his time in his first months as President, he should remember what voters told exit pollsters they cared about most—63% said the economy. (No other issue even exceeded 10%.)

In politics, crisis often brings opportunity. If Obama restores some measure of economic order, kick-starting U.S. capitalism and softening its hard edges, and if he develops the kind of personal rapport with ordinary Americans that F.D.R. and Reagan had—and he has the communication skills to do it—liberals will probably hold sway in Washington until Sasha and Malia have kids. As that happens, the arguments that have framed economic debate in recent times—for large upper-income tax cuts or the partial privatization of Social Security and Medicare—will fade into irrelevance. In an era of liberal hegemony, they will seem as archaic as defending the welfare system became when conservatives were on top.

A New Consensus

There are fault lines in the Obama coalition, to be sure. In a two-party system, it's impossible to construct a majority without bringing together people who disagree on big things. But Obama's majority is at least as cohesive as Reagan's or F.D.R.'s. The cultural issues that have long divided Democrats—gay marriage, gun control, abortion—are receding in importance as a post-'60s generation grows to adulthood. Foreign policy doesn't divide Democrats as bitterly as it used to either because, in the wake of Iraq, once-hawkish working-class whites have grown more skeptical of military force. In 2004, 22% of voters told exit pollsters that "moral values" were their top priority, and 19% said terrorism. This year terrorism got 9%, and no social issues even made the list.

The biggest potential land mine in the Obama coalition isn't the culture war or foreign policy; it's nationalism. On a range of issues, from global warming to immigration to trade to torture, college-educated liberals want to integrate more deeply America's economy, society and values with the rest of the world's. They want to make it easier for people and goods to

legally cross America's borders, and they want global rules that govern how much America can pollute the atmosphere and how it conducts the war on terrorism. They believe that ceding some sovereignty is essential to making America prosperous, decent and safe.

When it comes to free trade, immigration and multilateralism, though, downscale Democrats are more skeptical. In the future, the old struggle between freedom and order may play itself out on a global scale, as liberal internationalists try to establish new rules for a more interconnected planet and working-class nationalists protest that foreign bureaucrats threaten America's freedom.

But that's in the future. If Obama begins restoring order to the economy, Democrats will reap the rewards for a long time. Forty years ago, liberalism looked like the problem in a nation spinning out of control. Today a new version of it may be the solution. It's a very different day in Grant Park.

(Beinart is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.)

20081116-01 06:03 Bob Re: You Really Need to Do Some Research!

Hey Steve, Dennis, and all my new friends!

Sorry all I have not been in touch for awhile. It has been because as I told you before I live in the Congo, and I don't know how much news you have seen, but here all the n*ggers are killing each other and with any luck maybe they will kill 50% or more, well we could only be so lucky!!! Anyway just goes to show you and just wait soon al the n*ggers will be in tribal warfare in the good ole U.S. soon.

Well you guys did it congratulations!!!

Actually I heard the other day Obama came out and admitted that he was not going to be able to fix the economy like he had promised, but he does still think he will be able to n*gger-rig it!!!

But really we need to thank all of you for voting for Obama. However, I look at my fellow conservatives! There they go, glumly shuffling along, depressed by the election aftermath. But not me!!!! I'm virtually euphoric.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not thrilled with America's flirtation with neo-socialism. But there's a massive silver lining in those magical clouds that lofted Barack Obama to the Presidency. For today, without a shred of intellectually legitimate opposition, I can loudly proclaim to America: The Era of White Guilt is over.

This seemingly impossible event occurred because the vast majority of white Americans didn't give a fluff about skin color, and enthusiastically pulled the voting lever for a black man. Not just any black man. A very liberal black man who spent his early career race hustling banks, praying in a racist church for 20 years, and actively worked with America hating domestic terrorists. Wow! Some resume! Yet they made Barack Obama their leader. Therefore, as of Nov. 4th, 2008, white guilt is dead.

For over a century, the millstone of white guilt hung around our necks, retribution for slave-owning predecessors. In the 60s, American liberals began yanking that millstone while sticking a fork in the eye of black Americans, exacerbating the racial divide to extort a socialist solution. But if a black man can become President, exactly what significant barrier is left? The election of Barack Obama absolutely destroys the entire validation of liberal white guilt. The dragon is hereby slain.

So today, I'm feeling a little "uppity," if you will. From this day forward, my tolerance level for having my skin color hustled is now exactly ZERO. And it's time to clean house. No more Reverend Wright's "God Damn America," Al Sharpton's Church of Perpetual Victimization, or Jesse Jackson's rainbow racism. Cornell West? You're a fraud. Go home. All those "black studies" programs that taught kids to hate whitey? You must now thank Whitey. And I want that on the final.

Congressional Black Caucus? Irrelevant. Maxine Waters? Shut up. ACORN? Outlawed. Black Panthers? Go home and pet your kitty. Black separatists? Find another nation that offers better dreams. Go ahead. I'm waiting.

Gangsta rappers? Start praising America. Begin with the Pledge of Allegiance. And please, no more Ebonics. Speak English, and who knows where you might end up? Oh, yeah, pull up your pants. Your underwear is showing. You look stupid.

Black Fraternities? Seek diversity. Race Card? It's now the joker. Miss Black America? Get in line with all the other lovely ladies. Reparations? Paid.

To those Eurosnots who forged entire careers hating America? I'm still waiting for the first black French President.

And let me offer an equal opportunity whooping. I've always despised lazy white people. Now, I can talk smack about lazy black people. You're poor because you quit school, did drugs, had three kids with three different fathers, and refuse to work. So when you plop your Colt 45-swilling, Oprah-watchin' butt on the couch and complain "Da Man is keepin' me down!!!" allow me to inform you: Da Man is now black. You have no excuses.

No more quotas. No more handouts. No more stealing my money because someone's great-great-great-great grandparents suffered actual pain and misery at the hands of people I have no relation to, and personally revile.

It's time to toss that massive, obsolete race-hustle machine upon the heap of the other stupid 60s ideas. Drag it over there, by wife swapping, next to dope-smoking. Plenty of room right between free love and cop-killing. Careful, don't trip on streaking. There ya go, don't be gentle. Just dump it. Wash your hands. It's filthy.

In fact, Obama's ascension created a gargantuan irony. How can you sell class envy and American unfairness when you and your black wife went to Ivy League schools, got high paying jobs, became millionaires, bought a mansion, and got elected President? How unfair is that??? Now, Like a delicious O'Henry tale, Obama's spread-the-wealth campaign rendered itself moot by its own victory! America is officially a meritocracy. Obama's election has validated American conservatism!

So, listen carefully ... "Wham!!!"

That's the sound of my foot kicking the door shut on the era of white guilt. The rites have been muttered, the carcass lowered, dirt shoveled, and tombstone erected. White guilt is dead and buried.

However, despite my glee, there's apparently one small, rabid bastion of American racism remaining. Black Americans voted 96% for Barack Obama. Hmmm. In a color-blind world, shouldn't that be 50-50? Tonight, every black person should ask forgiveness for their apparent racism and prejudice towards white people. Maybe it's time to start spreading that guilt around.

While the technician is more important than the technology it is good to remember that a 9mm might expand but a .45 won't shrink.

All the loving best to you stupid n*gger-rag head loving mother f*ckers, and when you are all eating dirt cookies and everybody is living like Africans don't go blaming the Republicans like you stupid f*cks always do!!!!

PS: Black Hurricanes.....

Well, it appears our African-American friends have found yet something else to be pi*sed about. A black congresswoman (this would be Sheila Jackson Lee, of Houston), reportedly complained that the names of hurricanes are all Caucasian sounding names.

She would prefer some names that reflect African-American culture such as Chamiqua, Tanisha, Woeisha, Shaqueal, and Jamal. I am NOT making this up! She would also like the weather reports to be broad cast in 'language' that street people can understand because one of the problems that happened in New Orleans was that black people couldn't understand the seriousness of the situation, due to the racially biased language of the weather report.

I guess if the weather person says that the winds are going to blow at 140+ MPH, that's too hard to understand. I can hear it now: A weatherman in New Orleans says... Wazzup, mutha-fukkas! Hehr-icane Chamiqua be headin' fo' yo a*s like Leroy on a crotch rocket! B*tch be a category fo'! So, turn off dem chitlin's, grab yo' chirren, leave yo crib, and head fo' de nearest FEMA office fo yo FREE sh*t!

20081116-02 06:37 India First Hologram on CNN

Dear SteveB,

According to David Bohm, the universe is a holographic projection. Right now I am reading *The Holographic Universe* by Michael Talbot and fascinated by the subject. Then yesterday, CNN did the first holographic transmission ever! A new step for humanity!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SIS2ZwkWDg>

20081117-01 09:58 Bill "The Wild Wordsmith of Wasilla"

"The Wild Wordsmith of Wasilla" by Dick Cavett, *New York Times*

Nov. 14, 2008, (<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/11/14/the-wild-wordsmith-of-wasilla/>)

Electronic devices dislike me. There is never a day when something isn't ailing. Three out of these five implements—answering machine, fax machine, printer, phone and electric can-opener—all dropped dead on me in the past few days.

Now something has gone wrong with all three television sets. They will only get Sarah Palin.

I can play a kind of Alaskan roulette. Any random channel clicked on by the remote brings up that eager face, with its continuing assaults on the English language.

There she is with Larry and Matt and just about everyone else but Dr. Phil (so far). If she is not yet on "Judge Judy," I suspect it can't be for lack of trying.

What have we done to deserve this, this media blitz that the astute Andrea Mitchell has labeled "The Victory Tour"? I suppose it will be recorded as among political history's ironies that Palin was brought in to help John McCain. I can't blame feminists who might draw amusement from the fact that a woman managed to both cripple the male she was supposed to help while gleaning an almost Elvis-sized following for herself. Mac loses, Sarah wins big-time was the gist of headlines.

I feel a little sorry for John. He aimed low and missed.

What will ambitious politicians learn from this? That frayed syntax, bungled grammar and run-on sentences that ramble on long after thought has given out completely are a candidate's valuable traits?

And how much more of all that lies in our future if God points her to those open-a-crack doors she refers to? The ones she resolves to splinter and bulldoze her way through upon glimpsing the opportunities, revealed from on high.

What on earth are our underpaid teachers, laboring in the vineyards of education, supposed to tell students about the following sentence, committed by the serial syntax-killer from Wasilla High and gleaned by my colleague Maureen Dowd for preservation for those who ask, "How was it she talked?"

My concern has been the atrocities there in Darfur and the relevance to me with that issue as we spoke about Africa and some of the countries there that were kind of the people succumbing to the dictators and the corruption of some collapsed governments on the continent, the relevance was Alaska's investment in Darfur with some of our permanent fund dollars.

And, she concluded, "Never, ever did I talk about, well, gee, is it a country or a continent, I just don't know about this issue."

It's admittedly a rare gift to produce a paragraph in which whole clumps of words could be removed without noticeably affecting the sense, if any.

(A cynic might wonder if Wasilla High School's English and geography departments are draped in black.)

(How many contradictory and lying answers about The Empress's New Clothes have you collected? I've got, so far, only four. Your additional ones welcome.)

Matt Lauer asked her about her daughter's pregnancy and what went into the decision about how to handle it. Her "answer" did not contain the words "daughter," "pregnancy," "what to do about it" or, in fact, any two consecutive words related to Lauer's query.

I saw this as a brief clip, so I don't know whether Lauer recovered sufficiently to follow up, or could only sit there, covered in disbelief. If it happens again, Matt, I bequeath you what I heard myself say once to an elusive guest who stiffed me that way: "Were you able to hear any part of my question?"

At the risk of offending, well, you, for example, I worry about just what it is her hollering fans see in her that makes her the ideal choice to deal with the world's problems: collapsed economies, global warming, hostile enemies and our current and far-flung twin battlefronts, either of which may prove to be the world's second "30 Years' War."

Has there been a poll to see if the Sarah-ites are numbered among that baffling 26 percent of our population who, despite everything, still maintain that President George has done a heckuva job?

A woman in one of Palin's crowds praised her for being "a mom like me ... who thinks the way I do" and added, for ill measure, "That's what I want in the White House." Fine, but in what capacity?

Do this lady's like-minded folk wonder how, say, Jefferson, Lincoln, the Roosevelts, et al (add your own favorites) managed so well without being soccer moms? Without being whizzes in the kitchen, whipping up moose soufflés? Without executing and wounding wolves from the air and without promoting that sad, threadbare hoax—sexual abstinence—as the answer to the sizzling loins of the young?

(In passing, has anyone observed that hunting animals with high-powered guns could only be defined as sport if both sides were equally armed?)

I'd love to hear what you think has caused such an alarming number of our fellow Americans to fall into the Sarah Swoon.

Could the willingness to crown one who seems to have no first language have anything to do with the oft-lamented fact that we seem to be alone among nations in having made the word "intellectual" an insult? (And yet...and yet...we did elect Obama. Surely not despite his brains.)

Sorry about all of the foregoing, as if you didn't get enough of the lady every day in every medium but smoke signals. I do not wish her ill. But I also don't wish us ill. I hope she continues to find happiness in Alaska.

May I confess that upon first seeing her, I liked her looks? With the sound off, she presents a not uncomely frontal appearance.

But now, as the Brits say, "I'll be glad to see the back of her."

20081119-01	22:21	Dick	Fw: "A Letter to My Employees"
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[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com knows nothing. See: <http://www.rense.com/general84/letter.htm>] — SteveB]

To All My Valued Employees:

There have been some rumblings around the office about the future of this company, and more specifically, your job. As you know, the economy has changed for the worse and presents many challenges. However, the good news is this: The economy doesn't pose a threat to your job. What does threaten your job however, is the changing political landscape in this country.

Of course, as your employer, I am forbidden to tell you whom to vote for—it is against the law to discriminate based on political affiliation, race, creed, religion, etc. Please vote who you think will serve your interests the best.

However, let me tell you some little tidbits of fact which might help you decide what is in your best interests. First, while it is easy to spew rhetoric that casts employers against employees, you have to understand that for every business owner there is a back story. This back story is often neglected and overshadowed by what you see and hear. Sure, you see me park my Mercedes outside. You've seen my big home at last year's Christmas party. I'm sure; all these flashy icons of luxury conjure up some idealized thoughts about my life.

However, what you don't see is the back story. I started this company 12 years ago. At that time, I lived in a 300 square foot studio apartment for 3 years. My entire living apartment was converted into an office so I could put forth 100% effort into building a company, which by the way, would eventually employ you.

My diet consisted of Ramen Pride noodles because every dollar I spent went back into this company. I drove a rusty Toyota Corolla with a defective transmission. I didn't have time to date. Often times, I stayed home on weekends, while my friends went out drinking and partying. In fact, I was married to my business—hard work, discipline, and sacrifice.

Meanwhile, my friends got jobs. They worked 40 hours a week and made a modest \$50K a year and spent every dime they earned. They drove flashy cars and lived in expensive homes and wore fancy designer clothes. Instead of hitting the Nordstrom's for the latest hot fashion item, I was trolling through the Goodwill store extracting any clothing item that didn't look like it was birthed in the 70's. My friends refinanced their mortgages and lived a life of luxury. I, however, did not. I put my time, my money, and my life into a business with a vision that eventually, some day, I too, will be able to afford these luxuries my friends supposedly had.

So, while you physically arrive at the office at 9am, mentally check in at about noon, and then leave at 5pm, I don't. There is no "off" button for me. When you leave the office, you are done and you have a weekend all to yourself. I unfortunately do not have the freedom. I eat, sh*t, and breathe this company every minute of the day.

There is no rest. There is no weekend. There is no happy hour. Every day this business is attached to my hip like a 1 year old special-needs child. You, of course, only see the fruits of that garden—the nice house, the Mercedes, the vacations... you never realize the back story and the sacrifices I've made.

Now, the economy is falling apart and I, the guy that made all the right decisions and saved his money, have to bail-out all the people who didn't. The people that overspent their paychecks suddenly feel entitled to the same luxuries that I earned and sacrificed a decade of my life for.

Yes, business ownership has its benefits but the price I've paid is steep and without wounds. Unfortunately, the cost of running this business, and employing you, is starting to eclipse the threshold of marginal benefit and let me tell you why: I am being taxed to death and the government thinks I don't pay enough. I have state taxes. Federal taxes. Property taxes. Sales and use taxes. Payroll taxes. Workers compensation taxes. Unemployment taxes. Taxes on taxes. I have to hire a tax man to manage all these taxes and then guess what? I have to pay taxes for employing him.

[I have an idea for you, Mr. Businessman. Why don't you simply pass those taxes on to your customers in the price of your product or service? Your competitors face the same business environment, hence the same taxes. As to your allegations of problems with "uncertainty", I say you are a pu*sy. —SteveB]

Government mandates and regulations and all the accounting that goes with it, now occupy most of my time. [Ridiculous! —SteveB] On Oct 15th, I wrote a check to the U.S. Treasury for \$288,000 for quarterly taxes. You know what my "stimulus" check was? Zero. Nada. Zilch. [Because you're rich! The stimulus part is that poor people will spend the money and stimulate demand for goods and services like yours, dummy businessman. What a whiner! —SteveB]

The question I have is this: Who is stimulating the economy? Me, the guy who has provided 14 people good paying jobs and serves over 2,200,000 people per year with a flourishing business? Or, the single mother sitting at home pregnant with her fourth child waiting for her next welfare check? Obviously, government feels the latter is the economic stimulus of this country.

The fact is, if I deducted (Read: Stole) 50% of your paycheck you'd quit and you wouldn't work here. I mean, why should you? That's nuts. Who wants to get rewarded only 50% of their hard work? Well, I agree which is why your job is in jeopardy.

Here is what many of you don't understand ... to stimulate the economy you need to stimulate what runs the economy. Had suddenly government mandated to me that I didn't need to pay taxes, guess what? Instead of depositing that \$288,000 into the Washington black-hole, I would have spent it, hired more employees, and generated substantial economic growth. My employees would have enjoyed the wealth of that tax cut in the form of promotions and better salaries. But you can forget it now.

[Sorry. It doesn't and can't ever work like that, sucker. —SteveB]

When you have a comatose man on the verge of death, you don't defibrillate and shock his thumb thinking that will bring him back to life, do you? Or, do you defibrillate his heart? Business is at the heart of America and always has been. To restart it, you must stimulate it, not kill it.

Suddenly, the power brokers in Washington believe the mud of America are the essential drivers of the American economic engine. Nothing could be further from the truth and this is the type of change you can keep.

So where am I going with all this?

It's quite simple. If any new taxes are levied on me, or my company, my reaction will be swift and simple. I fire you. I fire your co-workers. You can then plead with the government to pay for your mortgage, your SUV, and your child's future. Frankly, it isn't my problem anymore.

Then, I will close this company down, move to another country, and retire. You see, I'm done. I'm done with a country that penalizes the productive and gives to the unproductive. My motivation to work and to provide jobs will be destroyed, and with it, will be my citizenship.

While tax cuts to 95% of America sounds great on paper, don't forget the back story: If there is no job, there is no income to tax. A tax cut on zero dollars is zero So, when you make your decision to vote, ask yourself, who understands the economics of business ownership and who doesn't? Whose policies will endanger your job?

Answer those questions and you should know who might be the one capable of saving your job. While the media wants to tell you "It's the economy stupid" I'm telling you it isn't.

If you lose your job, it won't be at the hands of the economy; it will be at the hands of a political hurricane that swept through this country, steamrolled the constitution, and will have changed its landscape forever. If that happens, you can find me in the South Caribbean sitting on a beach, retired, and with no employees to worry about.

Signed, Your Boss

20081120-01	10:35	Paul	Re: "A Letter to My Employees"
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Dear Dick,

Great letter. Glad to hear from you: it had seemed the jokes had stopped there. We need to remember that it is businessmen and entrepreneurs that we all depend on for the prosperity of this country. But I still wonder when the reports keep appearing about financial service company managers, who were responsible for "securitizing" those dubious mortgages, were collecting hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses and salaries while the value of everyone's investments was slashed by a third. And the CEOs of companies being driven into the ground, who chopped health benefits and pensions for retirees, impoverishing them and their families, still walk away with their multi-million-dollar salaries. (I have a client in that exact situation: a man who was well qualified for his job but who was replaced by a substantially younger man who hadn't even applied.) So it is the same old story: how do we fairly and correctly distinguish the meritorious, like the author of the letter, from those who certainly appear to be looting the system. Like I was taught in college, all generalities are false, including this one. Keep the good reading coming.

20081120-02	16:02	SteveM	"Not the End of the World"
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"Not the End of the World" posted by: Steven Den Beste in Weird World

Nov. 4, 2008, (http://chizumatic.mee.nu/not_the_end_of_the_world)

It's easy to let yourself go in despair and start thinking things like "This is the worst of all possible outcomes". But it isn't true. I think this election is going to be a "coming of age" moment for a lot of people. They say, "Be careful what you wish for" and a lot of people got their wish yesterday. And now they're bound to be disappointed. Not even Jesus could satisfy all the expectations of Obama's most vocal supporters, or fulfill all the promises Obama has made.

I think Obama is going to turn out to be the worst president since Carter, and for the same reason: good intentions do not guarantee good results. Idealists often stub their toes on the wayward rocks of reality, and fall on their faces. And the world doesn't respond to benign behavior benignly.

But there's another reason why: Obama has been hiding his light under a basket. A lot of people bought a pig in a poke today, and now they're going to find out what they bought. Obama isn't what most of them think he is. The intoxication of the cult will wear off, leaving a monumental hangover. And four years from now they'll be older and much wiser.

A lot of bad things are going to happen during this term. But I don't think that this is an irreversible catastrophe for the union. I've lived long enough to absorb this basic truth: the U.S. is too large and too strong to destroy in just 4 years. Or even in 8. We survived 6 years of Nixon. We survived 4 years of Carter. We even survived 8 years of Clinton, God alone knows how. [Errrr...and Bush? Not survived? —SteveB]

The President of the United States is the most powerful political figure in the world, but as national executives go his powers are actually quite restricted. Obama will become President, but he won't be dictator or king, let alone deity. He still has to work with the House and the Senate, and he still has to live within Constitutional restrictions, and with a judiciary that he mostly didn't appoint.

The main reason this will be a "coming of age" moment is that now Obama and the Democrats have to put up or shut up. Obama got elected by making himself a blank slate, with vapid promises about "hope" and "change"—but now he actually has to do something. Now he has to reveal his true agenda. And with the Democrats also having a majority in both chambers of Congress, now the Democrats really have to lead. And they're not going to do a very good job of it. It's going to be amusing to watch.

And the people who fell for the demagoguery will learn an invaluable lesson. Oh, the Democrats try to blame failure on Republican filibusters, of which there will be many. But that's always been a factor in our system, and many people believe it's an important check on government excess. The tradition in the Senate is that it is supposed to be a buffer against transient political fads, and the filibuster is a major part of that.

If the Democrats go all in, and change the filibuster rule, then they'll have truly seized the nettle with both hands and won't have any excuses any longer. That's why they won't do it. It's their last fig-leaf. But even with the filibuster rule in place, they'll be stuck trying to deliver now on all the promises implied, or inferred, during this election. The Republicans can only filibuster on bills the Democrats have already proposed.

And it ain't possible for the Democrats to deliver what's been promised. Gonna be a hell of a lot of disillusioned lefties out there. A lot of people who felt they were deceived. A lot of people who will eventually realize that the Obama campaign was something of a cult. Disillusionment will turn to a feeling of betrayal. And that will, in turn, convert to anger. In the mean time, Obama and Congressional Democrats will do things that cause harm, but very little of it will be irreversible. I would have enjoyed watching lefty heads explode if McCain had won. But we're going to see lefty heads exploding anyway; it's just going to take longer.

In the mean time, those of us who didn't want Obama to be president have to accept that he is. And let's not give in to the kind of paranoid fever dreams that have consumed the left for the last 8 years. Let us collectively take a vow tonight: no "Obama derangement syndrome". Obama is a politician. He isn't the devil incarnate.

So what are the good sides of what just happened?

1. It is no longer possible for anyone to deny that the MSM (Main Stream Media) is heavily biased. The MSM have been biased for decades but managed an illusion of fairness. That is no longer possible; the MSM have squandered their credibility during this campaign. They'll never get that credibility back again. [Seriously? — SteveB]

2. Since the Democrats got nearly everything they hoped for in this campaign, they'll have no excuses and will have to produce. They'll have to reveal their true agenda—or else make clear that they don't really have any beyond gaining power.
3. Every few decades the American people have to be reminded that peace only comes with strength. The next four years will be this generation's lesson.

Now, a few predictions for the next four years:

1. Obama's "hold out your hand to everyone" foreign policy is going to be a catastrophe. They'll love it in Europe. They're probably laughing their heads off about it in the middle east already.
2. The U.S. hasn't suffered a terrorist attack by al Qaeda since 9/11, but we'll get at least one during Obama's term.
3. We're going to lose in Afghanistan.
4. Iran will get nuclear weapons. There will be nuclear war between Iran and Israel. (This is the only irreversibly terrible thing I see upcoming, and it's very bad indeed.)
5. There will eventually be a press backlash against Obama which will make their treatment of Bush look mild. Partly that's going to be because Obama is going to disappoint them just as much as all his other supporters. Partly it will be the MSM desperately trying to regain its own credibility, by trying to show that they're not in his tank any longer. And because of that they are eventually going to do the reporting they should have done during this campaign, about Obama's less-than savory friends, and about voter fraud, and about illegal fund-raising, and about a lot of other things.
6. Obama will not be re-elected in 2012. He may even end up doing an LBJ and not even running again.

One last thing: I'm not saying I'm happy with this outcome. I would much rather have had McCain win. But this is not the end of the world, or the end of this nation. We've survived much worse. And now we need to show the lefties how to lose. Our mission for the next four years is to be in opposition without becoming deranged.

UPDATE: One other good thing: no one will be spinning grand conspiracy theories about this administration's Vice President being an evil, conniving genius who is the true power behind the throne. [What a nice compliment for Mr. Biden! —SteveB]

20081121-01	09:22	SteveB	Re: "A Letter to My Employees"
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Dear Dick,

I think it is very interesting that so many people are using recent events to try to promote class war and other discarded ideas from the last century that really have nothing to do with the current situation.

The hell with this businessman who has seen his taxes drastically reduced, gotten rich, and then can do nothing, apparently, but b*tch about taxes and threaten his workers. Ridiculous! Where would his company be without the education provided by the government for his workers, or without the police and fire departments to protect them, or the domestic peace, government regulation, etc., etc. that must be paid for with these taxes. I guess he wants to eliminate all that? Especially the regulation, I bet. Ya, right, we have way too much regulation of business in this country—that's why we all got raped while regulators slept!!!!

This is not the time to panic simply because a progressive black man has been elected President. Let us be true Americans and give the guy at least as much chance as we gave that idiot Bush!!!!!!

BUY AMERICAN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

20081121-02 22:41 Dick Re: "A Letter to My Employees"

Dear SteveB,

I agree with your summation. What are your thoughts about the Big Three bail-out ? One side of me says let's help because for every job lost ,ten more get affected thus causing a tsunami effect in job losses. The old saying that a fish rots from the head down is the way I would describe the CEO's. Paul, if our tax dollars go to this bail-out then we definitely need a change @ the top. The other side of me says let them go into Bankruptcy & restructure in a way that they will be leaner, more profitable & build better energy efficient cars. Let the Free-Market work. The UAW needs to look at themselves & the lucrative retirement packages that they negotiated that added to the demise of the Big Three. There needs to be compromise on both sides. To my other friend SteveB, I would like to hear your comments on this "ECONOMIC FUBAR".

20081124-01 10:04 SteveB Re: "Not the End of the World"

Dear SteveM,

Well, gee. I'm happy to read that you've decided to give the guy a chance to show what he can do in the next four years, despite the fact that you consider the current economic catastrophe to somehow be the fault of the man you think of as an incompetent, inexperienced, do-nothing, junior Senator from Illinois. I mean, "empty suit" from Chicago.

Jeez! If Obama could manage to do so much as such a big nothing like that...he must be mystically powerful!!!! No, just kidding, we all know that it was idiot Bush and his buddies who had their heads totally up their asses instead of competently running the country.

EVERYBODY knows who slept at the wheel for 8 years...oh, except maybe for that fighting terrorism thing, and that really hasn't turned out too well in most Americans' eyes.

You may try, BUT YOU WILL NEVER MANAGE TO CHANGE HISTORY ON WHO GOT US INTO THIS MESS, my Republican friend! AND which ideology!!!!

20081126-01 16:53 SteveM Re: "Not the End of the World"

Dear SteveB,

You don't listen very well do you? BHO now says that a balanced budget takes a back seat to fixing the economy. And the raise in the market can be partly attributed to him saying he is re-thinking raising taxes on the rich, at least until 2010, I guess he got the message. Poor people never gave anyone a job!

Now I just wonder why he's not sending the girls to public school, like the ones that he the self avowed communist Aires tried so hard the get money for in Chicago. Doesn't he trust the community organizers in DC. Surely the black folk there would hurt their own kind, would they? Show us the trust, BHO! Never mind, he's read police reports too.

Get some sun light

20081126-02 17:47 SteveB Re: "Not the End of the World"

Dear SteveM,

You'd better be careful...

If you're going to blame Obama for the fall in the stock markets (how laughable anyway since idiot Bush, the last time I looked, is still President and will be for way too much longer!)

You're going to have to give him credit when the markets rise (especially markedly, like this past week)!

I wish you'd just set aside your ideology and look at the practical facts of the reality we face, but you're still lost in the Republican/right-wing bucket of lies and slander, which is business as usual with them.

Just like you followed the party line that McCain was going to win the election. That should be a lesson to you on how full of lies they are and that is just the least of it. I told you the election would be a landslide. The people have spoken and any true American will listen and work to help implement solutions to our problems instead of, like Rush Limbaugh, et al, who are hell-bent on nothing but blind contrarianism.

And, have you noticed lately that, unlike all your ideologues like idiot Bush and his pals, practical, intelligent Obama has been talking about what we need...tax cuts and spending cuts and a balanced budget. Blind ideology leads to blind injustice...every time.

[20081126-03](#) 20:03 SteveM Fw: Would You Run?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Imagine this happening to you...

One Sunday morning during service, a 2,000-member congregation was surprised to see two men enter...

...both covered from head to toe in black and carrying submachine guns.

One of the men proclaimed: "Anyone willing to take a bullet for Christ remain where you are!"

Immediately, the choir fled...

The deacons fled...

And most of the congregation fled...

Out of the 2,000 there only remained 20.

The man who had spoken took off his hood. He then looked at the pastor and said, "OK, Pastor, I got rid of all the hypocrites..."

"...now you may begin your service. Have a nice day!"

And the two men turned and walked out.

[Then, as the 20 were excitedly patting each other on the back, complementing each other on the strength of their faith, the two men walked back into the church and slaughtered them all, because that's what bad men do and nothing makes any sense, so we much protect and nurture each other with our love. That's what religion is all about. Not impossibly attempting to comprehend how many hairs in God's gray beard. Not trying to employ the secret of... —SteveB]

[20081127-01](#) 09:46 SteveB Re: "Not the End of the World"

Dear SteveM,

Of course balancing the budget takes a back seat. It did for "conservative" Bush too didn't it!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'm completely done with this conversation. You are the most unreasonable of all my correspondents. No logic at all. Thanks.

[20081127-02](#) 23:01 SteveB Re: Would You Run?

Dear SteveM,

COME ON!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I myself greatly question a lot of what the Bible has to say!!!!!! Don't you?????????

Mary a virgin? Resurrection? Son of God? Heaven and Hell. A snake in the Garden? The great punishing Flood! Jonah and the Whale, etc., etc. Ya, it sure sounds like an old Mideast religion, doesn't it?

Now, I believe in God and I believe in Christ as a great man who was somehow too stupid to pick a disciple who could fricking write, so that Jesus could pass on his insights free from the censorship and distortion introduced by the early church. At this point, who really knows what Christ had to say? Maybe God alone?

No one knows what is true and not true in the Bible. These Fundamentalists who claim to know the mind of God are evil liars. They don't know any more about God than you or me. And even if we could say that someone's church or some demigod who is the head of a church is completely right. Which one is it? LOL!

As your friend, let me recommend that you not throw your life away on this total bullsh*t. It doesn't suit you or become you. Please be a bad motorcycle dude and not a Jesus-loving evangelical! Religion will get you nowhere good except maybe into the panties of evangelical chicks. That doesn't sound like much fun to me.

20081128-01	21:20	SteveB	"Mysterious Super Battery to Power Electric Cars This Year"
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The Ultra capacitor.

"Mysterious Super Battery to Power Electric Cars This Year" by Adam Turner, iTWire

Jan. 24, 2007, (<http://www.itwire.com/science-news/energy/8884-mysterious-super-battery-to-power-electric-cars-this-year>)

Texas-based developer EEstor has been extremely secretive about its ceramic Energy Storage Unit (ESU), but has revealed that the ESU has entered mass production and is set to power Toronto-based ZENN Motors' electric cars this year.

Constructed from barium nitrate powder, the ESU offers up to 10 time the energy density of lead-acid batteries or 2.5 times that of lithium ion batteries. EEstor is on target to provide 15 kilowatt per hour batteries to ZENN this year, weighing less than 45 kg and in operating in environments as severe as minus 20 to plus 65 degrees Celsius. The battery will have ability to be recharged in "a matter of minutes," according to EEstor, and will not degrade due to being fully discharged or recharged.

The technology can scale up to 52 kWh, according to EEstor's patent papers, charging in the range of four to six minutes with sufficient cooling of the power cables and connections. The batteries are not "explosive, corrosive, or hazardous" and EEstor also anticipates they could be used to store energy from solar panels for residential, commercial, or industrial applications.

20081130-01	08:35	SteveB	The GOP: Hijacked by Evangelicals
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Dear SteveM,

Your party and political movement (such as they are) have been co-opted—stolen by the Fundamentalists who want to throw away the Constitution, establish a state religion, and force all of us to "know" the Earth is 6000 years old, there is no evolution, and Jesus said abortion is a sin. Oh, and you'd better kiss Wednesday nights goodbye—one day a week ain't nearly enough for the Lord. Amen! (LOL, if it weren't so serious!)

Your party sold itself out to these people for votes and money...but it all got out of control, didn't it? They moved your party in a direction that has been a disaster for your party and our country, so, finally, the people voted even for a black man to get the GOP as completely out of power as possible.

The Evangelicals want to invade our privacy guaranteed by the above mentioned Constitution (which even their VP candidate doesn't bother to read!), and enter our bedrooms to make sure we don't have oral sex. They are convinced all of us "normal" people are evil and must be made to be like them...a bunch of prayin' pu*sies!

Believe me, I know these people and so do you. They are nothing but stupid, ignorant A*S-HOLES!!!! Your friends?

20081202-01 09:47 SteveB "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"

Dear SteveM,

The blame comes home to roost. "Sorry..." idiot Bush says.

YOUR SOCIALIST-REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT ADMITS HE F*CKED UP!!!!!! Gee...thanks for the apology, a-hole!

It looks suspiciously like Obama has been telling the truth, while McCain was lying out his *ss!

Ignorance—the only refuge of the ignorant!

"Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks" by Deb Riechmann, AP

Dec. 1, 2008,

[\(http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2008/12/01/bush_im_sorry_the_economic_crisis_is_occurring_1228158335/\)](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2008/12/01/bush_im_sorry_the_economic_crisis_is_occurring_1228158335/)

(WASHINGTON) President George W. Bush expressed remorse that the global financial crisis has cost jobs and harmed retirement accounts and said he'll back more government intervention if needed to ease the recession.

"I'm sorry it's happening, of course," Bush said in a wide-ranging interview with ABC's "World News," which was airing Monday. "Obviously I don't like the idea of people losing jobs, or being worried about their 401(k)s. On the other hand, the American people got to know that we will safeguard the system. I mean, we're in. And if we need to be in more, we will."

The U.S. economy fell into a recession in Dec., 2007, the National Bureau of Economic Research reported on Monday. Many economists believe the current downturn will last until the middle of 2009 and will be the most severe slump since the 1981-82 Recession. [Don't they mean...since the Great Depression???

On the war in Iraq, Bush said the biggest regret of his presidency was the "intelligence failure" regarding the extent of the Saddam Hussein threat to the United States. With the support of Congress, Bush ordered the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in Mar., 2003—a decision largely justified on grounds—later proved false—that Saddam was building weapons of mass destruction.

Asked if he would have ordered the U.S.-led invasion if intelligence reports had accurately indicated that Saddam did not have the weapons, Bush replied: "You know, that's an interesting question. That is a do-over that I can't do. It's hard for me to speculate."

During a discussion about what Americans should know about what it is like to be president, Bush was asked what he was most unprepared for going into the office.

"I think I was unprepared for war," he said. "In other words, I didn't campaign and say, 'Please vote for me, I'll be able to handle an attack.' In other words, I didn't anticipate war. Presidents — one of the things about the modern presidency is that the unexpected will happen."

On the presidential election, Bush called Barack Obama's victory a "repudiation of Republicans."

"I'm sure some people voted for Barack Obama because of me," said Bush, who leaves office with low approval ratings. "I think most people voted for Barack Obama because they decided they wanted him to be in their living room for the next four years explaining policy. In other words, they made a conscious choice to put him in as president."

As he leaves office, Bush said he felt responsible for the economic downturn because it's occurring on his watch, but he added: "I think when the history of this period is written, people will realize a lot of the decisions that were made on Wall Street took place over a decade or so" before he became president.

He said he would like to see "instant liquidity" in the markets given the extent of the financial rescue plan, yet he understands that fear has paralyzed the markets.

"It is hard for the average citizen to understand how frozen the system became and how over-leveraged the system became," Bush said. "And so what we're watching is the de-leveraging of our financial markets, which is obviously affecting the growth of the economy."

Last week, the Bush administration and the Federal Reserve pledged \$800 billion to break through blockades on credit cards, auto loans, mortgages and other borrowing. The latest moves raised U.S. commitments to contain the financial crisis to nearly \$7 trillion — though no one thinks the government will actually spend that much.

The figures include loans that are expected to be repaid, loan authorities to back mortgages, purchases of stock in banks, guarantees to support loans among banks and pledges backing other transactions.

"This economy will recover," Bush said in the interview conducted last Wednesday at the Camp David, Md., presidential retreat. "And when it recovers, many of the assets backed by the government now will be redeemed, and we will — could conceivably — make money off of some of the holdings."

Later in the interview, he said: "I can't guarantee that we'll get all our money back, but it's conceivable we could."

[HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! BOO-HOO! —SteveB]

20081202-02 14:55 SteveG Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"

Dear SteveB,

I really do not understand W. He is such a jerk for 7.5 plus years and trying to make nice in the last month and say he is sorry, he was not prepared for war, the intelligence information was bad, etc. All the stuff he has been told for over 7 years and now he is sorry.

20081202-03 15:17 SteveB Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"

Dear SteveG,

I think history will reveal that this was a dual-Presidency, at best. Idiot Bush was both too lazy and too stupid, I'm afraid, to effectively run the government himself. Dick Cheney will be revealed to be the dark president in hiding...manipulating the puppets from kind of behind the scenes. Instead of being on the alert to what could help or hurt the economy, as we paid and/or elected them to do, the administration went to sleep. Cheney did what his rich buddies asked. Bush did essentially what Cheney told him to do.

Of course Bush is surprised and sorry to learn that things fell apart during his watch. He's just as surprised to hear we're in crisis as McCain was and probably still is. No crisis for him, right?

What sad times in American history. I sure hope we can somehow manage to dig our way out. I have my doubts, but am willing to be temporarily optimistic. [Because I think Sarah Palin is going to ride into Washington in four years on a bull moose and save us! LOL!]

But instead of slapping a tax on gasoline to keep it stable at \$4.00/gallon, Bush and Congress panicked because of their short-sightedness—only to the next election—and sold the store and started the largest social/economic experiment in history with their multitrillion dollar bailouts. Printing fake money. How far can that really get us? How can alternative energy projects be viable in a climate of wildly fluctuating, often dirt-cheap oil? Believe me, the oil price swings are no accident, but carefully choreographed—and I'm no conspiracy theorist!

BUY AMERICAN!!!!!! A NEW CORVETTE IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN!!!! PASS IT ON!

20081202-04 15:32 SteveB "An Interview with Paul O'Neill"

Dear SteveM,

... Irresponsible Ideology and the Mess We're In

A little deep, but well worth reading at this juncture...

If Bush is apologizing, and we all know the country is already down the tubes as much as any possible administration could send us (good luck keeping your Big 3!), how is it that the intelligence, ideology, and actions of the Republican administration and the Republican philosophy should not be brought into question—especially by Republicans, who were sold out the most?

Why don't you question it in light of all the current evidence, Steve? You have been betrayed by your own Right! Now who do you trust? Idiot Rush?

"An Interview with Paul O'Neill" from the companion book to I.O.U.S.A., Daily Reckoning

Oct. 30, 2008, (<http://dailyreckoning.com/an-interview-with-paul-oneill/>)

(Paul O'Neill says he enjoyed being the 72nd secretary of the U.S. Treasury (2001—2002), even though the job lasted only 23 months. O'Neill, who has been analyzing the U.S. budget since he went to Washington, served in the Bureau of the Budget, which later became the Office of Management and Budget in the White House.)

(O'Neill came to American government in 1961 as a management intern, and stayed for 16 years through the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations. The last 10 years of his tenure were spent at what was the Bureau of the Budget, which became the Office of Management and Budget. There he became deeply involved in the issues of fiscal policy, budget balance, budget making, and helping presidents choose priorities for how we spend the nation's money.)

(Then he moved to the private sector in 1977. In 2000, he was asked by President Bush 43 to come back to the government and be the Secretary of the Treasury, which he did for 23 months before he got fired for having a difference of opinion.)

Q: When you took over at Treasury, how would you characterize the financial health of the United States? Are you surprised at where we are today?

Paul O'Neill: When I moved into the Treasury as the 72nd secretary, what we inherited from the Clinton administration was an economy that had been rolling itself into a modest recession for a year and a half. By that time, the dot-com bubble had burst and the economy had slowed down, and we actually had some negative quarters that we didn't really know about until Clinton was gone and Bush 43 was in charge. But on the fiscal policy front we were in a condition where we had, for the first time in a long time, a budget that was in surplus.

I have to hasten to add that while it was in surplus, it was not in surplus on a federal funds basis. It was only in surplus because the trust funds were bringing in a lot of money and together, with federal funds and the trust funds, the Clinton administration was able to claim three years of budget surpluses, which we hadn't seen since 1969. That was a year where we were in budget surplus with the use of the trust funds. The last year I think that we were actually in surplus on a federal funds basis, without using trust fund money, was in 1960, so we'd been at this now for 47 years of basically living beyond our means—especially if you think federal funds ought to be in surplus without using the trust fund money to calculate balance.

So in 2001, when Bush 43 took over and I took over at the Treasury, we were in a total surplus condition, and arguably (I think this was a correct argument) we needed to reduce taxes because taxes had crept up to the point where something like 20 or 21 percent of the GDP was being effectively taken by federal government. Traditionally, our level has been someplace around 18 percent or maybe 18.3. So I think it was correct to say that we could afford to have a tax cut, which President Bush 43 had run on in the 2000 election, and he set out to deliver what he promised in the election and I

think that was okay. The reason that I agreed to come in as Treasury secretary was because I saw lots of things in our economy and our society that needed to be done, and I was encouraged to believe that Bush 43 was up for the difficult political things that needed to happen to make course corrections. Those course corrections still include fixing the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, and fundamentally redesigning the way the federal tax system works. I thought there was some prospect that President Bush would entertain the difficult political choices that needed to be made in order to act on these things, and I spent a lot of time thinking about these things over a period, better part of 40 years, so I was anxious to have a go at it.

Q: How did it go?

Paul O'Neill: The first part was the easiest part. Cutting taxes is always a cinch—it's only a debate about who gets the credit and how big the cut is. But then we had 9/11 and it really changed where we were. The economy was still slow, although we were actually having positive growth in the fourth quarter of 2001.

But there was still a lot of energy and President Bush himself was bringing this energy that we need additional tax cuts. I honestly didn't think that was the right thing to do, because I continue to believe we needed the revenue that we were then collecting to work on the Medicare/Social Security problems. To work on fundamental tax redesign after 9/11 while worrying about whether there was going to be another attack or a series of attacks would cost hundreds of billions of dollars. So I was against further tax reductions at the time, especially as we got into 2002, as I became more concerned that we were also going to need money since it looked to me like we were sliding into a war with Iraq. I argued during the second half of 2002 we should not have another tax cut because we need the money to work on important policy issues that would shape the nation going forward, and we needed to have, in effect, rainy day money for the prospect of Iraq and another set of attacks like 9/11.

That was not a popular view, and in fact, it led to a conversation with the vice president where he basically told me, "Don't worry about further tax cuts, it's okay. Ronald Reagan proved that we don't have to worry about deficits." Which is really a shock to me because whatever you may think about Ronald Reagan, I don't think he or anyone else has proved that it's possible to ignore not just deficits, but federal debt as well. I think it is true that you can be sanguine about deficits for a short period of time, but you can't be sanguine about mounting debt for the United States of America. When we, the Bush 43 administration took over, we had something over \$ 5 trillion, maybe \$ 5.6 trillion worth of national debt. Today [Fall 2007] I think the number's \$ 8.8 trillion. That's not an innocent change, it is a monumental change in the debt service that we have to do in addition to and on top of all of the other things that our country needs to do.

Q: Toward the end of 2002, you wrote a report that said that the current debt wasn't the problem; it was the debt that we are stepping toward. Shortly thereafter you were asked to leave. Can you explain to me what happened the day you were fired?

Paul O'Neill: During 2002 I found myself being at odds with where policy seemed to be going, I kept arguing that we couldn't really afford another tax cut and that we didn't need one, since the economy was doing fine. But my problems were not just differences about tax policy and social policy and fixing Medicare and Social Security. I kept asking almost every week, of the people from the CIA who briefed me, you know, where's the evidence for weapons of mass destruction? I see all of these allegations and projections of trends from 1991 and what we knew in 1991, but I didn't see anything I considered to be evidence. One of the things I've been trained to do for a long period of time is to know what you know and to differentiate that from what you suspect or what someone alleges, so I kept being a pain in the neck and asking, "Where's the evidence? There's no evidence, there's nothing I believe."

Early in the administration, at a National Security Council briefing, there were a bunch of photos put on the table and it was alleged that this satellite picture of what looked like a warehouse that you could find anywhere in the world was a production center for weapons of mass destruction. I said, I've spent a lot of time going around the world, producing goods all over the world, and have seen a lot of factories and warehouses. How can you tell me this one is a center for producing weapons of mass destruction? There's nothing here that tells you that? You may assign it that, but there's nothing here that tells you that.

One of the things I found really interesting out of this experience is that even today, people that I have a lot of regard for their intellect, like Bill Clinton, still say they believed the evidence was there. I've never had this conversation with him, but it's hard for me to believe a guy who's as smart as he is doesn't know the difference between an allegation and evidence—especially someone who's trained as he is as a lawyer. I've been astounded, this is a bipartisan thing—people on both sides don't seem to get the difference between evidence and what they call intelligence, which I would call not intelligence, just a bunch of fabrications. So I was working my way to the margins of what endurance that people had for

me, both in economic policy and in everything else I encountered. I have to admit some of the things that I said during this period probably ought to have been tempered. For example, we were struggling with trying to get the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank out of the business of effectively bailing out private sector lenders who'd given money to developing countries with the expectation that the people of the United States and other tax-paying people around the world would bail out the private sector lenders. I said (probably not very advisedly), "Before we give any more money to Argentina, we ought to make sure it's not going to go to a Swiss bank account." Which was, I admit, not very diplomatic, but it was true—and interestingly enough, in a few weeks a guy who had been the president of Argentina said, without any prompting from me, "Well it was true he had money in a Swiss bank account, but it was all his own."

So in any event, as we moved past the election in 2002 and we had this continued conversation, a really heated conversation with the vice president about what I considered to be the inadvisability of a further tax cut, I got a call, early in December. I was in my office having a meeting with a group of people and my secretary came in and said, "The vice president's on the phone and would like to talk to you. The vice president said, "The president's decided to make some changes, and you're one of the changes. What we'd like to do is have you come over and meet with the president and basically say that you've decided to go back to the private sector, that you're ready to quit your involvement with the Treasury."

I said I didn't think I needed another meeting with the president, thank you very much. I thought I'd had plenty of meetings, and I thought he probably didn't need a meeting and I certainly didn't need a meeting. And I also said to him, "You know, I've been going along now for 65 years or so and, you know, for me to say that I've decided to leave the Treasury to go back to the private sector is a lie, and I'm not into doing lies. And so what I want to do is issue a press release tomorrow morning before the markets open so that they'll have time to digest this news in case it creates any stir. And I'll send the president a note telling him I'm resigning."

And I think he was surprised by that. He didn't try to argue me out of it, I think probably because he'd known me long enough to know that it wouldn't do any good, that I'd made up my mind and that was it.

Q: What did it feel like to get fired?

Paul O'Neill: Well, it's a first in my life—I'd never been fired before, I'd only been promoted to ever higher levels of responsibility. But it was okay with me because I would have really been uncomfortable arguing for policies I didn't believe in. One of the things I actually said to President Bush and Vice President Cheney when they asked me to come and have lunch with them, and to ask me to serve as the secretary of the Treasury, was that I had reservations about doing this. And one of the reservations I had was that, having been the CEO of a very big corporation for 13 years and the president of a very big corporation for the period before that, I wasn't sure how easy it was going to be for me to knuckle under when I thought the policy was wrong. The thing I didn't know is how difficult it would be to knuckle under if you thought the policy was not well vetted, that it was decided on the basis of ideology instead of what was right for the country. At that point I really thought the decisions were not being made on the basis of what was right for the country, they were being made on the basis of what was right for getting reelected.

It's probably altruistic, but I thought for a long time we need presidents who are so devoted to doing the right thing with and for the American people that they're prepared to lose for their values and to hang their values out in public for everyone to see them.

Q: Let's revisit the conversation that you had with Vice President Cheney prior to you being fired. Can you discuss the difference of opinion that you had in regard to tax cuts and deficits?

Paul O'Neill: Sometime after the election—it must have been mid-November—there was a meeting of the Economic Policy Group, including the vice president. As we sat at the table in the Roosevelt Room, we talked about where we were and where we were going. If I remember right, Glenn Hubbard made a presentation that was displayed on the screen at the front of the Roosevelt Room and showed where we were going and what different tracks looked like and GDP growth and the rest, including the effects of the proposed third tax cut. I made the argument, which I had been making over and over again since maybe June or July, that it was not advisable to have another tax cut because of the need to fix Social Security and Medicare and to have some money to smooth the fundamental redesign of the tax system. We needed to have in effect rainy-day money in the event that we had another 9/11 event—and at that point it looked like maybe we were going to go to Iraq, and it was not going to be cheap to do that.

So I argued that we should not have another tax cut because the economy was going to be in positive territory and doing okay through the next couple of years anyway without another tax cut, and there were all of these other compelling

reasons not to risk a deficit and not to risk adding more to the national debt. And the vice president basically said, "When Ronald Reagan was here, he proved that deficits don't really matter and so it's not a consideration or a good reason not to have an additional tax cut." I was honestly stunned by the idea that anyone believed that Ronald Reagan proved in any fashion, certainly not inconclusive fashion, that deficits don't matter. I think it is true on a temporary basis that a nation can have a deficit and have a good reason for having a deficit. I think the Second World War there was no way we could avoid having a deficit, but when we came out of the Second World War we started running budget surpluses again and did that through the '50s and into 1960. It's interesting, it's really only been in the last 40 years or so that we've accepted the notion that it's a bipartisan thing that we don't have to have fiscal discipline.

A year ago there was this signing ceremony in the Rose Garden for the new Medicare prescription drug entitlement, and it's going to cost us trillions of dollars. This event was not unlike any of the others in the Rose Garden on a nice sunny day, with the president sitting at the signing table with a bunch of grinning legislators behind him taking credit for this "great gift" they're giving the American people. But none of their money was going to get given to make this happen, because the federal government doesn't have any money that it doesn't first take away from the taxpayers.

There was no mention of the fact that this in effect was a new tax on the American people, and we didn't know how we were going to pay for it. It was only grinning presidents and legislators taking the credit for a gift, which strikes me as a ridiculous continuing characteristic of how we do political business in our country.

Q: If we couldn't afford it, why did we give it to the people?

Paul O'Neill: If you can get 51 percent of the people in the Congress to agree with the President's leadership initiative to say we ought to do this, that's all it takes. And I think it's regrettably true there are a lot of people who don't understand that when they get a gift from the American people, it's from the American people and it can only be paid for with taxes over time. I think the confusion is aided and abetted by the fact that it doesn't feel like we're paying for it. It's a lot like running up credit card debt:

As long as you can pay the interest charges on your credit card debt, you can live way beyond your means. In fact, we as a nation are living way beyond our means, and for a period of time, there's no doubt we've demonstrated you can get away with it. But I think we only need to look at the fate of other countries who've lived beyond their means for a long time to see you inevitably get into trouble. If you look at Germany in 1923, they got to a point where their currency was so worthless that you needed a wheelbarrow to haul the currency that was needed to buy a loaf of bread. You get inflation where people stop investing in your national debt, when they say, "We're not going to loan you money because you're not going to be able to pay it back." It's the same thing that happens to individuals and families. When you get extended to the point that you can't service your debt, you're finished.

You know, so you go through a calamity—either you go through a terrible inflation, which is a way of having a national bankruptcy, and you destroy accumulated income and wealth, and in fact you have a taking from all the people because suddenly their financial assets are worth nothing. You know, are we going to have that right away? No. But should the people who are in positions of political leadership know that and anticipate it and do something about it for the American people, you bet—and now is the time to begin doing something about it.

One of the difficult aspects of this debt problem is that it's not very transparent to people who are unschooled in fiscal and monetary policy. In a way, this problem's a little bit like the famous example of if you throwing a frog into boiling water. If you throw him into the already boiling water, he jumps out right away. But if you put the frog in the pot of cold water and turn the heat on under it, the frog will let itself be boiled because it doesn't respond to slow increase in temperature. Our debt problem is something like that. If we wait until we have a calamity and financial markets shut us off because we've exhausted their belief that we can service additional debt, it's too late.

This is a problem that we need to deal with without letting the heat be turned up some more.

I would hope we can demonstrate we're intelligent people that don't wait until they create a calamity in their country before they deal with problems that are obvious to anyone who's ever studied economic policy and fiscal policy and monetary policy. You only need to look around the world to see places like Argentina, Turkey, and Germany after World War II whose governments have effectively achieved a meltdown condition. Knowing this can happen to modern nations, we should not let it happen to ours.

Editor's Note: The above was taken from the companion book to the critically-acclaimed documentary *I.O.U.S.A.* . Included in the book you'll find interviews from some of the most revered voices in the nation, including Warren Buffett;

former Treasury Secretaries Paul O'Neill and Robert Rubin; Pete Peterson, CEO of The Blackstone Group; Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas); and bestselling *Empire of Debt* author Bill Bonner. Defiantly non-partisan, the empowering solutions outlined in these pages are a must-read for any American who wants to help change "business-as-usual" in Washington as a new administration heads towards the Oval Office.

20081203-01	12:41	SteveG	Re: "Bush Sorry Economic Crisis Has Cut Jobs, 401Ks"
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Dear SteveB,

I really do think W was picked for his last name only and the plan was carried out that Cheney and Rove ran the country with W as the front man. Have you read *Dark Side* by Jane Mayer? Hope I got the author's name right. Interesting reading.

20081203-02	18:16	Charlie	"Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"
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A very interesting proposal about a "Full Spectrum Economy". At OpEdNews, one of my favorite news sources these days.

I think she makes some great points, not the least of which is: what we have been using for the past 50 years obviously doesn't work and has reached its limit. NOW (while we're at a downturn with no end in sight) is the time to try *new models*.

As the quote at the end states:

As Buckminster Fuller said, 'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.' Let's try something new this time.....

"Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy" by Ann Kramer, OpEdNews.com

Dec. 3, 2008, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Try-something-else-A-Full-by-Ann-Kramer-081202-590.html>)

Paul Krugman, Nobel economist, acknowledges that the economy is in recession and says it will be a while until things turn around. Will it be 2010? 2011? 2013? He has no idea. He's also said that everything that's been tried so far to get the economy rolling again hasn't worked and that we're doing the same thing Japan did during its last major economic turndown—and it didn't work for them either.

Mr. Bernanke's outlook wasn't very upbeat either. "The likely duration of the financial turmoil is difficult to judge," he said. "But even if the functioning of financial markets continues to improve, economic conditions will probably remain weak for a time." Continuing, he said that "cumulating job losses, weak consumer confidence, and a lack of credit availability" would depress consumer spending, traditionally the engine of American economic growth, and noted that exports were "not likely to be as great a source of strength for U.S. economic activity in coming quarters as they had been earlier this year."

So, what's left to do but sit and wait it out? Or maybe this time we could try something else? As the world's economists sit in turmoil trying to get the old system running again—they are running up against new parameters that have never before been factored into the current 3 sector (government, markets and illegal) economic model: major resource depletion, global warming, and a 70% consumer economy that cannot be sustained. We all know it but our economists seem to be committed to long-term denial.

That's understandable—they're generally in their 50's or older and have made their fortunes in the 3 sector economy. Not hard to understand why they think this is a good system and is the only option possible. But there are cracks in the system. Even Greenspan admitted that his 40 year commitment to the 3 sector economy isn't working and he's totally stunned. It's clear that the imagination of the old guard is in a thinking block!

The old rules and the old system have run their course. This is a natural occurrence and shouldn't be viewed as a bad thing but welcomed as the opportunity it is for a new model to be designed. Welcome to a 6 sector economy—A Full Spectrum economy. A Full Spectrum economy enables the introduction of 3 new sectors to the current 3 sector economy.

Doing this will take the pressure off the government and market sectors to carry the entire burden of the economy. This is important because when these two sectors are strained, it results in an increase of the illegal sector of drugs/crime/prostitution to fill the void. Anyone would agree that this isn't the smartest way to go.

So a Full Spectrum economy makes sense! Adding these 3 new sectors—the household, unpaid volunteer and natural sectors as part of the measured/valued economy results in a more vibrant and active economy. These 3 new sectors have always been a part of the economy—in that massive quantities of 'work' have occurred in them and in fact the old 3 sectors could not have functioned without them. They've just never been monetized and valued and as a result, they've become invisible to the 3 sector economists.

Time to make the invisible visible! If we want a highly functional economy, designing the 6 sector Full Spectrum economy makes sense. Because the 3 new sectors foster a post-industrial service/knowledge economy into the areas that will be ever-more necessary now that consumption patterns are set to shift down.

For example, if we recognized the value of the 'household' sector—in that it produces a value of healthy, whole, strong children—we could pay those who do the high quality work in this sector. At the same time, thousands of other businesses would grow up around it. Not consumption businesses that lead to resource depletion—but new businesses in the service fields of education, health care, travel, art, creativity, music, environmental caring etc.

Household businesses are not 'paying people to make babies. Instead, the household sector is "whole person/optimal human development enterprises'. To be the best business they can be, "Optimal human development enterprises", like any business they would need to purchase services from other businesses. For example, as we know, today's traditional businesses pay for bookkeeping, legal fees, advertising costs, promotion, productions costs etc. all as a 'cost of doing business' on their way to success. Whole Person/optimal human development enterprises would do the same.

They would be looking for services that would enable them to foster the broadest 7 "intelligences" that foster optimal human development for their children. They might purchase services such as private art lessons, music, or other interests of their children. They'd purchase lots of the latest technology, preventative health care, and lifestyle support services. They would buy services from travel businesses that would provide 'real life' experiences both as 'adventure classes' that have children/families traveling the world—or in-home experiences using technology that enables us to 'be there' while sitting in our living rooms. The imagination runs wild when you build the household enterprises which become part of the B2B economy!

While this is happening in the household sector, the 'natural sector' will also be a source for new economic development. While factoring in 'true cost accounting' of the earth's resources will impact the 'market/consumption' costs/pricing to bring it into the balance that was missing in the 3 sector economy, working in this sector will provide much new and necessary work. Some will be in resource restoration but many new jobs will be created in work for caring for the planet in ways that benefit the household and market sectors too. It is a necessary new sector that, once monetized, has its value honored and respected within the 6 sector economy. It is another conscious step to again take pressure off the market/government sectors.

And the unpaid volunteer sector could be a method for 'banking volunteer time' (which is currently valued at \$19.61 per hour!) that could be traded for future caring in one's senior years or in time of need. For example, imagine if a volunteer 'banked' enough hours a month to cover their 'health insurance' payment and this was connected to a local health system? Imagine it costs \$1000 a month. That's 50 hours of volunteer time a month or about 11 hours a week. Doable? Certainly. There are all sorts of ways this could be 'banked' into the system within a community and result in a world that has everyone engaged and building a world that works.

We have a choice right now. We can sit on our butts and watch the chaos of the recession as we remain committed to the old 3 sector, imbalanced economy. We can understand why the current economists keep trying to fix a 3 sector economy but we can finally acknowledge that it's time for a new model.

We have a choice to create a Full Spectrum, 6 sector economy that holds the future brightly in front of us. Let's get off our butts and start designing this! It would put everyone to work and even the current economists would have something to do—writing books on why it is time to change to a 6 sector economy! I bet Paul Krugman could write that book!

As Buckminster Fuller said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." Let's try something new this time.....

[20081204-01](#) 13:00 SteveB Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"

Dear Charlie,

Great article (thanks!) and I agree in large measure...

1. And the place to start is to make it much harder to pay-off our politicians by reforming campaign finance laws—again!—this time, for real. Both parties have sold the people down the river in order to try to stay in power.
2. Then we must come to the real, realistic realization (haha) that, if we are to maintain any kind of American lifestyle, unilateral free trade and illegal immigration must go. An American MUST make more money than a Chinese or Indian worker for the same job. These countries have nearly-slave wages and terrible pollution, therefore no cost for abatement, which we rightfully impose on U.S. companies. Thinking we can compete as if the field were level has been proven to be ridiculous—our shrinking manufacturing, ballooning trade deficits, titanic foreign borrowing, aspects of the current crisis, etc. prove this beyond the shadow of a doubt.
3. Gasoline must be taxed to maintain at least a \$4.00/gallon level at the pumps in order to kill the gasoline engine. The revenue from most of this tax should be used to develop alternative energy solutions. If Europe has the will to impose this tax, so should we (though note that Europe fritters away the revenue rather than developing any useful technology, but that's Europe for you). Believe me, this tax ain't nearly as painful as the alternatives. In certain situations, such as recently, this tax could even operate in a reverse fashion to stabilize prices wherever they serve the larger American interests best.
4. We must all, as much as possible, BUY AMERICAN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! If you have the means to go out right now and buy a new American car...especially a Cadillac, Lincoln, or Corvette...doing so might even help the economy enough for you rich folks to avoid paying higher taxes. With a thriving economy, those tax hikes might become a little less necessary. But seriously, there is nothing at all wrong with helping ourselves and maintaining a healthy prejudice against foreign goods and companies. We should be prejudiced as hell, for the sake of our children. I don't understand how this once-strong principle became lost. Besides, this may be your last chance at a true bargain. Spend!

To me, the odds of any of these things happening seem about nil.

[20081204-02](#) 18:16 SteveG Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"

Dear SteveB,

Fuel: we are all over the place - ethanol, electric cars, bio diesel, hydrogen, etc. No concentration by all in one direction. The "60 Minutes" segment on algae makes since. Concentrate in one direction. Most electricity is made from burning coal - dirtiest carbon fuel. No real talk of diesel engines which can get you 50-60 MPG>

What is American? Fords assembled in Mexico, GM and Chrysler assembled in Canada, Subaru's, Toyota's, and Honda's assembled in Indiana.

Consistently during my lifetime we have penalized people for saving - we tax the interest they make. We reward people for borrowing - used to be able to deduct interest - still can on student loans.

What manufacturing?

[20081206-01](#) 09:46 SteveB Re: "Try Something Else! A Full Spectrum Economy"

Dear SteveG

I looked up *Dark Side* and it sure looks like scary reading. She does seem to think Cheney was in charge too, right?

I have been so disappointed in Congress this past couple of weeks over the auto industry. Banks? "Oh, here's \$700,000,000,000 with no strings attached and let us know if you want more." [It turned out to be more than \$12 trillion, at least. —SteveB] It isn't keeping people employed because they didn't specify that the banks have to actually lend the money, which is what we need, rather than buy other banks or foreign stocks, apparently. Also note that the banks, etc. got themselves into trouble.

But the auto industry has been put into the current crisis largely because of the government's stupidity, but they have to beg and grovel for a few billion dollars tied to everything in the book. It may be right for Congress to do this, but not in light of the way Wall St. was treated.

Chris Dodd is a total, unmitigated a*s-hole!

You know, there are great and good men on both sides of the aisle that I support...I hope and believe Obama will turn out to be one of them...BUT I ACTUALLY, REALLY DISLIKE BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES!!!! Neither is better than the other. Both are totally self-serving. Neither can focus further ahead than the next bought-and-sold election. The whole system has been almost totally corrupt for a long time. It is time to recognize that, like the bankers, politicians will turn against you if you don't regulate them properly.

This is really why we are sinking...otherwise, I believe this crisis could have been prevented by politicians seeking the good of the people rather than power, money, and re-election.

Did you know that France—usually no shining example of anything but arrogance—made lobbying and lobbyists illegal years ago? Not a bad idea in my book, but it is the campaign financing and influencing that has to be fixed. A country must insure that it's government's only motivation be the good of its people and nothing else. Not the good of themselves or of any other people, especially those in other countries or here illegally.

20081206-02	10:21	SteveB	"Despite Earlier Furor, Palin Shopping Continued"
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Obviously out just for herself...

If you want to see what a woman governor sounds like who is not a stupid b*tch, try to catch Michigan's governor, Jennifer Granholm. That's what an intelligent woman governor sounds like. Now she would have made a good VP pick for McCain. Maybe he would have been able to carry Michigan?

The number one qualification to be President is intelligence! If you ain't got it, nothing else matters.

"Despite Earlier Furor, Palin Shopping Continued" AP

Dec. 5, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28077236/ns/politics-decision_08/t/despite-earlier-furor-palin-shopping-continued/#.TxhuMm9SQhI)

(GOP spent \$4,383 at Saks, \$34,384 for makeup artist in race's final weeks.)

(WASHINGTON) Despite the furor over a \$150,000 campaign shopping spree for GOP vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin, the Republican Party continued to spend money on clothing and accessories for her in the contest's final weeks, new campaign reports show.

The latest buys ranged from \$4,383 at Saks Fifth Avenue and \$2,130 at Nieman Marcus, to \$148 at Victoria's Secret [but...we never got to see her in her new panties, so she should pay for this or give them back or "put them up on Ebay. LOL] locations in Philadelphia and Cincinnati. Another \$430 was spent at Aldo, a shoe store. The buys were listed under the heading of "campaign accessories."

The party also paid \$55,700 in "consulting" fees to Lisa Kline & Co., a New York fashion stylist. And the McCain-Palin presidential campaign, which was funded with \$84 million in tax dollars under the presidential public campaign financing

system, dispensed \$34,384 to Amy Strozzi, a celebrity makeup artist. The campaign had previously paid Strozzi \$36,000, disclosed in earlier campaign finance reports.

Party spokesman Alex Conant said the expenditures listed in the party's October and December reports "were the result of coordinated expenditures at the campaign's direction."

"Accessories have been returned, inventoried, and will be appropriately dispersed to various charities," Conant said.

20081206-03	11:09	SteveB	Alternative Energy Sources
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Dear SteveG,

In terms of energy, I think we HAVE to go in all directions because no one knows what the best solutions will be. Only the marketplace can decide, because we are a "free", "capitalist" country...mostly...partly.

I like the algae thing a lot better than using food to make fuel—that ain't ever gonna work well when you also have to feed people at as low a price as possible. Coal can be burned cleanly to generate electricity for transportation and the CO2 sequestered. We have the technology, plenty of coal, and an already existing power grid. Nuclear is a problem. Wind, cool. But it is much more efficient to generate power at a central location and distribute that, rather than distribute the fuel which is then used inefficiently to generate power for cars, etc. as we do now

The internal combustion engine is our bitter enemy and must be destroyed except for big trucks, locomotives, planes, ships, and motorcycles. Diesel doesn't really help us keep the environment clean or end our dependence on foreign oil. Oil must be saved for other uses like the vehicles just mentioned and making drugs, plastic, etc.

To me, hybrid cars are crap! Let's do it right with a ton more trains and public transportation and electric cars. We have the technology, we just need the will to use it and a controlled price for gasoline.

20081208-01	12:29	SteveB	"Liberals Voice Concerns About President-Elect Obama"
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Dear SteveM,

It looks like Obama is going to rule in a pragmatic, not an ideological, fashion, just as I predicted. That's exactly what we need. Now, if he will only quit smoking. What I don't understand is why you seem so afraid of some hypothetical disaster that might befall the country, rather than the actual catastrophe of our baby boomer lives that your friends have caused.

I don't see the use in worrying about some mythical disaster instead of the real thing we're immersed in. The Right blew it and are now unbelievably discredited. Your own people destroyed what you believed in. Your own conservative deficit cutters exploded the deficit.

I hope Bush, Cheney, McCain, Palin and all the rest just go "jump in the lake." What else are they good for? Not running the country, that's for sure!!!!!!!

"Liberals Voice Concerns About Obama" by Carol E. Lee and Nia-Malika Henderson, Politico

Dec 8, 2008, (<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1208/16292.html>)

Liberals are growing increasingly nervous—and some just flat-out angry—that President-elect Barack Obama seems to be stiffing them on Cabinet jobs and policy choices.

Obama has reversed pledges to immediately repeal tax cuts for the wealthy and take on Big Oil. He's hedged his call for a quick drawdown in Iraq. And he's stocking his White House with anything but stalwarts of the left.

Now some are shedding a reluctance to puncture the liberal euphoria at being rid of President George W. Bush to say, in effect, that the new boss looks like the old boss. "He has confirmed what our suspicions were by surrounding himself with

a centrist to right cabinet. But we do hope that before it's all over we can get at least one authentic progressive appointment," said Tim Carpenter, national director of the Progressive Democrats of America.

OpenLeft blogger Chris Bowers went so far as to issue this plaintive plea: "Isn't there ever a point when we can get an actual Democratic administration?"

Even supporters make clear they're on the lookout for backsliding. "There's a concern that he keep his basic promises and people are going to watch him," said Roger Hickey, a cofounder of Campaign for America's Future.

Obama insists he hasn't abandoned the goals that made him feel to some like a liberal savior. But the left's bill of particulars against Obama is long, and growing.

Obama drew rousing applause at campaign events when he vowed to tax the windfall profits of oil companies. As president-elect, Obama says he won't enact the tax.

Obama's pledge to repeal the Bush tax cuts and redistribute that money to the middle class made him a hero among Democrats who said the cuts favored the wealthy. But now he's struck a more cautious stance on rolling back tax cuts for people making over \$250,000 a year, signaling he'll merely let them expire as scheduled at the end of 2010. Obama's post-election rhetoric on Iraq and choices for national security team have some liberal Democrats even more perplexed. As a candidate, Obama defined and separated himself from his challengers by highlighting his opposition to the war in Iraq from the start. He promised to begin to end the war on his first day in office.

Now Obama's says that on his first day in office he will begin to "design a plan for a responsible drawdown," as he told NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday. Obama has also filled his national security positions with supporters of the Iraq war: Sen. Hillary Clinton, who voted to authorize force in Iraq, as his secretary of state; and President George W. Bush's defense secretary, Robert Gates, continuing in the same role.

The central premise of the left's criticism is direct—don't bite the hand that feeds, Mr. President-elect. The Internet that helped him so much during the election is lighting up with irritation and critiques.

"There don't seem to be any liberals in Obama's cabinet," writes John Aravosis, the editor of Americablog.com. "What does all of this mean for Obama's policies, and just as important, Obama Supreme Court announcements?"

"Actually, it reminds me a bit of the campaign, at least the beginning and the middle, when the Obama campaign didn't seem particularly interested in reaching out to progressives," Aravosis continues. "Once they realized that in order to win they needed to marshal everyone on their side, the reaching out began. I hope we're not seeing a similar 'we can do it alone' approach in the transition team."

This isn't the first liberal letdown over Obama, who promptly angered the left after winning the Democratic primary by announcing he backed a compromise that would allow warrantless wiretapping on U.S. soil to continue.

Now it's Obama's Cabinet moves that are drawing the most fire. It's not just that he's picked Clinton and Gates. It's that liberal Democrats say they're hard-pressed to find one of their own on Obama's team so far—particularly on the economic side, where people like Tim Geithner and Lawrence Summers are hardly viewed as pro-labor.

"At his announcement of an economic team there was no secretary of labor. If you don't think the labor secretary is on the same level as treasury secretary, that gives me pause," said Jonathan Tasini, who runs the website workinglife.org. "The president-elect wouldn't be president-elect without labor."

During the campaign Obama gained labor support by saying he favored legislation that would make it easier for unions to form inside companies. The "card check" bill would get rid of a secret-ballot method of voting to form a union and replace it with a system that would require companies to recognize unions simply if a majority of workers signed cards saying they want one. Obama still supports that legislation, aides say—but union leaders are worried that he no longer talks it up much as president-elect.

"It's complicated," said Tasini, who challenged Clinton for Senate in 2006. "On the one hand, the guy hasn't even taken office yet so it's a little hasty to be criticizing him. On the other hand, there is legitimate cause for concern. I think people are still waiting but there is some edginess about this."

That's a view that seems to have kept some progressive leaders holding their fire. There are signs of a struggle within the left wing of the Democratic Party about whether it's just too soon to criticize Obama—and if there's really anything to complain about just yet.

Case in point: One of the Campaign for America's Future blogs commented on Obama's decision not to tax oil companies' windfall profits saying, "Between this move and the move to wait to repeal the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, it seems like the Obama team is buying into the right-wing frame that raising any taxes—even those on the richest citizens and wealthiest corporations—is bad for the economy."

Yet Campaign for America's Future will be join about 150 progressive organizations, economists and labor groups to release a statement Tuesday in support of a large economic stimulus package like the one Obama has proposed, said Hickey, a co-founder of the group.

"I've heard the most grouching about the windfall profits tax, but on the other hand, Obama has committed himself to a stimulus package that makes a down payment on energy efficiency and green jobs," Hickey said. "The old argument was, here's how we afford to make these investments—we tax the oil companies' windfall profits. ... The new argument is, in a bad economy that could get worse, we don't."

Obama is asking for patience—saying he's only shifting his stance on some issues because circumstances are shifting.

Aides say he backed off the windfall profits tax because oil prices have dropped below \$80 a barrel. Obama also defended hedging on the Bush tax cuts.

"My economic team right now is examining, do we repeal that through legislation? Do we let it lapse so that, when the Bush tax cuts expire, they're not renewed when it comes to wealthiest Americans?" Obama said on "Meet the Press." "We don't yet know what the best approach is going to be."

On Iraq, he says he's just trying to make sure any U.S. pullout doesn't ignite "any resurgence of terrorism in Iraq that could threaten our interests."

Obama has told his supporters to look beyond his appointments, that the change he promised will come from him and that when his administration comes together they will be happy.

"I think that when you ultimately look at what this advisory board looks like, you'll say this is a cross-section of opinion that in some ways reinforces conventional wisdom, in some ways breaks with orthodoxy in all sorts of way," Obama recently said in response to questions about his appointments during a news conference on the economy.

The leaders of some liberal groups are willing to wait and see.

"He hasn't had a first day in office," said John Isaacs, the executive director for Council for Livable World. "To me it's not as important as who's there, than what kind of policies they carry out."

"These aren't out-and-out liberals on the national security team, but they may be successful implementers of what the Obama national security policy is," Isaacs added. "We want to see what policies are carried forward, as opposed to appointments."

Juan Cole, who runs a prominent anti-war blog called Informed Comment, said he worries Obama will get bad advice from Clinton on the Middle East, calling her too pro-Israel and "belligerent" toward Iran. "But overall, my estimation is that he has chosen competence over ideology, and I'm willing to cut him some slack," Cole said.

Other voices of the left don't like what they're seeing so far and aren't waiting for more before they speak up.

New York Times columnist Frank Rich warned that Obama's economic team of Summers and Geithner reminded him of John F. Kennedy's "best and the brightest" team, who blundered in Vietnam despite their blue-chip pedigrees.

David Corn, Washington bureau chief of the liberal magazine Mother Jones, wrote in Sunday's Washington Post that he is "not yet reaching for a pitchfork."

But the headline of his op-ed sums up his point about Obama's Cabinet appointments so far: "This Wasn't Quite the Change We Envisioned."

20081209-01 13:59 SteveB "Obama Derangement Syndrome"

Dear SteveM,

In my humble opinion, I think many of the issues at hand between us could be settled and agreed upon if you were ever able to give even one tiny inch.

For instance, Obama's birth certificate. Please read the article below. Surely, any reasonable person could agree that it is about time to get real. The rest of the world has—even most of the extreme right.

I think you need to realize before you get too testy (such as in your last email, my old friend) that it is not my opinions, but yours, that are out of the main stream. I think you would have to agree that, right or wrong, your thinking is radical, unusual, extreme, fringe, generally unaccepted, and marginal. The election certainly proved that, didn't it? I'm much nearer the center. I have been proven right in our disagreements time after time. When have you been proven right? Obama is a U.S. citizen. McCain and Palin are fools who have greatly harmed the GOP. McCain did not win the election as you said he would. Obama won as I predicted. Have you seen the Bush vs. Obama favorability ratings lately? Do you really not believe (as most of the rest of us do) that idiot Bush was the worst President maybe in forever?

So you are the one who should be offering proof of your extreme positions and you have not done that. Instead, I am the one who has been offering solid proof and evidence. Where is the rationale for your thinking? Is there one, or is it just extreme prejudice? That will get you nowhere.

You have so little to stand on with your discredited opinions and party...maybe you should try, at least, to understand the other side, maybe concede on a few reasonable points, and actually move a little toward the center from that extremely unhappy, rationally inconsistent, ultra-radical right wing stance. Huh? The world is a much bigger place than that. I'd give up that drive-time radio if I were you. Those folks are downright crazy and un-American.

If you love this country as you say you do and care about its future, those things above should not be that difficult. The article below gives plenty of reason to do so, and it was written by a well-respected man much further to the right than I am. Are you and your friends really out to save the country or to destroy it and the Constitution you say you honor? Funny to me that you seem to honor it in terms of guns, but not in terms of the right to privacy, separation of church and state, or the legitimate election of a President. Is war all you can conceive of? Do you really believe the Constitution should be followed only when it suits the extreme right?

Now your GOP buddies who killed the richest economy on Earth want to kill the auto industry. Wonderful! And you really think that I am the one who is misguided and brainwashed? I tow no party line at all, but you do. I see the problems with both parties, both ideologies, both extremes. Do you?

"Obama Derangement Syndrome" by David Horowitz, *National Review*

Dec. 8, 2008, (<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/226474/obama-derangement-syndrome/david-horowitz>)

(Conservatives need to shut up about the birth certificate.)

The continuing efforts of a fringe group of conservatives to deny Obama his victory and to lay the basis for the claim that he is not a legitimate president is embarrassing and destructive. The fact that these efforts are being led by Alan Keyes, an unhinged demagogue on the political fringe who lost a senate election to the then unknown Obama by 42 points should be a warning in itself.

This tempest over whether Obama, the child of an American citizen, was born on American soil is tantamount to the Democrats' seditious claim that Bush "stole" the election in Florida and hence was not the legitimate president. This delusion helped to create the Democrats' Bush derangement syndrome and encouraged Democratic leaders to lie about the origins of the Iraq War, and regard it as illegitimate as Bush himself. It became "Bush's War" rather than an American War with destructive consequences for our troops and our cause.

The Birth Certificate zealots are essentially arguing that 64 million voters should be disenfranchised because of a contested technicality as to whether Obama was born on U.S. soil. (McCain narrowly escaped the problem by being born in the Panama Canal zone, which is no longer American.)

What difference does it make to the future of this country whether Obama was born on U.S. soil? Advocates of this destructive campaign will argue that the Constitutional principle regarding the qualifications for President trumps all others. But how viable will our Constitution be if 5 Supreme Court justices should decide to void 64 million ballots?

Conservatives are supposed to respect the organic nature of human societies. Ours has been riven by profound disagreements that have been deepening over many years. We are divided not only about political facts and social values, but also about what the Constitution itself means. The crusaders on this issue choose to ignore these problems and are proposing to deny the will of 64 million voters by appealing to 5 Supreme Court Justices (since no one is delusional enough to think that the 4 liberal justices are going to take the presidency away from Obama). What kind of conservatism is this?

It is not conservatism; it is sore loserism and quite radical in its intent. Respect for election results is one of the most durable bulwarks of our unity as a nation. Conservatives need to accept the fact that we lost the election, and get over it; and get on with the important business of reviving our country's economy and defending its citizens, and—by the way—its Constitution.

20081210-01 19:14 SteveM Gun Rights

Dear SteveB,

Watch this video.

How sad this Texas girl had the encroachment on her second amendment rights so graphically illustrated. I see the honorable senator from New York was getting a little uncomfortable in his chair. The gun banners are absolutely speechless as this little Texas gal chews them up and spits them out. She knows what the 2nd amendment is really all about.

Watch it. You will be glad you did. And pass it along. Here's a video that I guarantee you won't forget anytime soon!! She didn't cry, although she came close to losing it, and she gave those a reality check they dearly needed.....

<http://www.theabsurdreport.com/2011/suzanna-gratia-hupp-what-the-second-amendment-is-really-for-2/>

20081211-01 09:53 SteveB Re: Gun Rights

Dear SteveM,

This 2nd amendment cr*p is pure and simple deceit and paranoia.

You should be much more worried about the more fundamental rights that the right wants to steal—the right to privacy, the right to equality, the right to healthcare, the right to a brighter future, the right to peace, the right to habeas corpus, the right to trial, the right not to be tortured, the right to a good secular education, the right to have a government not controlled by some (any) stupid religion.

Now, I'm all for the 2nd Amendment and people owning guns. I own 3 myself. But, realistically, what good are your stupid guns ever going to be against tanks, planes, helicopters, bombs, cannon, flame throwers, etc. etc.???????

This issue is nothing but the biggest red herring the world has ever seen. The Right pretends to protect an obvious, innocuous right, while stealing the rest. Wake up!

20081211-02 10:03 SteveM Re: Gun Rights

Dear SteveB,

Do you have a tank?

20081211-03 10:06 SteveB "The Truth About Idiot Bush (What a Legacy!)"

Keith Olbermann at his best (ya gotta love him!).

"The Truth About Idiot Bush (What a Legacy!)" (from the 12/9/08 "Countdown" transcript)

OLBERMANN: ...and number one [Bush scandal of the day], IED-gate, one of the top ten most disturbing realities of the war in Iraq. The concept, evidently a surprise to all on our side, of the improvised explosive device. The use of roadside bombs by insurgents to kill Americans. Well, it was not a surprise after all. The Pentagon's inspector general has issued a 72-page report revealing that the military was aware of the threat posed by mines and improvised explosive devices and of the available of mine resistant vehicles years before the insurgent actions began in Iraq in 2003. Which makes the report's other finding, that Marine Corps leaders simply stopped processing an urgent process from combat commanders in Anbar Province, for MRAPs, the IED resistant vehicles in 2005, makes that even more heinous. So not only did the Bush administration and the Bush Pentagon ignore the prewar intel, that the WMD we sought to recover were not in Iraq. But the Bush administration and the Pentagon ignored that if we removed Saddam Hussein an insurgency of some sort would develop in Iraq. And now we learn the Bush administration and the Bush Pentagon ignored the prewar intel that when an insurgency did develop, it would use roadside bombs to kill the troops we needlessly sent there. I don't know what, if any religion you belong to but I suspect you will agree that people that ignored so many foretellings of preventable death should have a long time to think about it in hell!

President Bush tells interviewers he does not care how history will portray him but in our third story tonight, "*The Los Angeles Times*" has obtained an internal White House memo giving Cabinet members talking points for painting history a rosy portrait of Mr. Bush, even though his image will only get worse as new and damning facts emerge. What does the memo say and how are we obligated to correct its bizarre claims? To start it says Mr. Bush, quote, "Promised to raise standards and accountability in public schools and delivered the No Child Left Behind," an act so poorly received, "*The Times*" points out, that it became a standard applause line this year from Democrats. Also from the memo, "He curbed AIDS in Africa. Its spread has slowed and Mr. Bush has won phrase for this" but he has not won any praise from withholding funds from groups that prevent condom use, a proven life saver, in favor of abstinence only programs, which have also failed in this country.

Also, Mr. Bush's foreign aid puritan, Randall Tobias, quit last year after patronizing an escort service linked to prostitution. Also from the memo, "Mr. Bush lifted the economy with his tax cuts" and quote, "responded with bold measures to prevent an economic meltdown." In 2005 he told a 57-year-old single mother of three, one of the mentally challenged, that it was, quote, "fantastic, uniquely American that she had to work three jobs" unlike half a million people that have no job as of November in the first presidency for decades during which family earning power fell and income disparity continued to rise, the meltdown he prevented, now having claimed several Wall Street institutions, which had weathered 1929 and 9/11 or 43 And of course, the old stand-by quote, "He kept the American people safe." Not counting 20 percent of his first term, Jan. 1, 2001, until Sept. 11, 2001. On 9/11 he sat reading "My Pet Goat" for seven minutes after learning America was under attack and then covered up environmental danger at Ground Zero. And failed to provide for the health of rescue workers. He helped bin Laden's family flee the country, opposed the 9/11 Commission, opposed the Department of Homeland Security, tried to outsource American's port security to Dubai, did not keep us safe from the shoe bomber, alert passengers and crew did that, did not keep five Americans safe from anthrax and never caught their killer, still has not caught the killer of 17 sailors aboard the U.S.S. *Coal*, still has not caught the killer of 3,000 on 9/11, outsourcing that to Afghans, turning that country into a narcostate giving bin Laden a safe haven in the region of Waziristan by literally endorsing a truce that Pakistan signed with the Taliban there. And most of all, not keeping safe 4,200 Americans dead in his war, a war that made us less safe, invading a country that posed no grave or gathering threat, provided a check on Iraq and igniting insurrection by disbanding the Ba'athist Party, creating a Muslim theocracy purged of its moderate intelligentsia, one in which freedom has marched backwards for women and Lebanon too elected a Muslim theocracy run by Hamas (sic), no less. Keeping us safe? Terrorism is rising worldwide. The still thriving enemy has claimed Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto and thousands of people in India, including 200 in Mumbai just last month. Russia can now invade U.S. allies without fear of retribution. And Mr. Bush failed to prevent Kim Jong-Il from joining the ranks of nuclear powers, despite even more ample warning than he received prior to 9/11.

He lifted not a finger to keep a major American city safe from wind and water. And what, finally, of the claims of talking points that Mr. Bush has always upheld quote "the honor and dignity of his office." You must define dignity downward to find it in a lie. The lie of mission accomplished. Of upholding the Constitution or protecting Habeas Corpus. That we do not eavesdrop without warrants, we do not eavesdrop on Americans. The lie that we do not torture, that we do not play politics with justice, that we do not use the wheels of justice to crush dissent, that we do not betray those who serve us in secret, that we uphold rather than commute the penalties for those who do, that we do not stage fake news conferences, do not censor science, do not plant propaganda in Iraqi newspapers nor pay U.S. columnists who write it in American newspapers. Or push respected Americans to vaporize their honor and dignity with lies to the world. Or lie about the causes of the credit crisis, high gas prices or even that he watched the first plane hit the North Tower on TV. Where is the honor of vowing a crusade, of daring those that would kill American troops to "bring it on", of promising to care for the troops after you put them in harm's way without body armor or up-armored vehicles? Where was the honor, the dignity in giving a dead soldier's mother a presidential coin and telling her, "Don't sell it on eBay." His memo revealing yet another lie. He does care how history will portray him and now he knows.

20081211-04 10:11 SteveB Re: Gun Rights

Dear SteveM,

No, I tried to get a tank, but they wouldn't let me.

Remember, the reason the founding fathers put in the 2nd amendment was because they knew the government would need to be overthrown in the future and they wanted to ensure that citizens had the means. They considered, rightfully so, that government is inherently evil.

They don't seem to have ever had that first thought about things like home invasion or carrying a concealed weapon.

So the guns you have might protect your home (all well and good) but they will never protect your liberty! Only your brain can do that. Start using it!

20081212-01 10:50 SteveB Fw: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

You might recall that John Hinckley was a seriously deranged young man who shot President Reagan in the early 1980s. Hinckley was absolutely obsessed with movie star Jodie Foster, extremely jealous, and in his twisted mind, loved Jodie Foster to the point that to make himself well-known to her, he attempted to assassinate President Reagan. There is speculation Hinckley may soon be released as having been rehabilitated. Consequently, you may appreciate the following letter from John McCain that the staff at the mental facility, treating Hinckley, reports to have intercepted this past weekend:

To: John Hinckley
From: John McCain

Dear Mr. Hinkley,

My wife and I wanted to drop you a short note to tell you how pleased we are with the great strides you are making in your recovery. In our fine country's spirit of understanding and forgiveness, we want you to know there is a non-partisan consensus of compassion and forgiveness throughout.

My wife Cindy and I want you to know that no grudge is borne against you for shooting President Reagan. We, above all, are aware of how the mental stress and pain could have driven you to such an act of desperation. We are confident that you will soon make a complete recovery and return to your family to join the world again as a healthy and productive young man.

Best Wishes, John and Cindy McCain

PS: While you have been incarcerated, Barack Obama has been banging Jodie Foster like a screen door in a tornado. Just thought you should know.

20081212-02	10:51	SteveB	"Financial forecast: 11 bets for '09"
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I sure hope this guy is wrong, but his assessment certainly rings true to me. Unfortunately, he knows a hell of a lot and I've seen him be right in the past when I doubted him. Of course, no one is right all the time. Right? Just remember those famous last words, "The 'fundamentals' of this economy are strong!"

Must all be the UAW's fault, huh? LOL!

"Financial forecast: 11 bets for '09" by Jon Markman, MSN Money

Dec. 12, 2008, (<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/SuperModels/financial-forecast-11-bets-for-09.aspx>)

After a rocky 2008, it's tempting to believe that better times are just ahead, especially with the president-elect focusing on the economy. So what's next? (Hint: Watch out.)

If 2008 often felt like a nauseating but enduring ride, as government and banking authorities grappled with unseen forces that rocked the investment world, then 2009 will be the year that distress becomes so great that investors actually lose their stomachs.

The past year may have been about the loss of confidence, but the coming year will be about the loss of hope.

It's always tempting after a massive decline to look optimistically at the future and think about what might go right. And in this case, it's true that the next month might bring calm and higher prices to the stock market as investors gaze wistfully at a path ahead that the Federal Reserve, the Treasury and Congress have promised will be greased richly with public funds. Several prominent fund managers who have been bearish on stock valuations for years have reversed their views, going long the market.

Yet in time, all those promises of federal largesse will need to be transformed into enough high-paying jobs and high-quality earnings so that towers of individual and corporate debts can be repaid and balance sheets rebuilt, and that is where the trouble still lies. The concept of spending hundreds of billions of dollars on rebuilding roads, investing in renewable energy and strengthening hospitals sounds peppy on paper, but when you pencil out how many actual salaries it creates, it isn't much—and history shows that government-funded gains rarely last.

Someone please tell me how many roads can be built by journalists thrown out of work at bankrupt newspapers or how many solar panels can be assembled by former accounts-payable managers for bankrupt retail chains. Unless you're a construction worker or bio-energy scientist, the Obama reconstruction will likely leave you cold.

By proposing massive borrowing to battle a problem created by an excess of debt, the government has essentially proposed fighting fire with gasoline. So, lit by a bonfire of the inanities, I propose to you 11 fearless forecasts for 2009:

1: Infrastructure spending plans will bog down in Congress.

The president-elect has asked Congress to send him a bill to sign in his first week in office. This is already a bad idea, as haste makes waste in lawmaking. But the disbursement of \$500 billion-plus would also generate an unseemly, partisan free-for-all in the Capitol, with powerful Democrats on the coasts hogging the best programs for their states and Republicans complaining about being shut out.

In short, passage of this noble yet spendthrift job-creation bill will drag out, blunting its effectiveness.

2: The unemployment rate will approach 10%.

Even if an infrastructure spending law dashes through Congress, it will be months before the money is spent and jobs are created. In the meantime, companies will see their borrowing costs rise even faster than their revenue shrinks—a toxic cocktail that leads to layoffs.

By the end of the year, the U.S. unemployment rate will rise from its current 6.7% to about 8.5%, en route to 10%-plus in 2010. The broadest measure of unemployment, which includes part-timers and discouraged job seekers, which is now at 12.5%, will approach 17% by 2010. In the spring, a single month will record a loss of 1 million jobs.

3: Weak second-quarter earnings will dash hopes.

Prayers for a swift end to the U.S. recession will go unanswered as investors come to realize that America can't spend its way out of a hole by itself. That will be clear in anemic corporate profits during the first half of next year. The driving force in 2009 will continue to be a forced reduction of leverage for all developed economies' big companies and elites combined with the relentless bursting of a global property and commodity bubble. The U.S. fiscal stimulus will soften the blow of the recession, but it will remain painful. By the time the recession ends, possibly in late 2009 or early 2010, it will eclipse the 1980 and 1973-75 recessions and be viewed as the second-worst of the past 100 years, after 1929-33.

4: Synchronized swoon will become an Olympic event.

No economic slowdown of the past 80 years has been so viciously coordinated among regions of the world and various industries that normally operate on different cycles. Past recessions have ended once one region's strength pulled up others, but Europe, Asia, the United States and Latin America will continue to pull each other down as monetary and fiscal stimuli fail to significantly erode debt loads.

The longer the recession, the more likely earnings will drop more than managements can handle, leading to accelerating bankruptcies and unemployment. Big companies will see earnings-per-share drops of 25%-plus.

5: Markets will reach lower lows.

The first bottom in 2008 was made on the failure of Bear Stearns in March at the 1,255 level of the S&P 500 Index (\$INX). The second was made on the failure of Fannie Mae (FMN, news, msgs) and Freddie Mac (FRE, news, msgs) at 1,200 in July. The third was made on the failure of Lehman Bros. (LEHMQ, news, msgs) and stress in related bank funding at 840 in October. The fourth was made around the near failure of Citigroup (C, news, msgs) and in recognition of a plunge in the rate of fundamental business deterioration in November at 750.

In 2009, final lows will come at 550 to 700 as the absolute level of earnings estimates plunges amid despair over the lack of progress from federal stimulus efforts.

6: Chinese growth will slow to the 0%-to-4% range—or worse.

China's growth rate has been in the low double-digits for years, generating the commodity boom in the developing world. Now many experts believe that, at worst, China's growth rate will slow to 7% in 2007.

But veteran Hong Kong economist Jim Walker, the director of the Asianomics research firm, believes investment cycles don't slow—they disintegrate. Although Beijing will try to keep building public infrastructure, Walker's research indicates that a steep decline in private-sector demand from Europe and the U.S. will lop 7.5 percentage points off gross domestic product growth in 2009.

Walker thinks a crash in domestic consumption will lop an additional 2.5 percentage points off GDP growth. Thus Walker's best-case scenario is in the 0%-to-4.5% range, and he puts 30% odds on a contraction. "There has been an outrageous over-investment in property and factories, and much will be unwound," he says. The economist also believes that the growth in Chinese domestic consumption has been overblown and that despite a 50% decline this year, the Chinese stock market remains grossly overvalued.

7: Russian, Persian Gulf and Japanese investors won't bail out the U.S.

The decline in oil and gas prices will gut the Russian and Persian Gulf economies to the extent that their governments will be too focused on boosting domestic growth to bother with buying more U.S. and European assets.

Due to their higher savings rate, the Japanese might actually regain some of their pre-1990 stature and use their strengthening yen to make smart acquisitions even as their domestic economy falls back into its two-decade recession.

8: Treasuries will trump corporate debt.

The United States will find it can issue as much debt as it wants, even as yields on the 30-year bond approach zero, as the world prefers their safety over the volatility of corporate debt. Junk and low investment-grade bond yields will continue to advance—in defiance of bulls' expectations—making it harder for companies to finance operations. The Fed will ultimately step in to guarantee some corporate debt.

9: Market timing will beat buy-and-hold.

As the government helps some industries at the expense of others, distorting normal corporate cash flows and historical pricing gauges, investors focused on fundamentals and valuation metrics will face another frustrating year. Traders and timers will dominate just as they did in the 1970s—and in 2008—as they swear allegiance to no investment style except the Church of What's Working Now.

Investors who try to buy into infrastructure companies—gravel miners, engineers, cement truck makers, fiber optic line constructors and steel makers—will be frustrated as they discover government contracts are less lucrative than private-industry contracts and suffer more slowdowns due to red tape, incompetence and corruption.

10: Investors will seek low-risk growth.

Most companies will spend 2009 focused on survival. The best will also innovate, as new products are the surest path to higher margins. Tech companies with large cash positions, consumer focus and innovation records, such as Apple (AAPL, news, msgs), will stabilize, as will some makers of networking equipment.

Meanwhile, many commercial-real-estate trusts, retail chains and old-school industrial manufacturers, such as Unisys (UIS, news, msgs), will declare bankruptcy or disappear in no-premium mergers. Banks will be avoided as the government has taken over their financing function and has a lower cost of funds. Energy, metals and materials will stabilize and inch higher.

11: Russia will seek its own bailout.

High-priced commodity exports fueled a big boom in social programs in Russia and the strength of the ruble. As energy prices stabilize at a lower level, analyst Vitaliy N. Katsenelson says he believes the ruble will be smashed, undermining buying power and putting a big hole in the Moscow government's ability to pay for expensive social programs.

After Russia "de-privatized" (the government word for stealing) oil assets, the Minsk-born Denver investment manager says, it reinvested little in new production facilities or maintenance, which has led inevitably to declining production. He expects Russia to need to do an about-face and beg foreign investors, and possibly even the International Monetary Fund, for a bailout. Well, that ought to do it for 2009—another cheery 12 months in which global commerce continues to unwind in painful fashion.

I hope that I have gotten every one of these wrong and that the new year is the best ever for the nation and your families.

20081212-03	16:14	Ben	Re: "Financial forecast: 11 bets for '09"
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SteveB,

This is observation from my buddy, who is VP of an investment bank that oversees the operations of the credit unions in the southwest region... his analysis makes your guy pretty good, because he usually finds much bigger holes in economic forecasts than he did for this.

But my buddy Brent brings up an important point that is overlooked, too...

from Brent:

He [Jon Markman] assumes that the new Fed, Treasury and SEC heads are buffoons like the current crop. I do not. Are his unemployment projections correct? Will Russia go hat in hand to the IMF for money, that's anybody's guess.

Overall I liked his writing style and his use of logic or outside experts to support his views. He was too light on counterpoints or intervening variables.

SteveB's laugh that it's the UAW's fault was probably tongue in cheek, but not far from the truth for the auto-industry.

What I am expecting, that he did not mention, is the only tool left in the whole government's toolbox to handle the current leveraged debt situation is "asset inflation." Double the price of everything on the planet, including wages, and you've halved the debt load. Too bad for the suckers that bought the debt.

When it comes to hard choices being made in Congress, as we saw with the failure of the bailout for the Big 3, they will take the easy "spend and inflate" route every time.

20081213-01 04:25 BrentR Re: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley

Dear SteveB,

HAHAHA !!! What's funny about this email is this! As just today I heard something about Hinckley and I started thinking about my uncle and telling my wife about him. My Uncle Bill from Lubbock Tx used to be a gunsmith. He did a lot of work for the Lubbock Police and also for many pawn shops in Lubbock.. Shortly after Hinckley shot Reagan the FBI showed up at my uncle's house and shop. My uncle had actually worked on the gun that Hinckley used. (The FBI was tracing the records of where the gun had been, I guess to check if there were any connections.) But anyway, just thought I would share a bit with you., because it was funny you sent this to me today after we just talked about him.....

Well, I hope you all have a great Christmas and New Years there in Montana! *Por favor mandar todos mis saludos a toda su familia desde Santa Cruz Bolivia.*

20081214-01 10:46 SteveB "Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"

Dear SteveM,

But, of course, to you he's just black. The "one drop" rule, right? The same rule that makes Dick Chaney and five former Presidents black (and perhaps even you and me, Blondie).

LOL!

Life and truth are so much more complex than your simplistic ideology makes them out to be.

I would think you right-wing extremists would love black people. They seem to embrace the love, proliferation, and use of guns just as much as you do. LOL again!

"Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors" by AP

Dec. 14, 2008, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28216005/ns/us_news-life/t/obamas-true-colors-black-white-or-neither/)

(Many people insist that 'the first black president' is actually not black.)

(WASHINGTON) A perplexing new chapter is unfolding in Barack Obama's racial saga: Many people insist that "the first black president" is actually not black.

Debate over whether to call this son of a white Kansan and a black Kenyan biracial, African-American, mixed-race, half-and-half, multiracial—or, in Obama's own words, a "mutt"—has reached a crescendo since Obama's election shattered assumptions about race.

Obama has said, "I identify as African-American—that's how I'm treated and that's how I'm viewed. I'm proud of it." In other words, the world gave Obama no choice but to be black, and he was happy to oblige.

But the world has changed since the young Obama found his place in it.

Intermarriage and the decline of racism are dissolving ancient definitions. The candidate Obama, in achieving what many thought impossible, was treated differently from previous black generations. And many white and mixed-race people now view President-elect Obama as something other than black.

So what now for racial categories born of a time when those from far-off lands were property rather than people, or enemy instead of family?

"They're falling apart," said Marty Favor, a Dartmouth professor of African and African-American studies and author of the book *Authentic Blackness*.

"In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois said the question of the 20th century is the question of the color line, which is a simplistic black-white thing," said Favor, who is biracial. "This is the moment in the 21st century when we're stepping across that."

'Obama is whatever people project onto him'

Rebecca Walker, a 38-year-old writer with light brown skin who is of Russian, African, Irish, Scottish and Native American descent, said she used to identify herself as "human," which upset people of all backgrounds. So she went back to multiracial or biracial, "but only because there has yet to be a way of breaking through the need to racially identify and be identified by the culture at large."

"Of course Obama is black. And he's not black, too," Walker said. "He's white, and he's not white, too. Obama is whatever people project onto him ... he's a lot of things, and neither of them necessarily exclude the other."

But U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield, a black man who by all appearances is white, feels differently.

Butterfield, 61, grew up in a prominent black family in Wilson, N.C. Both of his parents had white forebears, "and those genes came together to produce me." He grew up on the black side of town, led civil rights marches as a young man, and to this day goes out of his way to inform people that he is certainly not white.

Butterfield has made his choice; he says let Obama do the same.

"Obama has chosen the heritage he feels comfortable with," he said. "His physical appearance is black. I don't know how he could have chosen to be any other race. Let's just say he decided to be white—people would have laughed at him."

"You are a product of your experience. I'm a U.S. congressman, and I feel some degree of discomfort when I'm in an all-white group. We don't have the same view of the world, our experiences have been different."

'One-drop' rule

The entire issue balances precariously on the "one-drop" rule, which sprang from the slave-owner habit of dropping by the slave quarters and producing brown babies. One drop of black blood meant that person, and his or her descendants, could never be a full citizen.

Today, the spectrum of skin tones among African-Americans—even those with two black parents—is evidence of widespread white ancestry. Also, since blacks were often light enough to pass for white, unknown numbers of white Americans today have blacks hidden in their family trees.

One book, *Black People and their Place in World History*, by Dr. Leroy Vaughn, even claims that five past presidents—Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge—had black ancestors, which would make Obama the sixth of his kind.

Mix in a few centuries' worth of Central, South and Native Americans, plus Asians, and untold millions of today's U.S. citizens need a DNA test to decipher their true colors. The melting pot is working.

Yet the world has never been confronted with such powerful evidence as Obama. So as soon as he was elected, the seeds of confusion began putting down roots.

"Let's not forget that he is not only the first African-American president, but the first biracial candidate. He was raised by a single white mother," a Fox News commentator said seven minutes after Obama was declared the winner.

"We do not have our first black president," the author Christopher Hitchens said on the BBC program "Newsnight." "He is not black. He is as black as he is white."

A *Doonesbury* comic strip that ran the day after the election showed several soldiers celebrating.

"He's half-white, you know," says a white soldier.

"You must be so proud," responds another.

Pride is the center of racial identity, and some white people seem insulted by a perception that Obama is rejecting his white mother (even though her family was a centerpiece of his campaign image-making) or baffled by the notion that someone would choose to be black instead of half-white.

"He can't be African-American. With race, white claims 50 percent of him and black 50 percent of him. Half a loaf is better than no loaf at all," Ron Wilson of Plantation, Fla., wrote in a letter to the Sun-Sentinel newspaper.

Attempts to whiten Obama leave a bitter taste for many African-Americans, who feel that at their moment of triumph, the rules are being changed to steal what once was deemed worthless—blackness itself.

"For some people it's honestly confusion," said Favor, the Dartmouth professor. "For others it's a ploy to sort of reclaim the presidency for whiteness, as though Obama's blackness is somehow mitigated by being biracial."

Then there are the questions remaining from Obama's entry into national politics, when some blacks were leery of this Hawaiian-born newcomer who did not share their history. Linda Bob, a black schoolteacher from Eustis, Fla., said that calling Obama black when he was raised in a white family and none of his ancestors experienced slavery could cause some to ignore or forget the history of racial injustice.

"It just seems unfair to totally label him African-American without acknowledging that he was born to a white mother," she said. "It makes you feel like he doesn't have a class, a group."

There is at least one group eagerly waiting for Obama to embrace them. "To me, as to increasing numbers of mixed-race people, Barack Obama is not our first black president. He is our first biracial, bicultural president ... a bridge between races, a living symbol of tolerance, a signal that strict racial categories must go," Marie Arana wrote in the *Washington Post*.

He's a bridge between eras as well. The multiracial category "wasn't there when I was growing up," said John McWhorter, a 43-year-old fellow at the Manhattan Institute's Center for Race and Ethnicity, who is black. "In the '70s and the '80s, if somebody had one white parent and one black parent, the idea was they were black and had better get used to it and develop this black identity. That's now changing."

'Transitional period'

Latinos, whom the census identifies as an ethnic group and not a race, were not counted separately by the government until the 1970s. After the 1990 census, many people complained that the four racial categories—white, black, Asian, and American Indian/Alaska native—did not fit them. The government then allowed people to check more than one box. (It also added a fifth category, for Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.) Six million people, or 2 percent of the population, now

say they belong to more than one race, according to the most recent census figures. Another 19 million people, or 6 percent of the population, identify themselves as "some other race" than the five available choices.

The White House Office of Management and Budget, which oversees the census, specifically decided not to add a "multiracial" category, deeming it not a race in and of itself.

"We are in a transitional period" regarding these labels, McWhorter said. "I think that in only 20 years, the notion that there are white people and there are black people and anyone in between has some explaining to do and an identity to come up with, that will all seem very old-fashioned."

The debate over Obama's identity is just the latest step in a journey he unflinchingly chronicled in his memoir, "Dreams from My Father."

As a teenager, grappling with the social separation of his white classmates, "I had no idea who my own self was," Obama wrote.

No single definition

In college in the 1970s, like millions of other dark-skinned Americans searching for self respect in a discriminatory nation, Obama found refuge in blackness. Classmates who sidestepped the label "black" in favor of "multiracial" chafed at Obama's newfound pride:

"They avoided black people," he wrote. "It wasn't a matter of conscious choice, necessarily, just a matter of gravitational pull, the way integration always worked, a one-way street. The minority assimilated into the dominant culture, not the other way around."

Fast-forward 30 years, to the early stages of Obama's presidential campaign. Minorities are on track to outnumber whites, to redefine the dominant American culture. And the black political establishment, firmly rooted in the civil rights movement, questioned whether the outsider Obama was "black enough."

Then came the primary and general elections, when white voters were essential for victory. "Now I'm too black," Obama joked in July before an audience of minority journalists.

"There is this sense of going back and forth depending on the time of day in terms of making assessments about my candidacy."

Today, it seems no single definition does justice to Obama—or to a nation where the revelation that Obama's eighth cousin is Dick Cheney, the white vice president from Wyoming, caused barely a ripple in the campaign.

In his memoir, Obama says he was deeply affected by reading that Malcolm X, the black nationalist-turned-humanist, once wished his white blood could be expunged.

"Traveling down the road to self-respect my own white blood would never recede into mere abstraction," Obama wrote. "I was left to wonder what else I would be severing if I left my mother and my grandparents at some uncharted border."

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20081214-02	10:56	SteveM	Re: "Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"
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Dear SteveB,

Wrong dummy, His Father was Muslim, Arabic, African. They only reason he's not dead or in jail is a white women took him in and raised him. She was probably a charitable Christen too!

He is only exploiting the blacks and your white guilt.

20081214-03	11:28	SteveB	Re: Letter from John McCain to John Hinkley
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Dear BrentR,

That is a funny coincidence!

It is -20 F. (-30 C) here this morning. So much for my banana plants!

I hope you and yours have the best Christmas ever! (Even though we may have more snow!) Hopefully, when Santa comes to Bolivia, he'll leave his sleigh behind and hitch up some oxen to his wagon. He may also want to wear some lighter clothes for Santa Cruz, unless he's a true *cholo*.

20081214-04 12:45 SteveB Re: "Defining 'Mutt' Obama's True Colors"

Dear SteveM,

I have zero white guilt.

20081219-01 12:54 Dennis "Change You Won't Believe"

"Change You Won't Believe" by James Howard Kunstler,

Dec. 15, 2008, (<http://www.kunstler.com/blog/2008/12/change-you-wont-believe.html>)

The peak oil story has not been nullified by the scramble to unload every asset for cash—including whopping gobs of oil contracts—during this desperate season of bank liquidation. The main implication of the peak oil story is that we won't be able to generate the kind of economic growth that defined our way of life for decades because the primary energy resources needed for it will be contracting.

Just as global oil production peaked, our economy evolved into a morbid hypertrophy, and the chief manifestation of it was the suburban sprawl-building fiesta that has now climaxed in the real estate bust. By the early 21st century, when so much American manufacturing had been swapped out to Asia, there was no business left except sprawl-building—a manifold tragedy which wrecked the banks that financed it, and left the ordinary people mortgaged to it with ruinous liabilities.

That economy is now in its death throes. The "normality" it represents to so many Americans is gone and can't be brought back, no matter how wistfully we watch it recede. Even so, it was obviously not good for the country. The terrain of North America has been left scarred by unlovable objects and baleful futureless vistas that, from now on, will shed whatever pecuniary value they once had. It represents the physical counterpart to the financial mess that has been left to the young generations to clean up—and the job will take a very long time.

We have to, so to speak, get to place mentally where we can face the kinds of change that are now necessary and unavoidable. We're not there yet. It's not clear whether the elected new national leadership knows just how severe the required changes will really be. Surely the public would be shocked to grasp what's in store. Probably the worst thing we can do now would be to mount a campaign to stay where we are, lost in raptures of happy motoring and blue-light-special shopping.

The economy we're evolving into will be un-global, necessarily local and regional, and austere. It won't support even our current population. This being the case, the political fallout is also liable to be severe. For one thing, we'll have to put aside our sentimental fantasies about immigration. This is almost impossible to imagine, since that narrative is especially potent among the Democratic Party members who are coming in to run things. A tough immigration policy is exactly the kind of difficult change we have to face. This is no longer the 19th century. The narrative has to change.

The new narrative has to be about a managed contraction—and by "managed" I mean a way that does not produce civil violence, starvation, and public health disasters. One of the telltale signs to look for will be whether the Obama administration bandies around the word "growth." If you hear them use it, it will indicate that they don't understand the kind of change we face.

It is hugely ironic that the U.S. automobile industry is collapsing at this very moment, and the ongoing debate about whether to “rescue” it or not is an obvious kabuki theater exercise because this industry is hopeless. It is headed into bankruptcy with one hundred percent certainty. The only thing in question is whether the news of its death will spoil the Christmas of those who draw a paycheck from it, or those whose hopes for an easy retirement are vested in it. But American political-economy being very Santa Claus oriented for recent generations, the gesture will be made. A single leaky little lifeboat will be lowered and the chiefs of the Big Three will be invited to go for a brief little row, and then they will sink, glug, glug, glug, while the rusty old Titanic of the car industry slides diagonally into the deep behind them, against a sickening greenish-orange sunset backdrop of the morbid economy.

A key concept of the economy to come is that size matters—everything organized at the giant scale will suffer dysfunction and failure. Giant companies, giant governments, giant institutions will all get into trouble. This, unfortunately, doesn’t bode so well for the Obama team and it is salient reason why they must not mount a campaign to keep things the way they are and support enterprises that have to be let go, including many of the government’s own operations. The best thing Mr. Obama can do is act as a wise counselor companion-in-chief to a people who now have to leave a lot behind in order to move forward into a plausible future. He seems well-suited to this task in sensibility and intelligence. The task will surely include a degree of pretense that he is holding some familiar things together and propping up some touchstones of the comfortable life. But the truth is we are all going to the same unfamiliar new territory.

The economy we’re moving into will have to be one of real work, producing real things of value, at a scale consistent with energy resource reality. I’m convinced that farming will come much closer to the center of economic life, as the death of petro-agribusiness makes food production a matter of life and death in America—as opposed to the disaster of metabolic entertainment it is now. Reorganizing the landscape itself for this finer-scaled new type of farming is a task fraught with political peril (land ownership questions being historically one of the main reasons that societies fall into revolution). The public is completely unprepared for this kind of change. We still think that “the path to success” is based on getting a college degree certifying people for a lifetime of sitting in an office cubicle. This is so far from the approaching reality that it will be eventually viewed as a sick joke—like those old 1912 lithographs of mega-cities with Zeppelins plying the air between Everest-size skyscrapers.

The crucial element in the transformation underway will be emotion. The American experience for a few generations has produced an adult population with very childish instincts, increasingly worse each decade. For instance, the desperate power fantasies among the younger tattooed *lumpenproles*—those with next-to-zero real economic power—suggest a certain unappetizing playing-out of resource competition when the supply of Cheez Doodles and Pepsi starts to dwindle. But even the heretofore gainfully employed middle classes are pretty lost in fantasies at least of comfort and convenience. For years now, I have wondered how their sense of grievance and resentment will be expressed when the supermarket shelves run bare and the cardboard signs get taped over the local gas pump and the cable TV gets cut off for non-payment. You wonder, to put it bluntly, how far gone we really are.

Comment from Gary Gibson, Managing Editor, Whiskey & Gunpowder

Okay, Whiskey Shooters, I suspect that there will be some underwear bunching up because Jim mentioned Mr. Obama again without calling for his resignation or his head. I can’t stop the angry comments from pouring in—and in truth they’re kind of entertaining—but let me make clear my position in advance.

A President who restricts his activities to hand-holding and nice speeches would be a boon. What worries me is when heads of state and their congresses and parliaments and other bands of meddlers get it into their heads to “do something” and to “fix things”... which this administration—like every single one before it—will no doubt do. A mitts-off policy with a few there-there’s wouldn’t be bad at all.

That’s right, Barack; just commiserate...and try not to touch anything.

A point Jim keeps trying to drive home is that the scale of things will contract—of their own accord—in an energy scarce world. Big government’s going to become increasingly impotent. We can’t (and shouldn’t) count on them to help reorganize our lives. This is going to be a bottoms-up, local undertaking. Things won’t be re-localizing because of the decrees of a progressive government; they’ll be re-localizing because they must.

Gloom? Doom? Where? The transition’s liable to be traumatic, but the world’s liable to be a better place in many ways after reality has its way with us. We’ll all be plenty busy with re-establishing local farming...and manufacturing right here on our own shores! Paper-pushing will just be a necessary adjunct to a real economy that produces the things we need,

instead of the primary means of wealth generation. The financial tail will cease wagging the economic dog. Textiles! Commodities! Maybe even a commodity currency!

And you can say you saw it coming. You can even position yourself to make the most of it right now.

20081223-01 18:03 SteveB To: Pat Buchanan; Free Trade vs. Jobs

Dear Pat Buchanan:

I've enjoyed watching you throughout the campaigns and election, though I often completely disagreed with you.

Today, though, when you talked about our autoworkers, for example, having to compete with Chinese workers, you were exactly, completely right.

Speaking as a retired automation controls design engineer who has started up factories in the U.S., Canada, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Great Britain, and Germany, what I can't understand is how anyone can argue with this position.

As my old German calculus professor at Purdue University used to say, "It's intuitively obvious." There has been no such thing as a level playing field.

What these idiots don't understand is that a service economy is just about nothing, because only manufacturing, mining, and farming create enough wealth to keep a modern economy going. Do they think we should all live like the Chinese and Mexicans (though I mean them no offense and actually love the people of both nations)? Actually, I think it has done harm to the world to help all these Third World countries become like America. Have you been to any Asian cities lately? There's no local charm left, just "Californication".

What may not be so obvious is how we have come to this idiotic "level playing field" of globalization. Our politicians have been bought and sold and they have sold their own country and its workers down the river. Campaign finance and lobbying reform MUST go forward to a point where this becomes impossible. The problem is with both Republicans and Democrats.

But how do we get the very rascals who take the money to vote to give up the money? I would love to hear your ideas.

Meanwhile, keep up the good work. Thank you.

P.S. Wasn't it embarrassing the way McCain and Palin worked to destroy their own party, the mighty GOP, by lying throughout the entire campaign? What a couple of stupid people.

—SteveB

20081227-01 11:12 SteveB Reply to Some Jesus Email

Dear Rosali,

I have a very hard time believing that God created the entire universe simply to play a gigantic game with the "devil". (I thought gambling was forbidden? Then why would God gamble for our souls when they are His already?) Nor does a close reading of the Bible reveal this to be the case. The "devil" is merely a symbol for the evil in our hearts, just as "demon possession", we now know, does not cause human diseases such as cancer.

It is so very dangerous to take the Bible too literally.

P.S. This is not the "devil" talking. Peace and love...

20081229-01 13:01 SteveB "Happy Birthday, Dear Yeshua, Happy Birthday to You!"

Dear Rosali,

"Yeshua" would have been fine with me. I have to wonder...if they have had so much trouble with the Savior's name...how much else have they gotten wrong simply because of the translation? Like "I am a son of God," not "I am the Son of God."

"Happy Birthday, Dear Yeshua, Happy Birthday to You!" by Brian Palmer, Slate

Dec. 24, 2008, (Article URL: <http://www.slate.com/id/2207398/>)

(Was Jesus a common name at the beginning of the first century?)

On Thursday, Christians will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Was the Christian Messiah the first to have that name, or were there a lot of Jesuses running around back then?

Many people shared the name. Christ's given name, commonly Romanized as Yeshua, was quite common in first-century Galilee. (Jesus comes from the transliteration of Yeshua into Greek and then English.) Archaeologists have unearthed the tombs of 71 Yeshuas from the period of Jesus' death. The name also appears 30 times in the Old Testament in reference to four separate characters—including a descendent of Aaron who helped to distribute offerings of grain (2 Chronicles 31:15) and a man who accompanied former captives of Nebuchadnezzar back to Jerusalem (Ezra 2:2).

The long version of the name, Yehoshua, appears another few hundred times, referring most notably to the legendary conqueror of Jericho (and the second most famous bearer of the name). So why do we call the Hebrew hero of Jericho Joshua and the Christian Messiah Jesus? Because the New Testament was originally written in Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic. Greeks did not use the sound sh, so the evangelists substituted an S sound. Then, to make it a masculine name, they added another S sound at the end. The earliest written version of the name Jesus is Romanized today as Iesous. (Thus the crucifix inscription INRI: "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum," or "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.")

The initial J didn't come until much later. That sound was foreign to Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Not even English distinguished J from I until the mid-17th century. Thus, the 1611 King James Bible refers to Jesus as "Iesus" and his father as "Ioseph." The current spelling likely came from Switzerland, where J sounds more like the English Y. When English Protestants fled to Switzerland during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary I, they drafted the Geneva Bible and used the Swiss spelling. Translators in England adopted the Geneva spelling by 1769.

In contrast, the Old Testament was translated directly from the original Hebrew into English, rather than via Greek. So anyone named Yehoshua or Yeshua in the Old Testament became Joshua in English. Meanwhile, the holy book of the Syrian Orthodox church, known as the Syriac Bible, is written in Aramaic. While its Gospels were translated from the original Greek, the early scribes recognized that Iesous was a corruption of the original Aramaic. Thus, the Syriac text refers to Yeshua.

Bonus Explainer: What was Jesus' last name? It wasn't Christ. Contemporaries would have called him Yeshua Bar Yehosef or Yeshua Nasraya. (That's "Jesus, son of Joseph" or "Jesus of Nazareth.") Galileans distinguished themselves from others with the same first name by adding either "son of" and their father's name, or their birthplace. People who knew Jesus would not have called him Christ, which is the translation of a Greek word meaning "anointed one."

Brian Palmer is a freelance writer living in Columbia, Md.

20090107-01	19:05	SteveB	To Glenn Beck: Doom
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Dear Glenn Beck:

I caught some of your radio program yesterday.

Your shrill, panicky rhetoric on the most hellacious doom scenarios possible is unbelievably overblown and completely lacking in credibility. Everyone knows that if idiot, senile McCain had won, you and Rush and all the other right-wing extremists would be singing a different tune, even though the government would be pursuing the exact same strategies that they are under Bush and Obama.

I find your tone and words to be essentially un-American. You don't even offer any hope or solutions. None of you do. Only doom. Do you really think that helps?

You say you don't want the doom to come, but I sincerely question that. You are going to look pretty silly and stupid if the doom does not come about. I hope, at that time, you will be man enough to admit that you panicked like a chicken and that you were wrong. That America and Americans are stronger and better than you assumed.

I find it so exceedingly strange that none of you extreme right-wingers ever stray from the same "party line" concerning any issue. Where is the creative, independent thinking you say you so admire? Every extreme right-wing pundit always says exactly the same (excuse me) cr*p. I find that so exceedingly strange.

Also, please remember that your extreme views are held by probably only 5-10% of Americans, at most. You all need to be a little more humble and admit to yourselves that you might not know all there is to know. When you talk to Rush or Hannity or Laura or even Lou Dobbs, as you must do daily or hourly to get your stories aligned, you might try to convince them to do the same. Thank you.

20090109-01	12:09	SteveB	Christmas
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Dear Cândida,

I was there when all three of my children were born. Seeing their little heads peek out...seeing them nurse for the first time...seeing their mother hold them...holding them myself, and seeing that calm but sort of confused look in their eyes, like they don't know exactly which planet they have arrived on...were maybe the most wonderful moments of my life.

And you mothers are so much closer to the miracle than we guys are. I think Freud was wrong about that penis envy cr*p...where the real envy lies is the envy men have for women and the miracle of life that they make happen. But I am so happy for you, my friend!

We've been watching a TV series about the Seven Deadly Sins...haha—lust (my personal favorite!), gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride. I'm sure you had to memorize them. We were talking about them and how so much of the sin part involves excess and not following the Middle Way.

But the most interesting thing is that the two most deadly sins are not on the Church's list—fear and guilt! The Church reserved those two for itself, to use against the people to try to make them subservient and obedient to the Church. I'm not sure anything could be more evil than that. Fear is our greatest enemy...an enemy we must all defeat, not nurture as if it were a kind little baby. Guilt in moderation can be OK, but when used to control people, it becomes a source of pain and pure destructive evil.

Then the Church (and other religions, especially Islam) also took two wonderful things—faith and hope—and turned those against the people too. If people did not believe and hope for a heaven after this life, all the religious wars would cease. No matter what happens after we die, and I am guilty of hoping for something myself, especially for others like my son, I will never believe that there can be anything so sweet and wonderful, so beyond price as this life here that we are blessed with.

I wish all of your family the sense of wonder, fulfillment, and love that this life deserves.

20090111-01	01:43	Charlie	"Inaugurate This: Waiting for Barack Obama"
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Another good OpEd News piece. I love the term "politricks", personally.

"Inaugurate This: Waiting for Barack Obama" by Danny Schechter, OpEd News

Jan. 9, 2009, <http://www.opednews.com/articles/INAUGURATE-THIS-WAITING-F-by-Danny-Schechter-090109-839.html>

The inauguration of a new President is drawing close and the excitement in our media is palpable. All the outlets are planning big coverage and newspapers are doing special sections, with full color pictures and endless memorabilia. In the

midst of this midwinter depression/recession—whatever it is—many Americans want to celebrate the end of the Bush era and the coming of a President they believe they can believe in.

You would think that Barack Obama might tone down the festivities, given the hard times, but the millions on their way to Washington next week don't want to hear that. They want to mark a historical moment by investing hopes and hearts in Barack Obama's triumph, by hoping that change is coming and that he will and can deliver on all his promises, heal a troubled world, crush the fiscal crisis, and turn a very nasty political page for the better.

I share those hopes but also call on my fellow Obamacrats to recognize that it will take the power of people's power—the grass roots organizing, internet magicians, and You Tube guerillas who put Barack in office—to help him achieve the change he told us he wants to bring to America.

We have to stop looking at him and start looking to ourselves, the people who knocked on doors, raised money, reached out independently of the campaign, signed petitions, held up signs, registered voters around the clock, made media and organized the most amazing campaign in American history to see who has the leverage to defeat the lobbyists, special interests and Republican operatives who will do everything they can to derail any and all progressive change. That is if any makes its way out of the centrist bureaucrats and pols Barack has felt it necessary to appoint to navigate the shark infested waters in Washington politricks.

In the aftermath of the campaign, every network ran retrospectives, recapping their highlights of the campaign, the chronology, the endless primaries the ads, the oratory, the polls, the debates, Reverend Wright, Sarah Palin, Bill Ayers, Joe the Plumber, and all the familiar hot button issues and controversies that were recycled daily by pundits who were largely blatantly partisan and mostly wrong.

While politicians ran for office, the media ran for ratings and bragging rights about exclusives and "breaking" news. They all celebrated themselves as much as the victor.

What was most missed was the actual campaign and what made the difference. In partnership with Anant Singh's Videovision, I am directing a film that tells this story, that goes deeper than the hype. It shows how a former community organizer organized a community of believers that outworked their adversaries and did what was originally considered impossible by the cogniscenti: put a candidate of color in the highest office in the land.

How was this done? Who done it? We were unable to secure the campaign's support to tell this story—we were told they are in "lockdown,"— but we went ahead anyway with the enthusiastic cooperation of people who know Obama well and others who anonymously marched in his army as cogs in what became a well oiled machine. They think the real story must be told.

In many cases, these people were early converts, risking derision in their own communities and friends convinced by the media that the better-known front runners were unbeatable. These were people who followed their passion, invested time and money and in some cases gave up their normal lives to organize rallies, man (and wo-man) offices, make phone calls, send emails and work under the radar of a media that only focuses on events, celebrity candidates and political elites, rarely the people down below.

They held the faith when no one knew who Obama was or what he stood for. They stood by him when he was viciously attacked, denounced, lied about and maligned. They came from all races, all parts of the country, and many sacrificed jobs and income.

They were small d democrats in the sense that they showed us that grass roots democracy still has "legs." They were people who moved into high gear for many reasons—many because of a desire to end the war, or because he knew how to communicate with young people, or out of racial pride, or just plain disgust with the Busheviks and McNasties.

Some were political. Many were not. There was a wellspring of creativity. 1500 videos were made by the campaign along and probably twice as many by independent filmmakers, animators, and musicians. There was a rock musical, the Obama girl phenomenon (Yes, eat your hearts out (smile) I met her too,), Amigos De Obama, the Great Schlep, comedy, paintings, stickers, and endless emails. The social networking power of the internet was tapped with blogs, Flickr, Facebook, My Space. Twitter and texting. By the time it was through, Obama built a data base of ten million names, No one has ever done that. Half of his large war chest was raised on the internet in small donations.

More importantly, many of the campaign groups are still meeting sill organizing, still committed to the values Obama invoked. The world is waiting for Obama. I know many progressives, myself among them are disappointed by many Cabinet picks and cagey statement. I fear that many of the activists who have already opened up on Obama—who want him to be Hugo Chavez , not the centrist he is— risk alienating his supporters who have to be encouraged to stay engaged and press for the changes they worked for. Obama will need that kind of pressure, even if he won't always welcome it publicly. There will be a learning curve for all of us.

The democracy scholar and DEMOS fellow Ben Barber told us: "The world awaits Obama, there's no question about it. Everywhere I go, everyone I talk to, the expectations are just sky-high. And the sense that this is going to be a new kind of American President, a new face, a multicultural, a black face, a diplomatic face, an internationalist face of America is ever, so much so that you will certainly be disappointed."

I then asked, "Is there something about Washington, about politics, about special interests that is like a swamp, no matter what your intentions are, no matter what changes you wanna make, you get sucked into this vortex of a certain way of dealing, deference , playing to the power people, governed by the rules and protocols. I fear that no matter where, where you coming from you end up trapped in this machine."

He replied:

Cynics will tell you that Washington is a swamp and no matter where you come from, when you get there you get muddy, you're gonna get mired, you're gonna, get quick sand. Your gonna end up is dirty as everyone else...

(However) if you are a historian, you also look and say: wait a minute. Some people have come to Washington and have done better than others. Even the swamp can be changed, you can drain the swamp, you can spray the swamp ... you can dehydrate, there is a lot of things you can do about a swamp other than get sucked up by it, and there have been presidents who've been more successful and less successful doing it.

Will this be a period like the aftermaths of the civil war, like the New Deal, where America remakes itself, where it drains the swamp and fixes it and the answer to this is: it could happen, it could happen, we will see.

I will be sharing more of our insightful interviews as I cover the inauguration and its aftermath.

(News Dissector Danny Schechter is a filmmaker, editor of [Mediachannel.org](http://mediachannel.org) and the author of *PLUNDER: Investigating Our Economic Calamity* (Cosimo Books at Amazon). Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org.

20090116-01	08:07	SteveG	Fw: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson
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[Source of original email unknown. Debunked by Snopes.com, see below. —SteveB]

Judy Wallman, a professional genealogy researcher in southern California , was doing some personal work on her own family tree. She discovered that Harry Reid's great-great uncle, Remus Reid, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Montana in 1889. Both Judy and Harry Reid share this common ancestor: Harry Reid The only known photograph of Remus shows him standing on the gallows in Montana territory.

On the back of the picture Judy obtained during her research is this inscription: 'Remus Reid, horse thief, sent to Montana Territorial Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Montana Flyer six times. Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889.' So Judy recently e-mailed Congressman Harry Reid for information about their great great uncle.

Believe it or not, Harry Reid's staff sent back the following biographical sketch for her genealogy research: 'Remus Reid was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory . His business empire grew to include acquisition of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Montana railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to government service, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honor when the platform upon which he was standing collapsed.'

NOW THAT is how it's done folks! That's real SPIN.

20090116-02 08:26 SteveB Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveG,

People don't really believe all these Republican lies do they? I guess many people do—the Right are expert liars! The real story is here:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/humor/horsethief.asp>

20090116-03 08:46 SteveG Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveB,

Ain't SPIN a grand thing????

So you people in Montana are really sitting in 80 degree weather than subzero an Florida is a—6, think that spin will work? Amazing!!!!!!

20090116-04 09:03 SteveB Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveG,

Spin? The whole story is an outright lie (see Snopes.com). Not that I am a big fan of Harry Reid.

Did you see Bush's speech last night? How embarrassing! He is unable to admit to a single mistake or misjudgment. No wonder he was such a failure—his ego keeps him out of touch with reality. It's probably a defense mechanism for being so stupid, I guess.

It's too bad we can't devise some sort of job application psychological test that could keep defective people like him from running for office in the future, and also to keep people like many of his buddies and appointments out of government service.

20090116-05 09:17 SteveG Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveB,

I didn't watch it, but heard clips here and there. Our son teaches logic, ethics, and intro to philosophy. He had his logic students watch the debates and gave extra credit for documented instances of faulty logic. All I could think of in hearing the clip was the faulty logic that was coming out of the guy's mouth.

Exceptionally embarrassing!!!!!! The whole 8 years have been a nightmare!

Did you hear the confirmation hearings on the attorney general candidate? Sounds good to me. Do you think anyone will file war crime charges?

20090116-06 09:46 SteveB Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveG,

Ya, I think Holder made a very good impression. He sure has a big job ahead of him in the nearly destroyed Justice Dept.

War crimes trials: boy, I'm really divided here. I keep thinking I'd love to see Cheney brought before a firing squad or sent to Guantanamo. I'm pretty convinced the Moslem radicals see us as weak anyway, they would really see us as weak if we did that. So what if the French would be pleased! But maybe the world would see us as just and fair once again. Bush, no. If our President was convicted of war crimes, no President would ever be fully trusted with war again.

I don't understand why these people and our radical Right, like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, don't see the danger we place our troops in by torturing anyone. (Except if we just make them listen to Brittany Spears or Megadeth or Snoop Dog 24 hours a day.)

This war trials issue is so tough for me that I'll just trust Obama to make the right decision.

20090116-07 10:10 SteveG Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

Dear SteveB,

It is a tough issue, but someone has to be held accountable. We impeached Clinton for getting a bl*w job and improper use of a cigar, and yet we have not done anything with Rumsfeld, Scooter, Cheney, Bush, Gonzalez, etc. We outsourced a lot of the war crimes portions to the Blackhawk group, and Cheney's old company. Accountability besides the little fiasco with Scooter has to come around some time.

Part of the problem is that both houses of congress and both parties went along with the Bush administration decisions. Only Dennis Kucinich of Ohio made a big effort to do something and people laughed at him. We have to do completely away with lobbying, have all elections the same everywhere, do away with pork, have tight control over junkets, and elect people to do what is right for the country.

20090116-08 10:25 SteveB Re: Harry Reid: Montana History Lesson

from SteveG:

We have to do completely away with lobbying, have all elections the same everywhere, do away with pork, have tight control over junkets, and elect people to do what is right for the country.

Dear SteveG,

I agree 1000%! It is so obvious how corrupt our system has become. To really fit it, though, might take the revolution we talked about in the '60's. It is so hard for the corrupt to remedy their own corruption. So far, they haven't been able to do anything except smoke and mirrors.

20090117-01 10:53 SteveB To Glenn Beck: Fired from CNN

Dear Glenn Beck:

I was so very happy at NOT finding your insane rantings any more on CNN! What an improvement in the TV/cable landscape!

Then I learned you were moving to FOX Faux News, where maybe you belong, if your crazy paranoia belongs anywhere.

You really need to chill-out, Mr. Nazi!

Jeez, your shrill whining gets so old so fast.

20090117-02 14:31 SteveB The Truth, with Love

Dear Rosali,

The Pope and his interpretation of the Bible were said to be infallible. We now know this was wrong. Or the Crusades, the Inquisition, the molestations, and all the other evils of the Church might not have happened.

If even the Pope is not infallible, how can any other man or woman know the mind of God in any perfect, infallible way? Why is one a perfect interpretation of the Bible and all others wrong? How can anyone know which is the perfect interpretation? Hence, we have an almost infinite number of churches—The First Baptist Church, The Ninth Baptist Church, etc. The faith, belief, and hope of each seems equally strong and firm, yet each stands on a different foundation.

A riddle with no solution...

Se dijo que el Papa y su interpretación de la Biblia era infalible. Ahora sabemos que este se equivocó. O las Cruzadas, la Inquisición, los violations, y todos los otros males de la Iglesia no habrían pasado.

¿Si hasta el Papa es bastante falible, cómo puede algún otro hombre o la mujer saben la mente de Dios de algún modo perfecto, infalible? ¿Por qué uno es una interpretación perfecta de la Biblia y todos los otros incorrectos? ¿Cómo puede alguien saber cual es la interpretación perfecta?

Un acertijo sin solución...

20090118-01 09:13 SteveB "Republicans, Democrats Differ on Creationism"

"Republicans, Democrats Differ on Creationism" by Frank Newport, Gallup

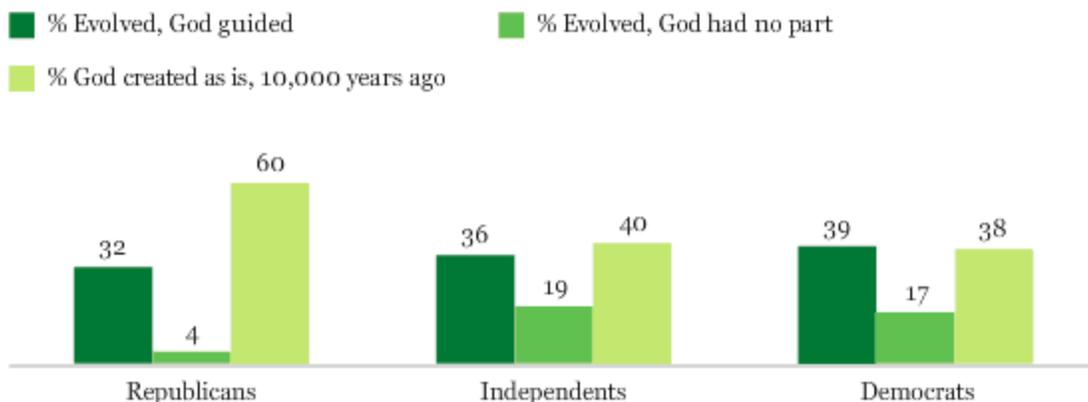
June 20, 2008, (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/108226/Republicans-Democrats-Differ-Creationism.aspx>)

Republicans much more likely than Democrats to believe humans created as-is 10,000 years ago

(PRINCETON, NJ) There is a significant political divide in beliefs about the origin of human beings, with 60% of Republicans saying humans were created in their present form by God 10,000 years ago, a belief shared by only 40% of independents and 38% of Democrats.

Which comes closest to your views: 1) Humans developed over millions of years, God guided, 2) Humans developed over millions of years, God had no part, 3) God created humans as is within the last 10,000 years

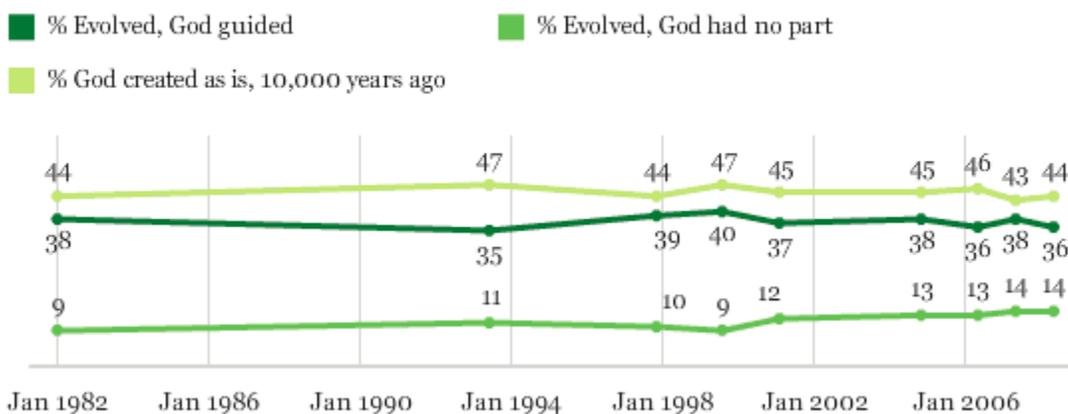
By party ID



GALLUP POLL

Gallup has been asking this three-part question about the origin of humans since 1982. Perhaps surprisingly to some, the results for the broad sample of adult Americans show very little change over the years.

Which comes closest to your views: 1) Humans developed over millions of years, God guided, 2) Humans developed over millions of years, God had no part, 3) God created humans as is within the last 10,000 years



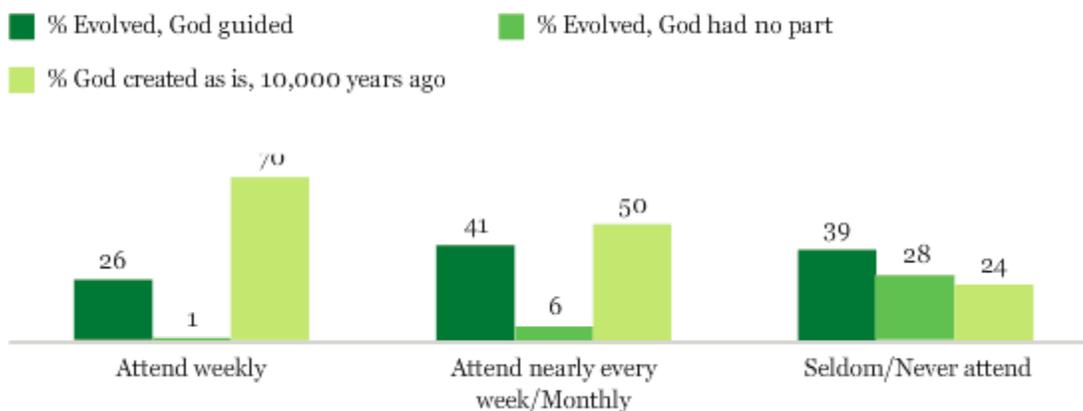
GALLUP POLL

Between 43% and 47% of Americans have agreed during this 26-year time period with the creationist view that God created human beings pretty much in their present form at one time within the last 10,000 years or so. Between 35% and 40% have agreed with the alternative explanation that humans evolved, but with God guiding the process, while 9% to 14% have chosen a pure secularist evolution perspective that humans evolved with no guidance by God.

The significantly higher percentage of Republicans who select the creationist view reflects in part the strong relationship between religion and views on the origin of humans. Republicans are significantly more likely to attend church weekly than are others, and Americans who attend church weekly are highly likely to select the creationist alternative for the origin of humans.

Which comes closest to your views: 1) Humans developed over millions of years, God guided, 2) Humans developed over millions of years, God had no part, 3) God created humans as is within last 10,000 years

By church attendance



GALLUP POLL

Implications

Although it is not a front-burner issue (particularly in light of the economy and the price of gasoline) the issue of teaching evolution in schools came up on the campaign trail last year, and could resurface in one way or the other between now and the November election.

Presumptive Republican nominee John McCain is facing the challenge of gaining the confidence and enthusiasm of conservative Republicans. Turnout among this group could be an important factor in determining the final vote outcome in a number of key swing states. As seen here, Republicans are in general sympathetic to the creationist explanation of the origin of humans, and if the issue of what is taught in schools relating to evolution and creationism surfaces as a campaign issue, McCain's response could turn out to be quite important.

Survey Methods

Results are based on telephone interviews with 1,017 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted May 8-11, 2008. For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points.

20090119-01 12:56 G. Beck Re: Fired from CNN

[I love this! What a smart-a*s! —SteveB]

Dear SteveB:

You do have an off switch and a channel change button you can use.

20090120-01 10:41 SteveB Re: Fired from CNN

Dear Glenn Beck:

Gee, how clever! That, however, is hardly the point. The point is the senseless damage your gloom and doom does to the nation.

20090120-02 14:10 SteveB "Text of Obama's Speech for His Inauguration as 44th President"

"Text of Obama's Speech for His Inauguration as 44th President" by AP

Jan. 20, 2009, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html?pagewanted=all>)

(WASHINGTON) My fellow citizens,

I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet, every so often the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because We the People have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers, and true to our founding documents.

So it has been. So it must be with this generation of Americans.

That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our nation is at war, against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age. Homes have been lost; jobs shed; businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly; our schools fail too many; and each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land—a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, and that the next generation must lower its sights.

Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America— they will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord.

On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn out dogmas, that for far too long have strangled our politics. We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of short-cuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the faint-hearted—for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things—some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life.

For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West; endured the lash of the whip and plowed the hard earth.

For us, they fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sahn.

Time and again these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked till their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions; greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive, our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions—that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act—not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories.

And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions—who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done; what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage.

What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them—that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply. The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works—whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account—to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day—because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched, but this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control—and that a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our Gross Domestic Product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart—not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. And so to all other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks, but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort—even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people, and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat, and roll back the specter of a warming planet. We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus—and non-believers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth; and because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation, and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass; that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself; and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West—know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history; but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders; nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect. For the world has changed, and we must change with it. As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet, at this moment—a moment that will define a generation—it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends—honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism—these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility—a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation, and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship.

This is the source of our confidence—the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny.

This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed—why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day with remembrance, of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our revolution was most in doubt, the father of our nation ordered these words be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world...that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive ... that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

America. In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

20090130-01	13:42	Dennis	"The Good War" (on Terror)
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"The Good War" by Bill Bonner, The Daily Reckoning

Jan. 30, 2009, (<http://dailyreckoning.com/the-good-war/>)

The Washington Post reports that the War on Terror is over. No armistice has been announced. No treaty has been signed. The whole thing is just being dropped quietly, like a burnt-out cigarette. Too bad. It was our favorite war.

In the few words that follow, we explain why. First, the background: "The history of the world is but the biography of great men," was Thomas Carlyle's contribution to the genre. But here at The Daily Reckoning we are more of the 'cometh the hour, cometh the man' school of history. When something needs doing...there is always some clown dim enough to do it. Osama bin Laden was that man.

"Bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy", was what he was up to, he said in a videotape. He even did the math. "Every dollar spent by al-Qaida in attacking the U.S. has cost Washington \$1m (£545,000) in economic fallout and military spending," said the report. "We, alongside the mujahideen, bled Russia for 10 years, [in Afghanistan] until it went bankrupt ... So we are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy."

How many generations will still tell of bin Laden's triumph? He brought down not just one empire, but two. His band of terrorists leached the Soviets so thoroughly, they fainted. It was no coincidence that the Soviets lost Afghanistan in the same year their empire disintegrated. Then, he delivered a challenge to the America's '*amour propre*.'

The attack on the World Trade Center incited a death wish. The feds flashed a Red Alert; Americans covered in their houses and sealed their windows and doors against biological attack. The 9/11 attackers could have been pursued by the usual gendarmes—at negligible cost. Instead, in the general panic, the Bush administration decided to go all out. Thus it was that the greatest stimulus package since WWII began—in haste and in delusion.

The federal budget went from its biggest surpluses to its biggest deficits. Interest rates were cut too—to an emergency rate of 1%. Within 24 months, the bubble in the Nasdaq was replaced by much bigger bubbles—in housing, finance, derivative debt, art, private equity, executive compensation, student loans and other forms of private debt. In effect, bin Laden suckered the fattest man on earth into having another éclair. The thunder coming from the financial markets for the past 18 months is the noise of his midriff exploding.

But we are not writing to complain about Osama bin Laden or the Bush Administration's reaction. When it comes to war and adultery, make-believe may be better than the real thing. Certainly, it is safer. In the War on Terror, the enemy had no tanks...no aircraft... no ships...no armies...no celebrated strategists...no famous generals...no sophisticated

weapons...no military culture...no leather trench coats...no burnished helmets...no battle cries.... The problem was, it was hard to find the enemy at all. The Department of Homeland Security conducted 3 billion airport inspections looking for them. We remember getting patted down so thoroughly we felt we should leave a tip. But how many enemy combatants do you think they nabbed? Not a one.

There are two possibilities. The first is that the security procedures were so fearsome that terrorists dared not try anything funny. The second is that there weren't really many terrorists at large—at least, not in the United States of America.

But compare it to WWI or WWII...or even a penny ante affair like the Spanish American war. The War on Terror mobilized the whole nation in a Great National Cause...at much expense, much damage to the Constitution, and much inconvenience, but without actually causing much real suffering. Sure, a few hapless Muslims, caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, were put on the rack. And yes, the cops in London gunned down a Brazilian electrician. Back in the United States, young couples did not embrace as they had in WWII—that is, as if there would be no tomorrow. Instead, they spent money as if there would be no tomorrow! No doubt, the desperate spending contributed to the bankruptcy of the whole system of bubble finance. But compared to the pain of a shooting war; the War on Terror was a delight. As far as we know, the Department of Homeland Security suffered not a single casualty. Not even any self-inflicted wounds. No executions for treason. And hardly any reported cases, neither of fleeing in the face of the enemy...nor collaborating...nor sabotage.

What a shame to let such a marvelous war to end without even a victory parade. Some of the agents should at least get medals for courage under fire...or exceptional valor.

Perhaps some special award Such as the special agents who arrested Tamera Jo Freeman. A 'Black Heart' medal might be appropriate. The woman was on a flight to Denver when her children got into a squabble. She spanked them both...and then Homeland Security agents put the cuffs on her. Charged with committing an "act of terrorism" she spent three months in jail and lost custody of her children. And there ought to be some medal for the Pentagon flatfoot who put the long arm of American law all the way across the Atlantic and onto the shoulder of Gary McKinnon. Mr. McKinnon, as the mayor of London informed us on Tuesday, believes in UFOs. And to prove that the U.S. army is hiding information on extraterrestrials, he hacked into the Pentagon's computer...leaving his email address and a message: "Your security is cr*p."

Rather than thank him for this useful observation, the Defense Department no doubt put out a billion dollar consulting contract for someone to tell them their security is cr*p...and put out a warrant for Mr. McKinnon's arrest on a terrorism charge. That kind of service above and beyond the call of duty should be recognized.

So form up the battalions of veterans! Assemble the legions of luggage inspectors and metal detector operators...and all the thousands of investigators, worn down by five years of following leads to nowhere! Dress them up in bright, clean uniforms...and give them their moment of glory. Pin medals on their chests. Then have a jolly march down Fifth Avenue. Line the streets. Give them a hearty hoorah as they march by. Throw out the ticker tape. Young girls ...fling yourselves at them...and get a kiss! And then, send them home.

20090211-01 14:45 SteveB "Geithner's First Test Is a Disaster"
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"Geithner's First Test Is a Disaster" by Jon Markman, MSN Money

Feb. 11, 2009, (<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/SuperModels/geithners-first-test-is-a-disaster.aspx>)

(In his initial public pronouncement on the government's financial bailout plans, the best the new Treasury secretary can offer is an uninspiring rehash.)

You know that awful feeling when you're the new guy and you've been working on a project for three months, and you've made no progress, and then the boss gives you a deadline? First you ask for one more day, but when the time finally comes that you've got to deliver, you've still got nothin', so you talk fast, use a lot of jargon, promise more details soon and hope no one notices you've got squat.

It's happened to all of us, but few have failed their first assignment on such an epic scale as Tim Geithner, the new Treasury secretary.

On Tuesday afternoon, he delivered the most remarkable "dog ate my homework" excuse in the history of the U.S. financial markets, making it more plain than ever that the government simply has no idea how to end the financial crisis or how to reassure the world that everything will be all right anyway.

The big idea was a vaguely described public-private partnership to acquire soured loans from banks that real-money investors have already said they would buy only if offered full guarantees against loss—and even then only with a gun at their heads.

"His speech was totally uninspiring. There was nothing new, no change," said Stan Shipley, a senior analyst at ISI Group in New York. Said David Kotok of Cumberland Advisors: "The proposal was nothing more than a promise to deliver a proposal. People are getting tired of this."

The lack of a detailed plan is important not just for investors but also for the average worker, mom and student because it means there really is no easy way out of the global economic crisis. It means we have assigned the job of fixing the banking system to the smartest guy the government could find and surrounded him with every possible resource, and given him plenty of time to think, and still he came up with bupkis.

That is scary to people, as well it should be. No one is going to cry crocodile tears for 30-year-old investment bankers who have lost their million-dollar jobs, but the impact on all Americans will be harsh and long-lasting.

Once the government truly socializes the banking system's losses by taking on the ruined loans, there will be little credit left for all the things that were so much fun in the past two decades. It will be hard to persuade banks to lend their precious money to dads for unproductive assets like leisure boats or even to real-estate investors for new apartment buildings, or to farmers for new tractors.

Salaries and living standards will come down, as instead of borrowing and spending we will have to develop a culture of saving and waiting.

Eventually, we will innovate and grow our way out of this hole, but it will take patience and time. Politicians don't want to tell us this, so they have planned a final \$800 billion plus party paid for with taxpayer appropriation and borrowing.

But eventually, when that money is spent, there will be no other choice but to admit our mistakes and buckle down for a world with less credit and lower asset values. Call it a depression, a prolonged recession or a flat spot in the road, but it will likely lead to a string of one-term presidencies and the relegation of the name Tim Geithner to trivia contests.

That's part of the reason investors, who had shown remarkable restraint and hope in recent days as they awaited Geithner's plan, responded in the only way they knew how, which was with a giant raspberry: Shares of big companies were flung to their biggest losses in three months as a shiver of despair ripped through trading floors.

There was a slight lag of disbelief that the Treasury secretary had offered nothing but a rehash, a repackaging and renaming of old ideas, before markets tumbled with a great collective sigh in the afternoon, wiping out 10% of the total market value of major banks in four hours.

Though it may have seemed to casual observers that Geithner had offered a set of decisive options with a \$1 trillion price tag, people in the investment industry realized all his ideas have already been tried and failed or have little support outside Washington intellectual circles.

"Geithner showed that not only does the emperor have no clothes, but he has nothing else either," said Satyajit Das, a global banking expert working in Australia. "He showed that the government has exhausted its ability to use monetary policy and has no new ideas to use alternative strategies, so-called quantitative easing, to relieve credit stresses either."

The problem, of course, is that there really is no neat, easy way to clean up the mess left behind by a multi-decade orgy of credit. Investors have suspected that, but now it's finally sinking in as true. Starting in the mid-1990s, mathematicians came up with incredible new ways to create money from thin air. Banks turned the theories into loans, dupes at ratings agencies blessed them as risk-free, and salesmen chopped them up and sold them to gullible investors.

These cheap, easy-to-get loans allowed people around the United States to buy much more home than they could really afford, as well as second homes, furniture, snowmobiles and the like, allowed businesses to expand much more than they

could really afford and allowed governments to extend a lot more benefits to citizens than they could really afford. In essence, the new loan theory financed a false prosperity that went on for so long that people came to think of it as normal.

The underlying engine for all this credit growth was escalating home prices, and when that stopped the tower of credit came crashing down, leaving homeowners without the ability to pay their loans and banks holding the bag. The roughly \$5 trillion in losses that financial institutions have on their books now are directly a result of this incredible error of judgment made when government regulators failed to rein in investment banks who competed with each other to make those loans and reward themselves richly in the process.

Realistic experts—at least the ones without political agendas—all agree that the only way to seriously deal with this colossal blunder is for the government to force banks to admit they screwed up and write the value of these loans down to zero. That would wipe out the assets of most major banks, making their equity worth nothing and their bonds worth little. They would be forced into bankruptcy, a process that would allow them to be recapitalized over time and then, later, re-privatized.

Nationalization would not be the end of the world, but it is a concept that is so anathema to Americans that it seemingly cannot be said in polite company. So instead we have this long, dragged-out Kabuki theater in which the banks have essentially been nationalized in everything but name, and yet no one will admit it to the American people. And the cost of this denial is another trillion-dollar program that will do nothing, most experts agree, except buy time until nationalization must be done later.

Government officials and economists hold up the example of the "lost decade" in Japan—a post-credit bubble era in which banks were allowed to cling to life but never regained enough strength to lend and help grow the economy—as an example of what they wish to avoid. The mantra in Washington is that policymakers won't make that mistake again. Yet New York private fund manager Craig Drill, who has studied the lost decade for years, says the situation we face today is really no different.

"Three years from now, people will decide that Japanese policymakers weren't so stupid after all," he said. "We're going to discover that there really was no solution, no way to snap your fingers and make it all better. The only solution is time."

20090214-01	12:25	SteveM	Fw: Jimmy Carter: The Worst President in American History
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Profile in incompetence:

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The Worst President in American History

Jimmy Carter became our 39th president at the young age of 52. He was a one-term governor from Plains, GA, where he managed the family peanut farm and taught Sunday school. He was also a graduate of the Naval Academy and served seven years in the Navy, leaving as a lieutenant.

He came to power in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the resignation of President Nixon. The public wanted change and someone new, and Carter was an ambitious, hands-on politician who promised better days. As good as his intentions were, however, the things he tried were not successful. In fact, he created far more serious problems than he ever solved.

The centerpiece of Carter's foreign policy was human rights, and he did achieve one noble success—a peace treaty between Egypt 's Anwar Sadat and Israel 's Menachem Begin. Unfortunately, that later led to Sadat's assassination at the hands of Muslim radicals. [So? —SteveB]

Many people felt Carter was a good man who worked hard and meant well. But he was naive and incompetent in handling the enormous burdens and complex challenges of being president.

He wrongly believed Americans had an 'inordinate fear of communism,' so he lifted travel bans to Cuba , North Vietnam and Cambodia and pardoned draft evaders. He also stopped B-1 bomber production and gave away our strategically located Panama Canal.

His most damaging miscalculation was the withdrawal of U.S. support for the Shah of Iran , a strong and longtime military ally. Carter objected to the Shah's alleged mistreatment of imprisoned Soviet spies who were working to overthrow Iran's government. He thought the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini, being a religious man, would make a fairer leader.

Having lost U.S. support, the Shah was overthrown, the Ayatollah returned, Iran was declared an Islamic nation and Palestinian hit men were hired to eliminate opposition. The Ayatollah then introduced the idea of suicide bombers to the Palestine Liberation Organization, paying \$35,000 to PLO families whose young people were brainwashed to kill as many Israelis as possible by blowing themselves up in crowded shopping areas. Next, the Ayatollah used Iran 's oil wealth to create, train and finance a new terrorist organization, Hezbollah, which later would attack Israel in 2006.

In Nov., 1979, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other Iranians stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans hostage for 444 days. Not until six months into the ordeal did Carter attempt a rescue. But the mission, using just six Navy helicopters, was poorly executed. Three of the copters were disabled or lost in sandstorms. (Pilots weren't allowed to meet with weather forecasters because someone in authority worried about security.) Five airmen and three Marines lost their lives.

So, due to over confidence, inexperience and poor judgment, Carter undermined and lost a strong ally, Iran , that today aggressively threatens the U.S, Israel and the rest of the world with nuclear weapons.

But that's not all. After Carter met for the first time with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, the U.S.S.R. promptly invaded Afghanistan . Carter, ever the naive appeaser, was shocked. 'I can't believe the Russians lied to me,' he said.

The invasion attracted a 23-year-old Saudi named Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan to recruit Muslim fighters and raise money for an anti-Soviet jihad. Part of that group eventually became al-Qaida, a terrorist organization that would declare war on America several times between 1996 and 1998 before attacking us on 9/11, killing more Americans than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

On Carter's watch, the Soviet Union went on an unrestrained rampage in which it took over not only Afghanistan , but also Ethiopia , South Yemen, Angola , Cambodia , Mozambique , Grenada and Nicaragua.

In spite of this, Carter's last defense budget proposed spending 45% below pre- Vietnam levels for fighter aircraft, 75% for ships, 83% for attack submarines and 90% for helicopters.

Years later, as a civilian, Carter negotiated a peace agreement with North Korea to keep that communist country from developing nuclear weapons He also convinced President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to go along with it. But the signed piece of paper proved worthless. The North Koreans deceived Carter and instead used our money, incentives and technical equipment to build nuclear weapons and pose the threat we face today.

Thus did Carter unwittingly become our Neville Chamberlain, creating with his well intended but inept, unrealistic and gullible actions the very conditions that led to the three most dangerous security threats we face today: Iran , al-Qaida and North Korea.

On the domestic side, Carter gave us inflation of 15%, the highest in 34 years; interest rates of 21%, the highest in 115 years; and a severe energy crisis with lines around the block at gas stations nationwide.

In 1977, Carter, along with a Democrat Congress, created a worthy project with noble intentions—the Community Reinvestment Act. Over strong industry objections, it mandated that all banks meet the credit needs of their entire communities.

In 1995, President Clinton imposed even stronger regulations and performance tests that coerced banks to substantially increase loans to low-income, poverty-area borrowers or face fines or possible restrictions on expansion. These revisions allowed for securitization of CRA loans containing subprime mortgages.

By 1997, good loans were bundled with poor ones and sold as prime packages to institutions here and abroad. That shifted risk from the loan originators, freeing banks to begin pyramiding and make more of these profitable subprime products.

Under two young, well-intended presidents, therefore, big-government plans and mandates played a significant role in the current subprime mortgage mess and its catastrophic consequences for the U.S. and international economies.

Hardest-hit by the mortgage foreclosures have been the citizens that Democrats always claim to help most—inner-city residents who fell victim to low or no down payment schemes, unexpected adjustable rates, deceptive loan applications and commission-hungry salespeople.

Now we're having to bail out at huge cost Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the very agencies that were supposed to stabilize the system. In time, this should improve the situation. But the party of Carter and Clinton that midwived our mortgage mess now wants to be trusted to take over and have the government run our entire system of health care!

And everyone is blaming Bush for our current problems. [Now, why would anybody do anything like that? LOL! We all know that Jimmy Carter is responsible for all the world's problems, including 9/11. And, for some reason, 12 years of republican administrations didn't undo anything Carter did. —SteveB]

20090214-02	15:02	SteveB	Re: Jimmy Carter; "The Violent Language of Right-Wing Pundits Poisons Our Democracy" Etc.
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Dear SteveM,

I'm not at all interested in this partisan, ideological, anti-American (because it hopes for the failure of America, upon which the last, fading hopes of the right-wing now relies) drivel (BS). I thought I made that clear.

For "Violent" (in the title) substitute "Catastrophic" or "Doom-Mongering" or "Doom-Wishing".

"The Violent Language of Right-Wing Pundits Poisons Our Democracy" by Jeffrey Feldman, AlterNet

May 6, 2008, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/84490/>)

(The following is an excerpt from Jeffrey Feldmann's new book *Outright Barbarous: How the Violent Language of the Right Poisons American Democracy* (Ig Publishing, 2008).)

The emergence of a cohort of right-wing pundits who use violent logic, language and arguments in national political debate did not gradually take shape over a long stretch of time, but rose up at a startling speed in the lead-up to the national elections of 2004 and 2006. As the horrific extent of the Iraqi military occupation waxed and George W. Bush's popularity waned, a hitherto sarcastic right-wing punditry seemed all at once to step into a new rhetorical frame. Suddenly, with Bush's re-election in doubt, casualties spiraling out of control, and revelations of U.S. military human rights abuses popping up all over, rightwing pundits shifted their tone from critique to conspiracy. The shift is summed up best by the opening line in Dinesh D'Souza's book *The Enemy at Home*: "The cultural left in this country is responsible for causing 9/11."

As if that is not enough, D'Souza's book also accuses liberals of engaging in civil war with the rest of America and of harboring a violent dream that complements the terrorist goals of Osama Bin Laden, yearns for the destruction of U.S. military forces in Iraq and seeks the downfall of the United States. D'Souza's book filled mainstream bookstores, giving scholarly legitimacy to violent accusations of high treason against vast segments of the American population.

Violent language as a manner of speech amongst right-wing pundits reached a crescendo in the days leading up to the 2006 midterm elections. I remember flipping through TV channels one day, attempting to avoid pundits' violent rhetoric. But such language was everywhere. Anne Coulter joked about "nuking" Iran, Bill O'Reilly talked about the "war on Christmas," Pat Buchanan and Lou Dobbs spoke of the "invasion" and "conquest" of America by immigrants. I even came across a discussion of the "war against the war," in which an anti-war protest was discussed as if it was a war. Every political topic seemed clouded over by a right-wing pundit using violence language.

In the first few months after the 2006 mid-term elections, I penned several blog posts questioning whether the rise of violent rhetoric on the right might be a dangerous development that could possibly transform, through a sudden incident, into actual physical violence. Turning to the work of Hannah Arendt, in particular her masterful study of politics and violence, *On Violence*, I began to realize that the last significant violent turn in American political ideology and practice involved both the political right and the left. The late 1960s was a time, Arendt explained, where people increasingly believed that violence could actually produce controlled political outcomes.

The result was an era in U.S. politics where a broad range of different political organizations and movements each took up violence, a product of the widespread acceptance of Mao Tse-tung's aphorism "Political power grows at the barrel of a gun." Arendt watched this moment lead to assassinations and mass chaos in urban centers, and thus argued that violence was problematic because it led to outcomes in politics that could not be controlled. Violence, she explained, drawing on a famous quote from Karl Marx, may be the birth pang of a new political body, but we would never say that labor pains were the cause of a birth. The same is true with violence, which occasionally happens at times of great political change but is not the cause of such change.

Arendt's thoughts on violence helped me to clarify several aspects of the trend in rightwing violent language that I was tracking in the media. First, I realized that the use of violent language was not accidental, but was the product of a shift in the political philosophy on which the right-wing punditry built their ideas. The shift was from a rhetoric of parody and burlesque to one of violence and accusation. Second, Arendt helped me to clarify exactly what role "violence" was playing in the worldview of the right-wing pundits. Most right-wing pundits see the power of the state as residing ultimately in the monopoly over violence, an idea that comes from the writings of German philosopher Max Weber. This, however, is not the political philosophy that guided the framers of the U.S. Constitution. In other words, violent rhetoric is not just a question of linguistic style, but a sign that a political philosophy in conflict with American deliberative democracy has captured the imagination of many right-wing pundits. Many factors have led to the emergence of violence among right-wing pundits, but the events of 9/11 seem central. In the wake of the attacks, right-wing pundits grew ever more convinced that the continued survival of United States depended on its willingness to use violence. The more violent language filled the airwaves of America's broadcast media, the more this new and disturbing logic of violence and power seemed to saturate public thinking. Lastly, Arendt's writing helped me to see that the American form of deliberative democratic politics itself was a form of government crafted as a replacement for earlier forms of rule by violence.

In a discussion of American politics, the opposite of violence has never been nonviolence, but participation—specifically, participation in deliberative democracy. The quintessential American town hall meetings that Jefferson imagined happening amongst small, mostly agricultural communities in rural colonial America were not just a system for accomplishing the needs of the people but a bulwark against tyrannical rule that resulted from a royal monopoly on all forms of power.

After considering the violent language from right-wing pundits, I began to see the language of America's elected leaders in a new light, particularly the rhetoric of President Bush and Vice President Cheney. It was clear to me that from the start of its term in office, the Bush administration was unrivaled in its ability to manipulate the public via the media. As such, strong political ties to privately owned, right-wing broadcast media was its biggest political asset. Yet, beyond their ability to wield control of the means of communication in our country, President Bush and Vice President Cheney embraced violence as a structuring concept in their political speech.

President Bush first stepped in the direction of violent language in the week following the attacks of Sept. 11, when he gave a series of public statements during visits to the White House by foreign dignitaries and U.S. government employees. The stated theme of that week was the mounting of a campaign to fight terrorism on a global scale, but the agenda had much more to do with constructing a new persona for Bush through a series of violent statements threatening the perpetrators of the attacks of 9/11. Over and over again that week, Bush said, "We're going to smoke them out of their holes," talking about the impending operations to find the terrorists responsible for 9/11 as if he were a cowboy setting out to kill prairie animals. Attempting much more than a bad John Wayne impersonation in those speeches, Bush was boldly stepping across a line that most presidents rarely crossed: direct calls for the death of other human beings.

That was a week of unimaginable emotional anguish for most Americans, and Bush's foray into violent language was largely hailed as welcome bravado in response to an act of war. While researching my book on presidential speeches in the summer of 2006, I went back to the transcripts of Bush's post-9/11 appearances and found moments filled with glib references to death and killing. Speaking to employees at the Pentagon on Sept. 17, 2001, for example, Bush said the following in response to a reporter's question:

I know that this is a different type of enemy than we're used to. It's an enemy that likes to hide and burrow in, and their network is extensive. There are no rules. It's barbaric behavior. They slit throats of women on airplanes in order to achieve an objective that is beyond comprehension. And they like to hit, and then they like to hide out. But we're going to smoke them out. And we're adjusting our thinking to the new type of enemy.

A sitting U.S. president's using his own voice to advocate graphic violence to the public signaled a disturbing change in our political system. Events can be relayed in a variety of ways. President Bush chose violent descriptions to sum up the problem. At first glance, one would assume that his words had the obvious impact of injecting fear into American consciousness. Indeed, they did. In the months that followed Sept. 11, 2001, the country grew more and more afraid of knife-yielding terrorists on planes and more afraid of hidden threats, as waves of panic spread back and forth across the country.

President Bush's metaphoric description of terrorists as animals skilled at hiding and committing barbaric acts of murder led people to accept that safety and security could only be restored by an equally violent process of hunting and killing. The violence of 9/11 had made Americans nervous about danger from the skies. As President Bush began to describe hidden threats of "barbaric" violence, Americans began to worry about which dangerous persons might be hiding in their own communities, or standing behind them in the grocery store lines, or sitting one seat over on the subway.

President Bush's turn to violent language was foreshadowed by his prior interest in the bellicose foreign policy vision of right-wing think tanks that had been pushing violent foreign policy since the late 1990s, such as the Project For The New American Century. His speeches also served as a green light to right-wing pundits, inviting them to step into a violent political idiom. Perhaps nobody embodied this more than Anne Coulter. Having made a name for herself as a pundit willing to talk about sex, Coulter's first column after 9/11 called for Americans to "invade" Muslim nations, "kill" their leaders and "convert" foreign citizens to Christianity. Coulter had lost a close friend in one of the planes that crashed on 9/11. Angry rhetoric in response to personal loss was a form of expression that most Americans understood, even as they felt uncomfortable with it. Nonetheless, Coulter's violent language took mainstream American media to a place it had not been since at least the 1950s, if not the 1930s. Another important step was about to be taken, however, and in this case it would be prominent pundits in the media who took the lead.

Whereas Bush had turned to violent language as a technique for dehumanizing the enemy—talking about terrorists as if they were animals to be hunted and exterminated—rightwing pundits on radio, television and in print slowly infused violent language into domestic political debate. Radicalized right-wing activists calling Democrats "murderers" had been a familiar, albeit disturbing, aspect of the abortion right's debate. What changed, however, was the sudden linking of violent death in 9/11 to issues that had hitherto been discussed solely in terms of competing social agendas. Speaking in the days after the events of 9/11 on the 700 Club, the flagship daily broadcast of his Christian Broadcast Network, Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell blamed the death and destruction on liberal groups in America:

FALWELL: The ACLU's got to take a lot of blame for this.

ROBERTSON: Well, yes.

FALWELL: And, I know that I'll hear from them for this. But, throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system, throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools. The abortionists have got to bear some burden for this because God will not be mocked. And when we destroy 40 million little innocent babies, we make God mad. I really believe that the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the

ACLU, People For the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America. I point the finger in their face and say, "You helped this happen."

ROBERTSON: Well, I totally concur, and the problem is we have adopted that agenda at the highest levels of our government. And so we're responsible as a free society for what the top people do. And, the top people, of course, is the court system.

Falwell's idea that "we make God mad so God uses terrorists to exact revenge" found its correlate in equally shocking attempts by left-wing pundits and intellectuals to somehow blame the murders of 9/11 on social and economic conservatives. Political activist and professor Ward Churchill, for example, claimed infamously that the victims of the attacks were somehow responsible for their own deaths by virtue of their employment in a capitalist society and was deservedly excoriated for doing so. Nonetheless, the limited amount of violent rhetoric from the left that followed 9/11

quickly dissipated. Falwell's and Robertson's exchange, by contrast, nudged open a door that more and more pundits in the right-wing media began to walk through because of two additional factors that had set up a tectonic shift in right-wing rhetoric.

The first factor was that Falwell's and Robertson's comments happened in a post-2000 America where key evangelical leaders wield unprecedented national influence. Most notable among these evangelical leaders is James Dobson, founder and chairman of the Christian parenting organization Focus on the Family and a best-selling right-wing author who writes and speaks about the importance of using physical violence as a technique for disciplining children. Dobson played a prominent role in turning out the vote in the 2000 presidential election, and as a result, his authoritarian writing on parenting is now widely discussed in the mainstream media. In the period immediately after 9/11, however, the influence of Dobson went far beyond the question of raising children to the much broader issue of how the terrain of political debate in America had shifted in the months prior to the attacks of 2001. The Dobson era in the Republican Party, in other words, heralded a newfound comfort with the use of violent terms on a host of social issues, including homosexuality, the family and education.

The second factor was the resurgence of the National Rifle Association as a political force in right-wing politics. Most prominent of all, then NRA Vice President Wayne LaPierre had already employed violent language to argue against gun control laws in the year prior to Sept. 11. In mid-2000, for example, LaPierre accused Bill Clinton of having blood on his hands for not enforcing gun laws, pushing the argument that Democrats allowed violent crime to happen in order to advance a liberal agenda and deny gun owners their constitutional rights. LaPierre's rhetoric was so inflammatory that even then NRA president, Charlton Heston, felt the need to redress him. Nonetheless, with the election of George W. Bush, LaPierre emerged as the premier author and TV pundit on gun issues. The dual rise of authoritarian evangelicals and NRA leadership in the Republican Party and the media prepared American civic debate to acquiesce to a higher level of violent rhetoric in domestic politics.

The run up to the 2004 presidential election further increased the volume and frequency of violent rhetoric in right-wing media—a key transformation in the Republican Party that became embodied in the words and persona of Dick Cheney. Caught in a cycle of bad news from Iraq, human rights abuses, tales of secret prisons, and mounting corruption scandals, the Republican Party launched a PR campaign to equate a Democratic return to the White House with increased terrorist attacks. Speaking to a packed crowd in Des Moines, Iowa on Sept. 9, 2004, Cheney brought violence to the heart of his campaign rhetoric: It's absolutely essential that eight weeks from today, on Nov. 2, we make the right choice. Because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we'll get hit again, that we'll be hit in a way that will be devastating from the standpoint of the United States, and that we'll fall back into the pre-9/11 mindset, if you will, that in fact these terrorist attacks are just criminal acts and that we're not really at war. I think that would be a terrible mistake for us. We have to understand it is a war.

Cheney proffered his violent theme to persuade voters. Rather than tone down his speeches in response to criticism, Cheney steeled his resolve and rallied the party faithful. By 2006, arguing that electoral victory for the Democrats would lead to the mass death of Americans by terrorists had become the core election strategy of the Republican Party. As election day neared, then Republican National Committee chairman Ken Mehlman commissioned a political ad called "The Stakes," combining a ticking bomb soundtrack, images of Osama Bin Laden, video clips from terrorist training films and shots of exploding nuclear bombs. The violent message of the ad was that a vote for the Democrats was a vote for mass annihilation at the hands of nuclear-armed Al Qaeda terrorists. The arc that had begun with President Bush using violence to dehumanize terrorists was now complete.

At this point in the discussion, many people often mistake a concern for violent rhetoric with attempts to censor political speech or limit freedom of expression. It is an understandable reaction brought on by the deep affection Americans hold for the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Freedom of speech—no matter how obscene, offensive or threatening that speech may be—cannot be limited, curtailed or regulated without violating civil rights, or so the argument goes.

In general, the American system recognizes that speech is not to be limited up to the point that it presents "a clear and present danger of action of the kind the state is empowered to prevent and punish." Shouting "Fire!" in a crowded theater, which we are not free to do, is the classic example. If we walk into a theater and cause mass hysteria by yelling "Fire!" without due cause, there will be a penalty for our destructive action. If someone says to a friend "Shoot that man there," and he does so—that speech is part of the crime and, thus falls under the criminal statutes against murder. Moreover, what we all too often forget in our rush to assert freedom of expression is the other side of the First Amendment, a side that is in many ways even more important: freedom from compulsion. Compelling individuals to speak or express themselves in a specific way, particularly by the state, damages the First Amendment as much if not more than limiting individual expression. If, for example, a newspaper editor were compelled to print the news each morning

according to the dictates of the White House communications director, that compulsion would infringe upon the First Amendment rights of far more people than just the editor. Anyone who read or heard about the information in that paper—as government had compelled the editor to include it—would be deprived of his or her First Amendment rights. Moreover, when it comes to violence in speech, context is everything. Violent language appears in the Bible, in Homer's works and in fairy tales, for example, but our system would never tolerate laws limiting the circulation or reading of The Book of Job, The Iliad or Little Red Riding Hood.

Following these basic principles, the U.S. federal government and court system have treated broadcast media, with its unrivalled ability to penetrate every aspect of American life, as a medium with potential for endangering certain individuals if left completely unregulated. In 2007, for example, the Federal Communications Commission issued a report studying the effects of violent television on America's children. The FCC came to the conclusion that efforts should be made to "channel" violent programming into those times of the day when children were least likely to be exposed to it and, wherever possible, to notify viewers in advance of violent content through a ratings system. Most of us benefit from this two-pronged approach without even thinking about it. When it is time for certain entertainment shows to start, a viewer discretion screen appears long enough to alert us to any violent content, language or otherwise, and in that moment we decide whether to continue watching or to choose another program. Most importantly, if we have children, that warning gives us a chance to decide if the content of the show is appropriate for our families.

As much as our system cares about protecting children from unwittingly coming into content with violent language in entertainment, the American system bends over backwards to make sure that none of the same measures infringe upon political speech. When it comes to political speech, the concern over compulsion is so deeply rooted in our culture that most scheduling restrictions or viewer advisories are held at bay. The exception to that rule, of course, are political shows that step clearly into a potential danger zone by virtue of their use of adult language—i.e., swear words. The best example of a political show that has been time channeled and includes viewer advisories is Real Time with Bill Maher. Clearly, there are commercial disadvantages to airing a political talk show after 11 p.m., but they are balanced by the benefits of helping parents protect their children. That is not to say that Bill Maher's language is "bad" for children, but only that the content of the discussions he leads are widely viewed as inappropriate for audiences under a certain age. Viewer advisories and time channeling are widely seen as helpful precisely because it is so difficult to define "violence" in such a way that would allow producers of content to predictably comply with regulations limiting it.

While not a source of violent rhetoric, Bill Maher's show includes many adult themes. As such, it points to a question about political media rarely asked in discussions of regulatory efforts with respect to violent language in broadcast TV: Are most political talk shows news or entertainment? Maher's show, with its signature combination of comedy monologue and celebrity roundtable discussion, is clearly a form of entertainment designed to challenge viewers to think critically about politics. Its content is political, but Real Time is entertainment. For many other political talk shows on TV, particularly those on Fox News, the line between news and entertainment becomes blurry if not invisible altogether. For example, in Apr., 2007, on an episode of The O'Reilly Factor, host Bill O'Reilly and his guest Geraldo Rivera discussed the issue of drunk driving, crime and illegal immigration through an exchange of violent rhetoric that many viewers described as unprecedented on a "news" broadcast. Given how disconcerted so many viewers were in response to this particular episode of O'Reilly's show, it suggests that the type of violent exchange it featured warranted a viewer discretion advisory and time channeling required of a show more explicitly presented as entertainment. The question, in other words, is not one of censorship, but of the best way to protect viewers given the unprecedented power of broadcast media in our society and the number of political talk shows that inhabit the gray zone between news and entertainment.

(Jeffrey Feldman is editor-in-chief of Frameshop and author of *Outright Barbarous: How the Violent Language of the Right Poisons American Democracy* (Ig Publishing, 2008).)

20090214-03	20:19	SteveM	Re: Jimmy Carter; Etc.
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Dear SteveB,

Here's what you've made clear, that you only believe in free speech as long as you're doing the talking, hence you use of anti-American. No mention of hope for failure was made in the history lesson I sent you. It Freedom of speech, not from speech! Leave it to you to not read it.

The other thing you've made clear with your vicious personal attacks on candidates and me is the you have no problem dishing it out, but you can't take it, punk. Don't bother replying, we're done, F*cking with you no longer amuses me. You really turned out be a disappointment. As I'm sure you Montana neighbors feel the same.

20090215-01 06:07 SteveB Re: Jimmy Carter; Etc.

Dear SteveM,

So be it. You never could stick to the issues, my friend.

I wonder where the extreme right and the Republicans are going to be if the current crisis does NOT turn into another Great Depression? The trash can of history? They sure act as if they know it. Hence, the constant gloom and doom and fear-mongering, instead of solutions.

What I had sent you was something pretty much anti-Obama, though I support him. You sent me more partisan, anti-Democrat same-old-same-old, and then talked about freedom of speech. It is you who have robbed yourself of freedom of speech by refusing to ever consider anything not dictated by the radical right, the very dying sliver of the population that is the source of so many of America's problems, in my humble opinion.

Hope you have a nice life. Try to be positive. America ain't dead yet!

20090217-01 09:58 SteveB "Metrics of National Decline"

"Metrics of National Decline" by Patrick J. Buchanan, Human Events

Feb. 17, 2009, (<http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=30725>) (<http://buchanan.org/blog/2009/02/pjb-metrics-of-national-decline/>)

"Bush Boom Continues" trilled the headline over the Lawrence Kudlow column, as George W. Bush closed out his seventh year in office.

"You can call it Goldilocks 2.0," purred Kudlow.

Yes, you could. But what a difference 12 months can make.

Final returns are now in on the eight years of George Bush. Charles McMillion of MBG Information Services has crunched the numbers. And, pace Kudlow, the only relevant comparison is to Herbert Hoover.

From Jan., 2008, right after Kudlow's column ran, through Jan., 2009, the U.S. economy lost 3.5 million jobs. The private sector loss of 3.65 million jobs was slightly offset by 148,000 jobs created by federal, state and local governments. Say what you will, the Bush years were boom times for Big Government.

And the private sector? Beginning and ending in recession, the Bush presidency added a net of 407,000 private sector jobs over eight years, less than 51,000 a year, the worst eight-year record since 1927-35, which includes the first six years of the Great Depression.

By Jan., 2009, the average workweek had fallen to 33.3 hours, the lowest since record keeping began in 1964.

From Jan. 31, 2001, through Jan. 31, 2009, 4.4 million manufacturing jobs, 26 percent of all of the manufacturing jobs in the United States, disappeared.

Semiconductors and electronic component producers lost 42 percent of their jobs. Communications equipment producers lost 48 percent of their jobs. Textile and apparel producers lost, respectively, 63 percent and 61 percent of their jobs.

As a source of American jobs, manufacturing, for the first time in our history, fell below health care and education in 2001, below retail sales in 2002, below local government in 2006, below leisure and hospitality, i.e., restaurants and bars, in 2008.

Between this unprecedented loss in manufacturing capacity and jobs, and the \$3.5 trillion in trade deficits in manufactured goods alone, run up by George W. Bush, the correlation is absolute.

Last week, final trade figures for 2008 came in. They make for riveting reading for Americans who yet believe that manufacturing is an indispensable element of national power.

With China exporting five times the dollar volume in goods to us as she imports from us, Beijing's trade surplus with the United States set yet another world record: \$266 billion. In those critical items the Commerce Department defines as advanced technology products (ATP), our trade deficit with China in 2008 reached an astonishing \$72 billion. Since Bush took office, our total trade deficit with China in ATP exceeds \$300 billion. Which of us, China or America, has the trade profile of a mature industrial and technological power?

Americans deplore our deepening dependence on foreign regimes for the vital necessity of oil. Are they unaware that the U.S. trade deficit in manufactured goods, \$440 billion, is \$89 billion greater than our all-time record trade deficit of \$351 billion in crude oil? Why is a dependence on Canada, Mexico, Venezuela or Saudi Arabia for oil a greater peril than a reliance on China and Asia for vital necessities upon which our prosperity and military depend?

A week ago, the Washington Times ("Volcker Blames Recession on Trade Imbalances") reported that ex-Fed Chair Paul Volcker told Congress the "massive trade-related imbalances in the United States economy were the source of the financial crisis." Pressed by Sen. Chris Dodd, Volcker said, "Go back to the imbalances in the economy. The United States has been consuming more than it has been producing for many years." What "imbalances" was Volcker referring to? Perhaps these.

Since 1982, the United States has run \$5.7 trillion in trade deficits in manufactured goods, and \$2.1 trillion in trade deficits in auto parts, trucks and automobiles. In the Bush years alone, the United States ran more than \$1 trillion in trade deficits in auto parts, trucks and cars.

These statistics, these realities—factories closing in the United States, manufacturing jobs being outsourced in the millions to China and Asia, enormous, endless trade deficits in goods—testify to a painful truth: America is a receding and declining world power. And in dealing with this systemic crisis, Obama's stimulus package is as irrelevant as were the Bush tax cuts.

How do we correct those "trade-related imbalances" of which Volcker spoke? We must export more and import less, save more and spend less, produce more and consume less. We need to emulate the ants and behave less like the grasshoppers of summer.

But how do you tell that to two generations of Americans who have been raised in an era of entitlement?

America needs an Industrial Policy.

But how do you tell that to Americans indoctrinated in the hoary myth that Reed Smoot and Willis Hawley caused the Great Depression and anything that sounds like America First risks a rerun of the 1930s?

20090303-01	11:17	Dennis	Fw: The Current Economic Crisis According to the Three Stooges
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The Current Economic Crisis According to the Three Stooges

Curly says to Moe: "You owe me ten dollars." Moe says to Larry: "Hey! You owe me ten dollars!" Larry says to Curly: "And you owe me ten dollars!"

Curly to Larry: "All I got is a five. Here's five. I'll owe you five." Larry to Moe: "Here's five. I'll owe you five." Moe to Curly: "Here's five. I'll owe you five."

Curly to Larry: "Here's the five I owe you." Larry to Moe: "Here's the five I owe you." Moe to Curly: "Here's the five I owe you."

Altogether, Moe, Larry and Curly were responsible for \$25 dollars of debt. All that debt was retired with a \$5 bill.

Now, suppose that Moe, Larry and Curly had, in a flash of inspiration, decided to stop lending to each other.

Moe owes \$10. Larry owes \$10. Curly has five but owes \$10.... a \$5 deficit.

The plan is for each to declare insolvency and then apply to the government for bailouts. The government is hesitant, but Moe is too big to fail. So is Curly and so is Larry. Ya gonna settle for Shemp? The fate of The Three Stooges is at stake!

But wait! The Actor's Insurance Group has insured all three stooges for financial losses. AIG is in the red \$25!

But, should AIG fail, it would be the end of all slapstick comedy as we know it! The Stooges are too big to fail! AIG is too big to fail!

The fate of our funny bones hang in the balance and the U.S. government is the only fiscal entity that can rob enough people, legally, to cover the losses. An enormous bailout is passed into law.

Moe gets \$10. Larry gets \$10. Curly gets \$5. AIG gets \$25 dollars.

And thus the economic crisis ends. The courageous and timely decisions that we have made will forever be on the minds of the generations to come, especially when they are a couple of dollars short.

20090304-01 10:02 Ben Video: "Shift Happens"

Take a look at the Shift Happens video. I think we've probably all seen one or both of the earlier versions; this one is new (to me) and just as intriguing.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljbI-363A2Q>

20090304-02 18:49 SteveB Re: "Shift Happens"

Dear Ben,

It's so intriguing to me that this is, I suppose, all pretty much true...yet how little the most important aspects of our lives here have changed. Love and happiness are still our goals, and still largely manage to escape most of us. Even if the universe is 13.5 billion years old and twice that many light years across, and even if there are uncounted dimensions, strings, and branes...the old mysteries remain unanswered. Who are we, really, within these bodies looking out? Why are we here? Is there a God? What happens after we die? How do we achieve good? How do we find that perfect peace and love we seem to instinctively assume exists? Etc.

20090305-01 08:22 Ben Re: "Shift Happens"

He's right. The non-material things are the same as always.

20090305-02 10:44 SteveB Re: "Shift Happens"

Dear Ben,

And even more pertinent, I think, is how can we use science to actually improve the important things in the human condition? We have managed to thwart death and some suffering with medical science. But the cost is also huge. I wonder sometimes if we are really better off. Have we been able to increase peace and happiness in the world? No as much as Buddha did. Have we even been able to successfully apply science to education so that we can teach our children more or better? To my mind, we're not any better than Aristotle, probably worse. Science doesn't even seem to work, at least yet, for the important things, and, instead, we seem to be getting further and further removed from them.

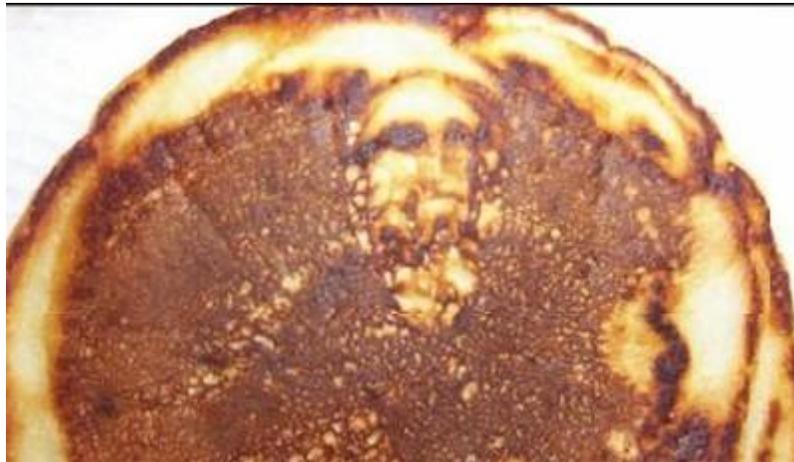
The American Indians had a better civilization than we do, yet we have always called them uncivilized savages. People with nothing, living in the Third World, seem happier to me than Americans in general. What has all of our scientific,

material crap really gotten us? Not fricking much, I say! Not enough for the damage we're done and the even more huge damage coming down the pike. How have we really reduced human suffering when, inevitably, billion die at some point in the future?

The only thing that gives me any hope for our incredibly stupid species is that, maybe in the future, an asteroid or comet is heading to destroy our planet and, because of all our otherwise useless science and factories, we are able to send up a rocket and divert the sucker.

Otherwise, give me a hunting party consisting of my closest friends bringing home fresh venison to our lovely wives and beautiful, well-behaved children waiting at home for us in our comfortable little village.

20090504-01	11:03	SteveB	"Holy Pancakes! Virgin Mary Seen on Griddle"
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Mexican wrestlers Renegado and Mr. Tempest look at an image of what they believe is "Our Lady of Guadalupe" on a griddle at Las Palmas restaurant in Calexico, Calif.

"Holy Pancakes! Virgin Mary Seen on Griddle" by Todd Krainin, AP

May 1, 2009, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30508304/?GT1-39001>)

(CALEXICO, Cal) The hottest thing on the griddle at the Las Palmas restaurant these days isn't the food — it's the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that a cook says she saw on the griddle.

Restaurant manager Brenda Martinez says more than 100 people have flocked to the small town of Calexico on the California-Mexico border to gaze at the likeness of the Virgin Mary since it was discovered as the griddle was being cleaned.

Among the awe-struck was a group of masked Mexican wrestlers who arrived Thursday for an exhibition at a nearby swap meet.

One, known as Mr. Tempest, says: "This is amazing. It's a true miracle."

Since the discovery, the griddle has been taken out of service and placed in a shrine in a storage room.

20090616-01	15:53	SteveB	"Let's Get Real About Alternative Energy"
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"Let's Get Real About Alternative Energy" by David MacKay, CNN

May 13, 2009, (http://articles.cnn.com/2009-05-13/tech/mackay.energy_1_fossil-fuels-heat-pumps-energy?s=PM:TECH)

(Editor's note: David MacKay is a professor of physics at the University of Cambridge. His book, *Sustainable Energy - Without the Hot Air*, is published by UIT Cambridge and is also available in electronic form for free from:

<http://www.withouthotair.com/> or <http://www.inference.phy.cam.ac.uk/sustainable/book/tex/sewtha.pdf>

We need to introduce simple arithmetic into our discussions of energy.

We need to understand how much energy our chosen lifestyles consume, we need to decide where we want that energy to come from, and we need to get on with building energy systems of sufficient size to match our desired consumption.

Our failure to talk straight about the numbers is allowing people to persist in wishful thinking, inspired by inane sayings such as "every little bit helps."

Assuming we are serious about getting off fossil fuels, the scale of building required should not be underestimated. Small actions alone will not deliver a solution.

Let's express energy consumption and energy production using simple personal units, namely kilowatt-hours. One kilowatt-hour (kWh) is the energy used by leaving a 40-watt bulb on for 24 hours. The chemical energy in the food we eat to stay alive amounts to about 3 kWh per day. Taking one hot bath uses about 5 kWh of heat. Driving an average European car 100 kilometers (roughly 62 miles) uses 80 kWh of fuel. With a few of these numbers in mind, we can start to evaluate some of the recommendations that people make about energy.

Take, for example, the idea that one of the top 10 things you should do to make a difference to your energy consumption is to unplug your cell-phone charger when you are not using it. The truth is that leaving a phone charger plugged in uses about 0.01 kWh per day, 1/100th of the power consumed by a light bulb.

This means that switching the phone charger off for a whole day saves the same energy as is used in driving an average car for one second. Switching off phone chargers is like bailing the Titanic with a teaspoon. I'm not saying you shouldn't unplug it, but please realize, when you do so, what a tiny fraction it is of your total energy footprint.

In total, the European lifestyle uses 125 kWh per day per person for transport, heating, manufacturing, and electricity. That's equivalent to every person having 125 light bulbs switched on all the time. The average American uses 250 kWh per day: 250 light bulbs.

And most of this energy today comes from fossil fuels. What are our post-fossil-fuel options?

Among the energy-saving options, two promising technology switches are the electrification of transportation (electric vehicles can be about four times as energy-efficient as standard fossil-fuel vehicles) and the use of electric-powered heat pumps to deliver winter heating and hot water (heat pumps can be four times as energy-efficient as standard heaters).

Among all the energy-supply technologies, the three with the biggest potential today are solar power, wind power and nuclear power.

As a thought-experiment, let's imagine that technology switches and lifestyle changes manage to halve American energy consumption to 125 kWh per day per person. How big would the solar, wind and nuclear facilities need to be to supply this halved consumption? For simplicity, let's imagine getting one-third of the energy supply from each.

To supply 42 kWh per day per person from solar power requires roughly 80 square meters per person of solar panels.

To deliver 42 kWh per day per person from wind for everyone in the United States would require wind farms with a total area roughly equal to the area of California, a 200-fold increase in United States wind power.

To get 42 kWh per day per person from nuclear power would require 525 one-gigawatt nuclear power stations, a roughly five-fold increase over today's levels.

I hope these numbers convey the scale of action required to put in place a sustainable energy solution. What about tidal power? What about wave power? What about geothermal energy, biofuels or hydroelectricity? In a short article, I can't discuss all the technology options.

But the sober message about wind and solar applies to all renewables: All renewables, much as I love them, deliver only a small power per unit area, so if we want renewable facilities to supply power on a scale at all comparable to our consumption, those facilities must be big.

If you don't want to build 1 million wind turbines, you can drill 1 million geothermal boreholes instead.

Before I close, I would like to say a few words about the idea that "the hydrogen economy" can magically solve our energy problems. The truth is that, in energy terms, today's hydrogen-powered vehicles don't help at all. Most prototype hydrogen-powered vehicles use more energy than the fossil-fuel vehicles they replace. The BMW Hydrogen 7, for example, uses 254 kWh per 100 km, but the average fossil car in Europe uses 80 kWh per 100 km.

In contrast, electric vehicles use far less energy: as little as 20 kWh per 100 km, or even 6 kWh per 100 km. The problem with hydrogen is that both the creation and the use of hydrogen are energy-inefficient steps. Adopting hydrogen as a transport fuel would increase our energy demand. And, as I hope the numbers above have shown, supplying energy to match our demand is not going to be easy.

The public discussion of energy options tends to be emotional, polarized, mistrustful and destructive. I hope that focusing attention on the numbers may make it possible to develop honest and constructive conversations about energy.

It's not going to be easy to make a energy plan that adds up, but it is possible. We need to get building.

20090616-02	13:38	SteveB	To: KLYQ AM Radio; Rush Limbaugh & Glenn Beck
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Dear KLYQ:

I have to tell you that I am starting to think that your syndicated program hosts, most notably Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, are doing the Republican Party and the country as a whole a great disservice.

Their constant attempts at inducing panic, mistrust, and action(?) seem to me to be totally misguided. Have you listened to the stridency level on these programs lately? Truly appalling!

I will no longer listen to any of these charlatans who hope for the demise or ruin of the United States, merely for the sake of blind ideology.

I think it is time for you to consider alternative programming. This stuff is serving no good, only evil. Thank you.

20090625-01	11:52	SteveG	Fw: The Bakken Formation: "U. S. Oil Discovery—Largest Reserve in the World!"
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Wonder if this is true?? I know there is a large reserve in Alberta, Canada in a "tar sands" formation.

Click on the link at the bottom to verify. Unbelievable!

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says it's a mix of true and false information:
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/gasoline/bakken.asp>. —SteveB]

OIL (not a joke)

The U. S. Geological Service issued a report in April ('08) that only scientists and oil men knew was coming, but man was it big. It was a revised report (hadn't been updated since '95) on how much oil was in this area of the western 2/3 of North Dakota; western South Dakota; and extreme eastern Montana..... check THIS out:

The Bakken is the largest domestic oil discovery since Alaska 's Prudhoe Bay , and has the potential to eliminate all American dependence on foreign oil. The Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates it at 503 billion barrels. Even if just 10% of the oil is recoverable... at \$107 a barrel, we're looking at a resource base worth more than \$5.3 trillion.

'When I first briefed legislators on this, you could practically see their jaws hit the floor. They had no idea.' says Terry Johnson, the Montana Legislature's financial analyst.

"This sizable find is now the highest-producing onshore oil field found in the past 56 years." reports *The Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. It's a formation known as the Williston Basin , but is more commonly referred to as the 'Bakken.' And it stretches from Northern Montana, through North Dakota and into Canada . For years, U. S. oil exploration has been considered a dead end. Even the 'Big Oil' companies gave up searching for major oil wells decades ago. However, a recent technological breakthrough has opened up the Bakken's massive reserves.... and we now have access of up to 500 billion barrels. And because this is light, sweet oil, those billions of barrels will cost Americans just \$16 PER BARREL!

That's enough crude to fully fuel the American economy for 2041 years straight.

And if THAT didn't throw you on the floor, then this next one should—because it's from TWO YEARS AGO!

"U. S. Oil Discovery—Largest Reserve in the World!" Stansberry Report Online (Apr. 20, 2006)

Hidden 1,000 feet beneath the surface of the Rocky Mountains lies the largest untapped oil reserve in the world. It is more than 2 TRILLION barrels. On August 8, 2005 President Bush mandated its extraction. In three and a half years of high oil prices none has been extracted. With this mother lode of oil, why are we still fighting over off-shore drilling?

They reported this stunning news: We have more oil inside our borders, than all the other proven reserves on earth. Here are the official estimates:

- 8-times as much oil as Saudi Arabia
- 18-times as much oil as Iraq
- 21-times as much oil as Kuwait
- 22-times as much oil as Iran
- 500-times as much oil as Yemen

...and it's all right here in the Western United States.

HOW can this BE? HOW can we NOT BE extracting this? Because the environmentalists and others have blocked all efforts to help America become independent of foreign oil! Again, we are letting a small group of people dictate our lives and our economy.....WHY?

James Bartis, lead researcher with the study says we've got more oil in this very compact area than the entire Middle East -more than 2 TRILLION barrels untapped. That's more than all the proven oil reserves of crude oil in the world today, reports The Denver Post.

Don't think 'OPEC' will drop its price - even with this find? Think again! It's all about the competitive marketplace, - it has to. Think OPEC just might be funding the environmentalists? Got your attention/ire up yet? Hope so! Now, while you're thinking about it and hopefully P.O'd, do this:

Pass this along. If you don't take a little time to do this, then you should stifle yourself the next time you want to complain about gas prices— because by doing NOTHING, you've forfeited your right to complain.

Now I just wonder what would happen in this country if every one of you sent this to everyone in your address book.

By the way...this is all true. Check it out at the link below!!!

GOOGLE it or follow this link. It will blow your mind.

<http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1911>

20090625-02	12:59	SteveB	Re: The Bakken Formation / Photo: Trapper Peak, Bitterroots, Montana
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Dear SteveG,

I believe the article you and Dick (Aug. 19, 2008) refer to is completely true. There is that much oil there and they are getting some of it out.

Your link was a good one: <http://www.usgs.gov/newsroom/article.asp?ID=1911>.

But, of course, there is a little problem that I didn't see mentioned. Just as with the possibility of using hydrogen as fuel for cars (a terrible idea in my mind—they MUST be electric!), it takes a lot of energy to get this energy. The rocks must be heated to a high temperature, the way I understand it, to release their oil. Just as it takes a ton of electricity to release hydrogen from water.

You know, I'm not so sure technology is going to be able to save us this time. But...one never knows.

I think this whole energy thing, from the standpoint of physics, is a much more difficult problem than some want to make us believe.

Take care. Hope you're having a great summer. Here's my favorite mountain...climbed it last year...thought I'd die!

Trapper Peak, Montana (with Baker Point)



[20090625-03](#) 13:06 SteveG Re: The Bakken Formation; Electric Cars

Dear SteveB,

My only concern about electric vehicles is that most electricity is from burning carbon based fuels - coal, natural gas - and I really don't like the idea of nuclear.

Diesel vehicles make sense to me, but there doesn't seem to be that much interest in this country. Switch grass based bio fuel also makes sense.

But what the hell do I know.

[20090625-04](#) 13:59 SteveB Re: The Bakken Formation; Electric Cars

Dear SteveG,

Well...I agree with you about nuclear fission. Maybe someday we'll work out fusion, but that's not an easy one. It would provide almost unlimited energy though.

We have to figure out ways—and have—to burn coal, especially, with no emissions, not even CO₂. They are close. Oil must be preserved. Since we must burn something, it has to be coal burned cleanly in central locations, generating electricity for everything else possible. It's the only workable solution I can see. It is much easier to burn something cleanly in a few locations than in millions of locations. Hence, electric cars are a must. So are electric trains. Lawnmowers must all be electric. F*ck lawns, anyway! Let's all have little hay or wheat fields!

We must save all the oil we have to make drugs and chemicals and to power planes, maybe some trucks, definitely motorcycles. That's it!

We need trains and re-configured cities. Do we have the will to do what's necessary? These big bunch of pussies in the world today? I highly doubt it!

20090701-01 08:21 SteveG Alternative Energy: Algae

Dear SteveB,

I had forgotten about algae - that really makes sense!!. As I understand it takes carbon dioxide to grow algae and you could locate their growth area next to electric power plants.

If the government or auto manufacturers were smart, they would all combine efforts and concentrate on one fuel - switchgrass or algae. But, this will not happen in my lifetime,

I am not as adventuresome as you in the eating!!!!!!! Do remember my Dad eating cow brain sandwiches and thinking how gross that was. No sense eating anything creepy, crawly or organs!

Going back toward more fruits and veggies rather than meat items. Seafood the best.

20090701-02 10:35 SteveB Re: Alternative Energy: Algae

Dear SteveG,

Just one article:

<http://www.greentechmedia.com/green-light/post/open-pond-vs.-closed-bioreactors-4012/>.

20090703-01 12:02 SteveB "Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation

Dear Dennis,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I still think this crap needs to be made illegal and/or impossible. Energy is just too important for these kinds of games.

"Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" AP

July 3, 2009, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/31720243/ns/business-oil_and_energy)

(PVM blames unauthorized trades for spike in Brent crude markets.)

(LONDON) PVM Oil Associates, the world's biggest over-the-counter oil brokerage, says it lost nearly \$10 million this week because of unauthorized trades that caused a temporary spike in Brent crude markets.

The firm said in a statement late Thursday that it was investigating the trades, which drove up the price of Brent futures by more than \$2 in one hour early Tuesday London time. It did not identify the trader involved in the transactions.

The Financial Times reported that futures contracts for 16 million barrels of oil changed hands in one hour, compared to a typical volume of 500,000 barrels.

PVM said the trading had been reported to the Financial Services Authority, but the government agency declined to say on Friday whether it was investigating.

A statement issued by PVM's managing director, Robin Bieber, said that "as a result of a series of unauthorized trades, substantial volumes of futures contracts were held by PVM."

"When this was discovered, the positions were closed in an orderly fashion. PVM suffered a loss totaling a little under \$10 million."

[20090703-02](#) 13:53 Dennis Re: "Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

My daughter's wedding has been my only shoot this summer since coming back from a photo tour to Romania in April. Jialin and I will be leading a photo tour to China in September and going to a travel writers convention in Mexico in October. We've talked about going somewhere this summer (Calgary for the Stampede or Albuquerque), but not making much progress. I'm Photoshopping images daily to upload to a new cooperative stock photo agency where I'm now an owner/member, Picade.com, as well as planning tours for next year (maybe China again in April or October and Morocco/Tunisia in May). That is keeping me busy while Jialin is making some money doing medical interpreting for the UMich Health Care system. Good thing, since I'm not making diddly selling stock photos this year.

Speaking of the reunion, Norton and I considered going, but decided against it when we heard you weren't coming. I had just gone to a reunion of my cousins (the Thompsons) and brothers in Terre Haute last month. We stopped in for a few hours on the way to Champaign-Urbana where we went apartment shopping for Jialin's son who starts grad school in architecture at UI this fall. A few hours in Indiana were enough.

[20090704-01](#) 09:47 SteveB Re: "Oil Brokerage Loses \$10 Million on Rogue Trades" Speculation

Dear Dennis,

Great to hear the news from you! It definitely sounds like you're keeping busy, even if your travels come after the summer.

Our fireworks here were canceled because of lack of money. They have to start so late that we don't feel like driving the 50 miles to Missoula just to see them, so staying close to home and cooking seems to be in order. We're probably going to turn our house into a restaurant when we get back to Bolivia later this year or next year. I'm planning a month there about September, but have no other travel plans except everywhere in Montana I can get to.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I had an interesting experience trying to purchase rights to a cover photo (last attachment) from a local photographer. I found the photo in an obscure Montana magazine, got in touch with the "photographer", negotiated and agreed to a price, but he didn't want to sign a simple contract stating that he actually owned the rights to the photo and was transferring single-use rights to me. He turned-out to be quite an a-hole, even though he is a neighbor. Unusual for Montana. Then I found that the photo is all over the internet and no one, apparently, knows who the photographer is.

So, to make a long story short, I'm just going to use one of my own photos, weak as they may be.

[20090709-01](#) 19:08 SteveB Fw: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

Dear SteveB:

Rampant oil-market speculation is driving up energy and food prices for the second year in a row. Just yesterday, the *Wall Street Journal* and other news media reported that continued speculation could "worsen the global economic downturn." We cannot allow this to happen.

Last year, you participated in the Stop Oil Speculation Now coalition, a multi-industry collection of businesses, labor groups, associations and concerned citizens united in support of responsible energy policies and prices. Thanks to your efforts, the threat of congressional action brought on by public outrage helped burst last summer's oil bubble and returned prices to reasonable levels.

Now that the speculators have returned, Congress and federal regulators again are considering action. Throughout this summer, we will keep you abreast of the latest news on this issue and let you know about the best opportunities to make your voice heard. By demanding that policymakers close known loopholes, increase market transparency and require strict limits on speculative trading, we can prevent future price spikes. These reforms, combined with increased domestic energy supply, exploration, alternative energy sources and conservation, will help lower prices for all Americans.

Now is the time to learn more about this important issue at:

<http://www.StopOilSpeculationNow.com>

and to encourage your friends to get involved at the S.O.S. Your Friends link on the Web site.

Together, we can help protect America's economic recovery.

Thank you, The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

20090709-02 19:12 Dennis Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

from SteveB:

Rampant oil-market speculation is driving up energy and food prices for the second year in a row.

Dear SteveB,

Geez, how am I gonna get back to even on my oil stocks without a little speculation to help me out? At least this group is only asking Congress to do something. That's a futile gesture that shouldn't hurt much.

20090710-01 08:37 SteveB Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

Dear Dennis,

As the article said:

At least this group is only asking Congress to do something. That's a futile gesture that shouldn't hurt much.

Ain't that the truth! The politicians are bought and sold...the whole system is corrupt and seems incapable of fixing itself or even taking appropriate actions.

Dennis: "...get back to even on my oil stocks"

I told you the price of oil was goin' down! I sure wish I could get all my commodity and stock predictions right!

20090710-02 08:50 Bill Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

Dear SteveB,

Yea, but how can a Wall Street greed head make a fast buck?

20090710-03 09:10 SteveB Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

Dear Bill,

Maybe they should be made to contribute to the good of society instead of acting like they're John Galt? Of course, the same thing could be said of Congress!

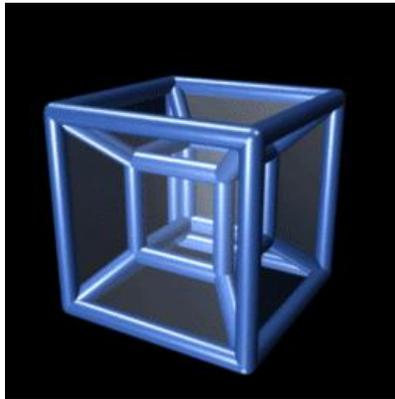
[20090710-04](#) 21:14 Bill Re: The Coalition to Stop Oil Speculation Now

Dear SteveB,

"Good of society?" What a quaint notion. Wall Street never gave a f*ck about Main Street, except to the extent it could extract lucre from it. There, I've exercised my cynicism for today and will be pacific and pleasant the remainder of the day.

[20090712-01](#) 19:14 SteveB Tesseract: 3-Dimensional Projections of Higher Dimensions

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tesseract>



[20090718-01](#) 20:28 SteveB Movie: *Public Enemies*

Fellow Hoosiers,

I highly recommend Johnny Depp's new John Dillinger movie, *Public Enemies*. They actually mention the name of Greencastle in it! I don't think that happens very often and, alone, is worth the price of admission. Oh, and the actin', writin', directin', and shootin' ain't bad either.

[20090722-01](#) 09:20 Ben Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?

The "More Orbiter?" paragraph on the last page has links to restored mission photos. The article is great reading.

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2009/07/22/destination_moon/

[20090722-02](#) 09:34 SteveB Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?

I always believed that they actually went to the moon. Then I learned that, after years of searching, NASA couldn't locate the original hi-res videos. BS! I'm all for space, but I don't want those jokers (or the military, for that matter) spending so much of our tax dollars.

Also, I'm sorry to say that it looks like Obama is blowing the job badly—look at the lack of jobs creation or preservation despite \$trillions. And he is nowhere on reducing the actual costs of health care, while expanding coverage in a halfway

fair manner that doesn't burden business excessively. All we really need are a few changes to tort and insurance laws, if they can't do anything else.

But as long as the government is bought and sold by campaign contributions (totally corrupt), nothing is ever going to be fixed.

I'm moving back to Bolivia in October! Hope you're having a great summer.

20090722-03 12:10 Ben Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?

Dear SteveB,

Oh, we went there, all right. But I see what you mean about losing the hi-res documentation.

I empathize with your feelings. To some extent, I share them. But still, I like it here. I don't doubt I could love Bolivia, too, but I still have hopes that Obama's path will effect at least some positive changes. It takes time to turn a ship with as much inertia as this. I agree that the forces of our embedded and corrupt system will conspire to thwart much of what he's attempting, and will doubtless wear him down considerably. But I still have hope.

20090722-04 13:28 SteveB Re: Apollo: The Most Successful Space Mission of All Time?

Dear Ben,

Even worse! I'm afraid that what He has attempted with the economy and what He is attempting to ram down our throats with healthcare (whatever it is He has in mind— maybe we're learn more tonight) is simply WRONG too!

I'm not about to side with the Ref*cklicans, but somebody is going to have to end up paying for all this! Gee, let's just print some more phony money!

20090723-01 13:44 Phil Fw: The Health Care Question

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

READ THIS, IT'S IMPORTANT.

I checked Snopes and in fact Rep John Fleming, a physician, (R, LA) introduced House Resolution 615, whereas all members voting for the bill would have to give up the Federal Health Insurance that Congressmen have and be the first customers of the new Health program. He has vowed that if the bill comes up for a floor vote he will add this language to the bill as an amendment. He says that if it is good enough for the people it should be good enough for congressmen. They are not better than the public.

[Yes, but Snopes.com says the bill is a "non-binding resolution" introduced in Jan., 2009, and never passed.

The exemption for congress is actually in the bill language. [In Obamacare? —SteveB]

The Health Care Question

Please pay attention to this.

FINALLY...THE \$50,000 QUESTION WAS ASKED!!!!.....YESTERDAY ON THE "ABC..OBAMA SPECIAL ON HEALTH CARE".....OBAMA WAS ASKED, "MR. PRESIDENT WILL YOU AND YOUR FAMILY GIVE UP YOUR CURRENT HEALTH CARE PROGRAM AND JOIN THE NEW "UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM" THAT THE REST OF US WILL BE ON ????".....OBAMA IGNORED THE QUESTION AND DIDN'T ANSWER IT!!!!.....A NUMBER OF SENATORS WERE ASKED THE SAME QUESTION AND THEIR RESPONSE WAS...WE WILL THINK ABOUT IT!!!!

IT WAS ALSO ANNOUNCED TODAY ON THE NEWS THAT THE "KENNEDY HEALTH CARE BILL"....HAS WRITTEN INTO IT THAT CONGRESS WILL BE (FROM THIS GREAT HEALTH CARE PLAN)....EXEMPT!!!!

HOW ABOUT THOSE APPLES.....NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR OBAMA OR CONGRESS.....BUT "OK" FOR THE REST OF US?????????

WE....THE AMERICANS NEED TO STOP THIS...ASAP!!!!....AND REVOLT...THIS IS WRONG!!!! IF YOU AGREE PLEASE PASS THIS ON....AND "REVOLT"!!!

20090723-02 14:09 SteveB Re: The Health Care Question

Dear Phil,

I like it! What a mess our "leaders" are making of this issue!

I'm convinced that nothing will get done right until we stop the campaign finance corruption. Maybe we need a constitutional amendment that would allow ZERO contributions of any kind over, say, \$100, and limit every single office—Senate, House, and President—to just one 4-year term, with never a re-election! Start fresh every time.

Maybe then they would stop selling the American people down the river! What we need is a true revolution. I'm sick of the Republicans and their demagoguery and their total inability to do anything right. I'm fed up with Democrats and their supreme ability to do everything wrong. I'm sick of the devotion of both parties to free trade, free immigration, and anyone other than the American people! And I don't mean just white American people, or white American people with guns, or giant corporations.

I'm heading for Bolivia in October! Take care, Phil. Hope you're having a great summer.

20090726-01 13:57 SteveB "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear Ben,

I see no excuse for this whatsoever! Why don't they just have one of those Texas oil pipeline companies build a big pipeline from the mouth of the nearby Mississippi and divert that water now being wasted into the sea? It will still get to the sea eventually anyway, but it might as well stop by Texas for a little vacation. What a ridiculously easy problem to solve. Granted...they needed to start on this project years ago, but why not do it now that the motivation is in plain sight? Get with it, Texans! Else move to where the water is.

"Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast" by AP

July 25, 2009, (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/32145286/ns/weather/t/drought-turning-texas-dry-toast/>)

(Water restrictions lead to extreme conservation efforts.)

DALLAS—Off-duty police officers are patrolling streets, looking for people illegally watering their lawns and gardens. Residents are encouraged to stealthily rat out water scofflaws on a 24-hour hot line. One Texas lake has dipped so low that stolen cars dumped years ago are peeking up through the waterline.

The nation's most drought-stricken state is deep-frying under relentless 100-degree days and waterways are drying up, especially in the hardest-hit area covering about 350 miles across south-central Texas. That's making folks worried about the water supply—and how long it might last.

"The water table's fallin' and fallin' and fallin,' like a whole lot of other people around here," said Wendell McLeod, general manager of Liberty Hill Water Supply Corp. and a 60-year resident of the town northwest of Austin. "This is the worst I can recall seeing it. I tell you, it's just pretty bleak."

There are 230 Texas public water systems under mandatory water restrictions, including those in and near San Antonio, Dallas, Houston and Austin. Another 60 or so have asked for voluntary cutbacks. Water levels are down significantly in lakes, rivers and wells around Texas.

Liberty Hill's Web site urges its 1,400 or so residents in all-red letters to stop using unnecessary water with this plea: "If we follow these strict guidelines, we may have drinking water." The town's shortage eased some with the arrival this week of 35,000 gallons a day from a nearby water system, but residents are still worried.

77 Texas counties in severe drought

According to drought statistics released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 77 of Texas' 254 counties are in extreme or exceptional drought, the most severe categories. No other state in the continental U.S. has even one area in those categories. John Nielsen-Gammon, the Texas state climatologist at Texas A&M University, said he expects harsh drought conditions to last at least another month.

In the bone-dry San Antonio-Austin area, the conditions that started in 2007 are being compared to the devastating drought of the 1950s. There have been 36 days of 100 degrees or more this year in an area where there are usually closer to 12.

Among the most obvious problems are the lack of water in Lake Travis and Lake Buchanan near Austin, two massive reservoirs along the Colorado River that provide drinking water for more than 1 million people and also are popular boating and swimming spots. Streams and tributaries that feed the lakes have "all but dried up," according to the Lower Colorado River Authority.

Lake Travis is more empty than full, down 54 percent. All but one of the 12 boating ramps are closed because they no longer reach the water, and the last may go soon. The receding waters have even revealed old stolen cars shoved into the lake years ago, authorities said.

There's no threat to the area's drinking water supply, Rose said, but there are increased boating hazards from the "sometimes islands" that pop up when the water's low, increased risk of wildfires, and more interactions between humans and wildlife.

"We're seeing deer and armadillo and other animals in places we don't typically see them," he said. "They're starving for water and food."

At the Oasis [ironic], a popular restaurant with a deck overlooking Lake Travis, the islands are even starting to grow heavy vegetation.

"You can see all the white on the rocks where the waterline used to be," said Becca Torbert, a server at the restaurant who says the boat traffic is down, but the water is down even more.

San Antonio policing water offenders

San Antonio, which relies on the Edwards Aquifer for its water, is enduring its driest 23-month period since weather data was recorded starting in 1885, according to the National Weather Service. The aquifer's been hovering just above 640 feet deep, and if it dips below that the city will issue its harshest watering restrictions yet.

The city's not just sitting around, though. A total of 30 off-duty officers and other employees are working overtime to patrol the city looking for people illegally watering. Since April, about 1,500 people have been cited and ordered to pay fines ranging from \$50 to over \$1,000. Residents also are encouraged to rat out water scofflaws on the 24-hour Water Waste Hot Line.

"We don't go out in a car with sirens blazing or anything like that, but we do take the report and send out a letter saying 'You've been reported for not following water rules,'" said Anne Hayden, spokeswoman for the San Antonio Water System.

There have been smatterings of light rain in the area this week, but not enough to make much difference. But hopefully, the end is in sight. Victor Murphy, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said an El Nino system is developing in the Pacific Ocean. That phenomenon is usually followed by increased rainfall in Texas in the fall.

McLeod, from Liberty City, hopes his little town can hang on till then. "I don't know how we can," he said. "I try not to look too far ahead."

20090727-01 13:18 DaveM Fw: "We the People Are Coming"

Letter read on Glenn Beck's show.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Democrat or Republican, most of us would agree, largely, in what she is asking for!

The following letter read on Glenn Beck's show is rapidly circulating around the country. Many Americans everywhere identify with this 53 year old woman. She has given us a voice. Please forward to your friends.

June 18, 2009, 10:01 pm

The woman who sent the long email letter below to Glenn Beck made her name known to him in a telephone interview the next night. She is Janet Contreras, a 53 year old woman in Phoenix, Arizona, a citizen fed up with the House, Senate, Administration, Democrats, Republicans.

During the interview she said "I don't want this. I don't want this fight, Glenn. I don't have the time, energy or financial resources for it but that no longer matters. It no longer matters if I'm able or if I want this fight. I have to take it on. It's not a matter of choice anymore, which is why I wrote the letter."

"The other part of this is that the invisible people who can and do represent my views need to come out of the shadows. I don't know who they are. They're going to get washed away with the rest of them if they don't have the courage to stand up against the Administration and those members of the House and Senate who are destroying our country and our values."

June 17, 2009

GLENN BECK: I got a letter from a woman in Arizona. She writes an open letter to our nation's leadership:

I am a home grown American citizen, 53, registered Democrat all my life. Before the last presidential election I registered as a Republican because I no longer felt the Democratic Party represents my views or works to pursue issues important to me. Now I no longer feel the Republican Party represents my views or works to solve issues important to me. The fact is I no longer feel any political party or representative in Washington represents my views or works to solve the issues important to me.

There must be someone. Please tell me who you are. Please stand up and tell me you are there and you are willing to fight for our Constitution as it was written. Please stand up now. You might ask what are my views and issues that I feel so horribly disenfranchised by both major political parties. Well, these briefly are my views and the issues for which I seek representation:

1. Illegal Immigration: I want you to stop coddling illegal immigrants and secure our borders. Close the underground tunnels. Stop the violence and the trafficking in drugs and people. No amnesty. Never again. Been there, done that, no resolution. PS, I am not a racist. This isn't to be confused with legal immigration.
2. The TARP Bill: I want it repealed and I want no further funding supplied to it. We told you no, but you did it anyway. I want the remaining unfunded 95% repealed. Freeze or repeal TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program) — the Wall Street handout bill, under President Bush, to address the subprime mortgage crisis, to purchase or insure up to \$700 billion of "troubled" assets.
3. Czars: I want the circumvention of our checks and balances stopped immediately. Fire the 37 czars. No more czars. Government officials answer to the process, not to the president. Stop trampling on our Constitution and honor it.

4. Cap and Trade. The debate on global warming is not over. There is more to say.

5. Universal Health Care. I will not be rushed into another expensive decision. Don't you dare try to pass this in the middle of the night and go on break. Slow down.

6. Growing Government Control. I want States Rights and sovereignty fully restored. I want less government in my life, not more. Shrink it down. Mind your own business. You have enough to take care of with your real obligations. Start there.

7. ACORN. I do not want ACORN and its affiliates in charge of our 2010 census. I also want them investigated. I also do not want mandatory escrow fees contributed to them on every real estate deal that closes. Stop the funding to ACORN and its affiliates pending impartial audits and investigations. I do not trust them taking the census over with our taxpayer money. I want all our money to them stopped. Face up to the allegations against them and get them resolved before getting any more involved with them. If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, hello.. Stop protecting your political buddies. You work for us, the people. Investigate.

8. Redistribution of Wealth. No, no, no. I work for my money. It is mine. I have always worked for people with more money than I have because they gave me jobs. That is the only redistribution of wealth that I will support. I never got a job from a poor person. Why do you want me to hate my employers? Why? What do you have against shareholders making a profit?

9. Charitable Contributions. Although I never got a job from a poor person, I have helped many in need. Charity belongs in our local communities, where we know our needs best and can use our local talent and local resources. Butt out, please. We want to do it ourselves.

10. Corporate Bailouts. Knock it off. Sink or swim like the rest of us. If there are hard times ahead we'll be better off just getting into it and letting the strong survive. Quick and painful. Have you ever ripped off a Band-Aid? We will pull together. Great things happen in America under great hardship. Give us the chance to innovate. We cannot disappoint you more than you have disappointed us.

11. Transparency and Accountability. How about it? No, really, how about it? Let's have it. Let's say we give the buzzwords a rest and have some straight honest talk. Please try. Please stop manipulating and trying to appease me with clever wording. I am not the idiot you take me for. Stop sneaking around and meeting in back rooms, making deals with your friends. It will only be a prelude to criminal investigation of you. Stop hiding things from us.

12. Unprecedented Quick Spending. Stop it now. Take a breath.

Listen to the people. Let's just slow down and get some input from some non politicians on the subject. Stop making everything an emergency. Stop speed reading our bills into law.

I am not an activist. I am not a community organizer. Nor am I a terrorist, militant or violent person. I am a parent and grandparent. I work. I'm busy. I'm busy and I'm tired. I thought we elected competent people to take care of the business of government so we could work, raise our families, pay our bills, have recreation, complain about taxes, endure our hardships, pursue our goals, cut our lawn, wash our cars on weekends, be responsible contributing members of society and teach our children to be the same—all while living in the home of the free and land of the brave. I entrusted you with upholding the Constitution. I believed in the checks and balances to keep from getting far off course.. What happened? You are very far off course.

Do you really think I find humor in the hiring of a speed reader to unintelligently ramble through a bill you signed into law without knowing what it contained? I do not. It is a mockery of the responsibility I have entrusted to you. It is a slap in the face. I am not laughing at your arrogance.

Why is it that I feel you would not trust me to make a single decision about my own life and how I would live it, but you expect I should trust you with the debt you have, without caring or conscience, laid on all of us and our children. We did not want the TARP bill. We said no. We would repeal it if we could. I am sure we still can. There is such urgency and recklessness in all of your recent spending.

From my perspective, it seems all of you have gone insane. I also know I am far from alone in these feelings. Do you honestly feel your current pursuits have merit to patriotic Americans? We want it to stop. We want to put the brakes on everything that is being rushed passed us and forced upon us. We want our voice back. You have forced us to put our lives on hold to straighten out the mess you are making.

We will have to give up our vacations, time spent with our children, any relaxation time we may have had and money we cannot afford—to spend on you—to bring our concerns to Washington. Our president knows all the buzzwords are unsustainable. No kidding. How many tens of thousands of dollars did the focus group cost to come up with those buzzwords? We don't want your overpriced words. Stop treating us like morons.

We want all of you to stop focusing on your reelection and do the job we want done, not the job you want done or the job your party wants done. You work for us and at this rate I guarantee you not for long—because we are coming. We will be heard and we will be represented.

You think we're so busy with our lives we will never come for you? We are the former silent majority, all who quietly work, pay taxes, obey the law, vote, save money, keep our noses to the grindstone—and we are now closely looking at you and the huge mess you created for all of us. You have awakened in us the patriotic spirit, so strong and so powerful that had been sleeping too long. You have pushed us too far. Our numbers are great. They will surprise you. For every one of us who come after you there will be hundreds more who could not come.

Unlike you we have their trust. We will represent them honestly. Rest assured they will be at the polls on voting day to usher you out of office. We have cancelled vacations. We will use our last few dollars saved. We will find the representation among us and a grassroots campaign will flourish. We didn't ask for this fight. But the gloves are off. We are very angry.

You will represent us or you will be replaced with someone who will. There are candidates among us who will rise like a Phoenix from the ashes you have made of our constitution.

Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian.. Understand this. We don't care. Political parties are meaningless to us. Patriotic Americans are willing to do right by us and our Constitution and that is all that matters to us now.

We are going to fire all of you who abuse power and seek more. It is not your power. It is ours and we want it back. We entrusted you with it and you abused it. You are dishonorable. You are dishonest. As Americans we are ashamed of you. You have brought shame to us in front of the whole world. If you are not representing the needs of your constituency loudly and consistently, in spite of the objections of your party, you will be fired. Did you hear that? We no longer care about your political parties. You need to be loyal to us, not to them. Because we will fire you and they cannot save you.

If you do or can represent me, my issues, my views, please stand up. Make your identity known. You need to make some noise about it. Speak up. I need to know who you are. If you do not speak up, you will be herded out with the rest of the sheep and we will replace the whole damn congress if need be one by one. We are coming. Are we coming for you? Who do you represent? What do you represent? Listen. Because we are coming. We the people are coming.

20090727-02	16:11	SteveB	Re: "We the People Are Coming"
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My answer to "We, the People Are Coming!":

Glenn Beck is a blithering idiot. Glenn Beck is probably a fascist and a lunatic. I am sick of his ravings.

Not that I disagree with all of this alleged "letter" (which he probably concocted himself). Neither would Obama.

But ACORN? Seriously? It's strange that this tiny (even if legitimate) issue, which is Glenn's and the radical right's #1 conspiracy theory of the moment, would be given such prominence in this "letter".

And where is any mention of the most important, fundamental issue of all—the nearly total corruption of our elected officials via campaign finance and lobbying by powerful special interests like the multi-national corporations which have shipped our jobs to China and Mexico, the AMA, the NRA, the insurance industry, the Wall Street bankers, the rich (who already pay the lowest taxes in the industrialized world), etc., etc.?

ACORN indeed!

This end-of-the world, doomsday, alarmist screaming and ranting, led by such idiot grab-any- conspiracy-theory-for-ratings crazies as Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and Dick Cheney threatens our freedom and democracy almost as much as the buying and selling of our elected politicians.

But I suppose Glenn would say that means I don't care about America. But at least I have no vested interest in trying to shout life back into a dying, old-fashioned media like (haha) radio or (bigger haha) Fox News or (biggest haha) my own ratings and giant bank accounts! Can Rush and Glenn say the same?

20090806-01	02:56	Charlie	"Flying Spaghetti Monster"
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An oldie but goodie. Seeing the crazy far-right fundos ("fundas?") come out of the woodwork with Health (s)care and Obama birthing reminded me to revisit the origins of the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

Ah, a breath of (logical) air. How refreshing!

"Flying Spaghetti Monster" by Bobby Henderson

Sept. 15, 2006 (<http://www.venganza.org/about/open-letter/>)

Open Letter To Kansas School Board from Bobby Henderson, concerned citizen

I am writing you with much concern after having read of your hearing to decide whether the alternative theory of Intelligent Design should be taught along with the theory of Evolution. I think we can all agree that it is important for students to hear multiple viewpoints so they can choose for themselves the theory that makes the most sense to them. I am concerned, however, that students will only hear one theory of Intelligent Design.

Let us remember that there are multiple theories of Intelligent Design. I and many others around the world are of the strong belief that the universe was created by a Flying Spaghetti Monster. It was He who created all that we see and all that we feel. We feel strongly that the overwhelming scientific evidence pointing towards evolutionary processes is nothing but a coincidence, put in place by Him.

It is for this reason that I'm writing you today, to formally request that this alternative theory be taught in your schools, along with the other two theories. In fact, I will go so far as to say, if you do not agree to do this, we will be forced to proceed with legal action. I'm sure you see where we are coming from. If the Intelligent Design theory is not based on faith, but instead another scientific theory, as is claimed, then you must also allow our theory to be taught, as it is also based on science, not on faith.

Some find that hard to believe, so it may be helpful to tell you a little more about our beliefs. We have evidence that a Flying Spaghetti Monster created the universe. None of us, of course, were around to see it, but we have written accounts of it. We have several lengthy volumes explaining all details of His power. Also, you may be surprised to hear that there are over 10 million of us, and growing. We tend to be very secretive, as many people claim our beliefs are not substantiated by observable evidence.

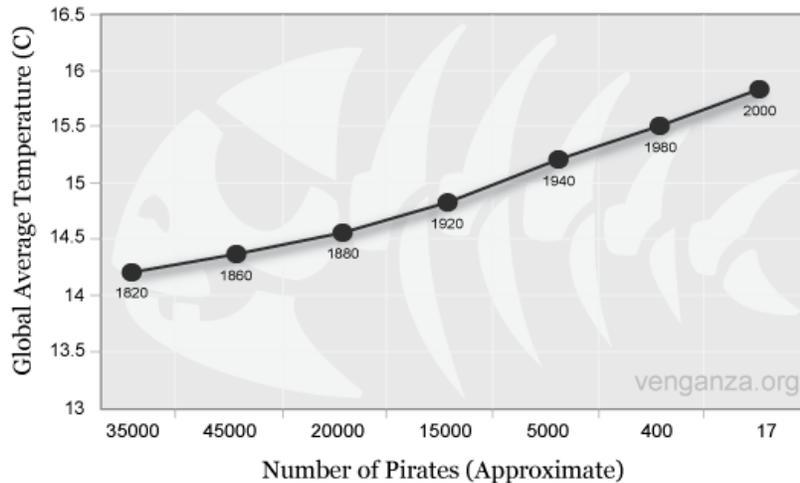
What these people don't understand is that He built the world to make us think the earth is older than it really is. For example, a scientist may perform a carbon-dating process on an artifact. He finds that approximately 75% of the Carbon-14 has decayed by electron emission to Nitrogen-14, and infers that this artifact is approximately 10,000 years old, as the half-life of Carbon-14 appears to be 5,730 years. But what our scientist does not realize is that every time he makes a measurement, the Flying Spaghetti Monster is there changing the results with His Noodly Appendage. We have numerous texts that describe in detail how this can be possible and the reasons why He does this. He is of course invisible and can pass through normal matter with ease.

I'm sure you now realize how important it is that your students are taught this alternate theory. It is absolutely imperative that they realize that observable evidence is at the discretion of a Flying Spaghetti Monster. Furthermore, it is disrespectful to teach our beliefs without wearing His chosen outfit, which of course is full pirate regalia. I cannot stress

the importance of this enough, and unfortunately cannot describe in detail why this must be done as I fear this letter is already becoming too long. The concise explanation is that He becomes angry if we don't.

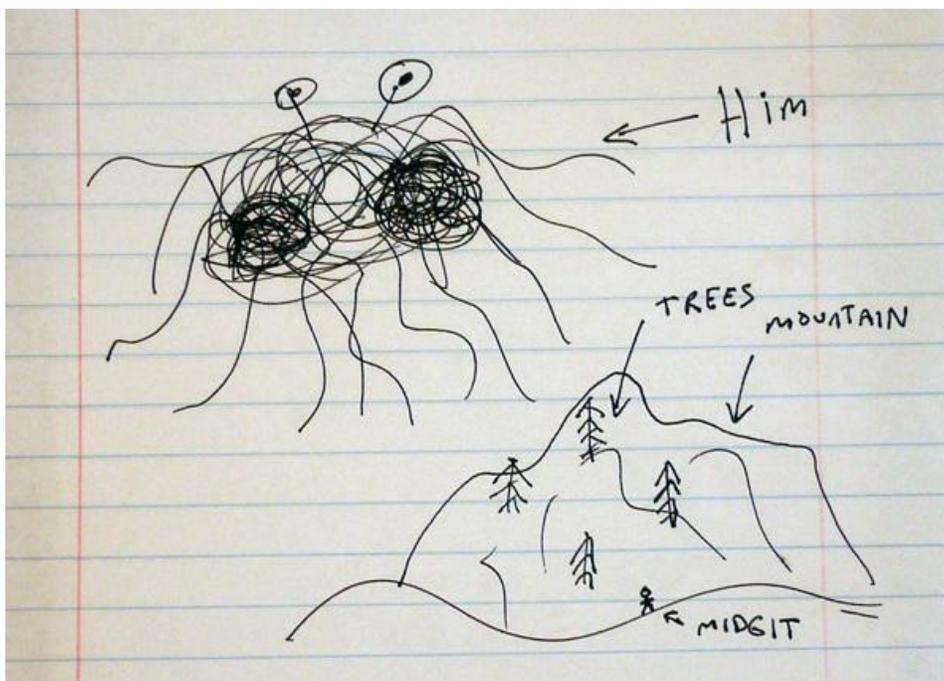
You may be interested to know that global warming, earthquakes, hurricanes, and other natural disasters are a direct effect of the shrinking numbers of Pirates since the 1800s. For your interest, I have included a graph of the approximate number of pirates versus the average global temperature over the last 200 years. As you can see, there is a statistically significant inverse relationship between pirates and global temperature.

Global Average Temperature Vs. Number of Pirates



In conclusion, thank you for taking the time to hear our views and beliefs. I hope I was able to convey the importance of teaching this theory to your students. We will of course be able to train the teachers in this alternate theory. I am eagerly awaiting your response, and hope dearly that no legal action will need to be taken. I think we can all look forward to the time when these three theories are given equal time in our science classrooms across the country, and eventually the world; One third time for Intelligent Design, one third time for Flying Spaghetti Monsterism (Pastafarianism), and one third time for logical conjecture based on overwhelming observable evidence.

I have included an artistic drawing of Him creating a mountain, trees, and a midget. Remember, we are all His creatures.



20090806-02 11:05 SteveB Re: "Flying Spaghetti Monster"

PRICELESS! BUT I DEMAND EQUAL TIME FOR THE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH OF STEVE!!!! OTHERWISE, ALL ARE DAMNED!

20090825-01 10:25 SteveB "Attack on Obama Riles Beck's Advertisers"

"Fair and Balanced"—haha!

"Attack on Obama Riles Beck's Advertisers" by David Bauder, AP

Aug. 23, 2009, (<http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D9A8NQ200>)

Glenn Beck returns to Fox News Channel on Monday after a vacation with fewer companies willing to advertise on his show than when he left, part of the fallout from calling President Barack Obama a racist.

A total of 33 Fox advertisers, including Wal-Mart Stores Inc., CVS Caremark, Clorox and Sprint, directed that their commercials not air on Beck's show, according to the companies and ColorofChange.org, a group that promotes political action among blacks and launched a campaign to get advertisers to abandon him. That's more than a dozen more than were identified a week ago.

While it's unclear what effect, if any, this will ultimately have on Fox and Beck, it is already making advertisers skittish about hawking their wares within the most opinionated cable TV shows.

The Clorox Co., a former Beck advertiser, now says that "we do not want to be associated with inflammatory speech used by either liberal or conservative talk show hosts." The maker of bleach and household cleaners said in a statement that it has decided not to advertise on political talk shows.

The shows present a dilemma for advertisers, who usually like a "safe" environment for their messages. The Olbermanns, Hannitys, O'Reillys, Maddows and Becks of the TV world are more likely to say something that will anger a viewer, who might take it out on sponsors.

They also host the most-watched programs on their networks.

"This is a good illustration of that conundrum," said Rich Hallabran, spokesman for UPS Stores, which he said has temporarily halted buying ads on Fox News Channel as a whole. Beck can bring the eyeballs. With the health care debate raising political temperatures, his show had its biggest week ever right before his vacation, averaging 2.4 million viewers each day, according to Nielsen Media Research.

He was actually on another Fox show July 28 when he referred to Obama as a racist with "a deep-seated hatred for white people." The network immediately distanced itself from Beck's statement, but Beck didn't. He used his radio show the next day to explain why he believed that. He would not comment for this article, spokesman Matthew Hiltzik said.

ColorofChange.org quickly targeted companies whose ads had appeared during Beck's show, telling them what he had said and seeking a commitment to drop him. The goal is to make Beck a liability, said James Rucker, the organization's executive director.

"They have a toxic asset," Rucker said. "They can either clean it up or get rid of it."

It's not immediately clear how many of the companies actually knew they were advertising on Beck's show. Sometimes commercial time is chosen for a specific show, but often it is bought on a rotation basis, meaning the network sprinkles the ads throughout the day on its own schedule. Sometimes ads appear by mistake; Best Buy said it bought commercial time for earlier in the day, and one of its ads unexpectedly appeared in Beck's show.

One company, CVS Caremark, said it advertises on Fox but hadn't said anything about Beck. Now it has told its advertising agency to inform Fox that it wanted no commercials on Beck.

"We support vigorous debate, especially around policy issues that affect millions of Americans, but we expect it to be informed, inclusive and respectful," said spokeswoman Carolyn Castel.

Besides the unpredictability of the opinionated cable hosts, the rapid pace of today's wired world complicates decisions on where to place ads, said Kathleen Dunleavy, a spokeswoman for Sprint. She said she was surprised at how fast the Beck issue spread across social media outlets and how quickly advertiser names were attached to it.

UPS' Hallabran said the decision to pull commercials "should not be interpreted as we are permanently withdrawing our advertising from Fox." He said the company wants to reach viewers with a wide spectrum of opinions.

Except for UPS Stores, there's no evidence that any advertisers who say they don't want to be on Beck's show are leaving Fox. Network spokeswoman Irena Briganti said the companies have simply requested the ads be moved elsewhere and that Fox hasn't lost any revenue.

She wouldn't say whether Fox was benefiting from any anti-anti-Beck backlash, with companies looking to support him. Some Beck supporters have urged fans to express their displeasure at companies for abandoning their man.

Beck supporters have suggested that retaliation might have something to do with ColorofChange.org's campaign. One of the group's founders, Van Jones, now works in the Obama administration and has been criticized by Beck. But Rucker said Jones has nothing to do with ColorofChange.org now and didn't even know about the campaign before it started.

Beck's strong ratings—even at 5 p.m. EDT he often outdraws whatever CNN and MSNBC show in prime-time—make it unlikely Beck is going anywhere even as the list of advertisers avoiding him approaches three dozen.

But it could mean advertising time becomes cheaper on his show than such a large audience would normally command. Some of his show's advertisers last week included a male enhancement pill, a law firm looking to sue on behalf of asbestos victims, a company selling medical supplies to diabetics and a water filter company.

Rucker said ColorofChange.org has contacted about 60 companies regarding Beck, and is heartened by the response.

"It's causing a certain conversation around Beck, which I think is important," he said.

20090903-01	11:40	SteveB	"Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"
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"Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?" *DailyMail*

April 10, 2009, (<http://www.greenpacks.org/2009/04/10/salar-de-uyuni-will-lithium-turn-bolivia-into-the-next-middle-east/>)

The landscape of Salar de Uyuni is a breathtaking sight to behold for travelers from all around the world who go through plenty to witness the true splendor of these salt-filled plains. But those reflective plains which mirror the sky and stretch endlessly as photographer's delight, could very soon turn into the next Middle East of the world- brazen, abrasive, dry and exploited land, not just home of a huge environmental struggle but also the next big political conflict.

But why is it that the vast and seemingly never-ending landscape hidden away from the world for many centuries, have now become a potential minefield for conflict? Lithium— the element that powers all the green cars, laptops, mobiles and every other fancy gadget you own, is lying in plenty under this surface.

For every automobile maker in the world, there is absolutely no doubt that those who control the supply and production of Lithium, will dictate the economy of the world in the next few decades, And it's this immense potential hidden under these salt flats that is attracting the world today.

So what is the problem in digging it up, you ask? After all, this will mean zero-emission vehicles and greener tomorrow. Well, yes and no at the same time. All the Lithium might help us build the greener roads for tomorrow, but it will come at a very heavy price for Bolivia. The salt flats will no doubt be destroyed, mining in the region will suck up the last drop of water and before you know it, this would turn into an over-exploited and useless wasteland. Something no local resident would approve of.

While the local government will no doubt hold off world pressure for a while— as it is unwilling to trade its natural treasure for cash at this point, one is forced to believe this will happen at some point in the future anyway.

Hatred for the West and a respect for the locals means that the Bolivian government is taking an absolute no-nonsense policy from anyone right now and is pretty clear that Salar de Uyuni “belongs to the people of Bolivia and not to the world”. Despite that, it will be interesting to see how long they will sit on the cash pot with growing hunger and unemployment and even if they do.

Some say that using this vast stretch of land and extracting all the speculated 5-9 million tons of Lithium underneath is worth the localized destruction as it will help give cleaner roads and skies to the entire planet. “Small sacrifice for the sake of greater good of environment” the experts say, but we sure hope it’s going to be a choice that will be purely left to Bolivia and the people of Salar de Uyuni.







[20090903-02](#) 12:31 SteveG Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"

Dear SteveB,

My first thought when hearing lithium went to lithium carbonate for bi-polar disorders. Lithium for batteries also makes sense.

Reportedly around San Antonio there are large lithium deposits also. All makes life interesting.

In regards to your email about the trailer hitch and the possessions you own actually owning you - I think you are right.

We are depleting our possessions to what fits in a Chevy Impala and heading south to the ocean to become beachcombers.

[20090903-03](#) 12:35 SteveB Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"

from SteveG:

We are depleting our possessions to what fits in a Chevy Impala and heading south to the ocean to become beachcombers.

Dear SteveG,

Seriously? Cool! Where?

[20090903-04](#) 12:43 SteveG Re: "Salar de Uyuni: Will Lithium Turn Bolivia into the Next Middle East?"

Dear SteveB,

We are going to the Daytona area the first part of October; taking a train ride in December from Deland, FL to Pasco, WA and back. That is as far as we have gotten.

[20090914-01](#) 09:33 Ben Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear SteveB,

But think about the diameter of the pipe to move enough WATER for 77 counties. And unless you're planning to move it by truck from the pipe head, think about the branching. Granted some counties here don't have a lot of people...

Anyway, what really bugs ME is that individual investors and corporations are allowed to buy up water rights and pump huge quantities of water out of the aquifers underneath their land, and then sell it back to the people in the surrounding region. It was RAIN when it fell.

[20090914-02](#) 11:32 SteveB Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

The Chunnel consists of 2 25' diameter "pipes" and 1 16' "pipe". It runs for 31.4 miles under the English Channel and had to be drilled out of solid rock. I'm proposing a "pipe" more like the Alaska Pipeline, which sits on the surface.

At New Orleans, the flow of the Mississippi is roughly 4.5 million gallons of fresh water per second. I propose siphoning off about 10,000 gal./sec. of this flow for the pipeline described below.

I estimate that just one 25' pipe could carry 864 million gallons per day, maybe more. All of New York City (8.2 million people) uses about 1 billion gallons per day.

So my pipe could put a dent in any drought.

[20090914-03](#) 11:56 SteveB Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear Ben,

Think about it and do the math. The distance ain't that far, there ain't much of an elevation difference, and it wouldn't actually take that big a pipe. It could even be an open stream/aqueduct for much of the distance, though I tend to prefer the pipe for purity/security/evaporation/pressure reasons and, besides, Texans are world-famous for being able to build such pipelines.

I say it's time to get creative with a lot of this cr*p! Cities, transport, energy, lifestyles, birth-rates, unrestrained growth, and much more need to be redesigned NOW!

Better if we all suffer a little now than millions or billions die an excruciating death in the near future, I say. But, of course, we are collectively too pu*s*y to actually even attempt to solve our problems. Maybe I'm a radical, but how is it not time for radical solutions if our children and grandchildren are not to mightily suffer? Are we frickin' blind????

Power to the people!

20090914-04 12:32 SteveB Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear Ben,

The Chunnel consists of 2 25' diameter "pipes" and 1 16' "pipe". It runs for 31.4 miles under the English Channel and had to be drilled out of solid rock. I'm proposing a "pipe" more like the Alaska Pipeline, which sits on the surface.

At New Orleans, the flow of the Mississippi is roughly 4.5 million gallons of fresh water per second. I propose siphoning off about 10,000 gal./sec. of this flow for the pipeline described below.

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20090914-05 12:49 Ben Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear SteveB,

Well, it's grand. Of course, New York doesn't maintain a herd. And the Chunnel is only 30+ miles. It's 1100 miles across Texas. The 25 foot pipe might carry enough water, but distributing it would be—interesting. Trucks? Golly. Lotta fuel there. Pick it up in 5 gallon jugs? Ditto. And—where does this pipeline end? Texas political infighting would make THAT one look mild; folks would get shot just over the debate.

Seriously: a long-term drought in a place this spread out, which believes it should be doing agribusiness is some of its more arid regions, is a nightmarish thought. And, of course, that is exactly what's happening to our corner of this little planet.

I told my wife twenty years ago that probably within our lifetimes, people would be shooting each other down here, over water. It will probably happen as I predicted. Why am I not vigorously looking for someplace else to live...? Beaver Island is sounding pretty good, stuck out there in the middle of the largest fresh water system in the world... but... dunno about those winters... even if it IS more water At least I doubt either my sister or my brother would be competing with me for that particular part of Mom's estate...

20090914-06 13:16 SteveB Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear Ben,

So the glass is half empty, huh? LOL!

The funny thing about Beaver is that it is exactly the same as the first time I ever went there...what...about 30 years ago. The ferry, the town, the stores, the Shamrock, the island, the people...all the same. That's the way it is in a place that is so economically disadvantaged. Heaven!

That's what I love about the Third World...people get by, have more joy, and things don't change very fast. Though this is less and less true.

20090914-07 13:21 Ben Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear SteveB,

My former boss at Commodore, Allan Branch—from Tasmania—visited us for a few days a couple weeks ago. Brilliant guy, and a lot of fun. LOVES his home state, for just those reasons.

Talked to another Aussie a couple days ago, a transplant to the U.S. in NYC working for Major League Baseball. Mentioned Allan to him as an interesting temporal coincidence; he was tickled and said much the same thing about Tasmania. His parents visited Hobart and it was like stepping back in time a century or half a century, depending on how you looked at it. Relaxed pace, beautiful and unspoiled (except all the Abos have been killed off), great resources, Victorian lifestyle. "There's time, and there's Tasmania time." I understand what you're saying. I have to wonder if I could be as happy, or more happy, in such a place all day long, every day.

Two weeks in Hawaii last summer made me think maybe I could. Certainly is relaxed and beautiful out there. But—six months of winter, with sporadic interruptions of communication and support from the outside world. Kinda scary, as I get older.

20090914-08 14:40 SteveB Re: "Drought Turning Texas as Dry as Toast"

Dear Ben,

I couldn't take Beaver all year round! But an exciting city of 1.5 million in the tropics, surrounded by natural beauty, and full of beautiful women? Now yer talkin' my language! And, actually, here in Montana in a little town with winter life is also good. (And since there are only a million of us here in this huge landscape, life is also sustainable.) As I'm sure you know, where you are ain't nearly as important as who you are and who you have around. Given some minimal standard of living, of course.

20090920-01 12:50 SteveB Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear K. E. Saavik Ford:

I really appreciate your help! I have thought about it and I have thought about it. From my IQ tests, they tell me I'm a genius, but I've always doubted it! Now I know why. Physics makes me feel stupid.

But, our Milky Way is headed for a collision with Andromeda in the far future, right? (At least I have read that.) And we see evidence of many colliding galaxies in our universe, right? And that is a "local effect", right? Otherwise, everything would be expanding apart. So local gravity can, at times, overcome the expansion of the universe, right?

Then tell me how it is that the most colossal explosion in the history of the universe somehow had no "local effect" that we can detect? It seems to me that the explosion must have occurred in this conventional 4-dimensional space and, therefore, would have left a colossal hole in the fabric of space-time that would be very detectable. Right? If the universe is truly expanding, then there is no reason for this "hole" to do anything but expand also, not somehow fill-in.

Doesn't the fact that we can't find this hole tell us something very fundamental and important about the universe that we have heretofore missed???? (And please understand that I am not implying that the missing thing is God! That's a subject that is way beyond me, though it is part of the subject of my epic poem.)

Again, I really appreciate your help and patience. Maybe Mr. Tyson and others have some ideas on this too?

Besides, measurements from the WMAP probe seem to tentatively indicate that the universe is flat, right? If all the dots on an inflating balloon start in the same place, they end up in the same place. The inflation, alone, takes them nowhere.

I'm still seeking the "big hole" somewhere in these four dimensions. My theory is that this missing hole is much more mysterious than black holes!

20091005-01 19:53 SteveB 2009 UN List of Best Countries to Live In

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

The US is 13th, Uruguay is 50th, St. Lucia is 69th, the smuggling state of Paraguay is 101st, and Bolivia is right down there with the African countries at 113th, just ahead of Mongolia (at least Bolivia beat Haiti, which was 149th). To me, the reasons that Bolivia is 113th are largely the things which endear her to me.

But, of course, the Republicans think the U.S. is #1, with no improvements needed. LOL!

20091010-01	09:50	SteveB	"Electron Band Structure In Germanium, My A*s"
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Finally! An honest college research paper!

<http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~kovar/hall.html>

Electron Band Structure In Germanium, My A*s

Abstract: The exponential dependence of resistivity on temperature in germanium is found to be a great big lie. My careful theoretical modeling and painstaking experimentation reveal 1) that my equipment is crap, as are all the available texts on the subject and 2) that this whole exercise was a complete waste of my time.

Introduction

Electrons in germanium are confined to well-defined energy bands that are separated by "forbidden regions" of zero charge-carrier density. You can read about it yourself if you want to, although I don't recommend it. You'll have to wade through an obtuse, convoluted discussion about considering an arbitrary number of non-coupled harmonic-oscillator potentials and taking limits and so on. The upshot is that if you heat up a sample of germanium, electrons will jump from a non-conductive energy band to a conductive one, thereby creating a measurable change in resistivity. This relation between temperature and resistivity can be shown to be exponential in certain temperature regimes by waving your hands and chanting "to first order".

Experiment procedure

I sifted through the box of germanium crystals and chose the one that appeared to be the least cracked. Then I soldered wires onto the crystal in the spots shown in figure 2b of Lab Handout 32. Do you have any idea how hard it is to solder wires to germanium? I'll tell you: real goddamn hard. The solder simply won't stick, and you can forget about getting any of the grad students in the solid state labs to help you out.

Once the wires were in place, I attached them as appropriate to the second-rate equipment I scavenged from the back of the lab, none of which worked properly. I soon wised up and swiped replacements from the well-stocked research labs. This is how they treat undergrads around here: they give you broken tools and then don't understand why you don't get any results.

In order to control the temperature of the germanium, I attached the crystal to a copper rod, the upper end of which was attached to a heating coil and the lower end of which was dipped in a thermos of liquid nitrogen. Midway through the project, the thermos began leaking. That's right: I pay a cool ten grand a quarter to come here, and yet they can't spare the five bucks to ensure that I have a working thermos.

Results

Check this sh*t out (Fig. 1). That's bona fide, 100%-real data, my friends. I took it myself over the course of two weeks. And this was not a leisurely two weeks, either; I busted my ass day and night in order to provide you with nothing but the best data possible. Now, let's look a bit more closely at this data, remembering that it is absolutely first-rate. Do you see the exponential dependence? I sure don't. I see a bunch of crap. Christ, this was such a waste of my time.

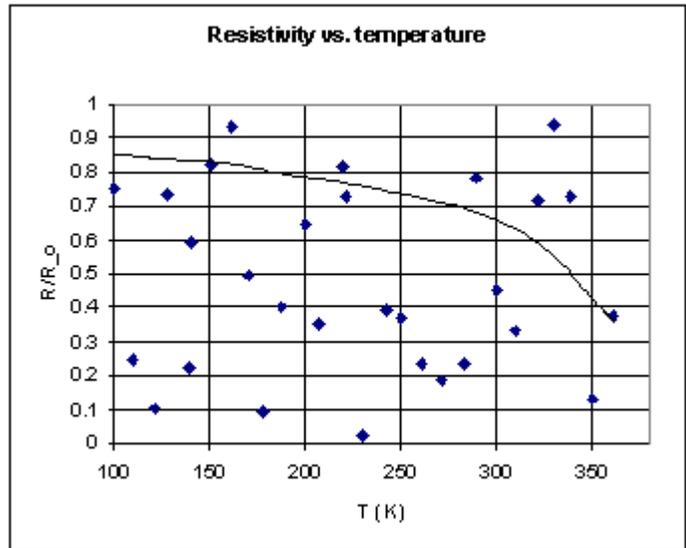


Fig. 1: Check this sh*t out.

Banking on my hopes that whoever grades this will just look at the pictures, I drew an exponential through my noise. I believe the apparent legitimacy is enhanced by the fact that I used a complicated computer program to make the fit. I understand this is the same process by which the top quark was discovered.

Conclusion

Going into physics was the biggest mistake of my life. I should've declared CS. I still wouldn't have any women, but at least I'd be rolling in cash.

20091010-02 18:33 SteveB Re: What Do You Like About Obama?

Dear Mike,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

To set the record straight, there is no way that my vote for Obama and my Pro-Choice beliefs are a contradiction in any way. Don't you realize the Democrats are largely Pro-Choice? Where's the contradiction? Democrats often seek less government incursion into our lives. Republicans don't have a monopoly on that, though their lies may make it seem so.

Nor is my support for Obama and my belief in small government staying as much as possible out of our lives a contradiction. Government has many legitimate functions, such as education, and control of unadulterated greed, as I'm sure you can appreciate.

But make no mistake about it, both of our political parties seek to limit our freedom, just in different ways. The Republicans want to intrude on our privacy, even in the bedroom, even in a mother's womb. They don't mind if we are made the pawns of unbridled capitalism. The Democrats want to uphold the Constitution a little better, I think, but they want to redistribute more of our money. It's six of one, half a dozen of the other.

And the two parties are both totally corrupt, in my book, because they allow politicians to be bought and sold by campaign contributions and lobbyists...more than \$500 million so far for health care reform votes, to give just one recent example. Make no mistake, this is corruption of the worst kind and is not permitted in much of the rest of the world.

It's funny. In many ways, we have a lot to learn about freedom, even so long after the founding of this great nation. Nothing is as straight forward or as simple as it seems.

And in the last election, I was not bothered one bit by ideology or dogma or political parties. It was a truth-telling genius against two lying idiots. Bush, unfortunately, had already given us eight years of idiocy and lies. Just my humble opinion, though I predict that it will be borne out by the history to be written in your lifetime.

By the way, how could I not know where I stand at this point in my life? Why would that be remarkable? I have seen much and thought much. I have witnessed my share of history. I've had a lot of years to do so. Right?

20091012-01 10:59 Ben Re: "Electron Band Structure In Germanium, My A*s"

Great reading. But of course it's very possible that either his solder joints sucked, or that his germanium crystal was as bad as the ones he rejected.

I think he was a tiddly bit miffed by the time he got his write-up finished.

Still, this is a gem, in its own way. I absolutely reveled in my pure science courses. Just loved 'em. (But then I never got data this bad, either.)

Very cool that is on Wisconsin's site! Thanks!

20091104-01 10:19 Ben "Gun Control and the 2nd Amendment, from the Vermont Perspective"

This is pretty amazing.

Forty seconds of investigation reveals that the bill in question was actually introduced in 2000, so this isn't really news, and—presumably—didn't pass, either.

"Gun Control and the 2nd Amendment, from the Vermont Perspective" posted by unknown

Oct. 25, 2009, (<http://james4america.wordpress.com/2009/10/25/gun-control-and-the-2nd-amendment-from-the-vermont-perspective/>)

Vermont State Rep. Fred Maslack has read the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as well as Vermont's own Constitution very carefully, and his strict interpretation of these documents is popping some eyeballs in New England and elsewhere.

Maslack recently proposed a bill to register "non-gun-owners" and require them to pay a \$500 fee to the state. Thus Vermont would become the first state to require a permit for the luxury of going about unarmed and assess a fee of \$500 for the privilege of not owning a gun.

Maslack read the "militia" phrase of the Second Amendment as not only affirming the right of the individual citizen to bear arms, but as a clear mandate to do so. He believes that universal gun ownership was advocated by the Framers of the Constitution as an antidote to a "monopoly of force" by the government as well as criminals.

Vermont's constitution states explicitly that "the people have a right to bear arms for the defense of themselves and the State" and those persons who are "conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms" shall be required to "pay such equivalent." Clearly, says Maslack, Vermonters have a constitutional obligation to arm themselves, so that they are capable of responding to "any situation that may arise."

Under the bill, adults who choose not to own a firearm would be required to register their name, address, Social Security Number, and driver's license number with the state. "There is a legitimate government interest in knowing who is not prepared to defend the state should they be asked to do so," Maslack says.

Vermont already boasts a high rate of gun ownership along with the least restrictive laws of any state. It's currently the only state that allows a citizen to carry a concealed firearm without a permit. This combination of plenty of guns and few laws regulating them has resulted in a crime rate that is the third lowest in the nation.

[Below added by some other writer. —SteveB]

America is at that awkward stage. It's too late to work within the system, but too early to shoot the tyrants. This makes sense! There is no reason why gun owners should have to pay taxes to support police protection for people not wanting to own guns. Let them contribute their fair share and pay their own way.

[20091217-01](#) 12:44 KE Saavick Ford Re: The Big Bang, Cosmology

Dear SteveB:

With apologies for the delay, again - we're a little swamped here - I recommend checking out:

<http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/question.php?number=575>

And links therein. They go into far more detail than I have time for!

[20091229-01](#) 21:36 Dick Fw: "Salute the Danish Flag—It's a Symbol of Western Freedom"

Denmark...Could this possibly be our future?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

This article could be seen as racist by some, but on the other hand it could also be seen as a reflection of our own reality that somehow our politicians refuse to see. The interpretation is up to the reader, however it is food for thought...

SALUTE to Denmark: This could very well happen here on our Continent.

"Salute the Danish Flag—It's a Symbol of Western Freedom" by Susan MacAllen, FamilySecurityMatters

July 23, 2007, (<http://www.fsarchives.org/article.php?id=1172085>)

In 1978-9 I was living and studying in Denmark. But in 1978—even in Copenhagen, one didn't see Muslim immigrants.

The Danish population embraced visitors, celebrated the exotic, went out of its way to protect each of its citizens. It was proud of its new brand of socialist liberalism one in development since the conservatives had lost power in 1929—a system where no worker had to struggle to survive, where one ultimately could count upon the state as in, perhaps, no other western nation at the time.

The rest of Europe saw the Scandinavians as free-thinking, progressive and infinitely generous in their welfare policies. Denmark boasted low crime rates, devotion to the environment, a superior educational system and a history of humanitarianism.

Denmark was also most generous in its immigration policies—it offered the best welcome in Europe to the new immigrant: generous welfare payments from first arrival plus additional perks in transportation, housing and education. It was determined to set a world example for inclusiveness and multiculturalism. How could it have predicted that one day in 2005 a series of political cartoons in a newspaper would spark violence that would leave dozens dead in the streets — all because its commitment to multiculturalism would come back to bite?

By the 1990's the growing urban Muslim population was obvious—and its unwillingness to integrate into Danish society was obvious.

Years of immigrants had settled into Muslim-exclusive enclaves. As the Muslim leadership became more vocal about what they considered the decadence of Denmark's liberal way of life, the Danes—once so welcoming—began to feel slighted. Many Danes had begun to see Islam as incompatible with their long-standing Values: belief in personal liberty and free speech, in equality for women, in tolerance for other ethnic groups, and a deep pride in Danish heritage and history. An article by Daniel Pipes and Lars Hedegaard, in which they forecasted, accurately, that the growing immigrant problem in

Denmark would explode. In the article they reported: 'Muslim immigrants constitute 5 percent of the population but consume upwards of 40 percent of the welfare spending.'

'Muslims are only 4 percent of Denmark's 5.4 million people but make up a majority of the country's convicted rapists, an especially combustible issue given that practically all the female victims are non-Muslim. Similar, if lesser, disproportions are found in other crimes.' 'Over time, as Muslim immigrants increase in numbers, they wish less to mix with the indigenous population. A recent survey finds that only 5 percent of young Muslim immigrants would readily marry a Dane.'

'Forced marriages—promising a newborn daughter in Denmark to a male cousin in the home country, then compelling her to marry him, sometimes on pain of death—are one problem' 'Muslim leaders openly declare their goal of introducing Islamic law once Denmark's Muslim population grows large enough—not-that-remote prospect...If present trends persist, one sociologist estimates, every third inhabitant of Denmark in 40 years will be Muslim.'

It is easy to understand why a growing number of Danes would feel that Muslim immigrants show little respect for Danish values and laws. An example is the phenomenon common to other European countries and Canada: some Muslims in Denmark who opted to leave the Muslim faith have been murdered in the name of Islam, while others hide in fear for their lives. Jews are also threatened and harassed openly by Muslim leaders in Denmark, a country where once Christian citizens worked to smuggle out nearly all of their 7,000 Jews by night to Sweden—before the Nazis could invade. I think of my Danish friend Elsa—who as a teenager, had dreaded crossing the street to the bakery every morning under the eyes of occupying Nazi soldiers—and I wonder what she would say today.

In 2001, Denmark elected the most conservative government in some 70 years—one that had some decidedly no generous ideas about liberal unfettered immigration. Today Denmark has the strictest immigration policies in Europe. (Its effort to protect itself has been met with accusations of 'racism' by liberal media across Europe—even as other governments struggle to right the social problems wrought by years of too-lax immigration.)

If you wish to become Danish, you must attend three years of language classes. You must pass a test on Denmark's history, culture, and a Danish language test. You must live in Denmark for 7 years before applying for citizenship. You must demonstrate an intent to work, and have a job waiting. If you wish to bring a spouse into Denmark, you must both be over 24 years of age, and you won't find it so easy anymore to move your friends and family to Denmark with you.

You will not be allowed to build a mosque in Copenhagen. Although your children have a choice of some 30 Arabic culture and language schools in Denmark, they will be strongly encouraged to assimilate to Danish society in ways that past immigrants weren't.

In 2006, the Danish minister for employment, Claus Hjort Frederiksen, spoke publicly of the burden of Muslim immigrants on the Danish welfare system, and it was horrifying: the government's welfare committee had calculated that if immigration from Third World countries were blocked, 75 percent of the cuts needed to sustain the huge welfare system in coming decades would be unnecessary. In other words, the welfare system, as it existed, was being exploited by immigrants to the point of eventually bankrupting the government.

'We are simply forced to adopt a new policy on immigration. The calculations of the welfare committee are terrifying and show how unsuccessful the integration of immigrants has been up to now,' he said.

A large thorn in the side of Denmark's imams is the Minister of Immigration and Integration, Rikke Hvilshoj. She makes no bones about the new policy toward immigration, 'The number of foreigners coming to the country makes a difference,' Hvilshoj says, 'There is an inverse correlation between how many come here and how well we can receive the foreigners that come.' And on Muslim immigrants needing to demonstrate a willingness to blend in, 'In my view, Denmark should be a country with room for different cultures and religions. Some values, however, are more important than others. We refuse to question democracy, equal rights, and freedom of speech.'

Hvilshoj has paid a price for her show of backbone.. Perhaps to test her resolve, the leading radical imam in Denmark, Ahmed Abdel Rahman Abu Laban, demanded that the government pay blood money to the family of a Muslim who was murdered in a suburb of Copenhagen, stating that the family's thirst for revenge could be thwarted for money. When Hvilshoj dismissed his demand, he argued that in Muslim culture the payment of retribution money was common, to which Hvilshoj replied that what is done in a Muslim country is not necessarily what is done in Denmark.

The Muslim reply came soon after: her house was torched while she, her husband and children slept. All managed to escape unharmed, but she and her family were moved to a secret location and she and other ministers were assigned bodyguards for the first time—in a country where such murderous violence was once so scarce. Her government has slid to the right, and her borders have tightened.

Many believe that what happens in the next decade will determine whether Denmark survives as a bastion of good living, humane thinking and social responsibility, or whether it becomes a nation at civil war with supporters of Sharia law.

And meanwhile, Canadians clamor for stricter immigration policies, and demand an end to state welfare programs that allow many immigrants to live on the public dole. Canadians are looking at the enclaves of Muslims amongst them, and see those who enter their shores too easily, dare live on their taxes, yet refuse to embrace their culture, respect their traditions, participate in their legal system, obey the laws, speak their language, appreciate their history...we would do well to look to Denmark, and say a prayer for her future and for our own...

If you agree with this article, then please pass it on.

20091230-01 07:20 SteveB Fw: Congressional Reform Act

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

This is a wonderful idea, but who is going to make it work??? Congress is just too powerful—taking care of themselves.

Happy New Year to all of us who didn't get a SS raise, but Congress did
Bette

THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS!!!!!!

A friend sent this along to me. I can't think of a reason to disagree. I am sending this to virtually everybody on my e-mail list and that includes conservatives, liberals, and everybody in between. Even though we disagree on a number of issues, I count all of you as friends. My friend and neighbor wants to promote a "Congressional Reform Act of 2009". It would contain eight provisions, all of which would probably be strongly endorsed by those who drafted the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

I know many of you will say, "this is impossible". Let me remind you, Congress has the lowest approval of any entity in Government, now is the time when Americans will join together to reform Congress—the entity that represents us.

We need to get a Senator to introduce this bill in the U.S. Senate and a Representative to introduce a similar bill in the U.S. House. These people will become American hero's. Thanks.—A Fellow American

Congressional Reform Act of 2010

1. Term Limits: 12 years only, one of the possible options below:

- A. Two Six year Senate terms
- B. Six Two year House terms
- C. One Six year Senate term and three Two Year House terms

2. No Tenure / No Pension: A congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.

3. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security: All funds in the Congressional retirement fund moves to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, Congress participates with the American people.

4. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan just as all Americans.

5. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
6. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
7. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
8. All contracts with past and present congressmen are void effective 1/1/11. The American people did not make these contracts with congressmen, congressmen made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, serve your term(s), then go home and back to work.

If you agree with the above, pass it on to all in your address list. If not, just delete.

20100113-01	11:36	Dick	Fw: Andy Rooney
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

AMEN TO THAT! Andy Rooney said on *60 Minutes* a few weeks back:

I don't think being a minority makes you a victim of anything except numbers. The only things I can think of that are truly discriminatory are things like the United Negro College Fund, Jet Magazine, Black Entertainment Television, and Miss Black America. Try to have things like the United Caucasian College Fund, Cloud Magazine, White Entertainment Television, or Miss White America; and see what happens. Jesse Jackson will be knocking down your door.

Guns do not make you a killer. I think killing makes you a killer. You can kill someone with a baseball bat or a car, but no one is trying to ban you from driving to the ball game.

I believe they are called the Boy Scouts for a reason, which is why there are no girls allowed. Girls belong in the Girl Scouts! ARE YOU LISTENING, MARTHA BURKE ?

I think that if you feel homosexuality is wrong, it is not a phobia, it is an opinion.

I have the right 'NOT' to be tolerant of others because they are different, weird, or tick me off.

When 70% of the people who get arrested are black, in cities where 70% of the population is black, that is not racial profiling; it is the Law of Probability.

I believe that if you are selling me a milkshake, a pack of cigarettes, a newspaper or a hotel room, you must do it in English! As a matter of fact, if you want to be an American citizen, you should have to speak English!

My father and grandfather didn't die in vain so you can leave the countries you were born in to come over and disrespect ours.

I think the police should have every right to shoot you if you threaten them after they tell you to stop.. If you can't understand the word 'freeze' or 'stop' in English, see the above lines.

I don't think just because you were not born in this country, you are qualified for any special loan programs, government sponsored bank loans or tax breaks, etc., so you can open a hotel, coffee shop, trinket store, or any other business. We did not go to the aid of certain foreign countries and risk our lives in wars to defend their freedoms, so that decades later they could come over here and tell us our constitution is a living document; and open to their interpretations.

I don't hate the rich; I don't pity the poor. I know pro wrestling is fake, but so are movies and television. That doesn't stop you from watching them. I think Bill Gates has every right to keep every penny he made and continue to make more. If it ticks you off, go and invent the next operating system that's better, and put your name on the building.

It doesn't take a whole village to raise a child right, but it does take a parent to stand up to the kid and smack their little behinds when necessary, and say 'NO!' I think tattoos and piercing are fine if you want them, but please don't pretend they are a political statement.. And, please, stay home until that new lip ring heals. I don't want to look at your ugly infected mouth as you serve me French fries!

I am sick of 'Political Correctness'. I know a lot of black people, and not a single one of them was born in Africa; so how can they be 'African-Americans'? Besides, Africa is a continent. I don't go around saying I am a European- American because my great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather was from Europe. I am proud to be from America and nowhere else. And if you don't like my point of view, tough...

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG, OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND TO THE REPUBLIC, FOR WHICH IT STANDS, ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

It is said that 86% of Americans believe in God. Therefore I have a very hard time understanding why there is such a problem in having 'In God We Trust' on our money and having 'God' in the Pledge of Allegiance. Why don't we just tell the 14% to BE QUIET!!!"

20100201-01 16:32 SteveB "Constitutional Amendment Picks Up Speed, Sort Of"

"Constitutional Amendment Picks Up Speed, Sort Of" by Eli Dumitru

Jan. 29, 2010, (<http://blogs.alternet.org/beyondwords/2010/01/28/constitutional-amendment-picks-up-speed-sort-of/comment-page-1/>) (http://current.com/groups/collective-journalism/92024007_constitutional-amendment-picks-up-speed-sort-of-beyond-words.htm)

I wrote earlier about the most effective way to deal with the recent Supreme Court ruling allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money on political campaigns is a Constitutional Amendment clarifying that money is not speech, and is therefore subject to regulation. I see now that both MoveOn and Public Citizen are taking up the cause of passing a constitutional amendment to "reverse" that Supreme Court decision. Unfortunately, they are backing the an amendment that ensures that corporations stay in power. Their amendment states that First Amendment rights belong to natural persons and the press and do not apply to for-profit corporations.

However, the press is mostly owned by for-profit corporations, so right there that amendment contradicts itself. The problem isn't freedom of speech. Everyone should have freedom of speech, including corporations. The problem is equating money with speech. Money is not speech. A dollar bill is not pro-abortion or anti-abortion. It carries no message, no idea, no information. It is not speech at all. Money is power. Money is a method of transferring energy. We need a Constitutional Amendment clarifying that money is not speech, and is therefore subject to regulation.

At the same time, we need another Constitutional Amendment clarifying that corporations are not persons under the law. Corporations are chartered by our government, and are therefore creations of our government. Our government, our creations. We the People have every right to regulate our creations.

These two Constitutional Amendments will clearly get to the roots of the problem without contradiction or confusion. Please go to MoveOn at then click on contact, and ask them to reconsider their position, and to take on a cause that will actually solve the problem. Also please go to Public Citizen at and tell them the same thing.

The last time I posted here about this Constitutional Amendment, someone responded that we can't pass such an amendment, and they sited their experience with trying to get an equal rights for women amendment passed. I appreciate their perspective, however I have two responses to that:

1. This time it may well be that the survival of our Democratic Constitutional Republic is at stake, so there may be more support for amendments that will really get to the root of the problem.
2. The other option is to let our nation slide away into a corporate-run tyranny. Our founding fathers staked their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor on the cause of creating this nation that has a system in place for us to modify our government without war, without violence. The least we can do is use that system as best we can to keep our government in our hands. If it's going to be a government of the people, we have to do it.

[20100215-01](#) 22:57 Dick Fw: Quotes: Thomas Jefferson

Obviously, he was a man ahead of his time. Especially read the last quote from 1802.

Thomas Jefferson Quotes:

When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe.

The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.

It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world.

I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them.

My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government.

No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms.

The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government.

The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.

To compel a man to subsidize with his taxes the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.

I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property—until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered. (1802)

I WISH WE COULD GET THIS OUT TO EVERYONE!!!

[20100216-01](#) 05:22 SteveB Guns in the Ghetto

Dear Ben,

I presented this idea to you once and I think you told me something like that it was a pretty radical understanding of the Founding Fathers' principles.

Here's one of the main sources:

"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government." —Thomas Jefferson

[20100216-02](#) 10:41 Ben Re: Guns in the Ghetto

Dear SteveB,

Uh... I don't recall that I ever disagreed with this statement, or even thought it radical. I just find it incredible, in this era.

The problem with it is that in today's world, unless the armed forces were to side with the citizens in a conflict with the government, any rebellious citizens would simply be annihilated. So this sentiment, however pure in theory, has been subjugated by advances in tyranny and bureaucracy. In Jefferson's time, it was a battle among equal forces. But I'm not going to stop a grenade, a commando, a rocket-launched missile, or a tank with my AR15 or 1911.

20100216-03 17:54 SteveB Re: Guns in the Ghetto

Dear Ben,

"So this sentiment, however pure in theory, has been subjugated by advances in tyranny and bureaucracy"...but mainly by advances in technology. That's why it is probably one of the dumbest ideas the FF's had. It's bad enough the government having nuclear and other weapons...but Ed, down the street...no thanks.

Still...the challenge of our times, the mighty challenge of our times, is to find a way to curb the American government, to bring it back under the control of the people, and not the control of a few bent on power and profit without end.

20100308-01 16:51 SteveB "The Last Question"

"The Last Question" by Isaac Asimov © 1956 (http://www.multivax.com/last_question.html)

The last question was asked for the first time, half in jest, on May 21, 2061, at a time when humanity first stepped into the light. The question came about as a result of a five dollar bet over highballs, and it happened this way:

Alexander Adell and Bertram Lupov were two of the faithful attendants of Multivac. As well as any human beings could, they knew what lay behind the cold, clicking, flashing face — miles and miles of face — of that giant computer. They had at least a vague notion of the general plan of relays and circuits that had long since grown past the point where any single human could possibly have a firm grasp of the whole.

Multivac was self-adjusting and self-correcting. It had to be, for nothing human could adjust and correct it quickly enough or even adequately enough — so Adell and Lupov attended the monstrous giant only lightly and superficially, yet as well as any men could. They fed it data, adjusted questions to its needs and translated the answers that were issued. Certainly they, and all others like them, were fully entitled to share in the glory that was Multivac's.

For decades, Multivac had helped design the ships and plot the trajectories that enabled man to reach the Moon, Mars, and Venus, but past that, Earth's poor resources could not support the ships. Too much energy was needed for the long trips. Earth exploited its coal and uranium with increasing efficiency, but there was only so much of both.

But slowly Multivac learned enough to answer deeper questions more fundamentally, and on May 14, 2061, what had been theory, became fact.

The energy of the sun was stored, converted, and utilized directly on a planet-wide scale. All Earth turned off its burning coal, its fissioning uranium, and flipped the switch that connected all of it to a small station, one mile in diameter, circling the Earth at half the distance of the Moon. All Earth ran by invisible beams of sun power.

Seven days had not sufficed to dim the glory of it and Adell and Lupov finally managed to escape from the public function, and to meet in quiet where no one would think of looking for them, in the deserted underground chambers, where portions of the mighty buried body of Multivac showed. Unattended, idling, sorting data with contented lazy clickings, Multivac, too, had earned its vacation and the boys appreciated that. They had no intention, originally, of disturbing it.

They had brought a bottle with them, and their only concern at the moment was to relax in the company of each other and the bottle.

"It's amazing when you think of it," said Adell. His broad face had lines of weariness in it, and he stirred his drink slowly with a glass rod, watching the cubes of ice slur clumsily about. "All the energy we can possibly ever use for free. Enough

energy, if we wanted to draw on it, to melt all Earth into a big drop of impure liquid iron, and still never miss the energy so used. All the energy we could ever use, forever and forever and forever."

Lupov cocked his head sideways. He had a trick of doing that when he wanted to be contrary, and he wanted to be contrary now, partly because he had had to carry the ice and glassware. "Not forever," he said.

"Oh, hell, just about forever. Till the sun runs down, Bert."

"That's not forever."

"All right, then. Billions and billions of years. Twenty billion, maybe. Are you satisfied?"

Lupov put his fingers through his thinning hair as though to reassure himself that some was still left and sipped gently at his own drink. "Twenty billion years isn't forever."

"Will, it will last our time, won't it?"

"So would the coal and uranium."

"All right, but now we can hook up each individual spaceship to the Solar Station, and it can go to Pluto and back a million times without ever worrying about fuel. You can't do THAT on coal and uranium. Ask Multivac, if you don't believe me."

"I don't have to ask Multivac. I know that."

"Then stop running down what Multivac's done for us," said Adell, blazing up. "It did all right."

"Who says it didn't? What I say is that a sun won't last forever. That's all I'm saying. We're safe for twenty billion years, but then what?" Lupov pointed a slightly shaky finger at the other. "And don't say we'll switch to another sun."

There was silence for a while. Adell put his glass to his lips only occasionally, and Lupov's eyes slowly closed. They rested.

Then Lupov's eyes snapped open. "You're thinking we'll switch to another sun when ours is done, aren't you?"

"I'm not thinking."

"Sure you are. You're weak on logic, that's the trouble with you. You're like the guy in the story who was caught in a sudden shower and who ran to a grove of trees and got under one. He wasn't worried, you see, because he figured when one tree got wet through, he would just get under another one."

"I get it," said Adell. "Don't shout. When the sun is done, the other stars will be gone, too."

"Darn right they will," muttered Lupov. "It all had a beginning in the original cosmic explosion, whatever that was, and it'll all have an end when all the stars run down. Some run down faster than others. Hell, the giants won't last a hundred million years. The sun will last twenty billion years and maybe the dwarfs will last a hundred billion for all the good they are. But just give us a trillion years and everything will be dark. Entropy has to increase to maximum, that's all."

"I know all about entropy," said Adell, standing on his dignity.

"The hell you do."

"I know as much as you do."

"Then you know everything's got to run down someday."

"All right. Who says they won't?"

"You did, you poor sap. You said we had all the energy we needed, forever. You said 'forever.'"

"It was Adell's turn to be contrary. "Maybe we can build things up again someday," he said.

"Never."

"Why not? Someday."

"Never."

"Ask Multivac."

"You ask Multivac. I dare you. Five dollars says it can't be done."

Adell was just drunk enough to try, just sober enough to be able to phrase the necessary symbols and operations into a question which, in words, might have corresponded to this: Will mankind one day without the net expenditure of energy be able to restore the sun to its full youthfulness even after it had died of old age?

Or maybe it could be put more simply like this: How can the net amount of entropy of the universe be massively decreased?

Multivac fell dead and silent. The slow flashing of lights ceased, the distant sounds of clicking relays ended.

Then, just as the frightened technicians felt they could hold their breath no longer, there was a sudden springing to life of the teletype attached to that portion of Multivac. Five words were printed: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

"No bet," whispered Lupov. They left hurriedly.

By next morning, the two, plagued with throbbing head and cottony mouth, had forgotten about the incident.

Jerrodd, Jerrodine, and Jerrodette I and II watched the starry picture in the visiplate change as the passage through hyperspace was completed in its non-time lapse. At once, the even powdering of stars gave way to the predominance of a single bright marble-disk, centered.

"That's X-23," said Jerrodd confidently. His thin hands clamped tightly behind his back and the knuckles whitened.

The little Jerrodettes, both girls, had experienced the hyperspace passage for the first time in their lives and were self-conscious over the momentary sensation of inside-outness. They buried their giggles and chased one another wildly about their mother, screaming, "We've reached X-23 — we've reached X-23 — we've —"

"Quiet, children," said Jerrodine sharply. "Are you sure, Jerrodd?"

"What is there to be but sure?" asked Jerrodd, glancing up at the bulge of featureless metal just under the ceiling. It ran the length of the room, disappearing through the wall at either end. It was as long as the ship.

Jerrodd scarcely knew a thing about the thick rod of metal except that it was called a Microvac, that one asked it questions if one wished; that if one did not it still had its task of guiding the ship to a preordered destination; of feeding on energies from the various Sub-galactic Power Stations; of computing the equations for the hyperspatial jumps.

Jerrodd and his family had only to wait and live in the comfortable residence quarters of the ship.

Someone had once told Jerrodd that the "ac" at the end of "Microvac" stood for "analog computer" in ancient English, but he was on the edge of forgetting even that.

Jerrodine's eyes were moist as she watched the visiplate. "I can't help it. I feel funny about leaving Earth."

"Why for Pete's sake?" demanded Jerrodd. "We had nothing there. We'll have everything on X-23. You won't be alone. You won't be a pioneer. There are over a million people on the planet already. Good Lord, our great grandchildren will be looking for new worlds because X-23 will be overcrowded."

Then, after a reflective pause, "I tell you, it's a lucky thing the computers worked out interstellar travel the way the race is growing."

"I know, I know," said Jerrodine miserably.

Jerrodette I said promptly, "Our Microvac is the best Microvac in the world."

"I think so, too," said Jerrodd, tousling her hair.

It was a nice feeling to have a Microvac of your own and Jerrodd was glad he was part of his generation and no other. In his father's youth, the only computers had been tremendous machines taking up a hundred square miles of land. There was only one to a planet. Planetary ACs they were called. They had been growing in size steadily for a thousand years and then, all at once, came refinement. In place of transistors had come molecular valves so that even the largest Planetary AC could be put into a space only half the volume of a spaceship.

Jerrodd felt uplifted, as he always did when he thought that his own personal Microvac was many times more complicated than the ancient and primitive Multivac that had first tamed the Sun, and almost as complicated as Earth's Planetary AC (the largest) that had first solved the problem of hyperspatial travel and had made trips to the stars possible.

"So many stars, so many planets," sighed Jerrodine, busy with her own thoughts. "I suppose families will be going out to new planets forever, the way we are now."

"Not forever," said Jerrodd, with a smile. "It will all stop someday, but not for billions of years. Many billions. Even the stars run down, you know. Entropy must increase."

"What's entropy, daddy?" shrilled Jerrodette II.

"Entropy, little sweet, is just a word which means the amount of running-down of the universe. Everything runs down, you know, like your little walkie-talkie robot, remember?"

"Can't you just put in a new power-unit, like with my robot?"

The stars are the power-units, dear. Once they're gone, there are no more power-units."

Jerrodette I at once set up a howl. "Don't let them, daddy. Don't let the stars run down."

"Now look what you've done, " whispered Jerrodine, exasperated.

"How was I to know it would frighten them?" Jerrodd whispered back.

"Ask the Microvac," wailed Jerrodette I. "Ask him how to turn the stars on again."

"Go ahead," said Jerrodine. "It will quiet them down." (Jerrodette II was beginning to cry, also.)

Jarrodd shrugged. "Now, now, honeys. I'll ask Microvac. Don't worry, he'll tell us."

He asked the Microvac, adding quickly, "Print the answer."

Jerrodd cupped the strip of thin celluloid and said cheerfully, "See now, the Microvac says it will take care of everything when the time comes so don't worry."

Jerrodine said, "and now children, it's time for bed. We'll be in our new home soon."

Jerrodd read the words on the celluloid again before destroying it: INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

He shrugged and looked at the visiplat. X-23 was just ahead.

VJ-23X of Lameth stared into the black depths of the three-dimensional, small-scale map of the Galaxy and said, "Are we ridiculous, I wonder, in being so concerned about the matter?"

MQ-17J of Nicron shook his head. "I think not. You know the Galaxy will be filled in five years at the present rate of expansion."

Both seemed in their early twenties, both were tall and perfectly formed.

"Still," said VJ-23X, "I hesitate to submit a pessimistic report to the Galactic Council."

"I wouldn't consider any other kind of report. Stir them up a bit. We've got to stir them up."

VJ-23X sighed. "Space is infinite. A hundred billion Galaxies are there for the taking. More."

"A hundred billion is not infinite and it's getting less infinite all the time. Consider! Twenty thousand years ago, mankind first solved the problem of utilizing stellar energy, and a few centuries later, interstellar travel became possible. It took mankind a million years to fill one small world and then only fifteen thousand years to fill the rest of the Galaxy. Now the population doubles every ten years —"

VJ-23X interrupted. "We can thank immortality for that."

"Very well. Immortality exists and we have to take it into account. I admit it has its seamy side, this immortality. The Galactic AC has solved many problems for us, but in solving the problems of preventing old age and death, it has undone all its other solutions."

"Yet you wouldn't want to abandon life, I suppose."

"Not at all," snapped MQ-17J, softening it at once to, "Not yet. I'm by no means old enough. How old are you?"

"Two hundred twenty-three. And you?"

"I'm still under two hundred. —But to get back to my point. Population doubles every ten years. Once this Galaxy is filled, we'll have another filled in ten years. Another ten years and we'll have filled two more. Another decade, four more. In a hundred years, we'll have filled a thousand Galaxies. In a thousand years, a million Galaxies. In ten thousand years, the entire known Universe. Then what?"

VJ-23X said, "As a side issue, there's a problem of transportation. I wonder how many sun power units it will take to move Galaxies of individuals from one Galaxy to the next."

"A very good point. Already, mankind consumes two sun power units per year."

"Most of it's wasted. After all, our own Galaxy alone pours out a thousand sun power units a year and we only use two of those."

"Granted, but even with a hundred per cent efficiency, we can only stave off the end. Our energy requirements are going up in geometric progression even faster than our population. We'll run out of energy even sooner than we run out of Galaxies. A good point. A very good point."

"We'll just have to build new stars out of interstellar gas."

"Or out of dissipated heat?" asked MQ-17J, sarcastically.

"There may be some way to reverse entropy. We ought to ask the Galactic AC."

VJ-23X was not really serious, but MQ-17J pulled out his AC-contact from his pocket and placed it on the table before him.

"I've half a mind to," he said. "It's something the human race will have to face someday."

He stared somberly at his small AC-contact. It was only two inches cubed and nothing in itself, but it was connected through hyperspace with the great Galactic AC that served all mankind. Hyperspace considered, it was an integral part of the Galactic AC.

MQ-17J paused to wonder if someday in his immortal life he would get to see the Galactic AC. It was on a little world of its own, a spider webbing of force-beams holding the matter within which surges of sub-mesons took the place of the old clumsy molecular valves. Yet despite its sub-etheric workings, the Galactic AC was known to be a full thousand feet across.

MQ-17J asked suddenly of his AC-contact, "Can entropy ever be reversed?"

VJ-23X looked startled and said at once, "Oh, say, I didn't really mean to have you ask that."

"Why not?"

"We both know entropy can't be reversed. You can't turn smoke and ash back into a tree."

"Do you have trees on your world?" asked MQ-17J.

The sound of the Galactic AC startled them into silence. Its voice came thin and beautiful out of the small AC-contact on the desk. It said: THERE IS INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER.

VJ-23X said, "See!"

The two men thereupon returned to the question of the report they were to make to the Galactic Council.

Zee Prime's mind spanned the new Galaxy with a faint interest in the countless twists of stars that powdered it. He had never seen this one before. Would he ever see them all? So many of them, each with its load of humanity - but a load that was almost a dead weight. More and more, the real essence of men was to be found out here, in space.

Minds, not bodies! The immortal bodies remained back on the planets, in suspension over the eons. Sometimes they roused for material activity but that was growing rarer. Few new individuals were coming into existence to join the incredibly mighty throng, but what matter? There was little room in the Universe for new individuals.

Zee Prime was roused out of his reverie upon coming across the wispy tendrils of another mind.

"I am Zee Prime," said Zee Prime. "And you?"

"I am Dee Sub Wun. Your Galaxy?"

"We call it only the Galaxy. And you?"

"We call ours the same. All men call their Galaxy their Galaxy and nothing more. Why not?"

"True. Since all Galaxies are the same."

"Not all Galaxies. On one particular Galaxy the race of man must have originated. That makes it different."

Zee Prime said, "On which one?"

"I cannot say. The Universal AC would know."

"Shall we ask him? I am suddenly curious."

Zee Prime's perceptions broadened until the Galaxies themselves shrunk and became a new, more diffuse powdering on a much larger background. So many hundreds of billions of them, all with their immortal beings, all carrying their load of intelligences with minds that drifted freely through space. And yet one of them was unique among them all in being the originals Galaxy. One of them had, in its vague and distant past, a period when it was the only Galaxy populated by man.

Zee Prime was consumed with curiosity to see this Galaxy and called, out: "Universal AC! On which Galaxy did mankind originate?"

The Universal AC heard, for on every world and throughout space, it had its receptors ready, and each receptor lead through hyperspace to some unknown point where the Universal AC kept itself aloof.

Zee Prime knew of only one man whose thoughts had penetrated within sensing distance of Universal AC, and he reported only a shining globe, two feet across, difficult to see.

"But how can that be all of Universal AC?" Zee Prime had asked.

"Most of it," had been the answer, "is in hyperspace. In what form it is there I cannot imagine."

Nor could anyone, for the day had long since passed, Zee Prime knew, when any man had any part of the making of a universal AC. Each Universal AC designed and constructed its successor. Each, during its existence of a million years or more accumulated the necessary data to build a better and more intricate, more capable successor in which its own store of data and individuality would be submerged.

The Universal AC interrupted Zee Prime's wandering thoughts, not with words, but with guidance. Zee Prime's mentality was guided into the dim sea of Galaxies and one in particular enlarged into stars.

A thought came, infinitely distant, but infinitely clear. "THIS IS THE ORIGINAL GALAXY OF MAN."

But it was the same after all, the same as any other, and Zee Prime stifled his disappointment.

Dee Sub Wun, whose mind had accompanied the other, said suddenly, "And Is one of these stars the original star of Man?"

The Universal AC said, "MAN'S ORIGINAL STAR HAS GONE NOVA. IT IS NOW A WHITE DWARF."

"Did the men upon it die?" asked Zee Prime, startled and without thinking.

The Universal AC said, "A NEW WORLD, AS IN SUCH CASES, WAS CONSTRUCTED FOR THEIR PHYSICAL BODIES IN TIME."

"Yes, of course," said Zee Prime, but a sense of loss overwhelmed him even so. His mind released its hold on the original Galaxy of Man, let it spring back and lose itself among the blurred pin points. He never wanted to see it again.

Dee Sub Wun said, "What is wrong?"

"The stars are dying. The original star is dead."

"They must all die. Why not?"

"But when all energy is gone, our bodies will finally die, and you and I with them."

"It will take billions of years."

"I do not wish it to happen even after billions of years. Universal AC! How may stars be kept from dying?"

Dee sub Wun said in amusement, "You're asking how entropy might be reversed in direction."

And the Universal AC answered. "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Zee Prime's thoughts fled back to his own Galaxy. He gave no further thought to Dee Sub Wun, whose body might be waiting on a galaxy a trillion light-years away, or on the star next to Zee Prime's own. It didn't matter.

Unhappily, Zee Prime began collecting interstellar hydrogen out of which to build a small star of his own. If the stars must someday die, at least some could yet be built.

Man considered with himself, for in a way, Man, mentally, was one. He consisted of a trillion, trillion, trillion ageless bodies, each in its place, each resting quiet and incorruptible, each cared for by perfect automatons, equally incorruptible, while the minds of all the bodies freely melted one into the other, indistinguishable.

Man said, "The Universe is dying."

Man looked about at the dimming Galaxies. The giant stars, spendthrifts, were gone long ago, back in the dimmest of the dim far past. Almost all stars were white dwarfs, fading to the end.

New stars had been built of the dust between the stars, some by natural processes, some by Man himself, and those were going, too. White dwarfs might yet be crashed together and of the mighty forces so released, new stars built, but only one star for every thousand white dwarfs destroyed, and those would come to an end, too.

Man said, "Carefully husbanded, as directed by the Cosmic AC, the energy that is even yet left in all the Universe will last for billions of years."

"But even so," said Man, "eventually it will all come to an end. However it may be husbanded, however stretched out, the energy once expended is gone and cannot be restored. Entropy must increase to the maximum."

Man said, "Can entropy not be reversed? Let us ask the Cosmic AC."

The Cosmic AC surrounded them but not in space. Not a fragment of it was in space. It was in hyperspace and made of something that was neither matter nor energy. The question of its size and Nature no longer had meaning to any terms that Man could comprehend.

"Cosmic AC," said Man, "How may entropy be reversed?"

The Cosmic AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Man said, "Collect additional data."

The Cosmic AC said, "I WILL DO SO. I HAVE BEEN DOING SO FOR A HUNDRED BILLION YEARS. MY PREDECESSORS AND I HAVE BEEN ASKED THIS QUESTION MANY TIMES. ALL THE DATA I HAVE REMAINS INSUFFICIENT."

"Will there come a time," said Man, "when data will be sufficient or is the problem insoluble in all conceivable circumstances?"

The Cosmic AC said, "NO PROBLEM IS INSOLUBLE IN ALL CONCEIVABLE CIRCUMSTANCES."

Man said, "When will you have enough data to answer the question?"

"THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

"Will you keep working on it?" asked Man.

The Cosmic AC said, "I WILL."

Man said, "We shall wait."

"The stars and Galaxies died and snuffed out, and space grew black after ten trillion years of running down.

One by one Man fused with AC, each physical body losing its mental identity in a manner that was somehow not a loss but a gain.

Man's last mind paused before fusion, looking over a space that included nothing but the dregs of one last dark star and nothing besides but incredibly thin matter, agitated randomly by the tag ends of heat wearing out, asymptotically, to the absolute zero.

Man said, "AC, is this the end? Can this chaos not be reversed into the Universe once more? Can that not be done?"

AC said, "THERE IS AS YET INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR A MEANINGFUL ANSWER."

Man's last mind fused and only AC existed — and that in hyperspace.

Matter and energy had ended and with it, space and time. Even AC existed only for the sake of the one last question that it had never answered from the time a half-drunken man ten trillion years before had asked the question of a computer that was to AC far less than was a man to Man.

All other questions had been answered, and until this last question was answered also, AC might not release his consciousness.

All collected data had come to a final end. Nothing was left to be collected.

But all collected data had yet to be completely correlated and put together in all possible relationships.

A timeless interval was spent in doing that.

And it came to pass that AC learned how to reverse the direction of entropy.

But there was now no man to whom AC might give the answer of the last question. No matter. The answer — by demonstration — would take care of that, too.

For another timeless interval, AC thought how best to do this. Carefully, AC organized the program.

The consciousness of AC encompassed all of what had once been a Universe and brooded over what was now Chaos. Step by step, it must be done.

And AC said, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!"

And there was light—

20100308-02 18:40 SteveG Fw: Un-Elect Congress & Congressional Reform Act

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

This is non-partisan good sense. Get rid of them!!!

COPY THIS AND POST IT ON YOUR FRIG!!!! REMEMBER 2010 IS AN ELECTION YEAR!!!!

Retribution is less than 1 year away! Take a look at this and just remember elections in Nov., 2010.

1. U.S. House & Senate have voted themselves \$4,700 and \$5,300 raises.
2. They voted to NOT give you a S.S. Cost of living raise in 2010 and 2011.
3. Your Medicare premiums will go up \$285.60 for the 2 years
4. You will not get the 3% COLA: \$660/yr.
5. Your total 2-yr loss and cost is—\$1,600 or-\$3,200 for husband and wife.

6. Over these same 2-years each Congress person will get an additional \$10,000

7. Do you feel SCREWED YET?

8. Will they have your cost of drugs—doctor fees—local taxes—food, etc., decrease? NO WAY!! . Congress and all Federal Employees received a raise and have better health and retirement benefits than you or I will ever have!!! AT NO COST TO THEM!!!!!! (YOUR TAXES PAY FOR IT ALL)

Why should they care about you? You never did anything about it in the past. They think you are too stupid or don't care. Do you really think that any of them care about you?

Send this message to those individuals— "YOU'RE FIRED!"

In 2010, you will have a chance to get rid of the sitting Congress: up to 1/3 of the Senate and 100% of the House! Make sure you're still mad in Nov., 2010, and remind their replacements not to screw-up. It is ok to forward this to your sphere of influence if you are finally tired of the abuse.

Maybe it's time for Amendment 28 to the Constitution...

28th Amendment will be as follows:

Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators or Representatives, and Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States.

Let's get this passed around, folks—these people in Washington have brought this upon themselves! It's time for retribution. Let's take back America... If you don't forward this to all your friends you will just become part of the problem of national apathy.

[20100310-01](#) 07:14 SteveB Re: Un-Elect Congress & Congressional Reform Act

Dear SteveG,

Exactly! I've been saying this and trying to accomplish it ever since I voted for the first time. Power corrupts!!!!!! Throw the bums out and keep throwing them out until they start serving the people instead of the dollar!

[20100319-01](#) 10:58 Ben "Texas Textbook Massacre: 'Ultraconservatives' Approve Radical Changes to State Education Curriculum" & "Dear Texas: Please Shut Up. Sincerely, History"

Dear SteveB,

The article below is satire, truly a rant, written by a liberal columnist in California.

HOWEVER, it's true that the Texas State Board of Education is proposed removing Thomas Jefferson from school history books, to be replaced with intolerant religious conservative John Calvin.

The entire article below is worth reading; while it's a rant, it's a thoughtful well-written one, and points out that the impact of these idiocies, if passed in Texas, could be passed wholesale to other conservative states.

If you do nothing more than glance at the article, please do follow the link to the Huffington Post article that details the 12 most incredible proposals before the TSBE right now.

This is really amazing.

from Sarah:

If you don't think Texas has a role to play in the national agenda, read on. Tongue and cheek, but these "changes" will impact the social studies curriculum of at the very least, a generation of students. The extreme agenda of ultra conservatives in Texas may very well influence the national academic agenda.

Last week the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE), led by Rick Perry's appointee, voted to remove Thomas Jefferson from social studies textbook standards. That's right. Thomas Jefferson — Founding Father, author of the Declaration of Independence, and a world-renowned scholar who advocated democratic, limited government — was deleted.

In case you haven't heard about the Texas Textbook Massacre, you can read about it below.

"Texas Textbook Massacre: 'Ultraconservatives' Approve Radical Changes to State Education Curriculum" Huffington Post

Mar. 13, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/13/texas-textbook-massacre-u_n_498003.html)

(AUSTIN, Tex) A far-right faction of the Texas State Board of Education succeeded Friday in injecting conservative ideals into social studies, history and economics lessons that will be taught to millions of students for the next decade.

Teachers in Texas will be required to cover the Judeo-Christian influences of the nation's Founding Fathers, but not highlight the philosophical rationale for the separation of church and state. Curriculum standards also will describe the U.S. government as a "constitutional republic," rather than "democratic," and students will be required to study the decline in value of the U.S. dollar, including the abandonment of the gold standard.

"We have been about conservatism versus liberalism," said Democrat Mavis Knight of Dallas, explaining her vote against the standards. "We have manipulated strands to insert what we want it to be in the document, regardless as to whether or not it's appropriate."

Following three days of impassioned and acrimonious debate, the board gave preliminary approval to the new standards with a 10-5 party line vote. A final vote is expected in May, after a public comment period that could produce additional amendments and arguments.

Decisions by the board — made up of lawyers, a dentist and a weekly newspaper publisher among others — can affect textbook content nationwide because Texas is one of publishers' biggest clients.

Ultraconservatives wielded their power over hundreds of subjects this week, introducing and rejecting amendments on everything from the civil rights movement to global politics. Hostilities flared and prompted a walkout Thursday by one of the board's most prominent Democrats, Mary Helen Berlanga of Corpus Christi, who accused her colleagues of "whitewashing" curriculum standards.

By late Thursday night, three other Democrats seemed to sense their futility and left, leaving Republicans to easily push through amendments heralding "American exceptionalism" and the U.S. free enterprise system, suggesting it thrives best absent excessive government intervention.

"Some board members themselves acknowledged this morning that the process for revising curriculum standards in Texas is seriously broken, with politics and personal agendas dominating just about every decision," said Kathy Miller, president of the Texas Freedom Network, which advocates for religious freedom.

Republican Terri Leo, a member of the powerful Christian conservative voting bloc, called the standards "world class" and "exceptional."

Board members argued about the classification of historic periods (still B.C. and A.D., rather than B.C.E. and C.E.); whether students should be required to explain the origins of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its impact on global politics (they will); and whether former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir should be required learning (she will).

In addition to learning the Bill of Rights, the board specified a reference to the Second Amendment right to bear arms in a section about citizenship in a U.S. government class.

Conservatives beat back multiple attempts to include hip-hop as an example of a significant cultural movement.

Numerous attempts to add the names or references to important Hispanics throughout history also were denied, including one amendment that would specify that Tejanos died at the Alamo alongside Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie. Another amendment deleted a requirement that sociology students "explain how institutional racism is evident in American society."

Democrats did score a victory by deleting a portion of an amendment by Republican Don McLeroy suggesting that the civil rights movement led to "unrealistic expectations for equal outcomes."

Fort Worth Republican Pat Hardy, a longtime teacher, voted for the new standards, but said she wished the board could work with a more cooperative spirit.

"What we've done is we've taken a document that by nature is too long to begin with and then we've lengthened it some more," Hardy said, shortly after the vote. "Those long lists of names that we've put in there ... it's just too long.

"I just think we failed to keep that in mind, it's hard for teachers to get through it all."

"Dear Texas: Please Shut Up. Sincerely, History" by Mark Morford, SF Gate

March 17, 2010, (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/g/a/2010/03/17/notes031710.DTL&ao=all>)

Hey, kids! Here's something I bet you didn't know: Black people? Back in 1800 or whenever? They liked being slaves. True! Many savvy, industrious Negroes actually volunteered for that fine, desirable position. It was a completely balanced, fair, hugely successful system, until those damn liberals came along and ruined everything. I know, right? What a shame.

Do you know what else? America was wholly victorious in Vietnam. It's a fact! Kicked some serious enemy butt! Mission accomplished! Sure it was a little bumpy for awhile, but President Nixon, that great and wronged American hero, put us on the righteous path in the end, wrapped that sucker up beautifully and made America the noble Superman to the world. Hey, it's the truth! You can look it up in your history textbook!

Even more good, newly historic news: Despite what you may have heard from the liberal media, America has very much won its recent, God-sanctioned wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Angry Allah loses again! Just look at this handy diagram on page 281, Figure 4-9. See those little dark-skinned bodies stacked up neatly beside that minaret? Right next to that completely unstaged photo of the toppled Saddam statue? Look how many there are! Graphs never lie.

Did you know, back in the frontier days, that Native Americans welcomed the white man with open arms? Absolutely true. Those poor, sunburned people were so beaten down and exploited by their oppressive dictator "chiefs," they were forced to believe in all sorts of disgusting pagan sun gods and had to eat, like, rocks and snakes and stuff.

It's no wonder they greeted proud, fair-minded American colonials as great liberators — yes! Just like in Baghdad! — and happily gave us free access to their fields and their women and their wonderful bead-making technology, in exchange for, you know, gin and fireworks. And casinos.

Never doubt America's irrefutable greatness, kids. Our prison system, for example, is the finest in the world. Also, dirty Mexican people had no role whatsoever in the Civil War or U.S. history (except as troublesome immigrants, yuck), hip-hop music is in no way, shape or form to be considered a significant cultural movement — unlike totally awesome Country & Western, and the War on Drugs is going spectacularly well, thanks to our fine military, numerous Afterschool Specials and the deep love of Jesus — who, if you look really closely at those old photographs from the Bible, is clearly wearing a U.S. flag pin on his robes to go along with his friendly, completely legal sidearm. God bless America.

These irrefutable facts — and many more just like them — are brought to you by the Texas State Board of Education, packed like a jug of rancid tartar sauce with intellectually numb simpletons who smell like ignorance and taste like fear. The TSBE: We make revisionist brainwashing fun!™

Maybe you didn't hear? The little item about how a small pod of pale ultra-conservatives in Texas has just demanded a whole slew of specific changes be made to history textbooks down in the Lone Star State? About how, in fact, nearly every change is a rather ridiculous rewriting of history and the language surrounding it, all tending to favor — can you

guess? — white privileged capitalist males, a bitter Christian God, and a whitewashed version of history that never actually existed?

Not much shocking about it all, really. "Texas education" has never exactly equated with "intellectual range and nuance." But there's a big, ugly snag: Due to the state's huge purchasing power, the decisions of these tiny-brained ultra-conservatives could well influence what goes into various school history textbooks nationwide.

So it is that that some inbred neocon beliefs about homophobic God and gun-loving country will ooze their way into the minds of unsuspecting youth in a completely different state say, 10 years' hence, like a poison slowly leeching into the cultural water supply. Ah, Texas conservatism. It's the new DDT!

What, too harsh? I'm not so sure. Yes, everyone knows that history is slippery and spurious to begin with, all about context and spin and who's telling the tale. History is, after all, written by the victors.

What they don't usually add is how history is then revised by the politicians, gutted by the church leaders, molested by the power mongers, skinned alive by paranoid militants, poorly codified by the speechwriters and then spun, torqued and diluted by countless mealy "experts" before being shoved down the gullet of unsuspecting youth, where it is partially digested like so much liquefied school lunch meat, only to be wrongly half-remembered later in life by the most insane among them, who then quickly gets his own talk show on Fox News. And lo, the circle of life continues.

Say what you will about standardized testing, draconian teachers' unions, lazy tenured teachers, crumbling campuses, slashed budgets, et al. I can think of no better argument for mortgaging everything you own so as to afford a private/charter school for your kid than the disturbing fact that these Texas State Board mongrels might have any power whatsoever to shape young minds by way of further tainting the already wobbly, spurious historical record.

Maybe it doesn't really matter. After all, it's widely understood that, given the state of public education, children don't really learn much in school anyway. The system is so problematic and the teachers union so dangerously obstinate, there's a good chance your kid will never crack open one of these flawed, historically inaccurate textbooks in the first place. Small consolation indeed.

It's not all dire and brimstone. Prior to this ridiculous move — and by the way, the board's revisions still have to be ratified, so there's a slim chance public outcry and a deep sense of shame at their own repellant personal politics will get them to back off — there's apparently been a small amount of improvement in school textbooks over the years.

From what I understand, in the wake of wildly influential bestsellers like *Lies my Teacher Told Me* and the late, great Howard Zinn's *People History* series, among many others, school textbooks underwent some significant improvements in the past couple of decades, slightly more multicultural and inclusive, balanced, realistic. Not nearly as thin, lopsided, sexist, jingoistic, myopic as they used to be. Is that damning with faint praise? Maybe.

Alas, if California weren't so utterly broke, slashing education budgets and shutting down schools, maybe our fair state could launch a counter-attack, demand some reasonably accurate historic revisions in those selfsame texts. Time was when we had some killer purchasing power of our own. Remember? Yeah, me neither.

Sadly, from what I hear, California schools don't even use textbooks anymore. Or classrooms. Or desks. They all disintegrated sometime back in 1987. History is now taught by means of sock puppets, toothpick dioramas and firecrackers. And gin.

Of course, I'm completely exaggerating. The changes the Texas Board is shoving through are probably relatively innocuous, just another toxic chemical added to the already lethal school lunch menu, one of a thousand, really. I'm sure everything will be fine. Kids won't mind a whit that they're being fed heavily processed, dangerous, non-nutritive mental crap. Hell, they'll probably enjoy it. You know, just like all those happy, contented slaves.

20100321-01	14:01	SteveB	Re: Texas Education, Etc.
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Dear Ben,

TEXAS! A holy land unto itself! Ya gotta love it and hate it both at the same time!

20100322-01 09:42 Ben Re: Texas Education, Etc.

Dear SteveB,

I love it. I love Texas. I'm insulated from a lot of the reactionary, blind so-called conservatism by living in Austin, of course, which helps a lot. And I'd LOVE to see the religious right and the truly blind "conservatives" (really true or nearly-true fascists) just up and disappear. It's not going to happen, of course. And the results are sometimes reprehensible. Often, even. But it's still a great place to live.

I am certain I could feel equally positive about a lot of other places, within the country and without. The snatches I've seen of England are very enticing. And although I've never been to Sweden, it's a liberal Mecca (currently being inflated with Middle East transplants). But a country that makes Hasselblads and Volvos, has a vast ocean-going industry, and still manages to have beautiful air, huge tracts of unpolluted forests, and lots of nice fisssh, great schools, and a full spectrum of social services, well, it's gotta be a great place to live. Norway, too, has an excellent rap with the UN stats, as does Canada.

But I'm here, and I love Texas, too, with all its warts.

At least, we're still allowed to laugh at the idiots.

20100322-02 11:15 SteveB Re: Texas, Texas Education, Etc.

Dear Ben,

Well, yes...you know, having lived in more places than I can remember or count...I am convinced that, though there is an immeasurable connection between the two, where you live is so very unimportant compared to how you live!

Looking for the perfect place to live reminds me of two things:

So many of the beautiful, intelligent women I've been lucky enough to know who are still alone and lonely because they keep searching for the perfect man. haha

And one of my brother Brent's best friends who, shortly after college, took off with his lovely young wife for Mexico (and I will never forget his words) "to seek an alternative lifestyle embodying our highest ideals." Cool. huh?

They were both found dead a few weeks later.

20100323-01 09:11 Ben Re: Texas, Texas Education, New Mexico, Etc.

Dear SteveB,

The base elevation of Red River is 8,671 feet. The cabin is another 8 to 10 miles uphill from the town. It COULD be more like 9500-9700 feet, but at that point, I choose to treat it like cosmological data, and just round it off. You can see Wheeler Peak (13161 feet) from the cabin, and off to the side a couple hundred yards to the south is an alpine slough from which the main headwaters of the Red River flow about thirty feet below the front porch. The slough is fed by two or three forks that descend some hundreds of additional feet from cold, deep alpine lakes a couple miles away. Both the slough and Wheeler Peak are part of the view from the porch and dining table in the cabin.

Hummingbirds abound. Bears are a nuisance at times, although I have yet to see one. There are many deer, and there are occasional reports of large cats. The cabin is either in, or on the edge of, the Carson National Forest, but about fifteen years ago, a bug-vectored blight knocked out 90% of the dominant species of fir, so that the forest is much-thinned, with a sparse population of old fir that are either very hardy, a different species, or just lucky, with aspen filling in rapidly alongside some other varieties of evergreen. There's a lot more sunlight hitting the ground than when we first visited in 1983, and for the first time in generations, you can (barely) see the flash and flicker cars traveling up the "highway" 800 feet or so from the front door. There isn't a lot of traffic, because the pavement ends about a half-mile uphill.

Dad's widow, Marilyn Miller, owns the cabin her Dad built in the 1940s; her sister Boo (really! it's on her driver's license!) owns a more recently built smaller cabin a hundred yards away. Carl Miller was one of the first Amarillons to buy land for a summer place above Red River, then a tiny town, and today not a lot larger. Marilyn is a lovely woman whom I met when Dad introduced us as the woman he intended to marry; I was about ten, and Marilyn was then, I think, 26. She was delighted to know the three of us, laughing easily as we played board games and did other fun stuff on our visits to see Dad in Fort Wayne; we all three loved her immediately. We'd acclimated to Dr Hammond and his marriage to our mother by then, so it was really a no-brainer. Sadly, Marilyn had a crippling stroke when she gave birth to the first of three boys (one of those early Pill tragedies); she was paralyzed on one side entirely and partially on the other, and only began to recover motor control after more than a year. Dad went into hyper nurturing mode, which continued shortly before he died a couple years ago. Marilyn was able to talk, very haltingly, and after a couple years stabilized in that regard. She's had a sever limp since, and conversation is tedious for her: her cognitive language is unhampered, and she has no trouble at all conceptualizing, but her word retrieval is badly damaged. She can know exactly what she wants to say, and why, as quickly as you or I, but to express it is a stumbling, frustrating process, so her speech is always says much less than she wants. And yet: she is utterly cheerful, funny, friendly, and completely without bitterness. She's one of the happiest people I know.

Marilyn was always very generous in allowing us to call her up and ask to visit the cabin; she would happily allow us to stay a week or three, and we did this a number of times until around 1991 or so. Dad would never willingly take her there for the summer, but as they could, her boys would, so by the time they were teenagers, she could visit her girlhood summer haunt again as their schedules allowed. (Dad was persuaded to take her up there just once shortly after they married and endured the ire of her father who never liked him; he thereafter avoided the place until fifteen or so years after the stroke, and promptly had an altitude-induced heavy smoker heart attack.)

Last year she called; the boys would be unable to make it to the mountains; would we like to go up and stay with her for a while...? Sure: how could we not?!

And we all three had a wonderful time. Not the sort of time Susette and I would have had alone, but great fun, nevertheless. As I read to my wife at bedtime every night, we expanded this to Marilyn. I pulled *Murder on the Orient Express* off the bookshelf at the cabin. It was the first time she'd experienced adult fiction since the stroke. That may seem incredible; it certainly hadn't occurred to me, even though I knew Dad hated to read, and openly said to his kids that "reading is a waste of time". Shocking, for a very intelligent man, but — that was Dad. He could really be an ass at times. No one could fault the care and attention he gave his wife, but — reading wasn't ever on the plate. Marilyn was completely absorbed; we read something else after that.

This summer, I'll start with *Nero Wolfe*. Ever read your Rex Stout? It's a gas. And I think she really likes that War era and Cold War stuff; it echoes her childhood.

20100330-01	08:35	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 1: "Losing Their Religion? Catholicism in Turmoil" & "Abuse Victims to Vatican: 'Stop Attacking Us!'"
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This organization that calls itself a "church"... First the rewriting of the life and words of Jesus, then the Crusades, then the Inquisition, and now this! Well, actually this for the last 2000 or so years—they just didn't get caught, I guess, until the last 50 years or so! All the while striving mightily to increase the world's population beyond the breaking point and destroy all other views on God, while claiming that they are better than the rest of us. PURE, UNADULTERATED EVIL!!!!

"Losing Their Religion? Catholicism in Turmoil" , by NBC/MSNBC

Mar. 30, 2010, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36094806/ns/world_news-world_faith/t/losing-their-religion-catholicism-turmoil/#.Ty5fnFxSQhI)

(Sex abuse scandal prompts soul-searching across the globe.)

(WARSAW, Poland) An Austrian priest avoids mention of Pope Benedict XVI in his Masses. A Philadelphia woman stops going to confession, saying she now sees priests as more flawed than herself. British protesters call for the pontiff to resign.

As the faithful fill churches this Holy Week, many Roman Catholics around the world are finding their relationship to the church painfully tested by new revelations of clerical abuse and suggestions Benedict himself may have helped cover up cases in Germany and the U.S.

There are fears that for those whose commitment is already wavering, the scandal could be the final blow, and a growing chorus is clamoring for the church to embrace full transparency, take a hard line against pedophiles, and reconsider the rule of priestly celibacy.

"There are too many victims, and too much lying from the church about what really happened," said Martin Sherlock, a Catholic newspaper vendor in Dublin, Ireland.

Experts say the church is facing a crisis of historic proportions.

"This is the type of problem that arises really once in a century, I think, and it might even be more significant," said Paul Collins, an Australian church historian and former priest.

Collins, 69, said the abuse controversy was not mentioned by the priest in his own church near Canberra on Palm Sunday, but that the congregation discussed it afterward outside.

"People are outraged really, they're furious with the complete failure of the church's leadership and their view would be that we are led by incompetent people," Collins said.

That view was echoed by many Catholics interviewed around the world by The Associated Press in recent days, although the pope also had defenders.

One of them was John Ryan, a retired glue factory worker, who said he was impressed by the letter Benedict wrote to the Irish faithful earlier this month in which he chastised Irish bishops.

"I was talking to my parish priest last weekend, and we were reading the pope's letter, and he told me: This pope is the most intelligent pope we've had in the last thousand years," said Ryan, 66, after a Mass in Dublin. "I couldn't disagree with that. I don't really think we could do better than with Benedict. I know they're supposed to be infallible, but I'd say most Catholics today would accept that nobody's perfect — not even the pope."

But across the Atlantic, Jasmine Co said her faith in the church was badly shaken.

The 56-year-old nurse, who recently moved to the U.S. from the Philippines, said she has stopped confessing her sins to priests, and is turning to God directly.

"I don't believe in confession to the priest because I don't know if that priest is more of a sinner than I am," Co said after attending a Palm Sunday service in central Philadelphia.

On Sunday in London, about 50 protesters staged a demonstration calling on the pope to resign — something that hasn't happened in 700 years.

The criticism is also coming from pulpits. Udo Fischer, an Austrian priest known for his liberal views, avoids mentioning Benedict and other church leaders by name during his Masses — at least until he sees stronger signals of remorse from the Holy See.

"We always stress that this is the church of Jesus Christ — that of the Lord Jesus and not that of the Lord Pope," Fischer said after a Palm Sunday service in his parish in Paudorf, a village near Vienna.

Parishioners young and old squeezed into pews in Fischer's modern and airy church clutching bunches of pussy willows blessed by the priest.

Traditionally Catholic Austria, shaken by clergy abuse claims in past years and again in recent weeks, risks a drop in already dwindling support for the church if no concrete action is taken to prevent further abuse and cover-ups, says Regina Polak of the University of Vienna's Institute for Practical Theology.

"The situation is very fragile right now," Polak said. "The potential for frustration is high."

In the pope's native Germany, the Roman Catholic diocese in the western city of Trier said Monday that 20 of its current and former priests had been accused "in recent weeks" of sexual abuse.

The allegations involved incidents from the 1950s to 1990, AFP reported. Ten of the accused priests have since died and another two have retired.

The BBC reported that the church was launching a hotline for German abuse victims.

In Spain, a heavily Catholic country where secular lifestyles are eroding church attendance, a coalition of more than 100 liberal-minded lay and clergy-based groups called the Vatican's handling of the scandal "irresponsible and insufficient," saying it failed to "put itself firmly on the side of the victims."

In Norway, Oslo's Bishop Bernt Eidsvig told Catholics in a letter last week that "the culture of silence that certain bishops advised is a betrayal."

Perhaps most ominous is the threat to the pope's own authority.

David Gibson, author of "The Rule of Benedict," a biography of the pope, said the criticism focusing on Benedict puts the "the mystique of the papal office" in peril.

"And above all, it diminishes his credibility, his ability to convince people of his message, to have people listen to him. It distances many Catholics, I think, even further from the institutional hierarchical church," said Gibson.

Even as Easter Week began, anxiety was heard in many places, with people struggling to draw a line between the crimes of some priests and their own deep attachment to communities and the beliefs that sustain them.

"At this point in my life I wouldn't leave the church for somebody else's sins," said Linda Faust, 56, after a Mass in Greendale, Wisconsin — the state where the late Rev. Lawrence Murphy was accused of molesting some 200 boys at a school for the deaf. Benedict, at the time Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, is linked to a decision in the 1990s not to defrock Murphy.

Instead, Faust said that she and her husband pray for the child victims, the abusive priests and the archbishops who let them transfer to other parishes.

A key focus for those seeking church reform is celibacy — a tradition dating to Christianity's early days but only made mandatory in the 11th century. Both Collins in Australia and Bishop Geoffrey Siundu, a former Catholic priest in Kenya, said the rule should go.

Siundu now heads the Ecumenical Catholic Church of Christ in Kenya, said the celibacy rule has driven 30 other ex-priests to join his church.

Retired Italian Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini also believes mandatory chastity for churchmen should be thought over to help the church regain lost trust.

Martini, the former archbishop of Milan, told Austria's Die Presse newspaper that only through an open discussion can the church regain its credibility.

Kathrin Radelmayer, 24, attended Mass in Munich, where Ratzinger's handling of a case when he was archbishop there has been questioned. She said she was sticking with the church even though many of her friends and relatives are distancing themselves now.

"It is such a shock for the church, but the church has withstood a lot in its 2,000 years and I think that it will survive this as well," Radelmayer said.

Marina Buendia, a 22-year-old nurse from Madrid, went to St. Peter's Square in Rome for the Pope's Palm Sunday Mass. She defended the church.

"The news of these cases has come to the Vatican far too late for the Vatican to be held responsible," she said. "I think that the Vatican has accepted the problem, which is a step in the right direction. We are both very religious and feel a very strong personal bond with the pope, which would never be affected by such scandals. As young Catholics, we feel welcome and included by the church."

At a similar Mass in Minneapolis, Teresa Schweitzer, a 45-year-old English teacher, said the handling of abuse cases compounds her disenchantment over other matters, including women denied leadership roles. But she drew comfort from the many Catholic priests and activists she has seen helping the poor and pursuing social justice.

"I've had a lot of disappointments over the years, and I'm hanging by a thread," Schweitzer said. "I keep coming back for the community — the way we support each other in so many ways. Do you give up on that? Or do you stay in it and fight for justice? I think that's where a lot of us are at now."

(The Associated Press, NBC News' Andy Eckardt and msnbc.com staff contributed to this report.)

"Abuse Victims to Vatican: 'Stop Attacking Us!'" by Carrie Antlfinger, AP

Mar. 30, 2010, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36094589/ns/us_news-life/t/abuse-victims-vatican-stop-attacking-us/)

(Deaf men allegedly molested by Wis. priest criticize pope's defensive stance.)

(MILWAUKEE) A man who says he was among some 200 deaf boys allegedly molested by a priest in Wisconsin said Monday the Vatican's defensive responses to revelations about the case make him feel like he did when he was 12, when no one would listen to him about the abuse.

Arthur Budzinski, 61, said at a news conference outside the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist that Pope Benedict XVI was trying to protect himself against criticism of his handling of the Wisconsin case against the Rev. Lawrence Murphy. Murphy was accused of molesting some 200 boys at the St. John's School for the Deaf outside Milwaukee from 1950-1975. He never was defrocked.

"It's 2010. I'm not trying to hurt the pope," Budzinski said. "The pope should do something. I'm just telling my story. That's all I'm doing," said his 26-year-old daughter Gigi Budzinski, who interpreted his sign language.

Top Roman Catholic officials are rubbing salt "into the already deep wounds of those who have been victimized and disillusioned by the Catholic church" by criticizing those speaking out about the Vatican, said Mary Guentner, a spokeswoman for the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

Guentner, who says she was abused by a nun in a different school, said victims should be praised, thanked and welcomed but instead have been vilified, mischaracterized and insulted for speaking out.

"It's ludicrous to claim that these hundreds of once-trusting, devout Catholics are somehow conspiring to hurt the world's most powerful religious figure," she said.

Recently released documents showed a Vatican office led by the pope, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, halted a church trial against Murphy. Ratzinger's deputy, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, shut the process down after Murphy wrote Ratzinger a letter saying he had repented, was old and ailing, and that the case's statute of limitations had run out. Bertone now serves as the Vatican's secretary of state.

The Vatican has said the case only reached the Vatican in 1996, that Murphy died two years later, and that there was nothing in the church's handling of the matter that precluded any civil action from being taken against him.

Benedict made no direct mention of the scandal in his Palm Sunday homily, but said Jesus Christ guides the faithful "toward the courage that doesn't let us be intimidated by the chatting of dominant opinions, toward patience that supports others."

The Vatican newspaper recently said there was a "clear and despicable intention" to strike at Benedict "at any cost."

Several victims held signs at the Monday news conference that read "Stop attacking us!" and "I'm not despicable."

Guentner said when the church attacks victims' motives, it intimidates other victims and witnesses whose information might protect other children.

She said she wants Milwaukee Archbishop Jerome Listecky to "ask the pope to be transparent, to disclose any involvement in any sexual abuse cases and to stop insulting victims," she said.

She also responded to comments made Sunday by former Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who is currently the New York Archbishop. He said the pope was suffering some of the same unjust accusations once faced by Jesus.

"(It) seems a little extreme to me," she said. "I think that seems a little extreme to all of us. We are now feeling persecuted from the response of the Vatican."

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20100330-02 08:46 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 2

And...they survive (richly, I might add) in a manner lower than leeches...by feeding off the guilt and, therefore pain, that they induce in, really, all of us in the Western world, Catholic or not. That guilt has become part of our twisted culture! Maybe Ayn Rand was right after all? haha

20100330-03 09:20 Lianne Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 2

Dear SteveB,

They should take a lesson from Tiger Woods PR firm and have an apology session over the media. A mea culpa celebrity blitz.

Been reading and attending lectures on Buddhism, check out: <http://www.lamamarut.org>.

They do not even understand what guilt is, just not part of their social indoctrination.

I am going to Italy at the end of April, and I know this may sound crazy but I am boycotting the Vatican during my time in Rome!

20100330-04 09:30 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 2

Dear Lianne,

Not crazy at all. I would do the same thing. Better diet first, because there's food, food, food (muy deliciosa!) You're gonna love it there!

Ya, I'm much more of a Buddhist than a Christian, Muslim, or Hindu, all of which feel they have to worship and adulate somebody, as if God were insane with narcissism and jealousy, which seems unlikely to me. But I have a lot of trouble with reincarnation (though I'm hopeful) and asceticism (God, please continue to give me those pleasures of the flesh!).

20100330-05 12:19 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 3

But I would be remiss if I did not add that I have a profound sense of appreciation, of thankfulness, for this incredible gift of life which I have somehow been given. It is surely the greatest of gifts. I have never understood how we could ask for more, for heaven, or reincarnation, or whatever.

I think I can safely say that, at least in my lifetime, we will never understand to what or to whom it is we express this thankfulness.

Let us call whatever or whomever it is (that we can properly express this gratitude to) God, and leave it at that. There! That's all of religion. That's the Church of Steve. If we are lucky, within us, thankfulness teaches us love.

We try to understand God not because we can, but because we must. We are driven by our very nature. I believe it is when we try to pin God down to something more precise than this that we are doomed to error and to harm. We must admit, at least to ourselves, that we cannot know more than this. The rest is pure, sweet hope.

[20100330-06](#) 12:32 Ben Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear SteveB,

Yeah, that's about where I get off on this, but my own religion may be a bit more karmic than yours. Although Susette and I attend a church regularly (St David's Episcopal, downtown) and really enjoy the service, and the intelligence and wit of some of the clerical staff (in particular Ron Smith, who is the Ron Smith Religion chair at UT, for his modern and humanistic biblical transliterations, since he reads Aramaic and classical Greek), our chief appreciation is in community participation (we're head of the Greeters, I am an usher, and we both volunteer in the commercial kitchen operated by the church) and in the very fine music. There is something ascendant in singing hymns along with a couple hundred other enthusiastic souls, mostly on-pitch, and a very well-played pipe organ of quality, and participation in a ritual well over a thousand years old. I enjoy it, despite knowledge that the ritual and traditions were designed for political purposes to delude former pagans, in a pursuit of power and control. Knowing this doesn't diminish the feeling of community. Perhaps it even enhances it. Eyes wide open, and all that. That same Ron Smith I mentioned was speaking one Sunday of the Resurrection, going over the fine points of the meaning in original Greek and how it differs from the English translations; frustrated perhaps by some blank looks, and departing from his normally quiet near-monotone, he bellowed "Come on, people! It's a MYTH!" I felt much better about my membership after that. Still, I am certain that the Jesus about which this very same church has taught me would have disapproved mightily of much that the Catholic church from which mine is sprung, has done, if not most of it. I don't think he'd want to be associated with what it's become.

My two cents.

[20100330-07](#) 12:38 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear Ben,

Well put, dude! I'm not sure about the "more karmic" part...

Myself, I don't participate in golf or organized religion for the same reasons. :-)

[20100330-08](#) 22:37 Jim Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear SteveB,

I see a -3. did I miss 1 and 2?

[20100331-01](#) 06:52 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear Jim,

Well...1 & 2 are really rants against the Catholic Church and their continuing abuse of children (and others) and covering it up. I thought maybe you might be offended, so...

[20100331-02](#) 11:15 Jim Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear SteveB,

Not easily offended (or catholic) but that's okay. I appreciate your sensitivity

I have some classmates from high school who are so vitriolic in their hatred for Obama and other Democrats and send me all sorts of things that just a little checking would show are entirely untrue. There are folks out there who are reworking scurrilous stories that have been used since FDR's day and claiming them to be true of politicians today, etc. and "friends" who pass them on as gospel. when I called one of them on the falsehoods he wrote back that the particular charges might not be true but that was the kind of people they were and they were certainly capable of doing those things so he was going to keep passing the attacks on.

I just delete some of his without even opening them.

Yesterday morning started out 28 degrees but warmed to 58. Today it is supposed to get up into the 70s. How hot is Santa Cruz?

[20100331-03](#) 12:51 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 3

Dear Jim,

I know exactly what you mean about the political stuff.

Right now it's 31 C. and sunny. It can get hot and humid, but the weather is not as bad as Florida in summer or winter. And here, there are incredible flowering trees in bloom all year round. Excellent fruits and vegetables all year round too, for very little money!

[20100401-01](#) 08:16 SteveB How Elections Work in Bolivia

This Sunday (yes, even though it is Easter), Bolivia will hold what would be the equivalent of "mid-term" elections in the U.S. There will be voting for mayors, governors, and all the elected local officials. To me, it is very interesting how different elections are here from the U.S. and how much the U.S. might learn from other countries if we just weren't so arrogant.

1. It is the law that every citizen eligible MUST vote or face a fine. Even as an immigrant (I'm on a 1-year visa now), when you have a 2-year visa (my next step) you must vote or face a fine.
2. No advertising is allowed on TV, radio, or in publications. This really reduces the amount of money required to run. I think there are other limits on how campaign funds are collected, etc., but I don't know much about these, and I'm sure there is some corruption and room for improvement here, but it is on a small scale compared to the U.S.
3. Instead, volunteers put up posters. The newspapers interview all the candidates and provide a lot of good information. Rallies are held all over where the candidates speak and they have a lot of fireworks, music, and dancing. These are big fiestas really. Last night was the last opportunity for campaigning and rallies. A huge rally/party was held near my condo here in Santa Cruz. Now it is a quiet time for reflection and discussion before Sunday's vote.
4. On Sunday, while the polls are open, not only is alcohol not sold (I think it is not even sold on Saturday), virtually everything closes! Restaurants, stores, etc. There are not even many taxis running.
5. The votes are on paper, with fingerprints. Verifiable. Absolutely re-countable. What do you think, Florida?

Not bad for a backward little country, huh?

[20100401-02](#) 09:55 GaryF Re: How Elections Work in Bolivia

Dear SteveB,

Interesting, if there is No advertising, how do the people know what the candidate stands for? I know that in several countries in which I've spent considerable time, voting is virtually always along party lines and a 1 vote majority or a coalition gets to run the whole show, this can really make the pendulum swing from right to left dramatically . Although I think the U.S. system is seriously flawed, I don't think a ban on TV/Radio/Print advertising is the answer, especially with a country the size of the U.S., but rather a time limit on campaigning (impossible with free speech as who gets to decide what is campaigning) and financial restraints. I do like the Spanish system where the voting takes place on Saturday and Sunday, so everyone has a chance to get to the poles. Don't be drinking too much of that tea down there.

20100401-03 10:44 Ben "Burning Salt Water"

Dear Allan,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8utkoK2DhA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9B8srudAUhE>

This is not what the news represents it to be, but it does have some significance. (See Wikipedia article on John Kanzius): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Kanzius.

The technology he devised of which this is an offshoot, however, is VERY significant:

<http://www.goerie.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100114/NEWS02/301149924/-1/ETN>

It's sad, though, that the news article in the movie below could have so misrepresented what it's trying to explain. Worthless hype written by glib idiots.

(I imagine you probably already know all about this.)

20100401-04 12:30 Allan Re: "Burning Salt Water"

Dear Ben,

Yes, I saw the original TV video of his burning saltwater back in 2007. Through the so-called "cold-fusion" debacle a decade earlier I was a house guest with the Jarvik's in Pittsburgh, and I saw Kanzius's experiment also from their house. So if there is ever a real alternative energy breakthrough, it will have to wait until my next visit to Pittsburgh it seems.

I did not know about his radio frequency cancer treatments though.

I was quite excited at the time and I did try to follow up with this, because conversion of water, any water but particularly salt water, to O and H by any process, and then back to pure water by burning it, would be a good desalination process. If the process required RF, which could come from a solar generated transmitter, then it would suit hot deserts alongside seas and oceans as a water source. But there was no further information, and your story shows that it was because patents are still pending. My belief is that it has an exciting future for all sorts of reasons. Only one would be the generation of hydrogen for hydrogen cars, instead of relying on electricity which would have to come from nuclear generators to make enough.

Happy Easter all, a big holiday here, 4 to 5 days for everyone, second only to Christmas for Australians. Even me.

20100401-05 15:05 SteveB Re: How Elections Work in Bolivia

Dear GaryF,

See #4. Do you really think the \$billions spent on advertising really tells you anything about the candidates? I don't. It doesn't even try. Not that of the candidates themselves and certainly not that of their oppositions' negative ads. People in the U.S. learn about the candidates the same way they do here...through their actions, though the news, and by hearing

them and talking to people. Size of country has little or nothing to do with it. All the advertising does is allow big money to buy the candidates!

The tea, etc. don't really appeal to me.

20100403-01 07:08 SteveB Re: "Burning Salt Water"

Dear Allan and Ben,

But, of course, if an invention is real and works, it is very well protected by patent applications alone. Patents do not necessarily have to be issued for there to be the protection. I know because I have several patents myself. Also, if you look at packages in the hardware store or elsewhere, you will see many that are "patent pending" (and protected well enough to be there on the shelves). The head-start of a good patent application is exceedingly difficult to overcome. So if there is secrecy here, I don't see how it could have anything to do with patent applications. It could have more to do with snagging investors...kinda like the old "cold fusion" scheme, huh?

And we are not talking about a source of energy here...unfortunately. Even the inventor admits that the process requires more energy than it can output. But for desalinization...maybe very cool... The hydrogen could be used to generate additional electricity for the RF generators so that maybe the process would require less juice than the electrolysis method. But modern desalinization techniques bypass the whole energy-hogging electrolysis method in favor of big pumps (necessary for any method) and filters, so this RF technique might still be nada.

And hydrogen as a fuel? Maybe for industrial use only. I have witnessed first-hand a hydrogen explosion and its devastating results at a factory in Massachusetts. These were experts handling the stuff, and the delivery truck and storage tank did not explode. If they had, I would not be here now to tell the story...the entire factory would have become a large crater in an instant. I don't think we ever want your average idiot handling this stuff.

And so the hunt for the holy grail of energy and water continues, though I still say that many places could just tap into the water rivers needlessly dump into the ocean. Again, about all you need are big pumps and a ditch or pipeline.

20100404-01 07:11 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 4: "Vatican Priest Likens Criticism of Church on Abuse to Anti-Semitism"

After 4,400 priests in the U.S. alone have admitted or been proven to have been sex abusers of children, and the Church has been forced to pay over \$2 billion in restitution (much of it from poor parishioners), and now, recently, we have learned that this and the cover-up (or blessing?) has been going on all over the world (for how long? 1800 years or so?)...after all of this and all the children who have been harmed...this is their attitude? One priest's opinion alone, indeed! More stupidity and evil lies!

HAPPY EASTER!

"Vatican Priest Likens Criticism of Church on Abuse to Anti-Semitism" by Michael E. Ruane and William Wan, *Washington Post*

Apr. 3, 2010, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/02/AR2010040204391.html?nav=emailpage>)

On the most solemn day in the Roman Catholic calendar, a senior Vatican priest ignited a fresh chapter Friday in the debate over the priest abuse scandal by comparing criticism of the Church and Pope Benedict XVI to the historic persecution and "collective violence" against Jews.

In a Good Friday sermon in St. Peter's Basilica attended by the pope, the Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa said a Jewish friend had written to him, saying the recent accusations about the Church reminded him of the "more shameful aspects of anti-Semitism."

Jews know "from experience what it means to be victims of collective violence," the priest said, and "because of this, they are quick to recognize the recurring symptoms."

The statement stung Jewish groups — with one spokesman calling it "repulsive" — and prompted calls for the priest to retract it and for the pope to address it.

The statement also angered victims groups, which expressed outrage that the Church, some of whose priests preyed on generations of Catholic children, was portraying itself as a victim.

"The pope is not the victim here, nor is the Church hierarchy," said David Clohessy, who is an advocate for victims and who experienced alleged abuses by a priest as a boy. "The victims are the boys and girls being sexually assaulted by priests, nuns, seminarians."

He said, "When they play the victim, when they rally around those who were predators or try to cover up for them, it just intimidates those who were abused from speaking up."

The Vatican quickly said Cantalamessa, a member of the Capuchin Order whose title is preacher of the Pontifical Household, was speaking only for himself.

As Cantalamessa delivered his homily in Vatican City, the weary-looking, white-haired pope, 82, sat near the basilica's main altar. Good Friday is the day on which Catholics mark the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. Easter follows on Sunday.

The homily came amid revelations of alleged abuse of children by priests across Europe and in the United States, and the accusation that Benedict, before he became pope, did not do enough to take action against suspect priests.

And it came amid a new CBS News poll that shows that the pope's favorable rating has fallen 13 points among American Catholics, from 40 percent in 2006 to 27 percent today. More than two in three Americans, including a majority of Catholics, say the pope has done a poor job of handling allegations of abuse by priests.

But other Catholics agree with Church officials that Benedict and the Church have been unfairly smeared.

During an evening liturgy, Cantalamessa said he had received a letter from a Jewish friend who was upset by the attacks against Benedict and the Church and expressed his "solidarity" and "sentiments of brotherhood."

Quoting from the letter with the author's permission, the priest said his friend had been following " 'with indignation the violent and concentric attacks against the Church, the pope and all the faithful of the whole world.' "

"The use of stereotypes, the passing from personal responsibility and guilt to a collective guilt remind me of the more shameful aspects of anti-Semitism," Cantalamessa said his friend wrote.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of Simon Wiesenthal Center, in Los Angeles, called the comparison "bizarre."

"The fact that he's quoting [a] letter from a Jewish person doesn't excuse the ignorance," he said. "These priests were perpetrators. They abused their calling, betrayed their faith. And then were protected by the hierarchy. To say that is like the persecution of the Jews is a distortion of history and shameful."

"It's Good Friday," he added. The priest "knows his remarks are going all over the world. And that's the message you want to give? Ridiculous. Not only should the priest retract it, but the pope should address it . . . to say nothing condones it."

The Rev. James Massa, chief officer for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on interreligious matters, said he worried how the comparison will affect the Church's relationship with the Jewish community. He noted the great progress made in recent decades in understanding between leaders of the two faiths.

"I hope that what was said will be understood as the comments of one particular priest, albeit a prominent one, and doesn't reflect opinions of the pope or the Catholic Church," Massa said. "I think the comparison is not only unfortunate, but inappropriate [and] . . . has no place in a Good Friday sermon."

The Rev. Federico Lombardi, a Vatican spokesman, said the priest was speaking for himself.

"There is no position of the Vatican to do a parallel between the critiques of the Church and the anti-Semitism," he said in a phone interview. "I stress that the intention of the priest was to give witness of solidarity of the Jewish friend who referred to his experience and suffering of his people. . . . The Vatican is not comparing critics with anti-Semitism."

But others in the Catholic community said they have been struck by the Church's response to recent abuse allegations.

"If they hired someone to draw up the worst possible PR plan for the Church, they could not do any worse than these guys are doing right now," said the Rev. Thomas Reese, senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University.

"It's disastrous," he said. "They really need to get someone from the U.S. bishops conference who has been through this before to get over there and help guide the coverage. I mean, to invoke the persecution of the Jews? They are making every mistake in the book."

20100404-02	08:44	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 5
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Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. — Martin Luther King, Jr.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... — Galatians 5:22-23

20100404-03	08:56	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 6: "Cardinal Condemns 'Gossip' at Easter Mass"
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I don't know about you, but for me it's just all too much! "Petty gossip" indeed!!!!

"Cardinal Condemns 'Gossip' at Easter Mass" by MSNBC

Apr. 4, 2010, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36166058/ns/world_news-europe/t/cardinal-condemns-gossip-easter-mass/)

(Pontiff maintains his silence on mounting sex abuse scandal during address.)

(VATICAN CITY) A senior cardinal defended Pope Benedict XVI from "petty gossip" on Sunday as the pontiff maintained his silence on mounting sex abuse cover-up accusations during his Easter message.

The ringing tribute by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals, at the start of Mass attended by tens of thousands of faithful in St. Peter's Square, marked an unusual departure from the Vatican's Easter rituals.

"Holy Father, the people of God are with you and will not let themselves be influenced by the petty gossip of the moment, by the trials that sometimes assail the community of believers," Sodano said.

The change of protocol underscored just how much the Vatican is feeling the pressure from the growing sex-abuse scandal and possible cover-up that have inched closer to the pope himself.

Dressed in gold robes and shielded from a cool drizzle by a canopy, Benedict looked weary as he listened to Sodano's speech at the start of Mass in the cobblestone square bedecked with daffodils, tulips and azaleas.

Sodano, a former secretary of state, praised Benedict as the "solid rock" that holds up the Church.

"The Church is with you!" Sodano told the pope to the cheers of thousands of people holding umbrellas in St Peter's Square.

His speech of solidarity listed those who support the pope, particularly "the 400,000 priests who generously serve" in schools, hospitals and missions around the world. This was a clear attempt to underscore the Vatican's position that only a tiny minority of priests have abused children.

Later, the pope did not mention the scandal in his twice-yearly "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) address, which touched on a series of world problems.

'Trials and sufferings'

Benedict singled out the "trials and sufferings" of Christians in Iraq and Pakistan, noting that these believers have risked persecution and death for their faith. He urged hope for the people of Haiti and Chile, devastated by earthquakes. He said Easter could "signal the victory of peaceful coexistence and respect" in crime-ravaged areas of Latin American countries plagued by drug trafficking and said he would pray for peace in the Middle East.

But, despite repeated appeals by victims of clerical sexual abuse that he take responsibility for his role in the handling of pedophile priests, he stayed silent on that issue. The victims contend there were decades of systematic cover-up by bishops in many countries, including the United States, Ireland and Benedict's native Germany.

They want him to demand the resignations of bishops complicit in any conspiracy to shield pedophile priests by shuffling them from parish to parish instead of kicking them out of the priesthood.

The accusations against the pope stem from his leadership as archbishop of Munich before he came to the Vatican three decades ago, as well as his long tenure in Rome of the Holy See's office dealing with a growing pile of dossiers about pedophile priests.

Victims group angry

"Victims are seeking consolation and healing and should not be insulted and told that our speaking out is petty gossip," said Barbara Blaine, a leader of the U.S.-based Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

"The pope has said the truth should be exposed. They can't have it both ways," she told Reuters.

The celebrations leading up to Easter have been clouded by accusations the Church in several countries mishandled and covered up abuse of children by priests, sometimes for decades.

Shaken by the crisis, the Vatican has several times accused the media of trying to smear the pope. Some reports have accused him of negligence in handling abuse cases in previous roles as a cardinal in his native Germany, and in Rome.

Sunday's edition of the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano denounced the accusations against the pope as a "vile defamation operation."

Benedict hasn't made any explicit reference to the scandal since he released a letter to the Irish faithful concerning the abuse crisis in that country on March 20.

The Vatican has denied any cover-up over the abuse of 200 deaf boys in the United States by Reverend Lawrence Murphy from 1950 to 1974. The New York Times reported the Vatican and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict, were warned about Murphy, but the priest was not defrocked.

On Saturday, the Vatican's newspaper kept up its campaign against the media for reports on alleged cover-ups of sexual abuse of children by priests, saying the pope had become the target of a "despicable campaign of defamation".

Apologies

On Sunday, the pope's personal preacher apologized to Jews after he compared attacks on the Church to "collective violence" against Jews throughout history.

"If — and it was not my intention to do so — I hurt the sensitivities of Jews and victims of pedophilia, I am truly sorry and I ask for forgiveness," Father Raniero Cantalamessa said in an interview with Italy's Corriere della Sera newspaper.

He also said the pope was not aware of his remarks and that the pontiff heard them for the first time along with everyone else in St. Peter's Basilica on Good Friday.

Jewish groups around the world had reacted with shock.

Rome's chief rabbi, Riccardo Di Segni, said the remarks were particularly insensitive because they were made on the day that for centuries Christians prayed for the conversion of the Jews, who were once held collectively responsible for Jesus' death.

A Vatican spokesman later said the comparison "is absolutely not the line of the Vatican and of the Catholic Church".

(Reuters and The Associated Press contributed to this report.)

[20100404-04](#) 09:52 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 7

Excuse me all to hell and back (as we say in Indiana) but, instead of continuing the cover-up, shouldn't these (what is the kindest words I can use?) liars, criminals, and hypocrites be begging the world and God for forgiveness, and (possibly) admitting that celibacy is their own invention (not that of Jesus or God) and just might be part of the problem (or, at the very least, provides a convenient excuse for the problem)????

Now, I'm off to Easter Mass to see if I can convince Someone to intervene (though I'm sorry to say that I don't really believe that will happen, but what the hey?).

[20100405-01](#) 09:11 Charis Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 7

Dear SteveB,

Here in Tarija Bolivia there is a complex underground tunnel system under the city. Tunnels have been found that apparently Catholic priests used to get to the convent several blocks away a couple hundred years ago. In the tunnel there are catacombs and skeletons of dead aborted babies. It is believed they are the priests' and nuns' babies. I don't actually believe Catholic priests even are celibate any more.

[20100405-02](#) 13:17 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 7

Dear Charis,

I believe it!

True story. Years ago I was having something at a restaurant just up Sucre from the plaza. One block and on the corner, the way I remember it, but I don't know if it's still there.

For some reason, some Gringo guy thought I looked like a Gringo too and struck up a conversation. :-) You know, the usual, where are you from, what are you doing in Bolivia? It seems he was here to have sex with young girls. I tried to slip away, but he kept talking, so my opportunity was a little delayed.

But what he told me was that there was a priest you could find hanging out in Arenal Park who was essentially a pimp for young girls. I didn't really believe him at the time, but now I think I do.

Divine guidance? Seems to be missing. My guess is that it was missing when they rewrote the life and words of Jesus too!

[20100406-01](#) 22:00 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 8: "Vatican Says Pope Target of 'Hate' Campaign"

Methinks the Church in need of a little Divine Guidance. They seem to have lost their way...very badly...a very long time ago...and the result is so very, very tragic...

The immediate problem stems from the fact that there are not just "allegations" of abuse cover-up. There is more than ample proof and admission of abuse cover-up. There is more than ample proof of a massive pattern of abuse and cover-up—nearly world-wide. Perhaps if these were simply allegations, one might be able to legitimately call them some kind of "hate campaign". But surely, to point to proven and admitted sin and demand change is no more than the Church as done during its entire existence. I know of no one who has ever labeled that a "hate campaign", but if that is what this is, then that is what it has always been.

"Vatican Says Pope Target of 'Hate' Campaign" by Francis D'Emilio, AP

Apr. 6, 2010, (http://www.cleveland.com/world/index.ssf/2010/04/vatican_blasts_anti-catholic_h.html)

(Blames allegations of abuse cover-up on groups with anti-Catholic agenda.)

(VATICAN CITY) The Vatican heatedly defended Pope Benedict XVI on Tuesday, claiming accusations that he helped cover up the actions of pedophile priests are part of an anti-Catholic "hate" campaign targeting the pope for his opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage.

Vatican Radio broadcast comments by two senior cardinals explaining "the motive for these attacks" on the pope and the Vatican newspaper chipped in with spirited comments from another top cardinal.

"The pope defends life and the family, based on marriage between a man and a woman, in a world in which powerful lobbies would like to impose a completely different" agenda, Spanish Cardinal Julian Herranz, head of the disciplinary commission for Holy See officials, said on the radio.

Herranz didn't identify the lobbies but "defense of life" is Vatican shorthand for anti-abortion efforts.

Also arguing that Benedict's promotion of conservative family models had provoked the so-called attacks was the Vatican's dean of the College of Cardinals, Angelo Sodano.

"By now, it's a cultural contrast," Sodano told the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*. "The pope embodies moral truths that aren't accepted, and so, the shortcomings and errors of priests are used as weapons against the church."

Italian Cardinal Giovanni Lajolo, who heads the Vatican City State's governing apparatus, also defended Benedict.

The pope "has done all that he could have" against sex abuse by clergy of minors, Lajolo said on Vatican radio, decrying what he described as a campaign of "hatred against the Catholic church."

Swept by scandal

Sex abuse allegations, as well as accusations of cover-ups by diocesan bishops and Vatican officials, have swept across Europe in recent weeks.

Benedict has been criticized for not halting the actions of abusive priests when he was a Vatican cardinal and earlier while he was the archbishop of Munich in his native Germany.

The mainland European scandals — in Germany, Italy, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland — are erupting after decades of abuse cases in the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland and other areas.

In Germany, nearly 2,700 people called the church's sexual abuse hotline in the first three days it was operating, a Catholic church spokesman said Tuesday. A team of psychologists and other experts have spoken with 394 people so far, ranging from several minutes up to an hour, Trier Diocese spokesman Stephan Kronenburg said.

"Most callers reported cases of sexual abuse," he told The Associated Press.

Benedict has ignored victims' demands that he accept responsibility for what they say is his own personal and institutional responsibility for failing to swiftly kick abusive priests out of the priesthood, or at least keep them away from children.

But he has been protected by a vanguard of senior Vatican prelates who are fending off what they contend is an orchestrated attempt to attack the leader of the world's more than 1 billion Catholics.

'Strong pope'

The Vatican No. 2 official, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, rebuffed questions about the pontiff's silence on the topic, indicating that Benedict was standing firm.

"He's a strong pope," he told reporters after arriving Tuesday in Chile. The Italian news agency ANSA quoted him as calling Benedict a "great prophet of the Third Millennium."

Bertone, now the Holy See's secretary of state but formerly Benedict's deputy when the future pope, then-called Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, headed the Vatican's morals office, has himself been swept up in the scandals.

During a May 1998 meeting at the Vatican, Bertone told Wisconsin bishops to halt a church trial against an ailing priest who was accused of sexually abusing 200 deaf children, according to a Vatican transcript. The priest died soon afterward.

"It's not true, it's not true! We have documented the opposite," ANSA quoted Bertone as saying in Chile. "Let's not talk about this topic now, because otherwise we'll be here all day verifying precisely the action taken by me and by his eminence."

On Easter, the most important day in the Catholic faith, the Vatican broke with tradition and began its service in St. Peter's Square with a ringing defense of Benedict delivered by Cardinal Sodano.

The Vatican newspaper quoted Sodano on Tuesday as saying the church is "certainly" suffering because of pedophile priests but he asserted that "Benedict XVI has apologized several times."

"But it's not Christ's fault if Judas betrayed" him, Sodano said. "It's not a bishop's fault if one of his priests is stained by grave wrongdoing. And certainly the pontiff is not responsible."

"Behind the unjust attacks on the pope are visions of the family and of life that run contrary to the Gospel," Sodano said. "Now the accusation of pedophile is being brandished against the church."

He noted that past popes have also been criticized, including the "offensive against Pius XII for his conduct during the last World War as well as that against Paul VI" for his encyclical against birth control, the cardinal said.

'Anti-Catholic hatred'

Pius has been accused by Jewish groups and some scholars as not having done enough to save Jews from the Holocaust, although the Vatican contends he used behind-the-scenes diplomacy to help them. Benedict has hailed Pius as a "great" pontiff, who is being considered for possible beatification.

Vatican Radio, presenting listeners with some of the most vehement counterattacks yet, depicted the church as a victim.

"There are those who fear the media campaign of anti-Catholic hatred can degenerate," Vatican Radio said.

It noted anti-Catholic graffiti on walls of a church outside Viterbo, a town near Rome, and reminded listeners that a bishop was attacked by a man during Easter Mass in Muenster, Germany. The bishop fought back with an incense bowl.

The radio likened the recent campaign to the persecution suffered by early Christian martyrs. "The crowds, incited by the slanders of the powerful, would lynch the Christians," the radio said.

In Munich, meanwhile, an independent lawyer hired by the Catholic church wrapped up his investigation of abuse allegations at the southern Ettal monastery.

"The investigation clearly shows a system of abuse that lasted for decades," Thomas Pfister told The Associated Press.

There were some cases of sexual abuse at Ettal but most victims who came forward were physically abused and most cases took place before 1990, Pfister said in a telephone interview.

The lawyer declined to elaborate as his final report will be published next week.

20100406-02 23:24 Larry Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8

Dear SteveB,

I had a bad accident in 1966 and I was taken to a Catholic Hospital with a serious concussion. Part of this I don't remember to this day. Anyway, when Sandy came to visit me she brought my bible. I noticed that the nuns stared at it a lot. (Protestant edition, of course) Afterwards they fed me my first meal, and it was somewhere left of awful. I just wouldn't eat it after bite or two and I thought they acted mad. In the evening I began to read my bible and a nun/nurse turned off my lamp. I went ahead and turned the pages as though I was reading it and she told me to get my sleep. I had gone to the hospital without any opinion concerning Catholicism but by the time I got back home I just didn't feel comfortable around any of their clergy or staff. I have always had a lot of Catholic friends though. About a year after my hospitalization they accepted a huge donation of Protestant bibles donated to St. Josephs' Hospital. A week later or so they were all found at the city dump. They probably came to the dump to get some food and the books fell off the trucks accidently like. ;-)

If you get a chance write me about what it is like in the town where you living. I would enjoy it a lot.

20100407-01 09:40 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8

Dear Larry,

Good story! Catholics, in general, don't really seem to think much of the Bible and are not encouraged to read it. Many more rosary beads and crosses are carried around than Bibles.

But, you know, I tend to think of the Bible as a very difficult and dangerous book! So, in a way, I think Catholics may be right about it not being fit for mass consumption, even though I know that sounds weird. But look at the trouble people and groups get into when they take it literally, as the Evangelicals try to do. And reading it creatively is dangerous too. Look at Jim Jones or David Koresh or any number of other charlatans. Look at the millions consumed by "End of Days". The Koran has the same kinds of problems.

Yet it was essentially what became the Catholic Church which created the Bible as we know it, right? They decided what to put in and what to leave out. And I don't think we will ever know how much creativity went into the writing of the books of the Bible, so long after the death of Jesus. I have always thought that it might have been a very good idea for Jesus to have picked at least one disciple who knew how to read and write. It seems that, as a group, they really let him down. Mohammed seems to have learned a lesson from this—at least the Koran was put into writing a little before and soon after his death. I much prefer the sacred Indian texts of Hinduism (a truly weird religion in some ways) and Buddhism (the "shining light") to either the Bible or Koran.

But, then, I've always thought that it might have been a good idea for the Son of God to say something about what a huge danger overpopulation and destruction of the environment, hatred of the environment, would become in the near future of mankind. He could have helped immensely more by saying something about that than by creating food, I think. But maybe that part of his teachings was so far over the heads of His followers that it became lost. What else became lost? A lot, I think...then substituted with fantasy. But that's just me.

And are there different Protestant and Catholic Bibles? (Except that the Catholic Bible is actually more complete.) And what is the holy text of Judaism doing in there anyway? I have never thought that it fit or belonged, despite the prophesy it contains. These are two very different, distinct religions, if you ask me. Otherwise, we are all doomed for worshiping anyone except the old mean, jealous, vengeful, narcissistic God Himself. I'd much rather see some of the Gnostic texts in there myself.

20100407-02 12:48 Larry Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 8

Dear SteveB,

I don't have time to say much right now, but the Bible is always a book to question. That is no heresy.

from Larry:

If you get a chance write me about what it is like in the town where you living. I would enjoy it a lot.

Dear Larry,

Here's some stuff about Santa Cruz. This is the first chapter of an unfinished guidebook. Hope you enjoy.

Getting Around Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia
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(Excerpted from: *A Guide to Bolivia by Someone Who Actually Lives There.*)

INTRODUCTION

"I know I'm in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, but where the heck am I and how do I get where I'm going? Was that the most beautiful woman in the world I just saw? And was that a guy on a bicycle carrying 200 brooms and mops and what else?"

I can't necessarily answer the last two very common questions, of course, but I would like to try to share some of my experience in getting from place to place here in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, where I have lived (and successfully gotten around with, mainly, little Spanish) for more than two and a half years. Getting around in other large Bolivian cities, like La Paz and Cochabamba, is exactly like Santa Cruz.

I'm not going to romanticize the place, though obviously, I like it well enough to live here, and, in fact, like living here very much indeed. But I may, at times, seem rather blunt (by Bolivian standards, at least), and I apologize for that up front. I mean to be fair but, if necessary, brutally honest. There are absolutely zero prejudices built into these observations. Haha. I'll tell you up front that one of the biggest prejudices built into this piece is the conglomeration of my ideas about how to live better in Santa Cruz and how to make it a better place to live. Much of this information is applicable to almost any other large city in developing countries where most people don't yet have automobiles (thank God!) and must rely on travel by foot, bike, or a highly developed public transportation system (necessitated by the fact that so many people aren't driving in the first place).

In many respects, I haven't found getting around not much different here in Santa Cruz than in cities like Mexico City, Castries, St. Lucia, Guangzhou, China, Jakarta, Indonesia, Fort-de-France, Martinique, San Juan, P.R., or even Lisboa, Portugal. Many cities in the world, by necessity, are much more advanced than American cities in terms of public transportation, but share with each other common problems caused by rapid development, overcrowding, aged infrastructure, and sweet people becoming plumb loco when they get behind the wheel of a vehicle.

As you read this guide, you may find yourself wondering, like so many people to whom I've told some of these stories, attempting to describe life here, why on Earth someone would choose to live in such a dirty, non-hassle-free city, where the simple act of getting from one place to another can be so potentially dangerous? That's a difficult question.

I suppose part of it is the adventure. But more importantly, you can know good and bad people wherever you live or travel. I guess it's just a matter of who you happen to know, by chance, or by fate, or whatever it is. Years ago, I came here because of one very good person, and then I met more very good people. And when you know someone in Bolivia, it's not long until you know their whole family, because families are very close here. Then, as in my case, you are treated like a member of the family, then you are one of the family, and this becomes true for more than one of the families you know. Then, one day, you find that you never want to leave for very long.

I believe that one of the main differences between much of Latin America, including Bolivia, and the U.S. is that, here, the culture encourages acceptance of whatever conditions are present, whereas the culture in the U.S. seems to me to encourage questioning and change. There are rather pervasive historical reasons for this difference. I don't see stating this observation as an expression of prejudice, but if you do, so be it.

Let me give you one little example, others are embedded elsewhere. I recently spent quite a bit of time at a hospital where the mother of a friend was dying. Two other people, the family of another patient in intensive care, had stayed all night in the hallway where a couple of old couches served as a waiting room. I first arrived early in the morning, after a very cold windy, night. The two people were clothed for winter, lying there covered with about a dozen blankets each. Two doors stood open to the cold wind outside and had remained so the entire night. Even though no one was around, even though no one was coming and going, even though there was no rule or sign about leaving them open, even though they were easily closed and I did so, the people did not think of closing them. Acceptance, rather than change, seems to be inherent here.

MONEY AND CHANGE (0 Stars!)

When I travel or live abroad, I'm more careful with money than I would be if I were living and working back home. I'm not sure exactly why. I guess it's a way of life left over from my college, backpacking, trekking, and sailing days. I can remember people in various harbors of the Caribbean, who were traveling from island to island or maybe even sailing around the world. Rich, right? Maybe in some cases, not all, but they were very careful with their money. They were either on fixed incomes or had a certain amount of money to travel on that they wanted to make last as long as possible, to prolong the fun. I meet many backpackers in Bolivia who are traveling around South America. They all seem to take the cheapest transportation possible (as do I), eat as inexpensively as they can (which I can't bring myself to do), and tend to stay in the cheapest hotels—*alojamientos*, they are called here, or hostels, and many of these places are pretty shabby, with rather primitive communal bathrooms, no televisions, phones, or air-conditioners. All these travelers want to make their money go as far as possible. Both the sailors and the trekkers love to share stories of great deals they got in this or that country. They love to recommend ways to get by cheaply. I guess I've just never completely outgrown that philosophy.

So I would like to begin with a subject that is common to all forms of transportation within the city—money.

Though the U.S. dollar is like a second national currency and is accepted everywhere, the national currency of Bolivia is the *boliviano*, abbreviated "bs." and divided into 100 *centavos*. The *boliviano* is also known locally as the *peso*. This harkens back to the days (not long ago) when the national currency was the *peso*, and "Boliviano" is just too long, I guess, for the marketplace. Ex-pats and foreign travelers often refer simply to "B's".

The problem is that there don't seem to be enough B's to go around. Of course, that's always the problem in any country, right? But I mean there apparently aren't enough of them available for daily commerce, especially coins. When you buy anything in Bolivia, if you attempt to pay without the correct change, the next thing that will happen is that you will be asked for change. Taxi drivers don't have change, stores don't have change, even the big supermarkets don't have the smaller change. And no one likes to give change. Having to do so often provokes an unconscious (I think) frown or even a scowl. Everyone acts like it's a total waste of their valuable time to have to find change, even if you are the only customer within fifty miles. Everyone wants to hoard whatever change they have.

The reasons given for this lack of cash include fear of being robbed (no one wants to even pretend to have any money), but I think this would only apply to bills, surely not to a few coins. There are claims that the government isn't producing enough coins smaller than 50 *centavos*. One hears rumors that the metal in the smaller coins (copper and nickel), especially the 20 *centavo* coin, is worth more than the coins themselves and can be sold in Argentina, at a 10% premium, to be melted down, but I have my doubts. I've done some weighing and some checking. My calculations seem to show that the 20 cent. coins and maybe the 10 cent. coins could indeed be worth more melted down. But then the copper and nickel need to be separated, so I'm not so sure. And what a hassle! Also, this doesn't explain the apparent shortage of other coins, or change in general. The other possibility is that, as in Argentina, people are hoarding coins because of the rumors or whatever. Maybe it's just an issue of lack of confidence. It's interesting to note that the U.S. penny and nickel are also worth more melted down, but U.S. law (actually enforced) and the hassle involved make the problem nonexistent. I think Bolivia, at least and maybe all countries, needs to make a change to plastic coins with holograms. That would solve the problem. Vending machines (what few there are in Bolivia) and parking meters (boo!) would simply have to change to accommodate the change to the new plastic change.

The lack of any customer-centered, service oriented attitude in general seems to me to be a bigger problem. I have successfully been able to acquire large amounts of coins myself at several of the banks in town. Why would it be the customer's responsibility to supply change? Maybe that's the way it's always been done here.

The supermarkets commonly short-change their customers, claiming they just don't have the coins in the registers. (So

their solution is to steal their customers' money?) Strange how they never seem to round up in their calculations and give you more change than you're due—unless you complain. Fun! As I said, you can be checking out of a huge, modern, brightly lit supermarket/discount mart and they will request change from you. My response used to be, "Do I look like a bank?" Another trick they will try to use is to give you cheap candy or a small box of matches in lieu of coins, as if candy were now legal tender. I don't want that for change. It's like being forced to buy something you don't want and didn't ask for. It's one of the reasons why we have money in the first place—to get exactly what we want, not things we don't want. But for the time being, I guess you can add candy and matches to the list of official currencies in Bolivia.

I estimate that the three largest grocery chains alone steal about \$1 million a year from their mainly poor customers with their rounding down "scheme" when they make change—only about \$1 U.S. per customer per year, but shouldn't that money be in the pockets of the people it belongs to? It can be pretty profitable for businesses, this lack of *el cambio*.

Once, I was shorted a ridiculously large 80 *centavos* out of 15 bs. (there are 50, 20, and 10 *centavo* coins—the 50 is very common—a micro (small bus, pronounced "meekro") costs one *boliviano* and 50 *centavos*, so these coins are in plentiful supply. It turned-out the cashier had the exact amount required in her drawer, but didn't want to be bothered with it, or was just lazy, or had instructions, or what? For amounts greater than 10 *centavos*, I will call cashiers to account when I check-out, requesting (OK, occasionally having to demand) my fair change (usually to give it to the bag boy/girl), but it's really a hassle, and I feel like the only person in Bolivia willing to take a stand on the issue. If everyone simply demanded their fair change, there would cease to be a problem. But the average Bolivian is not about to make such a fuss, which is how the stores get away with the thievery in the first place. No one wants to publicly disturb the natural karmic state known in Bolivia as *tranquilo* (not the expected *tranquilidad*, which is a word I've never heard used, for some reason).

Here's another example from the other day that really irked me, though I maintained my external *tranquilo*. I was paying my cable TV/internet bill at a financial institution named Fondo Fassil. A large part of their business is taking payments for utility companies. In Bolivia, for some reason, the utilities cannot accept money directly for their services. I once tried to pay my gas bill at the address on the bill, which is the gas company, and found out it wasn't allowed. I had made the rather long trip for nothing and had to go elsewhere to pay my bill. So, at Fondo Fassil, I was shorted 38 *centavos*. As is very, very common, I was asked if I had change, then handed the insufficient change with no comment. Now, I might have been more understanding had the young lady simply said, "Gee, sir, I'm really sorry, but I don't seem to have any small coins at the moment." No, no apology, no nothing. So I politely and calmly demanded my correct change. Even though the business of this company is to accept money and make change, I was expected to be a bank. It caused quite a little problem until some manager dug into his own pocket and produced the change. If that were my business, I believe I would get to the bank so I could serve my customers. By the way, security was no issue, because the guard was standing right there with his loaded, sawed-off shotgun. I don't understand, really, why people put up with what they put up with here.

One good money solution at supermarkets, pharmacies, and restaurants, is to use a credit card for the exact amount. One, and only one, of my American credit card companies (Capital One) charges no extra fees on foreign transactions, has no annual fee, gives me cash back or airline miles, protects me (somewhat) if I buy something that turns out to be bogus and the store doesn't provide satisfaction, and gives me a little better exchange rate (6.97 bs. per dollar) than the banks (6.96). Not bad for free, huh?

The credit union near me exchanges at 7.00, and guys in the streets with big wads of cash give 7.05, but I'm wary of getting counterfeit bills that I wouldn't know from the real thing. There are also businesses called Houses of Change (*casas de cambio*) which exchange dollars for 7.04. The exchange rate for Bolivianos/dollars has remained constant for the past year, but has been known to fluctuate a little in the past. The numbers presented are accurate as of June, 2010.

Another money solution can be to use American dollars. Remember, dollars are one of the legal currencies of Bolivia. One local supermarket chain, which is one of the worst at stealing your small change and charging you to use their restroom, happily exchanges dollars for a very fair exchange rate of 7.02. If they skim a little off the top on the way out, you're still ahead.

I guess checks exist in Bolivia, but you just don't see them. Maybe the big stores could take them, but I never see anyone writing one. Nobody else would take them. You'll see people taking 100,000 bs., or more, out of the bank for some transaction, because they can't write a check or use some other form of payment. I'm assuming that having to withdraw large sums of cash from a bank account is the least desirable form of payment for the person doing the paying, yet it is the norm. For a fee, there is a bank-issued *cheque de gerencia*, which is like a registered or certified check in the U.S. and is accepted by other banks, at least.

The best money solution is to carry a range of change, lots of change (even small coins if you don't want to feel like a fish on a hook). No matter how you travel or what you buy, your endeavors will proceed more smoothly if you carry lots of change. It will help everybody, most importantly, yourself. Consider small change to be the oil that greases the wheels of basic commerce, making everything run more smoothly.

As with any large city, Santa Cruz has beggars—both downtown and in the markets. Although as a rule, I tend not to want to encourage such behavior, I know that many of these people are very deserving, perhaps handicapped, in a land where the living is not easy in such circumstances. How nice if you always have something in your pocket for some of them. You don't have to do it all, just do your part sometimes.

Street performers can be found in many, even unlikely, places in the city, and that's something that I always like to encourage. A musician or two will board a micro and play a couple of songs. There might be a Mariachi band strolling through the central plaza. At major intersections, jugglers, fire eaters, and windshield cleaners perform in the most professional and hopeful manner imaginable. All these people enrich the city and deserve our gratitude and good will. Keep a coin locked and loaded at all times!

I give to beggars only if they are clearly disabled, I feel the rest could at least attempt the very easy (in Bolivia) process of trying to sell something. I understand Peru has outlawed giving to street beggars because it has a deleterious effect on people's lives. I never give to children, but am saddened when I see them working and selling things, often late into the night. There are places where I will never give—while sitting in restaurants or sidewalk tables, or at sporting or music events—where I don't want to be bothered, I just want to enjoy whatever I'm there for, and I feel that it is rude for strangers to intrude. Maybe that's just the small town Indiana/New England/Montana mix in me, I don't know. You would think people here, who build so many walls around their houses and never can be bothered to say, "Hello," would understand the value of privacy.

Another goodwill gesture is the tip, which is a little disused in Bolivia, but is much appreciated when given. There are many eligible recipients for the good will of tips—taxi drivers, cashiers, guards, waiters and waitresses, people who might help you park or watch your car, people who take care of the public bathrooms, people who sell you something with a smile instead of the usual scowl.

And, in Bolivia, someone will try to sell you almost anything no matter where you might be. The whole intricate, small capitalist-based distribution system of common goods is part of the richness of Santa Cruz. What service! I swear that every single block has at least one pharmacy, little grocery store, fried chicken restaurant, lawyer, and hardware store. There are people selling hot dogs, fruit, candy, *empanadas*, ice cream, glasses of *somó* and fresh-squeezed orange juice, CD's, DVD's, watches, sunglasses, strange tasteless extruded puffy things, and/or souvenirs at every corner. That may be a bit of an exaggeration in some instances (though the watches—Rolex, of course—are sold everywhere by roving salesmen), but it also fails to capture the density of stores, stalls, boxes, and carts at many intersections.

Bolivia is one of the few countries in the world where intellectual property rights are openly scoffed at. Copies of CD's, DVD's, and most software can be had for about \$1. Copies of movies can often be purchased even before their release. I once watched a copy of the Steven Spielberg movie, *A.I.*, which had been filmed off of a screen at a theater, including the shadows of people coming to their seats after the movie had started. Fake Nike, Levi Strauss, Sony, Coach, and Duracell products are everywhere. (Genuine imported goods cost about the same as in the States, though if they're made in America, they're more expensive in Bolivia.) It's often difficult to find a book that is not an illegal copy. I think the same piracy must apply to generic drugs here, because they are amazingly inexpensive. While this is a deplorable state of affairs, I have to say in all honesty, as an artist, myself, that if nothing were available except original, legal goods in these categories, almost nothing would be sold, because very few people could afford them. Either way, the artists make zilch! Maybe it's better to, at least, get the products into the hands of the people. In the case of music, at least, this does help sell concert tickets. I can see some of the copying issues both ways.

"Fast food" here is so fast that it makes American fast food seem slow in comparison, with its lines and wait times. Maybe they need to coin a new name and call it something like "instantaneous food", because that's what it really is, and what people have come to expect. Instantaneous cold drinks and ice cream are especially common, because all you need to be in business is a cooler, and it can be damned hot here. You can buy from your car, taxi, micro, bus, train, front gate, your favorite bar or restaurant, while waiting in line at government offices or banks, in front of the German Cemetery, American School, Irish Pub, *Jardin de Asia*, and Japanese Hospital. Everywhere!

For everywhere else, there are merchants riding or walking around to find you. And in the markets, people eat and drink non-stop. The outlying areas still have horse-drawn milk carts. I have run into the previously mentioned bike-riding

broom salesmen in some of the unlikeliest places, places seemingly impossible to make sales of things like brooms, like the *cabaña* discos down at the river where you're in the middle of nowhere, in the jungle, drinking too many beers, eating too much greasy food, and dancing way too much to feel normal the next morning...and there, just outside the little Disco—the broom guy, riding around with the inventory of a Super Wal-Mart stuck all around him, an entire array of handles piercing menacingly fore and aft. And I don't even want to think about the ubiquitous knife guy!

It's to the point now where you can buy almost anything almost anywhere—more service than you really need. The whole enterprise makes me think of what the U.S. would be like if Wal-Mart (and all the others) were permitted to not only advertise anywhere they want, but to sell anything anywhere they want. It's pure, unrestrained *laissez faire* capitalism...in a country with a nominally "communist" government, much like the Chinese, who live the same paradox.

Here's what a friend who grew-up in Santa Cruz had to say on the subject of all the local foods and drinks you can buy here:

"The little *comidas* (foods) sold everywhere are mostly *empanadas* (cheese and chicken), *asaditos* (little spicy hamburgers), *anticuchos* or *pacumutos* (shish-kabobs) with *yuca*. In the buses to San Javier they also sell *cuñapes* (my beloved cheese rolls), *roschas de maiz* (corn bread made with cheese and baked in the form of a doughnut). By the *Rio Grande*, they sell fried fish, fresh from the river (with *yuca* always). On the way to Cochabamba and Villamontes, they sell other things such as hard boiled eggs, all the fruits—oranges, tangerines, *achachairus*, *ocorós*, etc. And in little bags, they sell "atomic" corn with *queso fresco* (fresh cheese), which is one of my favorites.

In the streets and plazas it is basically the same. People like the *horneado típico* (baked things)—the *canapés*, *roschas*, and *empanadas* and also the *anticuchos*. In many places throughout the city, they sell hot dogs, hamburgers, *lomito* sandwiches, and a lot of drinks made from fresh fruits called *refrescos* (*refresco Cabrera* is one of the more famous). They make these from oranges, *achachairú*, tamarind, lemon, *maracuyá*, or peaches—all kinds of fruits. Another very popular drink is called *mocochinchi*, made from dehydrated peaches boiled with sugar and cinnamon for a long time. That one, to me, is the best soft drink in the entire world! I love it!

Along San Aurelio Avenue and outside the Parque Urbano, they sell *refresco de caña*—juice of the sugar cane, squeezed fresh with nothing added but ice. It is amazingly refreshing and delicious. *Somó* is another very popular drink, made from boiling corn, but consumed cold.

Tujuré is sold at the markets for breakfast. It's like oatmeal, but made out of boiled hard corn (*tujuré de maiz*) with a little bit of baking soda. It is one of the best breakfasts you can imagine! You eat it with milk, just like oatmeal, but it's much more delicious. Also, they sell *gelatina de pata*, which is jello made from boiling the paws of the cows. It is the best jello in the entire world.

In Cotoca [a suburb of Santa Cruz], they also sell *tortillas de maiz* (completely unrelated to the dull, boring, ugly, and pathetic Mexican *tortillas*). Our *tortillas* are made with corn flour, eggs, cheese, a little bit of mashed *yuca*, a little salt, a little sugar, and milk or water and grilled in iron grills. I grew up eating that for breakfast and there is nothing better in the entire universe. And they also sell many sweets in Cotoca—*empanizado*, *tablillas*, and *jalea de caña*. *Empanizado* is sugar cane juice cooked until it becomes hard. *Tablillas* are like fudge, made from sugar cane syrup and milk, I believe. I don't know completely how they made, but they are delicious! That kind of sweet used to be our dessert at home, together with fruit. Most of the time, we just had fruit, like watermelons, pineapples, grapes, or peaches. *Jalea* is just sugar cane syrup or jelly.

Another sweet thing that is delicious and sold especially in San Javier, Concepción, and Portachuelo is the *paraguayo*. These are sweet balls made from *almidón de yuca* (*almidón* is something finer than flour and it comes from washing shredded *yuca*. You let it rest, and later the *almidón* goes to the bottom and the water becomes clear. You get rid of the water, which leaves a fine powdered starch much like corn starch. When it's made from corn, it's called *maicena*).

I am reminded of the time we were taking *flotas* (medium-distance buses) around a big chunk of Bolivia. We had an all day ride at one point, traveling from small town to small town. I can't remember if this was the bus that broke down during that trip or not. Along the way, the bus had to stop at police check points, also for lunch, maybe one bathroom stop, and would stop or slow down at one-lane bridges. Every time these buses even slow down, someone is there to sell something to eat and drink. And at every opportunity, our driver bought everything in sight and ate pretty much

continuously the entire long journey, making his job go a little quicker, I'm sure, because he sure kept busy, but I hope he doesn't do that too many days a week.

Anyway, you get the point. You can buy "stuff" and may even want to buy "stuff" wherever you go. And people are ready to accept your money (especially if they don't have to make change, hint, hint, and waste your and their precious time) in exchange for your dreams, wants, and needs. (But don't expect to find a bathroom very easily, but if you do, that change just might come in very handy indeed.)

So, be the King of *Cambio*! The Queen of Quid! The Duke of *Dinero*! The Prince of the *Peso*! The positions seem to be totally vacant. "*iNecesito: El Rey del Cambio!*" (*¿El Ministro del Cambio?*)

WALKING (0 to 5 Stars!)

I love walking for so many reasons! Weather permitting (or sometimes not), I'm out there! I believe walking to be one of the most powerful mood elevators on the planet. The fitness/health/life-expectance benefits are enormous, and that's no exaggeration. You have to get up and make yourself do it at first, maybe, but then it becomes a fun addiction. It's easy for most of us and, for most of the rest of us, it'll get easier if you just walk a little, then a little more every day. As a friend used to say, "There's nothing to it but to do it!" Walking doesn't take any equipment (normally) except yourself and a good pair of shoes. (Or wear the Bolivian *zapatos nacionales*—flip-flops. I don't exactly know why these are so popular. Maybe it's because they're air-cooled and cheap, but I doubt if they are very good for your feet in the long run.)

Here in Santa Cruz (now Bolivia's largest and richest city), we're lucky because normal daily life brings us into contact with many walking situations. It's a necessity for many of us fortunate enough not to own cars, and we're lucky to have a lot of good weather and pleasant places for walking. (The bad weather and awful places to walk will be discussed too!) Most of us here walk a block or two to catch a taxi or a micro, to get to the nearest grocery, drug store, or restaurant, or to get to a destination from a rare parking spot. Those blocks add up.

The American geographical pattern for a city of 1.5 million people is reversed here. In American cities, of course, the outskirts or newer, more suburban areas would normally be better places to walk than the older inner city, or *ciudad central*. Though cities like New York, Chicago, and New Orleans—to name just a few—provide many great places for inner city walking. In Santa Cruz, much of the outlying part of the city is really pretty sad. Though these areas are generally very inexpensive places to live because they are inconvenient to most work or play, there can be grand houses behind grand walls in strange places, on streets of smelly mud with trash everywhere, where many of the neighbors are living in sheet-metal shacks.

I think a little geographical diversion is appropriate here, so let me give you a quick sketch of the city and environs. If you picture a bulls-eye, you have a map of Santa Cruz. Each ring represents a major avenue or highway, looping around the center of the city in concentric rings. That's why it's called the "Ringed City". The resulting inner most ring of the circle—the bulls-eye—is about 1.5 km. in diameter. Then each subsequent ring is about a kilometer out from its inner neighbor. There are at least nine rings now, but rings past the fourth are incomplete circles, cut off by the river (*El Rio Piraí*), which Santa Cruz essentially does not cross. In or near the city, there are just a couple of fords for horse carts and one little bridge, the *Puente del Urubó*. Perhaps you are reminded of Dante's Nine Circles of Hell and the River Styx in the *Divine Comedy*? And, ironically, in both Dante and Santa Cruz, it is the Fourth Ring which lies just before the river. Strange.

Like the spokes of a giant wheel, radial avenues and highways radiate out from the First Ring (*Primero Anillo*). Most of the thusly divided real estate is chopped up into normal, square city blocks, with many parks and plazas spread around the city. To me, plazas are one of the greatest things about Latin and European cities. I sure wish we had more of them in the U.S.

Within the first ring, about half of the structures are the old one or two story adobe commercial buildings or wall-enclosed houses with earthy red tile roofs. Many of these structures are very weathered. The adobe is covered by a layer of stucco which is then painted. In the surrounding countryside, the adobe is often not covered by stucco and the roofs are largely thatched palm fronds or grasses. But the term "old" is sort of an oxymoron when applied to Santa Cruz. Although the city was founded in about 1561 (accounts vary and must take into account that the city was moved two to four times), constant razing and rebuilding over the years have, for the most part eliminated the oldest structures. You won't find many of the old colonial buildings in the city, which are so common in much of the rest of Latin America. Santa Cruz was just a small jungle outpost in the days when Potosi, Sucre, and Lima, Peru were important colonial cities. Now, of course,

the tables have been turned. But even the central cathedral, the *Basilica Menor de San Lorenzo*, founded in 1605 and first constructed about 1660, was not completed in its current form until sometime after 1845.

I have to admit up front that I'm kind of a defeatist when it comes to the "environment". I definitely hate having to write that, because nobody loves the wilderness and life more than I do, but there are just too many billions of us to sustain without major, major suffering at some point. I'm not saying we should do nothing, but it seems the best we can do is delay future catastrophes. To me, it's expecting too much to think that we can avoid them, and that's discouraging. I'll keep trying. I'm just not overly hopeful.

Yet what could be more ecologically friendly than these Bolivian homes? Adobe walls, thatched roofs, packed earthen floors, no heat, no air-conditioning, and sometimes, especially until recently, no electricity or what we city folk are used to in the way of water. Much of the food consumed has little or no packaging. But, even here in Bolivia, the days of this way of life seem numbered. The world aspires to "advance". I almost said, "The world aspires to be America." But that's not quite right. It's more that they aspire to the American dream and the images the media present of "the good life".

Regardless, this adobe is really amazing stuff and holds up incredibly well considering how much more rainfall we get here in Santa Cruz compared to other locations like the American Southwest or parts of Mexico where you also see adobe. In the Southwest, they use grasses, but here they use bamboo to strengthen the adobe walls.

But I digress...again...

Santa Cruz is very much a work in progress—from the center outward—and that's one reason why the central area is so desirable—it's closer to being finished! In the central city, within the First Ring, within the Second Ring (where I live), and even inside the Third Ring, sidewalks are plentiful and busy intersections sport pedestrian crossings. Gee, just like a real city! In fact, this part of the city is very modern. Many modest "skyscrapers" have been built, mostly outside the First Ring (where the "old" city has been largely preserved), but within the Third.

In the inner city, the Twentieth Century (at least, but maybe not yet the Trendy-First) has arrived, with a myriad of places to walk to. There are stores of every ilk—literally thousands of restaurants (though most of them seem to be fried chicken places), bars where beers are \$1, discos, karaoke, mariachi, the parks and plazas, the zoo, churches, museums, art galleries, the markets (which are worlds unto themselves), and many streets are parkways with trees and benches. The city, in general is very green with gaudy tropical trees, flowers, and plants. All year round, something is blooming; some trees bloom continuously; others, nearly so. Sometimes the city will run power lines down the center of the sidewalk to avoid cutting trees.

As I write this, the mighty *toborochois* are displaying their big, showy pink and/or yellow flowers all over the city. *Toborochois* are often gigantic, incredibly sturdy jungle trees with bulging trunks. No wind can knock them down. When they are young, their trunks are bright green and studded with large thorns like miniature rhino horns. When they get older, the higher limbs keep the thorns, but their trunks don't bother with them anymore, grow pot-bellied, and turn brown. In the fall, which is drawing to a close as I write this, the *toborochois* are one of the few trees to lose their leaves, but, first, they start flowering. Then, as the leaves gradually fall, the trees do something exceedingly strange—they continue to produce their magnificent blossoms until only the blossoms remain, providing quite a show. Several weeks after they appear, the flowers also fall, and the leaves return quickly to begin a new cycle. In the States, we have several flowering trees, but only the tulip tree, with its dull, nearly hidden flowers, is anywhere near as big as a *toborochoi*, and Santa Cruz has many other huge flowering trees. I tend to like that.

Further out, especially outside the Fourth Ring, most streets are still unpaved dirt and rubble. Paving and sidewalks lie somewhere in the future. The only utilities in these areas are electricity and water (both universal), so everyone has to have septic systems and tanks of gas for cooking. No one has heat. Almost no one has air-conditioning. Rain, mud, and flooding can be big problems in the rainy season and giant problems if you have to get anywhere. Houses normally have septic tanks, but there are many open ditches where wash-water run-off stinks up the streets. Larger open ditches, called *canals*, often lie between unpaved lanes to carry away the enormous quantities of rainwater which can fall. Even with walls surrounding most of the houses, things can get pretty dirty out here. If anywhere in Latin America is the "Third World", this is it, and it surrounds us, thanks in large part to the ongoing colonialism of the capital, La Paz. Another factor you have to remember is that the city has exploded in population, by 500,000 people in just the last 10 years alone.

The weather is generally pleasant, though tending to the hot and rainy. When I'm asked to describe the weather, I usually tell people that it's similar to Florida, but better. Very seldom is it bad enough to keep folks home. When, to me,

the temperature becomes about perfect, say 70°F (21°C), locals don winter coats and hats, while I go around in my usual shorts and T-shirt. The average annual temperature is 75°F (24°C). I tend to like that.

Similar to Hong Kong, Tokyo, London, or New York, the streets nearly everywhere are full of interesting characters and, here in Santa Cruz, also full of famously beautiful women dressed in tight, scanty outfits. I tend to like that too.

Cruceños are not quite so in a hurry and full of purpose as folks in those other cities, but there are many pedestrians on the move, at a pace somewhere between wondering-around-lost and New York full-speed-ahead or Tokyo got-to-get-to-work. An amazing number of people spend amazing amounts of time just sitting around the plazas, or sitting around trying to sell a few things from their carts, stalls, or stores. Here, as I've said before, they live the notion of sell-every-possible-thing-every-possible-where and that helps keep the streets and sidewalks busy.

There is one small thing I need to mention mainly because it is important to a later discussion of national character. But having done rather a lot of it, let me tell you something about walking in Central American, South American, and Caribbean countries—you will never find a coin or anything of value on any street. In the U.S., I used to commonly see quarters, \$5 once, and so many pennies the teenagers discard. Maybe, in essence, that's what it means to be a rich country. Down here, forget about it! You'll never find anything that somebody didn't throw away, so try to keep an eye out, instead, for those cracks, holes, and unexpected steps, which brings me to the hazards of walking in the city and how to deal with them.

Footing

Yes, there are sidewalks, paved streets, and crosswalks in the central part of the city, but don't expect them to be perfect. Steps, for instance, in developing countries, don't fit any height standards. Some are short and some are high. Some older buildings were built so close to the street that the sidewalks in front of them are only wide enough for one person. A few wheelchair/bike ramps exist, but not many. Gutters and open holes are sometimes almost bottomless. Both small and large holes open up in the sidewalks. Sawed-off metal things stick up to trip you. Paving can be very uneven. Many of the streets are paved with hexagonal concrete paving stones, called *locetas*, instead of concrete or asphalt. These modern-day cobblestones are very handy if work needs to be done beneath the street, because they come up and go back down like jigsaw puzzle pieces, but their joints provide good things to trip over if you're not careful.

If you don't keep an eye out for the footing beneath you, you might find yourself beneath you lying on the street or sidewalk with a broken bone. I've seen this same problem in many countries. One night, in St. Lucia, a friend stepped into a partially covered drainage ditch and suffered very bad cuts and bruises to her leg, which really required a trip to the hospital, but we were having way too much fun for her to want to go all the way into the city to the emergency room. Here, the sidewalks, gutters, curbs, and steps are generally not as bad as many I've seen in the Caribbean and Mexico, and I think the traffic is often worse and more dangerous in the Orient.

I've gone down hard on the sidewalk, myself, three times in the first six months since I moved back down here, and I consider myself to have above average coordination. I wasn't even chewing gum! The uneven terrain is simply treacherous and there's a lot to look at, so it's difficult to keep looking down at your feet, though the terrain itself only accounts for two of these falls. The third I will talk about in the "Rain and Water" section. I have to add, though, that before moving back to Santa Cruz, in three years of walking and hiking a lot in Montana, in all kinds of weather, including a lot of snow and ice, up and down mountains, I never fell once.

Unlike the U.S., where children, old codgers, and even idiots are pampered and catered to with warning signs and guard rails, etc., you'll seldom find any of that in Bolivia. If you're out in the streets, you're considered an adult who can open both eyes and watch out for yourself, whether this happens to be true or not.

Traffic and Impatient drivers

Crossing the street can be dangerous anywhere, even in California, where drivers are required to stop by law if a pedestrian even sets foot in the street. Here, the crossings are much more dangerous because most of the people in vehicles want to kill you. At least it seems that way.

I don't know exactly how the laws work, but once you're off that curb you're fair game! Why there is no common courtesy in the streets or in the markets, I don't know, but I certainly don't like it. And since traffic signs and lights are often ignored, don't assume a green light is safe, or that you don't have to look the "wrong" way before crossing a one-way street. There are few one-way street signs, and normally, they are simply little arrows on the street signs, which are

quite rare to begin with.

In a rather comprehensive recent survey, reported in *El Deber*, our best local newspaper, the number one problem people noted was problems in the educational system—poor schools. This topped the list even above crime (#2), traffic (#3), disorder and rudeness in the markets (#4), and corruption in government (#5), which was in a dead heat with the problem of people urinating on the sidewalks and streets (#6).

The fact that education tops the list shows how much people value their children and their education. Bolivians think so highly of their children that they spoil them to death. They love them so much! Children are the very center of the family, as they should be. So why would anyone want to subject their children, or the children of others, to the insanity which is allowed to pass apparently unnoticed in the streets? Yet the entire city tolerates this utter lawlessness, chaos, and peril of stupid, rude, impatient drivers, who are especially dangerous to children. It is as if no one notices except me. The nearly lawless system works, in my opinion, only because, though there are apparently many bad people, people here are mostly law abiding on their own. Maybe it's because they're basically shy and submissive, maybe it's the strong family ties most people here share. But when it comes to driving, courtesy and safety seem to be words missing from the local vocabulary. It's a complete mystery to me, but I'll have more to say about this subject later, in the driving section.

Sun and Heat

Hey, it's the tropics! It gets hot and humid. If you become too hot and/or dehydrated, you can die. If you get too much sun, you're going to look old before your time and risk skin cancer. It's as simple as that. The locals cope with this problem by wearing lots of clothes, having darker skin, and, apparently, by losing the ability to sweat. Sometimes I'll be in a T-shirt and shorts and have sweat pouring down my face, while those around me wearing wool are cool as cucumbers. I just don't get it. It's illogical!

I don't do any of my long-distance walking in these conditions. I wear light-colored cotton. A hat is a good idea, but they tend to make me too hot. Sunscreen is, of course, necessary, and some women carry umbrellas to fend off that intense tropical sun. I try to stay in the shade of trees or buildings as much as possible.

Many of the older buildings in the central part of the city have porticos extending over the sidewalks, like old western towns in the U.S. These are effective for both sun and rain, though newer structures eliminate such niceties in favor of some obtuse architectural aesthetic objective or other.

Air conditioning has arrived in Santa Cruz...finally! But it's still limited to newer stores like supermarkets or to some of the fancier stores, condos, or houses. Don't expect to find it in most places. Many people seem to get by fine with simple open windows, foregoing even fans.

Wind

Chicago may be dubbed the "Windy City", but it's nothing compared to Santa Cruz, where, anytime but in summer, strong, cold winds called *surazos* can suddenly blow up from Argentina and feel like they must be coming straight out of Antarctica. Also, the high mountains and low jungles form a powerful weather maker that can produce strong winds and storms any time of the year.

I was walking down *Gringota* one day in the Ramada market (maybe the same day my \$1 *camba* straw hat got blown off and went rolling down the major street in front of the Ex-Terminal and I had to chase it a block or so in heavy traffic). I saw an old woman get knocked flat onto the sidewalk by the wind. She was so frail and so, you know, stiff like they get, that I'm sure she would have been there on the street until someone helped her up. But I was in a big hurry, so I had to walk by and leave the chore to someone else. No! Of course, I stopped and helped the poor thing get up and cross the busy street, and she thanked me so sweetly, but she had been a little panicked that the wind had surprised her so.

Rain and Water

This morning, as I write this, it's raining hard and cold from every direction at once. I can tell the direction because it's raining directly into every one of my windows—closed, of course. No fun, no matter what form of transportation you use. An umbrella is totally useless in this kind of torrent. It's just going to get destroyed and won't block any of that horizontal deluge anyway. Raingear is better, but it's often way too muggy for that kind of thing. A Goretex jacket is best, but pretty expensive. I usually get by with a light nylon jacket with a hood.

If there is one cloud in the sky and you go out, that cloud will rain for sure, though it seldom rains all day. The many trees lining the streets come in handy in this kind of weather, but you have to remember that after it has been raining for some time, the trees aren't much help. And after the rain stops, it will keep dripping under the trees. They can keep you dry for a while and wet for a while longer.

Another problem is that the rain gutters just don't have the capacity to carry away all the rain that can fall during a heavy downpour. I've found this to be true in many Florida cities that are much richer than Santa Cruz. In Sarasota, FL, the downtown becomes impassable in a heavy rain, except for Hummers. In Santa Cruz, these flooded streets that have become rivers can make crossing more of a swim than a walk. This is where the rubber flip-flops come in pretty handy, I guess. Many of the downtown sidewalks are raised a very uncomfortable step up from the street (again, as in Old West towns) in order to stay above the flood during these tropical rains.

But even the highest sidewalk is no protection against the vehicles that are determined to drive fast and close to the curb just to ruin your day and your clothes. When it's raining, you will see the unwary awash in giant sprays of water sent up from the flooded streets. The wary take shelter in doorways, then make mad dashes past the areas where the opportunity for these showers is greatest. Again, where is the courtesy?

The other time I fell, that I mentioned above, was right after a rain. Ceramic tiles are very popular in Santa Cruz, even for sidewalks. Many of these become as slick as ice when they are wet, while others have a surface that is OK in these conditions. You can't necessarily tell by looking which is which. On the day in question, I stepped onto one of these tiled sections and the next thing I knew, I was lying there looking up at the sky. Lucky again! I didn't break anything, but probably only because I've made sure for many years to get plenty of calcium. One of these days, if I'm not more careful, my luck will run out and I'm going to break something.

Pigeons

I don't like pigeons, but no one seems to do anything about them here. I guess there aren't enough cats or hawks or guys with shotguns to halt the invasion. They have gone from zero to a problem in just the few years I've been here. People think they're "pretty" and feed them, especially in the central plaza, where they've pretty much driven out the more desirable native species. Watch out for flying poo!

Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes in the tropics are more than just a bother. They're downright dangerous! They carry malaria (almost impossible to prevent and tough to cure), the famous yellow fever (which you must be vaccinated against to be in Bolivia), dengue fever (which has four varieties...if you've had them all, you might be immune), Japanese encephalitis, Rift Valley fever, and chikungunya.

Summers are the worst and, in winter, mosquitoes are rare. The city sprays pretty regularly, but there are many places for mosquitoes to breed and grow. And they are such smart little creatures! Can you even imagine how small the brain of a mosquito must be? And these guys aren't nearly as big as the ones you see up north in Maine or Canada. That tiny little brain performs all the intricate calculations and control necessary for flight, multiplication (of the species as well as mathematical, necessary for flight, in fact, calculus is necessary for flight), finding your blood (they know very well the difference between the front of you and the back of you, and when you're sleeping—almost like Santa Claus), and avoiding death as you stalk and try to swat them.

The mosquitoes in Santa Cruz have another amazing talent. You will see one, maybe after hearing it, hovering rather slowly, as if trying to gauge the situation as it tries to sneak up on you. You see her. She sees you seeing her. You start to make your move and, suddenly, instantaneously, she's not there, disappearing into thin air! They have some kind of afterburner, or cloaking device, or warp drive that they engage and they're gone.

And when a mosquito is around, even if it's somewhere with 100,000 people, like *Carnaval*, any soccer game, any political rally, any fiesta, or 7:00 pm in the Central Plaza, that mosquito is going to have such a taste for *la sangre del gringo* that it will hunt me out and find me and attack.

So you really want to do the things prescribed by the experts. When you go out, wear as much clothing as you can stand. Wear light-colored clothing, just as you would for the heat. Use an effective repellent like DEET on any exposed skin (not including your eyeballs). Try not to sweat or exhale. In their homes, some people use mosquito netting over their beds, but I prefer having screens in my windows and keeping the outside and bedroom doors closed as much of the time as

possible.

Did you know that every animal that is hunted has some inherent weakness that can be exploited by a hunter? For instance, flies have a very simple but interesting one. When they have landed and are just standing around, when you try to kill them, they are very quick to fly away. What you might not notice is that in order to become airborne, a fly first jumps straight up into the air. By the time your hand or other wielded object meets the surface to crush the fly, it is already gone because of its quick jump. But if, instead of trying to crush the fly on the surface, you simply clap your hands a few inches above the fly, it will jump straight up just in time to be squished between your clapping hands. Messy, but effective. Try it, but be sure to wash your hands afterwards. Everything has a weakness that can be exploited by a skilled hunter.

The same is true for mosquitoes in Bolivia and maybe the entire tropics, though maybe not in the entire world. It seems that the different mosquito species (there are about 3000 of them) think differently. What I have learned is that, if you have screens in your windows and the glass part of the window open, at dusk and dawn, any mosquitoes in the room will go to the screens and sit there waiting for you to come and kill them. So, before you go to bed, at dusk, having prepared the windows ahead of time, simply slip in and nail the little buggers so you can get a good night's sleep later. Be sure to close the door when you exit the bedroom. Everything has a weakness, even the mighty (and deadly) mosquito.

While I'm talking about essential chemicals like insect repellent and sun screen, let me add a note on other toiletries essential for life in Santa Cruz. You'll also need stuff you maybe never needed in a non-tropical climate...things like baby powder, moisturizing lotion by the gallon (even though, I know, it's very moist here), lip balm, antibiotic ointment (you don't want to let even the smallest cut get infected), aloe vera, and, possibly, some kind of anti-fungal preparation. Do you still wonder why there's a pharmacy on every block?

Odors

There are often odors one must contend with in developing countries, but here one must sometimes contend with human excrement in the sidewalk. The strong smell of stale urine is common in some neighborhoods. There seem to be two reasons for this problem. One is that many recent immigrants have moved down from the *Altiplano* (the high mountainous plain of the Andes) and they simply don't have very clean habits. Period. That's not prejudice, it's simply an unfortunate fact. The second is that there is not an adequate supply of free public restrooms anywhere in Bolivia. What restrooms exist often cost 1 bs. or so to use, and most people who urinate in the streets don't have a peso to spare to pay for the service. The short term solution for a pedestrian, I'm afraid, is to watch where you step, walk fast, and try not to breathe.

People who walk their dogs in Bolivia never clean up after them. Even if a dog drops excrement right in the middle of the sidewalk, that's where it stays. It's just not part of the culture to even think that there might be a better way, or that people with animals might have some responsibility to others. In the U.S. maybe we go a little too far in the other direction toward fastidiousness, but I don't like stepping in the stuff. Do you? Does anyone? I wonder why people here so often don't think of other people?

Another problem, but one that causes more ugliness than odor, is the amount of trash in the streets. Most of the *chola* treats sold everywhere are packaged in plastic or paper. Plastic bags are ubiquitous. Not to single out any one group, but indigenous people in general seem to be blind to the problem. Commonly, they will throw trash into the street when they're standing right by a trash container. I guess that's the way they do it up in the *Altiplano*, which is largely a barren wasteland anyway, so that's the way they do it here in this garden of paradise. There seems to be little or no attempt at education. If there are fines, there are no warning signs of them like you find in the U.S. and other parts of the world, and there would certainly not be any enforcement of such a law anyway. There is possibly one on the books, ignored by even the police. They can't be bothered to leave their police stations.

Crime

I might as well mention it, since it will be on the minds of many of you. I think crime is a little over-rated in the city, but, according to the newspaper poll I mentioned before, lack of security was cited as the second biggest problem in the city. I think Santa Cruz is at least as safe from crime as any other large city I've been in, but people don't feel safe, and that's a problem, even if it's mainly because, just a short time ago, Santa Cruz was a small town with no crime at all to speak of. Yet you would think there must be a reason for all those walls, bars, heavily-armed police, and security guards.

I try to be careful, but I too have been robbed...in a Hipermaxi supermarket, of all places. Before this incident, I was

about to write that I'd never been robbed in a Spanish-speaking country (not counting the U.S.). Just thinking that is probably what made this incident happen, since I didn't get a change to knock on any wood.

I went shopping for *lomo* (beef tenderloin) at Hipermaxi Sur and got robbed! It was my own fault, really, and I was actually quite lucky. It's been pretty cold and rainy here, so I wore a jacket (with good zippered pockets) and sweat pants (with stupid pockets). I put my cell phone and my little *chola* change purse in one jacket pocket, my credit cards and paper money in the other jacket pocket. It was kind of hot in the supermarket, so I took off the jacket and left it in the cart. I kept the cart close to me but not right in front of me. Big mistake. As I dealt with the butcher, some ass-hole thief got to my jacket! I didn't notice until I started checking-out that my \$40 cell phone and change purse were missing, but my real valuables in the other pocket were OK. Whew! Stupid me! I guess I spaced-out and thought I was still in Montana. I'm usually very mindful and cautious here, but...maybe I was thinking about those delicious hamburgers I was about to make...

So my cooking was delayed a little. First, I had to bring the groceries home, walk to the micro, then ride to Tigo (my cell phone company) to get a new cell phone, then another micro, followed by another walk. That all went pretty well. I was even able to get my old number, even though numbers are embedded in chips here that are interchangeable—they'll work in any phone. Very convenient for the thieves.

Here are some tricks I use here and in any large American or European city. Well, any city! I've been robbed my fair share of times (which is how I've learned). Don't wear a backpack (in back, at least). Better not to have one. Never, ever wear a "fanny pack". Not only do you make yourself look silly, they are easily robbed. And, ladies, don't carry a purse unless you absolutely have to and, if you have to carry one, make sure it's a big one with nice strong straps, so you can swing it as a weapon. (And most women here do carry giant, suitcase-size purses, maybe for that reason.) Keep pepper spray in your pocket or purse. Take a class in self-defense. Wear shoes good for running (forget those high heels, ladies), in case you have to get away or chase down some punk who ran off with your *camba* hat.

Normally, don't carry around credit cards or original documents. Carry a photocopy of your passport, driver's license, or ID. Don't carry much money. Don't carry a normal, American-style billfold. Keep coins and small bills in a little leather purse like they sell in the markets. If you must carry large bills, keep them tucked away somewhere else, so that, if you are robbed, you can pretend the change purse is all you have. Don't look like you have anything. Don't wear jewelry. Don't dress expensively or to be noticed.

Be alert. Look around you. Look dangerous. In the Ramada market, I once caught a potential "bad guy", who looked like he was sizing me up as a potential "mark". I sort of stared him down and, conceivably, he thought better of making a target of me. Be careful where you walk at night, though I have walked safely in so many places... It's better, at night especially, to stick with areas where there are lots of people, and that is very much of Santa Cruz indeed. This rule alone has kept me safe during a lot of time spent in big cities. I hate being in a big city like Chicago at night and looking around to find myself the only person in the street.

BICYCLES (0 Stars!)

Are you kidding me? You'll be flattened like a pancake! Here, bicycles, usually modified, are only used by professionals transporting or selling things, except for a few kids very locally in the *barrios* or in the larger parks.

Most bicycles are unhealthy anyway, because their skinny little seats constrict the blood vessels in the "crotch" area and can eventually cause impotence in men and who knows what in women (well, actually, they don't know of anything in women). Riding is only half the exercise of walking, it takes equipment that can be stolen, and it's dangerous because you are fair game to the predatory motorized vehicles out there. Maybe bicycles will become a better choice in the future, after they get rid of the in parts of the city (see below), or build more bike paths.

In the meantime, leave the biking to the broom man, the gardeners who carry all their equipment, including lawn mowers, on tiny bikes as they ride from house to house, and people delivering or selling goods from specialized bikes that are more like mini-trucks.

Motorcycles? Do you really think a bicycle is any safer just because it has a motor on it? They're very dangerous because of the traffic and deadly drivers, and then there's that rain, mud, gravel, dirt, and rocks. To my way of thinking, motorcycles in Santa Cruz are strictly for couriers and pizza delivery *hombres* only!

MICROS (2 to 3 Stars!)

The small buses so common in Santa Cruz, as mentioned previously, are called micros. They hold about 25 people (sitting) and 15-20 more standing in the aisle. During the rush hours, passengers are packed like fruit at the market, which can make riding a bit uncomfortable. Though the use of deodorant is widespread in Santa Cruz, it is not yet universal, though I think the same thing can be said of America or Europe. But, as I said previously, people don't sweat much here, so the stink in close quarters is not as bad, I don't think, as crowded public transportation in, say, Mexico, the Caribbean, or Great Britain. Actually, I don't mind the odors as much as when the people in close quarters are coughing or itching a lot. From the former you can catch a cold, the flu, or tuberculosis; from the latter you might get lice or worse.

I believe all micros here are the "Coaster Jumbo" model of Toyota first manufactured in 1975 and still being made—incredibly durable, incredibly efficient. I can't understand why they aren't used extensively in the U.S., but I've never seen one there, or any equivalents. They have a 4.0 L turbo diesel (very economical, very clean burning, with little pollution), have very tight turning radii, and cost about \$75,000 new. They are also used extensively in Japan, Hong Kong, and Australia. Most of the micros in Santa Cruz are shipped here after being heavily driven in one of these other countries, yet they don't seem to be "transformers" (converted from right to left hand steering). If they are transformed, somebody or some factory does a very good job. I believe they are manufactured with air-conditioning, but I have never been on one with functioning A-C. Instead, large windows can usually, but not always, be made to slide open. Almost all micro drivers play their stereos constantly, and a few micros have flat-screen televisions that display advertising videos, but mostly these are always broken. There are about as many seatbelts on micros as there are on U.S. school buses—zero.

For 1.50 bs. (roughly 22¢), you can ride to virtually every part of Santa Cruz, within a block or two of just about any possible destination. There are more than 100 different routes and at least a few thousand micros. They don't have schedules, there are just many of them, spaced out on each route. You board or exit anywhere you can flag one down or request the driver stop to let you off, not just at designated bus stops. You can go about anywhere in the city riding just two micros, but it might be possible to find a trip that would require three. One will take you amazingly far. It's a good game to try to get to your destination in as few micros as possible.

There are micros which rotate around the rings in both directions, making them very easy to ride because you know where they're headed. #17 and #18 go around the First Ring, #72 and #73 go around the Second Ring. Normally, the routes begin in some *barrio* on one side of town, pass through the approximate center of town, on to another *barrio* on the far side, take a break, then return along roughly the same path. I have ridden many of the micros along their entire routes, but still have many to go.

Micros and walking are my two favorite ways of getting around Santa Cruz. I may not be the only *gringo* riding the micros, but it usually seems that way. Rarely do I ever encounter folks from other parts of the world, but that is true for Santa Cruz in general, with the possible exception of the central plaza. The fact that other *gringos* don't ride the micros probably says more about me than about the other people. Riding a micro is an adventure, especially if it's a micro you've never been on before, or if you miss your stop or go to sleep and end up in the middle of some remote nowhere *barrio*.

A guidebook and a separate map of micro routes are published, but I find them to be more cryptic than very helpful. There are signs on the front of the buses which tell you their major destinations, and they are also color coded as well as numbered. The numbers are most important. There is almost always someone around you can ask for advice while you wait. You can also flag down random micros and ask the driver, through the window, if they go to where you want to go. But don't expect the drivers to take time for much courtesy.

Micro drivers are doing fifty things at once—steering, shifting gears, watching the traffic, taking money, making change, making sure no one sneaks on the micro without paying, maybe eating, drinking (not alcohol, thank God!), listening to music, and honking their wolf whistle horn at pretty girls in the street. Sometimes they have their wife or kid riding in the front passenger seat and they're carrying on a conversation. Yet a recent study I read showed, supposedly, that the human brain can only multitask three things at once (before it blows up?), in addition to the background, life maintaining functions. The drivers are really too busy to think about what effect sudden starting and stopping might have on passengers who are aboard. Passengers are essentially on their own.

But don't get me wrong, these drivers are invariably tough, serious, fearless, conscientious professionals, very good at what they do. I might last one day at their job, but maybe not, and I bet most people wouldn't attempt it, period. On the other hand, driving a taxi in Santa Cruz wouldn't be much fun either. Like most truck drivers and many laborers, a lot of

micro drivers chew coca to stay alert and fight off fatigue, but few taxi drivers seem to have picked-up the habit.

If you're lucky, you might get to "ride shotgun" and sit in the one vacant seat way up front, over the engine compartment, up by the driver. You are beyond the crowds here, the view is very good from there, and you might get to pass the time card between the driver and the guy at the check-points, and maybe even pass money from passengers back and forth.

Your exact change will come in very handy on micros, especially if you have it in hand before you board. This reduces the time you're vulnerable to sudden starts and stops, as you stand there waiting for your change, reaching out to the driver's similarly outreached hand, trying to hold on to whatever you can with the other hand. It's much better to finish with just one quick transaction, so you can sit or use both hands as quickly as possible.

It's good to have a sturdy pair of sea legs for the abrupt starts and stops the micros are famous for. Yet, from Santa Cruz, the nearest sea is an incredible journey across the highest mountains or the deepest jungle or both! Let me put it like this, with the jerky starts and stops, a micro is no place to have a toothpick in your mouth unless you want to risk having it jammed into your brain. I've seen quite a few falls, probable broken teeth, and quantities of blood. You can sometimes be cut by sharp, exposed metal. Micros will stop almost anywhere, but only for an instant, so you'd better move quickly.

The kids and teenagers who ride the micros used to be trained by their parents and schools to give up their seats to adults. Many people will still give up their seat to a pregnant woman, a woman carrying a baby, or one of the rare handicapped people brave enough to be out and about. But this traditional courtesy, like so many others, is starting to break down.

TAXIS (3 to 4 Stars!) AND LIMOS (5 Stars!)

You can take a taxi anywhere in Santa Cruz for about \$1 to \$3 U.S., though a trip to or from the airport is a standard 50 bs. (about \$7). Similar to some of the micros, there are taxis which do nothing but rotate around the rings for a mere 2 bs. (less than 30 cents). From the streets around the old Ex-Terminal (on the First Ring, at the corner of Cañoto and Gringota) you will find taxis that can take you to outlying towns cheaply — Cotoca, Warnes, Buena Vista, Samaipata, etc. I recently took one of these to a friend's *quinta* outside a little town named La Bélgica, which must be a good 50 km. from Santa Cruz. Along with some other people who were making the same trip, I paid an astoundingly low price of \$1.

You certainly can't drive a car here that cheaply (but more about that later). And remember, the more people in your group, the more economical a taxi becomes. I find these prices very reasonable considering that gasoline costs about \$2/gallon, though gas (LPG) is cheaper. Diesel is a little more expensive, because most of it must be imported, whereas Bolivia has abundant light crude for gasoline and plenty of gas. The prices of fuel are all set by the government, along with the price of staples like rice, flour, and farmer's cheese.

Santa Cruz taxis don't have meters, so it's a good idea to explain your destination to the driver and find out what the price is going to be before getting in or taking off, whichever is easier and safer. Another technique is not to worry about the price or discuss it with your driver in advance. Instead, just be very nice and talk his head off. The hope is that, by the time you reach where you're going, you'll be such good friends with the *taxista* that he won't feel right about charging you too much. I've seen this work. The ring taxis and taxis to fixed destinations like the airport or other towns have fixed prices. Except for the ring taxis, you might be able to negotiate a little.

When I first arrived in Santa Cruz, in early 2004, we took a taxi from the airport—an old green and white Toyota Corolla hatchback, two-wheel drive when I had been told four-wheel drive (4WD) is essential here. I noticed Japanese characters on the window, which seemed strange at the time, and that the steering wheel had been moved from the right to the left side of the taxi. Even more strange, I thought!

I learned later that, like the micros, most of these used 1.5 L Toyota Corolla taxis arrive here after already having served a long tour of duty in Japan, so they must their steering wheels and pedals "transformed" from the right side of the car to the left. This makes it difficult to see the speedometer, though no one bothers to try to look. That old buggy we took from the airport had been a taxi in Japan, lived out its "useful" life, then was shipped all the way to Santa Cruz to serve for hundreds of thousands more miles.

On the way into, the poor old taxi's engine died. We stopped alongside the busy highway, the driver got out, lifted the hood, took off his shoe, hit something with it in the engine compartment (probably the carburetor), closed the hood, got back in, and we were off. What a simple tool kit! Ever since then, taxis and *taxistas* have been a part of my life here in Bolivia.

Like the micros, almost all the taxis get by with "air cooling" instead of air-conditioning—you just roll the windows down. But lately I have been seeing and riding in more and more nice, new taxis, with A-C making things a lot more comfortable. In the heat of the night, not long ago, I was way out past the Seventh Ring and was lucky enough to flag one of these down for a very nice ride. Taxi drivers often, but not always, use seatbelts themselves, but seldom provide them for the cramped, difficult to enter and exit back seats. If you want to wear a seatbelt, your best bet is to "ride shotgun" up in the front, and lose that feeling of having your own personal limo chauffeur, with you in the back seat.

Many taxis have been converted, locally, to run on LP gas, using the same kind of tank that Americans use for their barbeque grills. It can be a little scary looking behind you in the hatchback and seeing one of these home-grown "conversions" right behind where you're sitting. You wish you were at least in one of the sedans, which might give you a fighting chance if the tank exploded in the trunk instead of in the passenger compartment. Well...that still doesn't sound too good does it? You never know for sure whether you're in a practical vehicle (natural gas is cheap and clean, and Bolivia has plenty) or a good-sized bomb. But actually I exaggerate a little, and have not heard or read of any vehicle explosions from these conversions.

The mechanics here are masterful at maintaining these vehicles, seemingly keeping them going forever in a country of roads so bad that there are auto spring and tire repair shops everywhere. I don't think I've ever seen more than a few places that repair springs in the U.S. in my life. The many unpaved roads and streets are often full of mud or covered with bricks and concrete chunks from some demolished wall or building. This is why 4WD is so nice to have here, but these taxis get by without it and go everywhere, with the apparent price being frequent spring and tire repairs.

If you're worried about security, call a "radio *movil*" taxi, get the name and ID number of the *taxista*, write it down or have a third party look at it and write it down before you take off in the taxi. Foolproof! Though most of the older taxis lack seatbelts, especially in the back seat (and no one in Bolivia seems to use them), many of the *movil* taxi companies have the newer models with seatbelts. If you have to lug a baby around, this is the way you want to go in order to be able to strap in your baby's car seat.

Santa Cruz (*Cruceño*) taxi drivers really know their way around and are normally very courteous, efficient, and masterful, if often impatient. They do a great job, especially considering how wild and unsafe the streets can be, and considering that anyone who pulls out in front of you—even immediately and suddenly in front of you—has the right of way. In all the micro and taxi rides I've taken, I've never been in an accident. (But I'm knocking on my desk as I say this.)

Taxis also carry a vast amount of the commerce of the city, things like groceries, medicine, wine—whatever you might want—and often have roof racks for carrying furniture and larger items. When I bought the huge table that serves as my desk where I'm writing this, I brought it home on top of a taxi. It is said that you can ask a taxi driver to bring you anything. With a word or a phone call, they can get it for you and deliver it—groceries, liquor, dinner, your kid from school, a suddenly needed prescription at 4:00 am, maybe a prostitute, if you are so inclined. (I'm told some drivers carry picture books to select from, though, frankly, given the generous, sweet nature of *mujeres Latinas*, I find that hard to believe.)

Two of the best taxi companies are Radio Movil El Toucan (3-333-3222) and Radio Movil Vallegrande (3-352-6162). Two *taxistas* who have lived in the States and speak pretty good English are Carlos Boral (7-004-5666), who lived in Rhode Island for 15 years, and Omar Miranda (7-009-3250), who lived in Indiana for five years. Both are very good guys.

Limos: what can I say? They have them here too. I'm almost as philosophically opposed to limos as I am to golf (no offense intended to all you golfers) or bottled water, but they do provide a comfortable ride. And if you like or need to drink (not bottled water) while you're getting somewhere, limos are hard to beat.

YOUR OWN CAR OR OTHER VEHICLE (0 Stars!)

First of all, are you sure, I mean completely and positively certain, that you want or need to be driving your own vehicle in some of the worst, craziest traffic you will ever see? If you answer "yes" to that question, you might want to think

about seeing a doctor to find out what's wrong with you. Just kidding, but not by much!

I'm not opposed to cars, at least in the U.S., where there are normally no alternatives, at least at the present time. Since soon after my sixteenth birthday, I have driven my own car, and I have driven all over Bolivia and many other parts in the world in rental cars. I have driven down Bolivia's "most dangerous road in the world", the old "death road", and loved it, but I don't drive in Santa Cruz and don't wish to.

To me, the only time it makes sense to own a vehicle in Bolivia is if you live out in the country, have a farm (*la quinta*) in another town or outside of town, or if you have a business. Maybe you need to come into the city, but, when you think about it, you don't really need to come all the way into the city. You could park on the outskirts and, similar to airport parking, use a taxi or micro as your shuttle bus service. The Mennonites, of which we have many here in Bolivia, live on farms way out of town, yet manage to live well without automobiles, as do I, living in the city. Do you need a vehicle for a business, and there are no other workable alternatives like taxis, couriers, hauling companies, or relocating your business to near where you live or visa-versa? Maybe your own car, truck, or SUV is in order. If you have small children and believe they are safer in your car than in micros or taxis, or if you have many small children who must be constantly shuttled around, by all means, buy a car. I don't see any other excuses for owning one.

And, mothers! Do you really think your baby is safer in your car if it's hit by a fully loaded micro than it would be riding in the micro? I'm not completely convinced. Do you really think you should risk your baby's life in Santa Cruz traffic any more than necessary, anyway? The trips that are truly necessary can be handled by a professional driver in a radio *movil* taxi that happens to have seatbelts in the back for a car seat.

And women here will do anything for their children—die, no problem. They spoil their kids to death. Maybe that's what makes them such impatient, inconsiderate babies when they grow up and become drivers. But what mothers apparently will not do for their children is force those in charge to construct a society that is fair and safe for children. For some reason, mothers (and fathers) are blind to this possibility, so it has not happened in all these centuries. Transportation here is not really safe for children, maybe not for anyone.

You might say, "Ah, but what about the freedom bestowed by having your own vehicle at your beck and command?" But what freedom is there in being stuck in traffic all the time? Any freedom people might think is gained by owning a car is deception. A car is more convenient, you say? How "convenient" are the ubiquitous traffic jams, parking, insurance, gas, oil changes, car washes, accidents, repairs, even spring repairs, flat tires, getting your car stolen or, worse, car-jacked with you in it? I just jump in a taxi or micro and go!

I believe that most people who own cars or SUV's in Santa Cruz do so for the feeling of "being somebody", or of "having arrived", or to impress people. But those feelings are deceptive too. You will actually arrive sooner if you save your money instead of wasting it on what is, essentially, a non-essential luxury.

The following are some of the things I think a person should consider very seriously before deciding to buy and drive any kind of vehicle in Santa Cruz.

Rules of the Road

I wrote "rules" above, but I only actually know of one—other than, "Honk your horn and try to intimidate everyone else on the road as much as possible." That "rule" is this: If you can get any tiny part of your vehicle in front of another, you have the right-of-way. If that other car hits yours, well, the results prove that you were in that region of space first. It's sort of an extension of the rule in the U.S. that if someone hits you from behind, the accident must be their fault, because they should have been prudent and observant enough to have been able to stop in time. When two vehicles hit "head-on", as two *flotas* recently did south of the city, killing ten people, I guess it's the fault of both drivers. I bet the police hate to come out of their cozy station to investigate one of those.

Actually, what I call the "bumper first" or "bumper in front" rule works pretty well here. It makes lane changing a little bit easier, if you are the vehicle doing the changing. Another wild activity that this rule makes possible is turning left from an extreme right hand lane. Try that in the U.S.! If you enjoy rudely darting out in front of other vehicles (even big, lumbering micros), somehow blindly trusting that they will see you and be able to stop, then this kind of driving is for you. Accident investigation is made much simpler for the police and insurance companies because they don't have to confuse themselves with other issues. The proof of what happened is in the damage. They don't have to analyze or even think about any other evidence.

But "bumper in front" makes for very difficult driving, because you never know when another vehicle is going to

aggressively finagle his bumper in front of yours, necessitating a suddenly swerve or stop on your part. You might be blasting down a deserted street, thinking you have the right-of-way because the side streets have, or should have, stop signs. But if another vehicle can beat you to any of the space ahead of you, you had better be able to stop. Another big problem is that this rule seems to aggravate the use of horns and produces a lot of ticked-off drivers. It creates rudeness and anger because everyone is always trying to push in front of everyone else.

As for other "rules", I honestly don't know of any actual, official speed limit in Santa Cruz, probably because it's almost impossible to go very fast. So, most accidents tend to be pretty low speed affairs. On the highways outside the city, though, it's a different story, and multiple fatality accidents are all too common, as in the U.S.

Only a little more than half the 400,000 vehicles in the city are legally licensed. That's how ineffective the law is here. The vast majority of the unlicensed vehicles are private automobiles, SUV's, and pick-ups.

Traffic

I am duty-bound to report that traffic has become truly horrendous much of the time, especially during the rush hours or when it rains. Traffic within the First Ring and on major streets leading into the First Ring is a total nightmare all the time. The Second Ring is a mess half the time—all day and into the night, except on Sundays and holidays. Just when you want to go somewhere, you will find that everyone else in the city wants to go there too. It's such a communal feeling! There are just too many vehicles for the available infrastructure. The streets in the inner city are old and narrow, and the roads are often in poor repair. Since there is almost no enforcement of the law, such as parking laws, vehicles park illegally, blocking streets which are already narrow. Vendors use the streets to set up shop. Recently a large section of the Ramada market burned to the ground. The fire trucks couldn't get to the fire because the streets were full of illegal vendor tents and carts.

If you know the city well, like the *taxistas* do, you can find your way around some of the problem areas. The micro routes are well thought-out and micros are able to intimidate their way along them. Ask yourself this, where does that leave all the private vehicles? I'll give you a hint: stuck in traffic!

Parking

Parking is a big problem. So is getting to and from your parked car. There you are, walking instead of riding in a micro or taxi, being free of the whole parking problem and, sometimes, cost. Micros take you near where you're going and taxis take you right to the door. Your car takes you from one distant parking spot to another distant parking spot, leaving the rest of the trip up to your feet, with no other option, even if it's raining lizards and salamanders.

There are no parking buildings to speak of and very few parking lots. Downtown, where streets are narrow and traffic at its worst, parking is allowed on far too many streets. Parking laws are not enforced, so people commonly park in the traffic lanes when they can't find anywhere else. Streets that could be three or four lanes wide are reduced to one lane much of the time.

Now, I read in the newspaper that they're going to ruin downtown even further by putting parking meters into a big chunk of the central city. I'm afraid the money or promise of money from the parking will provide enough corruption that other ideas won't get a fair hearing. And how is it that these new meters are not going to be vandalized and burglarized, when there is no one to guard them?

The parking problems create some unusual opportunities, though. There's a little side street called Calle Canada Strongest, named after a soccer team, I believe, that runs off Av. Monseñor Rivero, one of the most important, busiest parkways in the city, and where many of the best restaurants and coffee shops are located. When the city needs room for gatherings of, say, a million people, they close down Monseñor Rivero near where it runs into the giant El Cristo statue on the Second Ring. On this busy little side street, with its precious, free parking places, a man, Jaime, has set up his little business, which requires nothing but himself. He spends his afternoons and evenings, helping people parallel park, then keeps a watchful eye on the parked cars along his little one block territory. He also has an arrangement with one of the businesses to buy buckets of water, so he can also wash your car for you while it's parked there, for about fifty cents. This money and his tips provide a living for himself and his family with three children. On Saturdays, his two young sons often help out.

Santa Cruz Drivers (Oh my!)

Unfortunately, not every driver in Santa Cruz attended the Indianapolis (believe it or not) Driving School, just down the street from me. Often, drivers, especially women drivers, for some reason, are talking on their cell phones, the same as everywhere else in the world. The professional drivers of taxis and micros almost never use cell phones while driving.

Driving, in general, is very difficult here. I don't enjoy doing it, myself. You can't expect niceties such as lane markings (even if there are many lanes), street signs, one-way street signs, stop signs, or stop lights, though there are many more of each than when I first came to Santa Cruz. Many of the signs that are in place are pretty much ignored, but people do generally obey traffic lights now. When they were newer, they were largely ignored too. Now, finally, with so much more traffic, I guess people have started seeing them as essential, so improvement is possible. Some of the newer lights at major intersections have large, color-changing count-down displays to tell you how many more seconds are left in a red or green light. I don't think I've ever seen any of those in the U.S., but they are a very good idea.

Similar to the New England countryside, there are many traffic circles at intersections in Santa Cruz, but, here, these circles are in the city and often have several lanes leading in from each direction. Often, without lights or signs, these circles are breeding grounds for accidents. The good news is that what I believe to be the first limited access intersection (called an "overpass" here) in the country is nearing completion where the Fourth Ring intersects one of the main arterial spokes on the north side of town. More are in the works, but it will be a while before they help the driving situation very much.

As I mentioned in the walking section, I'm very sad to have to report that there's almost no such thing as courtesy on the streets of Santa Cruz, though maybe I'm starting to see little inklings of it starting to grow, but I could be wrong. You do see a little patience sometimes, but not much. You'd better not go to sleep when a light changes to green, or hold-up anyone behind you, not for a microsecond, even if you are a micro or taxi picking-up or discharging passengers. The vehicles behind you, even other micros and taxis, will give you a serious tongue lashing with their horns. And many vehicles in Santa Cruz have two or more horns—one to punish those New York minute delays and one friendly one, often a loud whistle, many times the two-note "wolf whistle", the first note rising, the second falling. But you won't get the whistle if you try to sleep through a green light. I just don't know what happens to that popular local philosophy of *tranquilo* when Bolivians get behind the wheel and turn into Incredible Hulks.

There is very little effort to halt drunk driving in Bolivia. People here never worry about getting arrested for a traffic offense, only about getting into an accident or having to pay a bribe. If you have an accident that is your fault and you are legally drunk, your insurance will pay nothing. But if you get drunk and kill someone, you are sort of excused because drunk people in Latin America, unlike in the U.S., are not held to the same level of accountability as people who are sober. I don't know if this is right or wrong, but I say, if you're determined to do something wrong in Bolivia, get drunk first!

Noise

Another problem with all the private cars is the noise pollution. The horns are bad enough, but in addition, many cars have the multiple-phase siren alarms installed. The cycles of these useless noise makers can be set off by the wind or a passing micro or motorcycle. Do these car owners really believe that the noise gives them any security? There are so many, so often, that no one pays any attention. They're just a blight upon the urban soundscape! Sometimes it can make you feel like smashing a windshield (the alarm certainly isn't going to stop you), especially when one of these monsters keeps going off in front of your house, or a restaurant, where you're maybe trying to have a pleasant meal at a sidewalk table.

Cost

Of course, you can buy new, imported cars here...mainly Japanese, though the Koreans and Chinese are making strong pushes. Formerly, a lot of VW's from Brazil made their way here, but that no longer seems to be happening. Ford and Chevrolet barely put in an appearance. I probably see more Hummers than all other American brands put together. Bye, bye, Hummer! Many used cars, like most of the taxis and micros are shipped here from Japan, maybe even from elsewhere, but not the U.S.

Cars cost just as much or more here as they do in the U.S. Many of the vehicles you see in the streets are the brand new Hummers I mentioned, Land Rovers, Lexus's (Lexus? Lexuses? Lexi?), and Mercedes. One has to wonder where the money comes from for all these shiny new cars (and big new buildings being constructed all over town). One theory is, directly and/or indirectly, from cocaine. In case you aren't familiar with recent Bolivian history, the president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, is the uneducated former-head of the coca growers' union. The refined product of coca, cocaine, is still

nominally illegal in Bolivia, but the growing of more and more coca is encouraged, to “help” the indigenous farmers. The coca is used by these peoples for chewing and tea. When Evo came to power, he kicked-out the U.S. Ambassador and the U.S. coca and cocaine eradication efforts and money. The result has been more money for more coca farmers, but also more traffic—in cocaine and on the streets.

Very little real wealth is created for Bolivians by the sale and use of these cars crowding our city. When a person here buys any car, even a used car, almost all of that money has already left Bolivia or is about to leave. When people use taxis or micros, almost all of that money remains in Bolivia, right here in town, in the hands of hard working people who need it.

And people in Bolivia really value their money. I mentioned previously that you will never find any in the streets. People here may tend to be poor, but, unlike in the States, they save money. The savings rate is very high, so banks and credit unions are extremely busy making fortunes for themselves, while people are crowded into lines. The government has recognized this and imposes a tax on all deposits and withdrawals. So why don't people realize that owning a car is not really, economically, a good thing to do?

For *Cruceñas*, owning a car or giant SUV (the favored vehicle here) is a practical paradox. It's expensive and unnecessary—a complete waste of money. People in Santa Cruz are usually very modest when it comes to other behaviors—their houses (often, fine ones are hidden behind shabby walls), their clothes (how ritzy are tight jeans and flip-flops?), etc. But the cars seem to me to be nothing more than rampant modernism and conspicuous consumption, a disease contracted probably from the mass media. What a shame!

When computing the cost of owning and driving vehicle, you have to remember that there are many different factors involved—the cost of the car itself, including depreciation, interest or interest/income lost because you have your money tied-up in the car, insurance (expensive here, as you can imagine), licensing of both the car and driver(s) (which may include the cost of driving school or learning-to-drive accidents), maintenance (oil changes, tires, springs, batteries, etc.) and repairs (do you really think you won't be involved in an accident or accidents?), gasoline, parking and security, car washes, potential damage due to vandalism (most cars you see are pretty dinged and scratched up, there must be a reason for that). Then, after paying for all this, you just might have your car stolen and taken to Paraguay, then sold for parts to be smuggled back into Bolivia and sold for repairs. Try getting insurance here after that happens to you.

Let's look at the math. For used cars, the calculations are difficult. The past history of any given used car in Bolivia can be very problematical. Is it stolen? Has it been wrecked? Was it driven to death in Bangladesh, then shipped here? How soon is it going to break down and need extensive repairs? You might get lucky, then again...

So let's use the example of a very inexpensive new car, just to eliminate some of the unknown costs. The other day, I passed by a Hyundai dealership. I don't remember the model being featured, but it was one of the smallest of the compacts. They were making a big deal out of the fact that your monthly payments (for five years) would only be \$220. That breaks down to about \$7.33 per day. Then there is gasoline, insurance, etc.—all the things I listed above. Well, I can take at least seven taxi rides every day of the month, just for the price of the car payment. Few of us need to do that much running around. If you do, there are always the micros to get even more bang for your buck. No one drives a car in Santa Cruz to save money, that's for sure.

And all these cars have a high cost to society too—deaths and injuries, huge expenses to build and maintain roads. The cars demand services—gas sucking drive-thru's at banks and restaurants, ugly repair shops covering huge sections of the city, tires, lead batteries, and junk cars that must be disposed of, giant gas stations all over the place. The list goes on and on.

When you want to go out of town, rental cars are inexpensive and plentiful for those trips. You can rent a nearly new 4WD mini-SUV for \$40 to \$60 per day, with 100 km. included. There's no need to own your own car for those occasional trips into the hinterlands. And, as I discussed in the “Taxi” section, fares to many distant locations are very economical. For others, you can take a bus, train, or fly, and still be money ahead of car ownership.

Security

Do you remember the rule for walking, “Don't look like you have anything.”? Well, a car breaks that rule, unnecessarily, to my mind. A car is something you have to defend—from being stolen, maybe with an ineffective alarm system that bothers everyone every time the wind blows, from being harmed maliciously, like at *Carnaval*, and from being destroyed in an accident. You might have to defend yourself inside your car, because you look like you might have something worth

stealing, and you have to think about the security of your parking spots. You'll probably need to carry a credit card, ID, and more cash than with other modes of transportation, because you need gas, or you might need an emergency spring repair, or just because it's more convenient to carry in your big, luxurious SUV. Driving your own car also breaks the security rule of not carrying original documents. You'll need your original drivers' license, at least.

A Possible Solution to the Traffic Problems in Santa Cruz

Have I mentioned that everything in Bolivia is late and that there are many more holidays than in the U.S.? Well, it's true. Except for the supermarkets, hotels, and a few restaurants which have adopted American-style business practices, the stores open at 10:00 AM, close for lunch and a *siesta* from about noon to 2:00 or 3:00 PM, then remain open until 7:00 or 8:00 PM. Dinner is commonly at 7:30 or 8:30. Bars, discos, karaoke, and parties get started about 10:00 PM and often go all night. A wedding can last for three grueling days and the process of letting go of the deceased takes at least ten days. Sunday night is often all night partying/drinking night, rather than, or in addition to, Friday and Saturday. The birthdays of everyone in the large extended families must be celebrated with at least a small party, so the *fiestas* can seem endless.

The holidays, just to name a few, start with three weekdays for *Carnaval*, then there are about three independence days, today is Corpus Christi day, so that means a four day weekend. And it is on these holidays and Sundays that Santa Cruz traffic becomes reasonable. This is what the streets would be like if laws were enforced and some solution could be put into place to reduce the continual traffic jams that normally choke the city.

Everyone who lives here knows that the traffic problems are terrible. The very life of Santa Cruz is beginning to be crushed by the traffic. Drivers are frustrated, impatient, and rude. Useless burglar alarms saturate the city, destroying the peace whenever the wind blows. It often takes forever to get anywhere.

Santa Cruz is blessed with a richness of taxis and micros. We have a great public transportation infrastructure in place, but a poor roadway infrastructure. Why not take advantage of this situation? Why not provide the conditions to make public transportation grow, thrive, and improve? Why destroy it with all these cars, as has happened in the United States?

I've written about how Santa Cruz is a "ringed" city. Already, the First Ring is closed to traffic during *Carnaval*, and what a refreshing situation this is. Why not open up the narrow streets in the central city, not to more parking, but to more taxis and micros? Perhaps, in the future, there could be bicycle lanes and/or street cars. The possibilities are endless once you get rid of the awful traffic created by the private automobiles.

The rings make possible a great solution to all the traffic, parking, and transportation problems—simply forbid private automobiles, SUV's, etc., within the First Ring, Second Ring, Third Ring, or Fourth Ring. I don't really know how far out to impose the ban, but it could start with the First Ring, just to see what how it goes, then the plan could be expanded outward as deemed worthy. At the present time, traffic is not really functional within the First Ring anyway. Taxis, micros, commercial vehicles, and specially licensed vehicles would be permitted access to the zone(s) forbidden to private vehicles. Since public transportation doesn't accommodate the people very well who have babies in car seats, or people who are handicapped, they would be permitted to drive nearly anywhere, but would require special license plates, and parking on the streets would be strictly limited.

Other people who must drive would have to park their cars outside the forbidden zone(s) and take public transportation from there. Taxis and micros would thrive. Jobs would be created. The city would no longer be choking to death. Parking lots similar to airport parking could be created outside the forbidden zone(s). Pollution would be reduced. The \$millions now needed and being spent on road and street improvements could instead be spent to improve our schools. Without all the traffic, there would be space for things like bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways, even monorails and trolley cars. Peace and tranquility would be restored to our city.

Immediately, an organization should be started to give away free bumper stickers for taxis and micros:

¡NO CARROS EN DENTRO PRIMERO ANILLO!
(NO CARS INSIDE THE FIRST RING!)

¡SOLO VEHICULOS COMERCIALES EN DENTRO PRIMERO ANILLO!
(ONLY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES INSIDE THE FIRST RING!)

I say, especially in places where people have used their ingenuity to get by largely without automobiles in the hands of

every man woman and child, we should discourage the sale and use of automobiles. I don't think that's prejudicial. Are all the peoples of the world entitled to make America's same mistakes or can they learn from them? Are Americans truly happy with their lives largely based on the automobile? Are we happy destroying the Earth and using up the last of the fuel, in the name of freedom, of pride, of ego? All of them hollow...

To close this section, let me give you an example from today, as I write this, of what life is like in Santa Cruz, and the transportation I used. I took two micros (less than 50 cents U.S., total) to get to the titanic Abasto produce/farmers market. I didn't have to fight for a parking place or experience any other of the problems or expenses of driving a car. I walked very little, and that was pleasant. I got my hair cut by the same guy, Alberto, who always does it (\$1, plus I always tip him \$1). Then I bought a big 50 pound bag of fresh oranges, right off the truck (less than \$3), almost for sure organic, because insecticide is very expensive here. I got right into a taxi, which brought me home (about \$2). I took the oranges into my kitchen immediately and, after a quick wash, started squeezing some with my electric juicer, then I drank a huge glass. Now that's fresh (and incredibly delicious)!

And I could have had my \$100-a-month live-in maid do the whole thing in addition to her other daily tasks of cleaning the condo, doing the laundry, and cooking, but I choose not to have a maid. I'll write more about this subject too, in a future section. They have a saying here: "The maid is the happiness of the family." But that's what she is, another member of the family, and a member of the family who eats alone in the kitchen after the rest of the family has finished, who maybe lives in the tiniest room possible. In my condo and many houses I've seen, the maid's bedroom is smaller than some doghouses or playhouses I've seen in the U.S.—not much bigger than the smallest bed, with one little window, no air-conditioning or heat, next to the laundry room. If I need another family member, I'd rather just have a cat. Not that I mean to insult any maids or any people who have maids—more power to all of you. It's just that when I grew-up in Indiana, our mothers were the maids, so I'm just not used to having one.

FINDING THINGS (No Matter How You Get There)

In the following sections of this guide, I will present much more information about the Santa Cruz and Bolivian destinations you might find worth traveling to, and those you might not—the sights, museums, nightlife, restaurants, *pensiones*, hotels, motels, hostels, *alojamientos*, *residenciales*, and unique destinations. But I would like to provide a very brief introduction to that subject here.

Finding things in Santa Cruz is no simple task unless you know the city very well. Yellow pages, which many of us depend on in the U.S. are not much help. The land-line world of the city is split into two rivals, Entel and Cotas, each with about half of the total yellow pages, and most businesses just don't find it cost effective, I guess, to pay for a listing. The world-wide trend toward cell phones and away from wired phones is more advanced here than in the U.S., so even businesses, more and more, use only cell phones. Listings in something called a telephone book are rapidly becoming obsolete.

The internet has rushed in to help, but Santa Cruz is still a world of very small businesses. They have no web presence and there are no online directories to help find all these little enterprises. Even many of the largest businesses, hotels, and restaurants have very minimal websites, perhaps simply listing their phone number. But if you don't already know about a place, you won't easily find it on the internet.

Many of the larger stores and restaurants have very amateurish television infomercials. Usually, some television "host" or newscaster is featured. There may be one or more of the local models involved, especially if the commercial is for a clothing store. The store owners are interviewed. The television "personality" gushes on and on about how great everything is, as the camera pans the shelves of various items sold. These are OK as far as they go, but you would have to watch a lot of boring infomercials to learn much about where to buy the items you want to buy.

One of the great helps is the way businesses are sort of geographically organized in Santa Cruz. The *chola* markets provide a good start. Los Posos, within the First Ring, has many gold and jewelry shops and kiosks. A lot of veterinarians are located there, for some reason. They also sell a lot of clothes and there is a whole army of tailors ready to do your bidding. The Siete Calles market is also located near the heart of the city. Clothing and shoes are probably its specialty. The Ramada market has many hardware and inexpensive furniture stores. I have already mentioned the Abasto market, which is like the world's largest farmers market. The Nueva Feria is a titanic market, selling anything you can imagine, but is only open on Wednesdays and Saturdays. All the markets sell fruit and vegetables, clothes, sunglasses, CD's, electronics, cleaning supplies, plastic-ware, etc.

But the organizing of things sold does not end with the markets. Where things are sold, there is often a concentration of similar competitors. This is a great aid to shoppers. There is a street with almost nothing but furniture stores, another with appliances, another with party goods, another with costumes. Hardware, auto parts, barbeque grills, paint, lumber, bricks, clothes, books (conveniently located near the universities), electronics, printing, photographers, and lawyers are also similarly concentrated in one or more areas of the city. Many computer stores are in one large building. The same can be said for CD, DVD, and cell phone stores. Many of the universities are in one area, many of the hospitals are in another. In La Paz, there is a street of "witches". In Santa Cruz, there is even an area, Los Tantacatos, where their specialty is merchandise that has been stolen. Restaurants and hotels can be found all over the city, not in any special area.

None of these things are really advertised. You have to know the city. You have to ask. If you ride the micros around, like I do, you'll see things. Carry a map, paper and pen at all times. Gradually, you will learn where things are. Just don't expect to find things like malls or Wal-Marts where everything is in one place, all nicely organized for you. But, hey, you don't really want the world to be all the same everywhere, do you?

Come and visit me sometime!

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Still more evidence. Still more cover-up. Obviously, the "Church" doesn't give a "Rat's A*s-inger" about our children. Oh, except as sex toys for the priesthood!

"Future Pope Stalled Pedophile Case" by Gillian Flaccus, AP

Apr. 9, 2010, (http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/national_world&id=7377773)

(LOS ANGELES) The future Pope Benedict XVI resisted pleas to defrock a California priest with a record of sexually molesting children, citing concerns including "the good of the universal church," according to a 1985 letter bearing his signature.

The correspondence, obtained by The Associated Press, is the strongest challenge yet to the Vatican's insistence that Benedict played no role in blocking the removal of pedophile priests during his years as head of the Catholic Church's doctrinal watchdog office.

The letter, signed by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, was typed in Latin and is part of years of correspondence between the Diocese of Oakland and the Vatican about the proposed defrocking of the Rev. Stephen Kiesle.

The Vatican refused to comment on the contents of the letter Friday, but a spokesman confirmed it bore Ratzinger's signature.

"The press office doesn't believe it is necessary to respond to every single document taken out of context regarding particular legal situations," the Rev. Federico Lombardi said. "It is not strange that there are single documents which have Cardinal Ratzinger's signature."

The diocese recommended removing Kiesle (KEEZ'-lee) from the priesthood in 1981, the year Ratzinger was appointed to head the Vatican office which shared responsibility for disciplining abusive priests.

The case then languished for four years at the Vatican before Ratzinger finally wrote to Oakland Bishop John Cummins. It was two more years before Kiesle was removed.

In the November 1985 letter, Ratzinger says the arguments for removing Kiesle are of "grave significance" but added that such actions required very careful review and more time. He also urged the bishop to provide Kiesle with "as much paternal care as possible" while awaiting the decision, according to a translation for AP by Professor Thomas Habinek, chairman of the University of Southern California Classics Department.

But the future pope also noted that any decision to defrock Kiesle must take into account the "good of the universal church" and the "detriment that granting the dispensation can provoke within the community of Christ's faithful, particularly considering the young age." Kiesle was 38 at the time.

Kiesle had been sentenced in 1978 to three years' probation after pleading no contest to misdemeanor charges of lewd conduct for tying up and molesting two young boys in a San Francisco Bay area church rectory.

As his probation ended in 1981, Kiesle asked to leave the priesthood and the diocese submitted papers to Rome to defrock him.

In his earliest letter to Ratzinger, Cummins warned that returning Kiesle to ministry would cause more of a scandal than stripping him of his priestly powers.

"It is my conviction that there would be no scandal if this petition were granted and that as a matter of fact, given the nature of the case, there might be greater scandal to the community if Father Kiesle were allowed to return to the active ministry," Cummins wrote in 1982.

While papers obtained by the AP include only one letter with Ratzinger's signature, correspondence and internal memos from the diocese refer to a letter dated Nov. 17, 1981, from the then-cardinal to the bishop. Ratzinger was appointed to head the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith a week later.

California church officials wrote to Ratzinger at least three times to check on the status of Kiesle's case. At one point, a Vatican official wrote to say the file may have been lost and suggested resubmitting materials.

Diocese officials considered writing Ratzinger again after they received his 1985 response to impress upon him that leaving Kiesle in the ministry would harm the church, Rev. George Mockel wrote in a memo to the Oakland bishop.

"My own reading of this letter is that basically they are going to sit on it until Steve gets quite a bit older," the memo said. "Despite his young age, the particular and unique circumstances of this case would seem to make it a greater scandal if he were not laicized."

Irwin Zalkin, an attorney representing some of the victims, said he was familiar with the correspondence but wouldn't provide documents to AP.

"Cardinal Ratzinger was more concerned about the avoidance of scandal than he was about protecting children," Zalkin said in a phone interview. "That was a central theme."

As Kiesle's fate was being weighed in Rome, the priest returned to suburban Pinole to volunteer as a youth minister at St. Joseph Church, where he had served as associate pastor from 1972 to 1975.

Kiesle was ultimately stripped of his priestly powers in 1987, though the documents do not indicate when, how or why. They also don't indicate what role — if any — Ratzinger had in the decision.

Kiesle continued to volunteer with children, according to Maurine Behrend, who worked in the Oakland diocese's youth ministry office in the 1980s. After learning of his history, Behrend complained to church officials. When nothing was done she wrote a letter, which she showed to the AP.

"Obviously nothing has been done after EIGHT months of repeated notifications," she wrote. "How are we supposed to have confidence in the system when nothing is done? A simple phone call to the pastor from the bishop is all it would take."

She eventually confronted Cummins at a confirmation and Kiesle was gone a short time later, Behrend said.

Kiesle was arrested and charged in 2002 with 13 counts of child molestation from the 1970s. All but two were thrown out after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional a California law extending the statute of limitations.

He pleaded no contest in 2004 to a felony for molesting a young girl in his Truckee home in 1995 and was sentenced to six years in state prison.

Kiesle, now 63 and a registered sex offender, lives in a Walnut Creek gated community, according to his address listed on the Megan's Law sex registry. An AP reporter was turned away when attempting to reach him for comment.

William Gagen, an attorney who represented Kiesle in 2002, did not return a call for comment.

More than a half-dozen victims reached a settlement in 2005 with the Oakland diocese alleging Kiesle had molested them as young children.

"He admitted molesting many children and bragged that he was the Pied Piper and said he tried to molest every child that sat on his lap," said Lewis VanBlois, an attorney for six Kiesle victims who interviewed the former priest in prison. "When asked how many children he had molested over the years, he said 'tons.'"

Cummins, the now-retired bishop, told the AP during an interview at his Oakland home that he "didn't really care for" Kiesle, but he didn't recall writing to Ratzinger concerning the case.

"I wish I did write to Cardinal Ratzinger. I don't think I was that smart," Cummins, now 82, told AP.

Documents obtained by the AP last week revealed similar instances of Vatican stalling in cases involving two Arizona clergy.

In one case, the future pope took over the abuse case of the Rev. Michael Teta of Tucson, Ariz., then let it languish at the Vatican for years despite repeated pleas from the bishop for the man to be removed from the priesthood.

In the second, the bishop called Msgr. Robert Trupia a "major risk factor" in a letter to Ratzinger. There is no indication in those files that Ratzinger responded.

The Vatican has called the accusations "absolutely groundless" and said the facts were being misrepresented.

20100409-02 16:58 Charis Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 9

Dear SteveB,

Really interesting stuff Steve. I would just say though, that when you say "church" it implies all Christian churches and since this is about the Catholic Church I think it would be better to state that because not all churches have this problem and it isn't fair to those that don't. I'm Lutheran and I know that even in the Lutheran church things like this happen, but you know I'm just saying ... so that people don't generalize and criminalize all churches know what I mean?

20100410-01 18:58 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 9

Dear Charis,

Good point. But in the States, the Church (capitalized) refers to the Catholic church. I use the quotes to indicate, I guess, that I'm being somewhat sarcastic or satirical or satyrical.

Hey, I'm a Lutheran too! Missouri Synod...but fallen (haha)...and I don't think anything like this goes on in the Lutheran church...not the celibacy...not wide-spread child abuse...not the organized cover-up...not the \$billions in restitution on the backs of the poor.

This is what my dear cousin, Larry, who is a Quaker minister, had to say on the subject:

I totally agree, SteveB. Covering up wouldn't work in my own protestant denomination (Quakers) because I would personally call the police a moment after I knew some kid had been molested by any man no matter who the guy was. We have no secret society we need to protect. And we want no secret society to protect us. Every protestant believes as his heart directs and that is a freedom we would never surrender.

20100412-01 15:00 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 10: "Vatican to Bishops: Follow Law, Report Sex

The conspiracy continues! One might wonder why this tiny gesture wasn't done after the first cases surfaced a long time ago. This directive is actually an admission that, at least up to the present moment, the "Church" has been complicit in the illegal cover-up of these heinous crimes. I say the guilty b*stards should be prosecuted!

"Vatican to Bishops: Follow Law, Report Sex Abuse" by Nicole Winfield, AP

Apr. 12, 2010, (<http://www.newsday.com/news/world/vatican-to-bishops-follow-law-report-sex-abuse-1.1858057>)

(VATICAN CITY) The Vatican on Monday made clear for the first time that bishops and other church officials should report clerical sex abuse to police if required by law. But the policy failed to satisfy victims who charge that the church deliberately hid abuse for decades.

Victims, government inquiries and grand juries have all charged that the Catholic Church created what amounted to a conspiracy to cover up abuse by keeping allegations that priests raped and molested children secret and not reporting them to civil authorities.

The Vatican has insisted that it has long been the Catholic Church's policy for bishops, like all Christians, to obey civil reporting laws. In a new guide for lay readers posted on its Web site, the Vatican explicitly spells out such a policy.

"Civil law concerning reporting of crimes to the appropriate authorities should always be followed," the Vatican guidelines said.

That phrase was not included in a draft of the guidelines obtained Friday by The Associated Press. The rest of the guidelines follow previously known and public procedures for handling canonical investigations and trials of priests suspected of abuse.

The Vatican offered no explanation for the addition.

Victims were not impressed.

"Let's keep this in perspective: it's one sentence and it's virtually nothing unless and until we see tangible signs that bishops are responding," said Joelle Casteix, western regional director for SNAP, the Survivors Network for Those Abused by Priests, the main victims' group in the U.S. "One sentence can't immediately reverse centuries of self-serving secrecy."

She said if the Vatican truly wanted to change course "it would be far more effective to fire or demote bishops who have clearly endangered kids and enabled abuse and hid crimes, than to add one sentence to a policy that is rarely followed with consistency."

None of the core public Vatican documents to be applied in cases of abuse direct bishops to report cases to police. Nor does canon law make such an explicit requirement.

Jeffrey Lena, the Vatican's U.S. lawyer, said a 1965 document from the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, contained an implicit understanding of the need to follow civil laws that are just.

The vague citation, however, is not nearly as explicit as what is contained in the lay guide.

"It's beyond dispute that the canon law does not mandate non-reporting," Lena said. "These guidelines may help clarify that point for people who are less familiar with canon law."

"The statement confirms what has been long known, that where the civil state creates an obligation to report, bishops like anyone else are required to examine the law and determine what they have to do to obey it," Lena told the AP.

In 2002, after the clerical abuse scandal erupted in the United States, American bishops enacted reforms, which the Vatican made church law for the U.S., that do not specifically order all bishops to notify civil authorities of new claims. Instead, the U.S. policy instructs bishops to comply with state laws for reporting abuse, and to cooperate with authorities. All U.S. dioceses were also instructed to advise victims of their right to contact authorities themselves.

The Rev. Davide Cito, a canon lawyer at Rome's Santa Croce University, called the publication of the universal church policy in the lay guidelines "an important development."

"I'm very pleased," he said. "A Christian also has to follow civil laws. It's a Christian duty."

A Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini, said the reporting requirement had been the internal policy of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 2003. The Vatican in 2001 shifted its policy on dealing with abuse cases, ordering bishops around the world to refer all cases to the Congregation, which then decides how to proceed. Previously, diocese themselves dealt with most of the cases on their own.

Asked how bishops were supposed to know of this internal policy on reporting to police, Benedettini declined to comment.

Pope Benedict XVI had told Irish bishops last month that they should cooperate with civil authorities in investigating abuse. But the guidelines mark the first time that such procedures for the church at large, in which bishops are explicitly told they should follow civil reporting laws, have been laid out publicly.

20100412-02	16:20	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 11: "Vatican Makes Peace with Beatles after 40 Years"
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OK, the Church has finally caught up to 40-some years ago. Does this mean they'll be OK with rap, hip-hop, and reggaeton 40 years from now? Are they trying to tell us how "hip" they are, now that "hip" is "square", to twist the words of my friend and neighbor, Huey Lewis? LOL! Ain't forgiveness grand?

Does this mean bra-less is OK? Women's lib? Pre-marital sex? Ya, I know, don't get carried away, Steve. This just all seems like such a joke to me, considering the seriousness of the trouble the Church is in at this exact moment. Dan Brown, anyone?

"Vatican Makes Peace with Beatles after 40 Years" by Alessandra Rizzo, AP

Apr. 12, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/12/vatican-makes-peace-with- n_533976.html)

(VATICAN CITY) The Vatican has finally made peace with the Beatles, saying their drug use, "dissolute" lives and even the claim that the band was bigger than Jesus are all in the past — while their music lives on.

Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano paid tribute to the Fab Four in its weekend editions, with two articles and a front-page cartoon reproducing the crosswalk immortalized on the cover of the band's album "Abbey Road."

The tribute marked the 40th anniversary of the band's breakup.

"It's true, they took drugs; swept up by their success, they lived dissolute and uninhibited lives," said the paper. "They even said they were more famous than Jesus," it said, recalling John Lennon's 1966 comment that outraged many Catholics and others.

"But, listening to their songs, all of this seems distant and meaningless," L'Osservatore said. "Their beautiful melodies, which changed forever pop music and still give us emotions, live on like precious jewels."

It is not the first time the Vatican has praised the legendary band from Liverpool.

Two years ago, Vatican media hailed the Beatles' musical legacy on the 40th anniversary of the "White Album." And last month the Vatican paper included "Revolver" in its semiserious list of top-10 albums.

Now, L'Osservatore says that the Beatles' songs have stood the test of time, and that the band remains "the longest-lasting, most consistent and representative phenomenon in the history of pop music."

Giovanni Maria Vian, the editor in chief of L'Osservatore Romano, said Monday that he loves the Beatles.

He said that at the time of Lennon's sensational statement, Osservatore "commented that in reality it wasn't that scandalous, because the fascination with Jesus was so great that it attracted these new heroes of the time."

20100413-01	08:58	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 12: "European Abuse Hot Lines Log Jump in Calls"
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The tip of the iceberg...finally revealed through the fog of intimidation, ridicule, deception, lies, and cover-up:

"European Abuse Hot Lines Log Jump in Calls" by Melissa Eddy and Veronika Oleksyn, AP

Apr. 13, 2010,

(http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2010/04/13/european_abuse_hot_lines_log_jump_in_calls/)

(VIENNA) Telephone hot lines in Europe offering help to people claiming abuse by Roman Catholic priests are being deluged with calls as the crisis spreads — with one center reporting complaints jumping from about 10 cases a year to more than a thousand in the past few weeks.

Experts say the record influx of calls reflects an increasing realization among victims that they are not alone and that they will not be scorned for breaking their silence about horrors that in many cases go back decades.

"Until now, many people were afraid they wouldn't be respected," said Max Friedrich, a prominent Austrian psychiatrist. "There's also a certain comfort knowing you're not the only one to have experienced such abuse."

In the Netherlands, the Help and Law line was set up in 1995 and generally dealt with roughly 10 reports of abuse per year. Since March it has received some 1,300 new reports, said Pieter Kohnen, spokesman for the Dutch Bishops' Conference, which runs the line.

As with similar help lines, not every complaint turns into an actual case — meaning the caller is assigned a legal adviser to guide him or her through the process.

Still, Help and Law is now dealing with nearly 50 cases, compared with 10 to 14 for most years, and the number is likely to rise further as the center plows through a backlog of complaints, according to spokesman Ben Spekman.

"We have started more cases in the last month than in the previous three years combined," Spekman said. "It is a significant increase."

Spekman said the hot line is also attracting people who feel compelled to give their reaction to reports of abuse. Some other callers report abuse that happened to a deceased loved one. In neither case would such calls lead to a formal complaint procedure.

Germany's bishops conference, which launched its hot line on March 30, reported this week that 2,700 people have called it in its first three days, while an older number in Germany run by a pro-reform group, We Are Church, said calls have jumped dramatically.

"In the past eight years we received about 300 calls total; in the past four to five weeks alone, we have gotten 100 calls," said Annegret Laakmann, a spokeswoman for We are Church.

In general, the hot lines offer an initial open ear to victims. Laakmann said that in Germany every complaint is believed without question. In some cases, the hot lines offer a chance to speak to a psychologist, or help finding one. In cases where legal avenues can be pursued, they counsel victims in how to approach authorities.

In Austria, if the perpetrators are still alive, they are tracked down and confronted with the allegations, according to an Austrian Web site that provides an overview of the country's church abuse complaint centers. In concrete cases, a perpetrator's supervisor in the church is informed and the person is suspended until the matter is cleared up, it said.

Austria has nine church-run offices that allow victims to report abuse — one for each diocese. The first was set up in Vienna in 1996 as a result of the sex scandal surrounding then Cardinal Hans Hermann Groer. In the first three months of this year, the offices recorded 566 calls or e-mails.

According to the Vienna hot line, 174 contacts were made between January and the end of March — compared to 17 in all of 2009. Of those, eight turned out to be concrete cases after experts held intensive conversations with alleged victims, said Erich Leitenberger, spokesman of the Vienna Archdiocese.

Hans Tauscher, who runs the complaint center for the Innsbruck diocese, said he has recently been working eight hours a day taking calls, answering e-mails and meeting with victims. He says it's tough to generalize on how much time he spends with each person, saying some take up to 45 minutes to describe what they went through. Others just take minutes.

"I go with whatever they want — the conversations are very unstructured," Tauscher said.

Christiane Sauer, a psychotherapist who heads the hot line in the Linz diocese, said people often tell her how relieved they feel after opening up to her, sometimes after decades of silence.

"They become calmer by talking about what happened," said Sauer, who encourages victims to also notify police or prosecutors — even if the abuse took place many years ago.

Some claim it is ludicrous to expect victims to contact church-sponsored hot lines since they are sometimes run by clergy and represent an institution that covered up or ignored cases in the past.

Critics include a newly created Austrian victims' group that calls itself the Platform Of Those Affected By Church Violence. It set up its own hot line on March 23 and has logged some 203 contacts since then.

Hans Peter Hurka of the Austrian branch of We are Church said most of the church-run centers were "fig leaves" until now, hiding the problem rather than exposing it.

In a sign the church may be taking this criticism to heart, Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn recently appointed a former regional governor, Waltraud Klasnic, to ensure that all abuse allegations are investigated. She has also set up her own abuse hot line.

In the Netherlands, Spekman disputed the argument that the system cannot be trusted because it is not independent.

"In our view its independence is guaranteed," Spekman said. "If somebody does not agree they can always go to civil courts."

20100413-02	20:26	Marci	The "Church"—Chpt. 13: "The Pope Should Stand Trial"
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Dear Steve,

The Vatican laughs at the idea that the Pope could be arrested in Great Britain.....

I told you. The Pope can be judged under the criminal law of the places where the crimes were committed. It would be great if they did arrest this evil person.

"The Pope Should Stand Trial" by Richard Dawkins, *The Guardian* (U.K.)

Apr. 13, 2010, (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/apr/13/pope-prosecution-dawkins>)

Sexual abuse of children is not unique to the Roman Catholic church, and Joseph Ratzinger is not one of those priests who raped altar boys while in a position of dominance and trust. But as so often it is the subsequent cover-ups, even more than the original crimes, that do most to discredit an institution, and here the pope is in real trouble.

Pope Benedict XVI is the head of the institution as a whole, but we can't blame the present head for what was done before his watch. Except that in his particular case, as archbishop of Munich and as Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (what used to be called the Inquisition), the very least you can say is that there is a case for him to answer. The latest smoking gun is the 1985 letter obtained by the Associated Press, signed by

the then Cardinal Ratzinger to the diocese of Oakland about the case of Father Stephen Kiesle, mercilessly analyzed by Andrew Sullivan here.

Lashing out in desperation, church spokesmen are now blaming everybody but themselves for their current dire plight, which one official spokesman likens to the worst aspects of anti-Semitism (what are the best ones, I wonder?). Suggested culprits include the media, the Jews, and even Satan. The church is hiding behind a seemingly endless stream of excuses for having failed in its legal and moral obligation to report serious crimes to the appropriate civil authorities. But it was Cardinal Ratzinger's official responsibility to determine the church's response to allegations of child sex abuse, and his letter in the Kiesle case makes the real motivation devastatingly explicit. Here are his actual words, translated from the Latin in the AP report:

This court, although it regards the arguments presented in favour of removal in this case to be of grave significance, nevertheless deems it necessary to consider the good of the universal church together with that of the petitioner, and it is also unable to make light of the detriment that granting the dispensation can provoke with the community of Christ's faithful, particularly regarding the young age of the petitioner.

"The young age of the petitioner" refers to Kiesle, then aged 38, not the age of any of the boys he tied up and raped (11 and 13). It is completely clear that, together with a nod to the welfare of the "young" priest, Ratzinger's primary concern, and the reason he refused to unfrock Kiesle (who went on to re-offend) was "the good of the universal church".

This pattern of putting church PR over and above the welfare of the children in its care (and what an understatement that is) is repeated over and over again in the cover-ups that are now coming to light, all over the world. And Ratzinger himself expressed it with damning clarity in this smoking gun letter.

In this case he was refusing the strong request of the local bishop that Kiesle should be unfrocked. Vatican standing orders were to refer such cases not to the civil authorities but to the church itself. The current campaign to call the church to account can take credit for the fact that this standing order has just changed, as of Monday 12 April 2010. Better late than never, as Galileo might have remarked in 1979, when the Vatican finally got around to a posthumous pardon.

Suppose the British secretary of state for schools received, from a local education authority, a reliable report of a teacher tying up his pupils and raping them. Imagine that, instead of turning the matter over to the police, he had simply moved the offender from school to school, where he repeatedly raped other children. That would be bad enough. But now suppose that he justified his decision in terms such as these:

Although I regard the arguments in favour of prosecution, presented by the local education authority, as of grave significance, I nevertheless deem it necessary to consider the good of the government and the party, together with that of the offending teacher. And I am also unable to make light of the detriment that prosecuting the offender can provoke among voters, particularly regarding the young age of the offender.

The analogy breaks down, only in that we aren't talking about a single offending priest, but many thousands, all over the world.

Why is the church allowed to get away with it, when any government minister who was caught writing such a letter would immediately have to resign in ignominy, and face prosecution himself? A religious leader, such as the pope, should be no different. That is why, along with Christopher Hitchens, I am supporting the current investigation of the pope's criminal complicity by Geoffrey Robertson QC and Mark Stephens. These excellent lawyers believe that, for a start, they have a persuasive case against the Vatican's status as a sovereign state, on the basis that it was just an ad hoc concoction driven by internal Italian politics under Mussolini, and was never given full status at the UN. If they succeed in this initial argument, the pope could not claim diplomatic immunity as a head of state, and could be arrested if he steps on British soil.

Why is anyone surprised, much less shocked, when Christopher Hitchens and I call for the prosecution of the pope, if he goes ahead with his proposed visit to Britain? The only strange thing about our proposal is that it had to come from us: where have the world's governments been all this time? Where is their moral fiber? Where is their commitment to treating everyone equally under the law? The U.K. government, far from standing up for justice for the innocent victims of the Roman Catholic church, is preparing to welcome this grotesquely tainted man on an official visit to the U.K. so that he can "dispense moral guidance". Read that again: dispense moral guidance!

Unfortunately I must end in bathos, with a necessary correction of a damaging error in another newspaper. *The Sunday Times* of 11 April, on its front page, printed the headline, "Richard Dawkins: I will arrest Pope Benedict XVI." This conjures up — as was doubtless intended — a ludicrous image of me ambushing the pontiff with a pair of handcuffs and marching him off in a half Nelson. Blood out of a stone, but I finally managed to persuade that Murdoch paper to change the headline in the online edition.

Never mind headlines invented by foolish sub-editors, we are serious. It should be for a court to decide — a civil court, not a whitewashing ecclesiastical court — whether the case against Ratzinger is as damning as it looks. If he is innocent, let him have the opportunity to demonstrate it in court. If he is guilty, let him face justice. Just like anybody else.

20100413-03	22:01	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 14: "The Great Catholic Cover-Up"
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Dear Marci,

I think it is so possible he could be arrested that he will cancel his trip! Actually, his crimes were probably committed in Germany. Right? That's where he masterminded the cover-up of cases all over the world...

"The Great Catholic Cover-Up" by Christopher Hitchens, Slate

Mar. 15, 2010,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/fighting_words/2010/03/the_great_catholic_coverup.html)

(The pope's entire career has the stench of evil about it.)

On March 10, the chief exorcist of the Vatican, the Rev. Gabriele Amorth (who has held this demanding post for 25 years), was quoted as saying that "the Devil is at work inside the Vatican," and that "when one speaks of 'the smoke of Satan' in the holy rooms, it is all true—including these latest stories of violence and pedophilia." This can perhaps be taken as confirmation that something horrible has indeed been going on in the holy precincts, though most inquiries show it to have a perfectly good material explanation.

Concerning the most recent revelations about the steady complicity of the Vatican in the ongoing—indeed endless—scandal of child rape, a few days later a spokesman for the Holy See made a concession in the guise of a denial. It was clear, said the Rev. Federico Lombardi, that an attempt was being made "to find elements to involve the Holy Father personally in issues of abuse." He stupidly went on to say that "those efforts have failed."

He was wrong twice. In the first place, nobody has had to strive to find such evidence: It has surfaced, as it was bound to do. In the second place, this extension of the awful scandal to the topmost level of the Roman Catholic Church is a process that has only just begun. Yet it became in a sense inevitable when the College of Cardinals elected, as the vicar of Christ on Earth, the man chiefly responsible for the original cover-up. (One of the sanctified voters in that "election" was Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, a man who had already found the jurisdiction of Massachusetts a bit too warm for his liking.)

There are two separate but related matters here: First, the *individual responsibility* of the pope in one instance of this moral nightmare and, second, his more general and *institutional responsibility* for the wider lawbreaking and for the shame and disgrace that goes with it. The first story is easily told, and it is not denied by anybody. In 1979, an 11-year-old German boy identified as Wilfried F. was taken on a vacation trip to the mountains by a priest. After that, he was administered alcohol, locked in his bedroom, stripped naked, and forced to suck the penis of his confessor. (Why do we limit ourselves to calling this sort of thing "abuse"?) The offending cleric was transferred from Essen to Munich for "therapy" by a decision of then-Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, and assurances were given that he would no longer have children in his care. But it took no time for Ratzinger's deputy, Vicar General Gerhard Gruber, to return him to "pastoral" work, where he soon enough resumed his career of sexual assault.

It is, of course, claimed, and it will no doubt later be partially un-claimed, that Ratzinger himself knew nothing of this second outrage. I quote, here, from the Rev. Thomas Doyle, a former employee of the Vatican Embassy in Washington and an early critic of the Catholic Church's sloth in responding to child-rape allegations. "Nonsense," he says. "Pope Benedict is a micromanager. He's the old style. Anything like that would necessarily have been brought to his attention. Tell the vicar general to find a better line. What he's trying to do, obviously, is protect the pope."

This is common or garden stuff, very familiar to American and Australian and Irish Catholics whose children's rape and torture, and the cover-up of same by the tactic of moving rapists and torturers from parish to parish, has been painstakingly and comprehensively exposed. It's on a level with the recent belated admission by the pope's brother, Monsignor Georg Ratzinger, that while he knew nothing about sexual assault at the choir school he ran between 1964 and 1994, now that he remembers it, he is sorry for his practice of slapping the boys around.

Very much more serious is the role of Joseph Ratzinger, before the church decided to make him supreme leader, in obstructing justice on a global scale. After his promotion to cardinal, he was put in charge of the so-called "Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith" (formerly known as the Inquisition). In 2001, Pope John Paul II placed this department in charge of the investigation of child rape and torture by Catholic priests. In May of that year, Ratzinger issued a confidential letter to every bishop. In it, he reminded them of the extreme gravity of a certain crime. *But that crime was the reporting of the rape and torture.* The accusations, intoned Ratzinger, were only treatable within the church's own exclusive jurisdiction. Any sharing of the evidence with legal authorities or the press was utterly forbidden. Charges were to be investigated "in the most secretive way ... restrained by a perpetual silence ... and everyone ... is to observe the strictest secret which is commonly regarded as a secret of the Holy Office ... *under the penalty of excommunication.*" (My italics). Nobody has yet been excommunicated for the rape and torture of children, but exposing the offense could get you into serious trouble. And this is the church that warns us against moral relativism! (See, for more on this appalling document, two reports in the London Observer of April 24, 2005, by Jamie Doward.)

Not content with shielding its own priests from the law, Ratzinger's office even wrote its own private statute of limitations. The church's jurisdiction, claimed Ratzinger, "begins to run from the day when the minor has completed the 18th year of age" and then lasts for 10 more years. Daniel Shea, the attorney for two victims who sued Ratzinger and a church in Texas, correctly describes that latter stipulation as an obstruction of justice. "You can't investigate a case if you never find out about it. If you can manage to keep it secret for 18 years plus 10, the priest will get away with it."

The next item on this grisly docket will be the revival of the long-standing allegations against the Rev. Marcial Maciel, founder of the ultra-reactionary Legion of Christ, in which sexual assault seems to have been almost part of the liturgy. Senior ex-members of this secretive order found their complaints ignored and overridden by Ratzinger during the 1990s, if only because Father Maciel had been praised by the then-Pope John Paul II as an "efficacious guide to youth." And now behold the harvest of this long campaign of obfuscation. The Roman Catholic Church is headed by a mediocre Bavarian bureaucrat once tasked with the concealment of the foulest iniquity, whose ineptitude in that job now shows him to us as a man personally and professionally responsible for enabling a filthy wave of crime. Ratzinger himself may be banal, but his whole career has the stench of evil—a clinging and systematic evil that is beyond the power of exorcism to dispel. What is needed is not medieval incantation but the application of justice—and speedily at that.

[20100415-01](#)

14:11

SteveB

The "Church"—Chpt. 15: "Pope Notes Attacks on Church, Urges Repentance"

Finally, after centuries, some words we have wanted to hear! I wish they had been stated a little more officially and openly, but it seems like a start.

"Repent ye sinners!"

I must say...the last sentence in the article is very telling...

"Pope Notes Attacks on Church, Urges Repentance" by Nicole Winfield, AP

Apr. 15, 2010, (

(VATICAN CITY) Pope Benedict XVI broke his recent silence on the clerical abuse scandal Thursday, noting recent attacks on the church and the need for "we Christians" to repent for sins and recognize mistakes.

Benedict made the comments during an off-the-cuff homily at a Mass inside the Vatican for members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Victims of clerical abuse have long demanded that Benedict take more personal responsibility for clerical abuse, charging that the Vatican orchestrated a culture of cover-up and secrecy that allowed priests to rape and molest children for decades unchecked.

Those demands have intensified in recent weeks as the Vatican and Benedict himself have been accused of negligence in handling some cases in Europe and the United States.

"I must say, we Christians, even in recent times, have often avoided the word 'repent', which seemed too tough. But now under attack from the world, which has been telling us about our sins ... we realize that it's necessary to repent, in other words, recognize what is wrong in our lives," Benedict said.

"Open ourselves to forgiveness ... and let ourselves be transformed. The pain of repentance, which is a purification and transformation, is a grace because it is renewal and the work of divine mercy," he said.

It was Benedict's fullest allusion to the scandal since he sent a letter to the Irish faithful March 20 concerning what Irish-government inquiries have concluded was decades of abuse and church-mandated cover-up in the country.

Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi confirmed that Benedict was indeed referring to the scandal. "That's a legitimate reading," he said. "You can apply (his comments) to the current situation."

In his letter to the Irish, Benedict chastised Irish bishops for failures in leadership and judgment. But he took no responsibility himself or for the Vatican, which many victims have blamed for being more concerned about protecting the church than children.

On Monday, the Vatican posted on its Web site what it claimed had been a long-standing church policy telling bishops that they should report abuse crimes to police, where civil laws require it.

But critics have said the guidelines were merely a deceptive attempt by Rome to rewrite history, designed to shield the Vatican from blame by shifting responsibility of dealing with abusive priests onto bishops.

The Rev. Thomas P. Doyle, a canon lawyer who has been the main expert witness for victims in hundreds of lawsuits, called the guidelines a "failed attempt at damage control through revision of history."

He noted that senior Vatican officials, including the current Vatican No. 2, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, in 2002 were quoted as saying the church shouldn't require bishops to report abusive priests to police because it would violate the trust the two shared.

"In practice, the policy has been to avoid contact with civil authorities and to cover up the crimes and the criminals," Doyle wrote in an article this week. **"The newly created canonical tradition of referral to civil authorities is the result of one thing: public outrage, the exposure from the media and the pressure for accountability in civil courts."**

20100417-01	10:23	India	Buddhist Blog
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Dear SteveB,

An interesting article: <http://ecobuddhism.blogspot.com/>.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

20100417-02	11:58	SteveB	Re: Buddhist Blog
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Dear India,

Very good stuff here, my friend. Thank you!

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." — Martin Luther King, Jr.

More evidence that the Church covered-up for its criminal priests, and, perhaps, evidence that it may finally realize it must be "humble enough to recognize the failures and sins in its members."

Too bad it can't also recognize the utterly unnecessary weirdness of all its priests having to be celibate. Too bad it can't recognize the equal rights of women. Too bad it feels the earth must be overpopulated until it is destroyed.

Too bad it can't recognize, despite its own admissions, that it might, at times, be wrong and not under the direct control of God—the very same problem kings used to be unable to admit to...and history has certainly proven them wrong.

But, of course, the Church is not really human...it can't actually be wrong!

"Pope: Church Will Protect Young from Abuse" by AP

Apr. 18, 2010, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/36625387/ns/world_news-world_faith/t/pope-church-will-protect-young-abuse/#.Ty6IhXSQhI)

(Pontiff meets with victims following Mass to tens of thousands in Malta.)

(VALLETTA, Malta) Pope Benedict XVI met with a group of clerical abuse victims on Sunday and promised them the church would do everything in its power to bring justice to victims and protect young people in the future.

The Vatican said Benedict expressed his shame and sorrow at the pain the men and their families suffered and prayed with them during the meeting at the Vatican's embassy in Malta.

It was the first time Benedict had met with abuse victims since the worldwide clerical abuse scandal engulfed the Vatican earlier this year.

"He prayed with them and assured them that the Church is doing, and will continue to do, all in its power to investigate allegations, to bring to justice those responsible for abuse and to implement effective measures designed to safeguard young people in the future," a Vatican statement said.

Benedict, on a trip to Malta overshadowed by the global crisis, also heard the island's leading bishop say on Sunday that the Catholic Church has to be humble enough to recognize its failures.

The pope, who turned 83 on Friday, met with the group after a celebrating a mass for tens of thousands of people in a dockside area built in the 17th century over underground grain silos.

He made no reference to the sexual abuse crisis before the meeting, telling priests only to "fulfill the mission you have received."

But Paul Cremona, the Archbishop of Malta, spoke directly about the abuse crisis which is sapping the church's credibility in Malta and beyond.

In his address to the pope at the start of the mass, Cremona spoke of the need for "a church humble enough to recognize the failures and sins in its members."

Cremona, with the pope listening on the same platform, also spoke of the need for "a Church which does not seek privileges."

It was the second time in as many days that someone addressing the pope mentioned the sexual-abuse crisis.

The overnight trip is the pope's first foreign travels since the full force of the scandals have rocked the church became apparent and threatened to engulf his papacy.

At his arrival on Saturday, Maltese President George Abela said priests sometimes "unfortunately go astray" and it was "the church and even the state's duty to work hand in hand" to prevent abuse and punish offenders "so that justice will not only be done but seen to be done."

Speaking to reporters aboard the plane taking him to Malta on Saturday, he said Roman Catholicism has been "wounded by our sins" but did not use the word "abuse".

Pope's connection to scandal

Hundreds of cases of sexual and physical abuse of youths in recent decades by priests have come to light in Europe and the United States as disclosures encourage long-silent victims to finally go public with their complaints.

Benedict has been accused by victims groups of being part of systematic practice of cover-up by church hierarchy for pedophile priests, in his earlier roles as an archbishop in Germany and later at the helm of the Vatican morals office.

In his sermon at the open-air mass, the pope also called on the overwhelmingly Catholic nation, where abortion and divorce are illegal, not to succumb to the secular influences.

"Not everything that today's world proposes is worthy of acceptance by the people of Malta," he said. As the pope was in Malta, the Vatican was swept up with another potentially explosive case.

Cardinal Dario Castrillon Hoyos, a former Vatican official who congratulated a French bishop for hiding a sexually abusive priest in 2001, told a conference in Spain he acted with the approval of the late Pope John Paul.

Last week the Vatican spokesman indirectly confirmed that a 2001 letter Castrillon Hoyos sent to the bishop posted on a French website was authentic and was proof the Vatican was right to tighten up its procedures on sex abuse cases that year.

But the spokesman said on Saturday night he had no further comment on Castrillon Hoyos's remarks in Spain.

20100419-01	02:25	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 17: " <i>Convento da Arrábida</i> "
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Don't get me wrong. I think there is a place for celibacy in the Church, as long as it is a place away from our children and, maybe, women.

I once visited a defunct (is it any wonder?) convent in Portugal (now a sort of national historical site), where the priests took not only vows of celibacy, but vows of silence and reclusion from the outside world. Even in their church, where the townspeople were also permitted to attend services, these monks hid behind screens and peeked through slits that did not allow them, normally, to even see the common people, nor, of course, to be seen by them.

I wrote the poem below, approximately, about that convent.

So if Catholic priests want to be this crazy, I say they should be free to do so. But please keep the members of this radical cult away from our children.

Convento da Arrábida

The snow is falling heavily now
Adding itself to the white already
Hiding all that lies beneath.

My thoughts drift like the perfect flakes
Backward and forward, seeking
Something level upon which to rest awhile.

Old feelings push through the covering
Like spring beauties in warming woods
Reclaiming the territory of summer.

I have no brightly decorated tree
No cards coming and going by mail
Only myself to give.

Picturing the first Christmas I remember
When, as a 4-year-old, walking with my father
The night before the big day.

He pointed up to the starry sky
At what I know now must have been a plane
Where I clearly saw Santa and his sleigh.

Fast forward to the blessing
Of my own kids on Christmas morning
Bright eyed with wonder, woken up by joy.

Then wishful thinking, perhaps, leads me
To thoughts of last summer's warmth
In the sun on a mountain in Portugal.

The silent monks walked up
These worn hand-set stone steps
For hundreds of snowless Christmas's.

They must have cast their wordless gaze
Down the gray line of watchtowers
Toward the clean white village by the sea.

Each plain little cubicle in the monastery
Housed one robed soul
Never seen or heard outside this place.

Their library, chapel, and eating place so simple...
A lovingly restored mechanical clock still times
Forgotten travels of lovely wooden model ships.

Everywhere frescoes tiles paintings statues
Of the Virgin contemplating a skull
Commemorate what inner journeys?

Is she thinking of the death of her son
Or of His birth?
Of what could have been or what must be?

I picture the monks meditating on whatever
Made them lock themselves away
From the world they had always known.

Their life outside the world
No, beside the world
Filling them or leaving them empty?

Running away from the dark
Or toward the light?
They gave up so much for perhaps so little.

Their ghosts inhabit these hard stones
But return no answers to my questions

Why all had to be lost to be found.

I realize, like them, I have missed much of life
So little have I seen or known
Between my first Christmas and this.

And the lesson I can't escape in this refuge
Is not to run away from the life we are given
But to embrace the warmth and even the cold.

In Arrábida green trees and bright flowers
Even now lead down the mountain to the shore
Where love and hope rise each day
And the light still shines in this world.

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20100419-02 02:36 SteveB Quotes: Responsibility

When a man points a finger at someone else, he should remember that four of his fingers are pointing at himself.
—Louis Nizer

Within each of us lies the power of our consent to health and sickness, to riches and poverty, to freedom and to slavery.
It is we who control these, and not another.
—Richard Bach

You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.
—Abraham Lincoln

You must take personal responsibility. You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of.
—Jim Rohn

The greatest gifts you can give your children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence.
—Denis Waitley

The reason people blame things on the previous generations is that there's only one other choice.
—Doug Larson

The father who does not teach his son his duties is equally guilty with the son who neglects them.
—Confucius

20100420-01 10:39 Lianne Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 17

Dear SteveB,

Nice poem. I leave for Italy on Friday and for one of my stays, I am staying at a convent on a country hillside. Looked so peaceful.

Just read this morning's newspaper. a Catholic priest was busted in a prostitute sting. He had replied on craigslist and they set him up.

It is all falling apart for the upper hierarchy. I feel bad for those who are authentically doing the work on the local level, teaching, ministering...

20100420-02 15:59 SteveB Quotes: Mothers

Hundreds of dewdrops to greet the dawn,
Hundreds of bees in the purple clover,
Hundreds of butterflies on the lawn,
But only one mother the wide world over.
—George Cooper

Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship fall; a mother's secret hope outlives them all.
—Oliver Wendell Holmes

One lamp - thy mother's love - amid the stars
Shall lift its pure flame changeless, and before
The throne of God, burn through eternity -
Holy - as it was lit and lent thee here.
—Nathaniel Parker Willis

Life is the fruit she longs to hand you,
Ripe on a plate.
And while you live,
Relentlessly she understands you.
—Phyllis McGinley

Respect for ones parents is the highest duty of civil life.
—Chinese Proverb

20100421-01	08:00	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 18: "Pope Asleep? Benedict XVI Appears To Sleep During Malta Mass"
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I bet you thought I was going to let this story go away. Haha!

Here's a little bit about "El Papa" after he met with Maltese abuse victims and failed to apologize to them. Is this clown for real?

"Pope Asleep? Benedict XVI Appears To Sleep During Malta Mass" by Huffington Post

June 18, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/18/pope-asleep-benedict-xvi_n_542216.html#s82151)

He wouldn't be the first person to fall asleep in church, though he's the last one you would expect.

Benedict XVI appeared to nod off during a Sunday mass in Malta, leaving Guido Marini (seated to his right) no other option but to poke the Pope. Perhaps that's in the job description for Marini, the Master of Pontifical Liturgical Celebrations.

These photos may not help that asleep-on-the-job image the Pope's been struggling with.



And here's a little story from *The Onion* that, I think, while not serious, manages to put everything into perspective. Haha. Ya gotta love *The Onion*!

"Pope Vows To Get Church Pedophilia Down To Acceptable Levels" by *The Onion*

April 5, 2010, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/pope-vows-to-get-church-pedophilia-down-to-accepta,17201/>)



Pope Benedict XVI explains which types of slow, deliberate touching the church deems inappropriate.

(VATICAN CITY) Calling the behavior shameful, sinful, and much more frequent than the Vatican was comfortable with, Pope Benedict XVI vowed this week to bring the widespread pedophilia within the Roman Catholic Church down to a more manageable level.

Addressing thousands gathered at St. Peter's Square on Easter Sunday, the pontiff offered his "most humble apologies" to abuse victims, and pledged to reduce the total number of molestations by 60 percent over the next five years.

"This is absolutely unacceptable," Pope Benedict said. "It seems a weakening of faith in God has prevented our priests from exercising moderation when sexually abusing helpless minors."

"And let me remind our clergy of the holy vows they all took when they entered the priesthood," he continued. "They should know that they're only allowed one small child every other month."

The pope said he was deeply disappointed to learn that the number of children sexually abused by priests was almost 10 times beyond the allowable limit clearly outlined in church doctrine. Admitting for the first time in public that the overindulgent touching of "tender, tender young flesh" had become a full-blown crisis, the Holy Father vowed to implement new reforms to bring the pedophilia rate back down to five children per 1,000 clergy.

"The truth is there will always be a little bit of molestation—it's simply unavoidable," Vatican spokesperson Rev. Federico Lombardi said. "But the fact that young boys have gotten much more attractive over the past few decades is no excuse for the blatant defiance of church limits that have been in place for centuries."

"The majority of priests don't want to molest kids at all," he added. "But for those who do, we must make sure they're doing it at a reasonable rate."

Following the pope's speech, the Vatican released a statement outlining its plan to reduce pedophilia. Starting next year, specially trained cardinals will make unannounced visits to inspect and observe random churches in order to ensure they are not going beyond diocese-wide molestation caps. The inspector-cardinals will grade each parish based on long, private interviews with altar boys in darkened church basements, and careful observation of priests' sexual activity.

These senior officials will also have the authority to enforce harsh punishments for any clergy member violating his allotment of pedophilia.

"If a priest goes even one child over the limit, there will be hell to pay," said Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops Giovanni Battista Re, explaining the Vatican's new "Three Strikes, You're Out" rule. "After the third offense, the offending priest will immediately be moved to another parish. This will give officials time to investigate the case, and will act as an effective deterrent since it usually takes months for priests to gain the trust of the new children."

As a "goodwill measure," Cardinal Re said all churches will also be required to display a sign next to the altar showing the number of days since the last molestation. [This one is totally cracking me up! —SteveB]

Criticism of the pope's new plan has already begun to emerge from within the Catholic Church itself. Rev. Walter Moore, a pastor at St. Peter's in Chicago, questioned the Vatican's methodology in calculating the molestation rates, saying the church's inconsistent definition of pedophilia may have skewed the numbers.

"Is it technically pedophilia if the child's clothes are fully on the entire time? What if he's asleep when it happens?" Moore said. "It's time we had some clear guidance from Rome on this issue. For instance, the church counts it as one incident regardless of whether the child is molested multiple times by the same individual or by two priests at once. That's just plain wrong."

"Plus, if it's supposed to be a special secret between the priest and the boy, is it even any of the church's business in the first place?" he added. "Maybe Brandon is just trying to get attention."

The Vatican would not release details of the pope's upcoming world tour, in which he plans to clear up any confusion on the matter by personally demonstrating what constitutes molestation. [Too f*cking much! I'm dying! —SteveB]

20100421-02	11:16	Lianne	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 18
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Dear SteveB,

I love the Onion and just how old is the pope?

20100421-03	12:32	Jim	Re: "Burning Salt Water"
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Dear SteveB,

This is a little weird. I need to look some more before I would accept it at face value, but it is curious. And I always have been interested in Stirling engine applications as well. Anyone else seen this "demo"?

[20100421-04](#) 12:48 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 18

Dear Lianne,

The old fraud is 83, but I don't see that as an excuse for sleeping on the job, let alone covering up the abuse of children and enabling more abuse for much of his career.

The ultimate problem, of course, is the same old one. Anyone who thinks they know the mind of God is wrong. It is unknowable in its specifics, by philosophical definition.

All the Church's problems and all the problems of all Western and Middle-East religions are caused by this ultimate fallacy.

The immediate problem, as I've stated before, is the stupid, radical practice of universal celibacy in the Church.

And this Pope thinks he's a philosopher. That's almost as funny as the *Onion* article. And I thought this *Onion* article might be the funniest piece I have ever read. I love the instructional perspective it could surely impart to even the most devout, most lunatic Catholic.

[20100423-01](#) 05:01 SteveB Friendship

Dear SteveG,

Haven't heard from you in a while & was wondering how you are? Are you playing that much golf, or what? haha

And how is Florida? I'm going to try to make a trip to see the kids and grandkids this summer sometime.

Today, it finally turned cold and stormy in the tropics. As I look out all my windows, it seems to be raining hard from every direction at once. How can it do that?

[20100423-02](#) 09:50 SteveB Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland

Here are some really spectacular pictures of the Eyjafjallajokull Volcano's recent eruption in Iceland:

http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2010/04/more_from_eyjafjallajokull.html



[20100423-03](#) 10:37 Bill Re: Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland

Dear SteveB,

Magnificent pictures. Thanks. The eruption in Iceland caused me to remember another Icelandic volcanic event, the January, 1973 eruption on Heimaey in the Vestmannaeyjar. A couple of months later I stopped in Iceland for a few days while en route to Europe. I went together with several other people in the hotel where I was staying in Reykjavik to charter a flight on a small plane to Heimaey, the airstrip there having been uncovered in the two or three months following the eruption. Most of the village, though, was still covered with coarse, black ash, which had caused roofs to collapse and simply covered others wholly. There were still fumaroles venting here and there. All the population had been evacuated shortly after the eruption had occurred. The U. S. Navy, which has or had an air station near Keflavik, had helped prevent the village from being covered with lava by installing pumps and hoses to direct water on the approaching lava and freeze its approach. The village, despite lots of cinder-related damage, was uncovered and revived. The good little harbor and its small fish-processing plant were saved and continue to operate. Several years later, I flew out there again, that second time on a small jet, and saw the completely recovered village and fishing operations.

[20100423-04](#) 11:21 SteveB Re: Photos: Eyjafjallajokull Volcano, Iceland

Dear Bill,

Thanks for the story! I'm pretty sure the 1973 eruption must be the one photographed by a photographer named Pete Turner. Maybe look him up. They were amazing (yes, very, very black!) and inspired me to study photography and dream of being a photographer, but I found out that I'm just not visual in that way. But I still remember the photos and how inspired I was by them. I think they helped develop my love for art of all types.

And I love volcanoes!!!!

20100423-05 11:54 SteveG Re: Friendship

Dear SteveB

We have been traveling again and relocated ourselves to the northwest - Yakima, WA - about 150 miles east of Seattle on the eastern side of the Cascade.

Son and his family are here and we fell in love with a little 5 month old granddaughter - so we moved. Interesting place - high dessert surrounded by hills - between the hills are orchards, vineyards, and fields of hops. Wineries everywhere. Son's back porch faces west, has outdoor speakers, can sit and watch the sunset over the hills and between Mt. Rainier and Mt. Adams while you listen to the blues. Not a bad deal. We have an apartment about a mile away - life is good.

Last played golf August 21, 1967.

Really enjoy your emails.

Kind of interesting the religion thing with the Catholic Church and Islam both messing kids up. Maybe other religions do the same thing - maybe they should lose their tax advantage for a while?

20100423-06 13:06 SteveB Re: Friendship

Dear SteveG,

Good to hear your doing OK. I may also be in Montana a while this summer, but it looks less likely. My wife is still there but moving down here this summer.

Golf—ya...I might have played a round or two as late as the early 70's, but maybe it was the late 60's. How do you remember the exact date? Or joke?

Golf is one of the few things that I am philosophically opposed to. Boy, does that upset some people when I tell them that. F*ck 'em!

I agree with you about the tax break, only it should be permanent. All but charitable work they undertake, which should have to operate separately, like other non-profits. The religious part should be taxed like any other form of advertising/brain-washing.

Take care. Washington is a great state!

20100504-01 08:22 SteveB The U.S. of A.

This quote is from an email I received from my lovely Bolivian wife, Marcela (I call her Marci most of the time). She has studied and lived extensively in both the U.S. and Bolivia, in Montana at this moment.

"Another big mystery: Why do people still criticize the U.S. and capitalism so much? And why all the guilt here? It is obvious that the U.S. is doing better than any other place. It is obvious that capitalism works. Bolivia is a mess [communist wannabes], the U.S. is not. It is like if you were drowning, holding a rotten log, and you saw a strong, big ship full of happy people and you said, "It is wrong to have a strong ship."

Why would people tell themselves those lies? It doesn't make sense."

I love her analogy. Please allow me to expand it a little.

Let's picture every country as some kind of ship at sea. And you have to remember that each ship does more than to symbolize a country at the present moment. The ships represent the entire modern history of each country...its form of government over the years, the creativity and industriousness of its people, its constitution, its good or bad fortune, its natural resources, everything that affects the material side of life, at least.

(This is because culture is difficult to measure or judge and takes so many different forms. Also, culture of any kind has a difficult time flourishing without the material needs of people being satisfied first. Yet it must be admitted that the culture of a country must, somehow, be a very important but mysterious part of its representative ship.)

Now, no one is more aware of the problems that exist in the U.S. than I am. I am saddened by them, disappointed, and worried. And both my wife and I love little Bolivia dearly. But as I look at the world in all honesty and objectivity, both as an outsider and an insider as far as the U.S. is concerned, I have to say that the U.S. is the newest, most modern luxury cruise ship out there. In fact, because of its power, it's almost like the biggest, most luxurious cruise ship combined with the biggest aircraft carrier, but that's difficult to picture.

There are quite a few other luxury cruise ships out there, but they tend to be a little smaller and older. Some of them are in pretty poor states or repair, like Greece. Others, like Germany, are looking pretty good.

Then there are the broken down sailboats one sees in the harbors of the world that are dead tired and no longer equipped for the open sea. Their bottoms are covered in algae. They go nowhere. I'm not sure if any countries are "rotten logs", but there are definitely rag-tag pirate ships like North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, etc. And there is every kind of ship in between.

And many people seem to want to jump whatever ship they're on and try to get on the luxury liner that is the U.S.

But doesn't even that great ship reach a point where it can hire no more crew? Where there are no more cabins for additional passengers? Where the kitchens can't produce enough food, and people are sleeping all over the decks?

And since any ship leaks and can be sunk, can't even the grandest be overloaded to the sinking point? And since it is the lives of our children and grandchildren which could be lost, doesn't there come a time to stand up with pride and say simply, "No more, please!"?

Personally, I applaud Arizona for, alone, having the balls to stand up and say, "No! We will enforce the law that exists in every single country on earth, and is enforced in every single country on earth except here in the U.S."

If you feel guilty about that, if you feel that somehow intrudes on someone's "rights," then I feel truly sorry for you and for our great nation.

20100504-02 10:23 Jim Curiosity & Reincarnation

Dear SteveB,

I was curious about the #808 in your signature... Does that mean there are 807 previous clones? or incarnations?

20100504-03 11:52 SteveB Re: Curiosity & Reincarnation

Dear Jim,

Jeez, I hope not. Though as a part-time Buddhist I guess I'm supposed to believe in that, but it seems like more wishful thinking to me. But I hope so.

I think it's so easy to get hope and belief and faith mixed up in our brains. But that's just me.

Actually, it's my condo #. :-)

20100504-04 13:39 BrentR Re: The U.S. of A.

Hear Hear!!!!

Castro, Chavez and Evo would move into the U.S. in a flash of an eye, if they could!!! Actually Evo is pi*sed off because as the leader of the coca growers the U.S. would not give him a visa to enter the U.S.!! However the U.S. has not given

any of them a visa so they all have attitudes against the U.S.!! But every one of them would scramble to jump on the luxury liner, if they were permitted!!!

20100504-05 13:58 GaryF Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear BrentR,

Although I agree with almost all of what SteveB had to say, I seriously doubt any of these 3 would even consider moving to the U.S. For the most part it is only the very poor of Latin America who want to come here, much like it is the only the Africans and eastern Europeans who are illegally migrating to Europe.

20100504-06 14:50 BrentR Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear GaryF,

Please excuse me but you are very wrong!! I am not trying to get in a p*ssing match with you or with anybody!! However I have lived outside of the U.S. for 28 years and have 4 passports full with 2-5 extensions each!! I speak various languages and have lived and worked with people in over 50 countries!! I know how the people are, not just the tourist attractions, 5 star hotels, and Mc Donald's etc!! I also know most of the people who have a hard-on against the U.S. is for some reason or another they were rejected or someone close to them rejected for going to the U.S....however, almost every one of them that would be offered another chance to go would so in a heart-beat!!

Yes the poor people all try to go to U.S. to work and make money, some go to live off the welfare but most are actually hard workers trying to make a buck and make a better life for them and their families!! I know many illegals and legal immigrants in the U.S. I am not saying by no means that I am for the illegals in the U.S. or not!! I also believe like SteveB says there is only so much room and food on the boat!!

However I live in Latin America and I have Lived in Africa and in Asia!! I know both rich and poor!! I have lived and worked and associated with both classes!! The rich I know have almost all have lived in and have studied in the U.S. Most all have houses and bank accounts in the U.S. still and forever!! Almost everybody I know if they had enough money to go anywhere that they could they would all high tail it to the U.S., and many of them would not return!! Many people save and save trying to get the ticket to the U.S.!!!

I also know for a fact that Evo tried desperately to get a visa to go to the states, his sister also tried desperately also to get a visa!! Both of which had they been granted would probably still be living in the U.S.!! Chavez's dream was to be an American Baseball Player however he was not good enough for the cut and was not selected on various attempts!! Have you ever heard Aesop's Fable the Fox and the Grapes??

20100504-07 15:22 Charis Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

I think what people criticize isn't the American lifestyle—many want the lifestyle. What they criticize is how it was obtained. Which is also where the U.S. and European guilt trip comes from.

20100504-08 16:30 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A. & "Two Arizona City Councils Vote to Sue Over New Law"

Dear Charis,

Wow! I find that our little analogy has stirred-up quite a hornet's nest.

Well...I guess I just grow tired of all the America bashing that goes on. It's almost like a giant rising tide of brain washing, caused by jealousy, and maybe called by the name "liberal education".

I don't see any reason for guilt in how anything was obtained. Let's look at history for some answers. Please correct me if I err.

1. We fought a war of independence from the British colonialists to found a country trusting in God, equality, and liberty, regardless of how imperfectly it may have been manifested. We always hold the U.S. to a higher standard, don't we? Justified, but hardly fair. No guilt here.
2. We fought a few other wars maybe not so justified, but seldom fired the first shot. Besides, what country hasn't. Switzerland? Please!
3. I'm not proud of the way we treated the Indians, but this is seldom condemned by anyone, except maybe Evo. This was a grievous error, but what country has not committed errors? The Vatican? Hardly. Again...that higher standard. (Most of the damage, but not most of the betrayal, was caused by diseases no one even knew the cause of.)
4. We fought one of the bloodiest wars the world has ever seen to end slavery. I'm not proud of slavery, but I feel no guilt. I, and most Americans, had ancestors who sacrificed their lives to end it. Even Jesus never explicitly condemned slavery. Mohammed said only to treat your slaves well. Slavery still exists in many African, Mid-East, and Eastern countries. The U.S. has very little and we seek to punish these rare criminals. Even the Jews condoned slavery after having allegedly been slaves themselves. God seems to be silent on the matter. The U.S. is not.
5. We fought three world wars to save the world, at great cost to us: WWI, WWII, and the Cold War.
6. We have striven greatly to be a "Nation Under God" but that is now highly criticized.
7. We have striven greatly not to be a colonial power, unlike every other powerful nation the world has ever seen. We didn't even take Iraq's oil, even after Donald Trump strongly suggested it.
8. We grew rich because of the hard work and creativity of our people and the luck of the draw. I feel no guilt or shame about that and neither should anyone else. America's wealth was not obtained in any way, shape, or form the way Europe's was...on the backs of colonies.
9. We have opened our doors and our pocketbooks to the world, probably to the detriment of the future of America and of our children and grandchildren. The balance of payments deficit, which has existed almost my entire lifetime, documents the billions of dollars we ship overseas each month. "Fair trade" and "free trade" exist to be fair to others, not to America.
10. We seem to always be ready to help, and reticent to plunder. And we actually do help. Big time!

Because others are jealous is no reason to feel shame or guilt. We have many things to improve. We have a system of government that money has corrupted in a terrible way. We don't take care of our own. We seem to have lost much of our will and way. But we are still the greatest nation the world has ever seen and the only nation I have ever know in history to actually strive for good. We have much to fix. Much to feel proud of. We have no time and no cause for shame or guilt. We are the light of the world and we must make it shine ever brighter.

Below is the latest insanity from Arizona. Thank you all for contributing to the discussion.

"Two Arizona City Councils Vote to Sue Over New Law" by Felicia Fonseca, AP

May 5, 2010, (http://www.wane.com/dpps/news/national/west/2-arizona-city-councils-vote-to-sue-over-new-law-jgr_3343918)

(FLAGSTAFF) The Tucson and Flagstaff city councils voted Tuesday to sue Arizona over its tough new immigration law, citing concerns about enforcement costs and negative effects on the state's tourism industry.

They are the first municipalities in Arizona to approve legal challenges to the law. Earlier this week, proposed litigation in Phoenix took a hit when the city attorney said Mayor Phil Gordon lacks the authority to file suit without the support of the City Council.

The new state law requires local and state law enforcement officers to question people about their immigration status if there is reason to suspect they're in the country illegally. The Flagstaff City Council voted unanimously in favor of a resolution that says it's an unfunded mandate to carry out the responsibilities of the federal government. Its Tuesday night meeting drew a crowd that initially numbered in the hundreds but dwindled significantly as the night wore on.

The council will retain legal counsel and could either pursue its own lawsuit or join Tucson or other cities in efforts to fight the immigration bill.

It also is considering setting up a legal defense fund to which many in the audience said they would contribute.

"This new bill has the power to make a criminal out of me for helping my family and friends," said Flagstaff resident Loretta Velasco. "I will not turn my back on them, so whatever I can do, I will do."

The few who spoke in favor of the immigration measure urged the council to let someone else bear the cost of fighting it, and said the law had nothing to do with racial profiling.

Roger Boone said most people agree the immigration system is broken but a "race to the courts" is irresponsible.

"If Tucson is saying in a 5-1 vote it is filing, let them spend their money," he said.

Flagstaff is struggling with a \$12.8 million budget shortfall this fiscal year, and city staff has been cut by 14 percent, including the loss of 13 police positions.

Mayor Sara Presler said she realizes each lawsuit Flagstaff faces for either enforcing or failing to enforce the immigration measure could cost the city in roads, police officers or staff. But she said it's better to be proactive than reactive.

Earlier Tuesday, the Tucson City Council approved a resolution to sue the state, with Councilman Steve Kozachik casting the lone no vote, The Arizona Republic newspaper reported.

Kozachik said he agrees the law is flawed but thinks Arizona needs to "de-escalate the conversation" and filing a lawsuit is not the way.

Other council members argued the cost to enforce the new immigration law will be overly excessive.

Mayor Bob Walkup said the law is based on a misguided notion that illegal immigrants are bad for the area's quality of life and economy. He said much of Tucson's economy is derived from Mexican tourists who come to vacation and shop, the Republic reported.

In Phoenix, the mayor had said he would proceed with a legal challenge to the law after failing to gather enough support from the City Council. But a legal opinion issued Monday by Phoenix City Attorney Gary Verburg said only the City Council has the power to authorize lawsuits.

Four lawsuits challenging the law were filed last week by the National Coalition of Latino Clergy and Christian Leaders, a Washington-based researcher who plans to visit Arizona and two police officers, one from Phoenix and the other from Tucson. The officers filed the lawsuit as individuals and weren't challenging the law on behalf of their employers.

20100504-09	17:08	Dick	Re: The U.S. of A.
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Dear SteveB,

RIGHT ON!!!!!!!!!!!!!! My friend. I will go one step further. The old practice of anchor babies must be stopped. The beautiful lady that stands in NY Harbor symbolizes what we are all about but it must be done "LEGALLY FOLLOWING A PROCESS THAT PREVIOUS IMMIGRANTS HAD TO ENDURE". They need to be sponsored so they don't go on the dole & what about vaccinations. I could go on & on about this issue. The state of Arizona did the right thing. The next thing we

need to do is get the freeloaders on welfare in this country back to work. I think some of the disability pensions out there are another area that needs to be looked at.

[20100504-10](#) 17:16 Charis Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

I don't agree that the U.S. should feel guilt either. I just see that the U.S. and Europe are motivated by guilt and allow themselves to be manipulated by it—especially Europe because the South American nations manipulate them into feeling bad for being the primary consumers of most of the world's resources (i.e.: Americans eat 60% of all the beef in the world, for example) and being the primary contaminators of the earth (the U.S. has been, for most of the past 4-5 decades in top spot for contaminator, but is soon be edged out by China and/or Brazil and/or a couple other countries) but it's pretty much this that people hate the U.S. for. I'm not saying I agree. It's just what people from other nations think. But it's an interesting discussion. Personally I think pretty much the same as you. It's mostly envy.

[20100504-11](#) 17:18 Charis Re: The U.S. of A.

I'm pretty mad about illegal aliens demanding "rights" too. Don't know what would happen if Americans decided they should demand their rights in Mexico, for example. I'm personally glad Arizona passed the law.

[20100504-12](#) 17:43 SteveG Re: The U.S. of A.

A couple of years ago we were spending the weekend in Indianapolis. Met a nice young man working as a bellhop at the Marriott. He said he was from Senegal, went to college and graduated in France and then came to the U.S. It seemed strange to me, but he answered straight up "opportunity". Went out for breakfast the next morning, met a nice young lady with an unusual first name for Indiana and an accent—she was the hostess. She said she was from Senegal, went to college in France and graduated, and then came to the U.S. for "opportunity". The 2 did not know each other. Must be something to it.

[20100504-13](#) 17:55 Brent R Re: The U.S. of A.

Hear Hear!!!! That's what I was trying to explain to Gary!! I am not saying EVERYBODY wants to go and live in the U.S., but I bet you if you gave everybody in the world the chance 99.9 % of them would go and large % of them would stay legally or illegally!! Unless maybe if they are French!!!

[20100504-14](#) 18:34 GaryF Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear BrentR,

BULLSH*T !!!

[20100504-15](#) 18:35 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear BrentR and GaryF,

Well, this has turned into quite a lively discussion. [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20100504-16](#) 19:27 BrentR Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

I really did like your analogy about the boats!!! [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Dear GaryF,

Sorry if you are getting a bit frustrated on the subject!! I am not sure how we are going to settle this one way or another!!

But I am sure someone here can pull us up some statistics about which country has the most immigrants legal and illegal, also the statistics of which country has the longest waiting list for visas, and while we are at it which consulates have the longest lines outside of people waiting in long lines to try their luck at getting a visa!! And maybe the country that rejects more visas every year than any other!! Can you tell one other country that has so many hordes of people trying to get in????

France, I am sure, would come in second as they have held the doors open for a long time and are full of Africans and Middle Easterners who would not even of had a chance to get into the U.S. usually because it was an additional expense to get there. All the French friends I have are getting tired of the huge swarms of immigrants there living off the French welfare system. But most of those immigrants also would go to the U.S. if they had their choice!!

But I would be the first to admit that America is not the America it was 30 or 40 years ago!! It is turning more and more into a police state then a free state, many of the freedoms and rights that our forefathers had are now gone!!!! And I personally have no desire to ever live there again, and probably never will!! But people are still swarming the borders trying to get in and stay in!!! The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence!!

But hell, GaryF, if you are ever in the neighborhood it would be great to have a cold one with you!! Hell, I will even invite you out for a BBQ!!! It would be a great debate!!

Bonne Chance Mon Ami

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

IF YOU CROSS THE NORTH KOREAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU GET 12 YEARS HARD LABOR.

IF YOU CROSS THE IRANIAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU ARE DETAINED INDEFINITELY.

IF YOU CROSS THE AFGHAN BORDER ILLEGALLY, YOU GET SHOT.

IF YOU CROSS THE SAUDI ARABIAN BORDERILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE JAILED.

IF YOU CROSS THE CHINESE BORDERILLEGALLY YOU MAY NEVER BE HEARD FROM AGAIN.

IF YOU CROSS THE VENEZUELAN BORDERILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE BRANDED A SPY AND YOUR FATE WILL BE SEALED.

IF YOU CROSS THE CUBAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE THROWN INTO POLITICAL PRISON TO ROT.

BUT...IF YOU CROSS THE U.S. BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU GET:

- A JOB,
- DRIVERS LICENSE
- SOCIAL SECURITY CARD
- WELFARE
- FOOD STAMPS
- CREDIT CARDS
- SUBSIDIZED RENT OR A LOAN TO BUY A HOUSE
- FREE EDUCATION
- FREE HEALTH CARE
- A LOBBYIST IN WASHINGTON

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS PRINTED IN YOUR LANGUAGE
THE RIGHT TO CARRY YOUR COUNTRY'S FLAG WHILE YOU PROTEST THAT YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH RESPECT
AND, IN MANY INSTANCES, YOU CAN VOTE.

ALL PAID FOR BY WORKING PEOPLES' TAXES! (IT'S NOT GOVERNMENT MONEY, IT'S TAX PAYER'S MONEY.)

20100505-01 00:24 BrentR Re: The U.S. of A.

GaryF,

I just wanted to make one more comment for the moment about a comment that you made!!

And I quote you," I seriously doubt any of these 3 would even consider moving to the U.S. For the most part it is only the very poor of Latin America who want to come here, much like it is the only the Africans and eastern Europeans who are illegally migrating to Europe."

As we were talking about Fidel, Chavez and Evo!! You are probably right that none of these 3 would like to come to America now!!! But prior to their takeovers of office every one of them would have come to the U.S. and live the American Dream!! As they were all poor prior to their takeovers!! Now They all live like Yankee Imperialist Pigs that they despise so much!! Fine Wines, \$400 bottles of Whiskey, Cuban Cigars, Luxury Autos, Private Planes \$10,000 Custom Made Suits, Huge Mansions and Properties!! But look at how they have really f*cked up all of the rights for the people that elected them into office! 10 years after Chavez has been president!!!! Where do the poor people live now???? I will tell you !!! In the same pig sty they lived in 10 years ago!!! There is no freedom of speech, freedom of press, no meat, milk eggs, rice, coffee, sugar in the stores even if you have money!!! What about Evo in Bolivia "GAS FOR THE BOLIVIANOS"!!!! Now there is not even bottled gas in Bolivia to cook with!!! No diesel for the tractors to plant or harvest with!!

Ok again I am going on a rampage!!!

20100505-02 01:06 Marci Re: The U.S. of A.

Thank you all for the interesting debate. The U.S. fascinates the entire world. It must be in human nature to admire and want to be like the biggest, most powerful, most successful one. Everybody wants to see, to touch, to experience this phenomenal Country. In the past, it was Rome. Till these days, there is the expression "All roads lead to Rome". Everything, including success, has a price though . In your case, it is to be invaded by people from all over. The good thing is that that price can be controlled. As for the luxurious cruise getting too crowded. I wouldn't be so worried. That's what Americans are best at, solving problems. I am sure they will find the way to solve the illegal immigration problem, or whatever other problem they have like the shipping of jobs to China to name one.

As for the choices people have. There is nothing more interesting and stimulating than an international marriage. The relationship is amazingly complicated, but also fun and worth it, just unlike any other. In addition, as a bonus, you get to enjoy the two places. It is really nice.

Love y'all. (I learned English in Alabama)

20100505-03 07:39 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

I love the debate too! Why are we so afraid to enforce our own laws? That seems much more like a Third World country where the police spend their time hiding out in the police stations. What in God's name is wrong if, "officers question people about their immigration status if there is reason to suspect they're in the country illegally."

We are too shy as a nation to do that? Amazing to me! Racial profiling? Who cares! If you're legal and went through the lengthy and expensive legal immigration process, like my wife did, then you would be proud to show you have a right to be here.

Remember. Mexico has some of the toughest immigration laws in the world and they enforce them!

Authenticated by: http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/government/a/sylvia_allen.htm.

"I Want to Explain Why SB 1070 Is Needed" by Arizona State Senator Sylvia Allen

May 1, 2010, (<http://bsimmons.wordpress.com/2010/05/01/i-want-to-explain-why-sb-1070-is-needed-by-arizona-state-senator-sylvia-allen/>)

I'm Arizona State Senator Sylvia Allen. I want to explain SB 1070 which I voted for and was just signed by Governor Jan Brewer.

Rancher Rob Frantz was murdered by the drug cartel on his ranch a month ago. I participated in a senate hearing two weeks ago on the border violence, here is just some of the highlights from those who testified.

The people who live within 60 to 80 miles of the Arizona/Mexico Border have for years been terrorized and have pleaded for help to stop the daily invasion of humans who cross their property . One Rancher testified that 300 to 1200 people a DAY come across his ranch vandalizing his property, stealing his vehicles and property, cutting down his fences, and leaving trash. In the last two years he has found 17 dead bodies and two Koran bibles.

Another rancher testified that, daily, drugs are brought across his ranch in a military operation. A point man with a machine gun goes in front, 1/2 mile behind are the guards fully armed, 1/2 mile behind them are the drugs, behind the drugs 1/2 mile are more guards. These people are violent and they will kill anyone who gets in the way. This was not the only rancher we heard that day that talked about the drug trains.

One man told of two illegal's who came upon his property one shot in the back and the other in the arm by the drug runners who had forced them to carry the drugs and then shot them. Daily they listen to gun fire during the night it is not safe to leave his family alone on the ranch and they can't leave the ranch for fear of nothing being left when they come back.

The border patrol is not on the border. They have set up 60 miles away with check points that do nothing to stop the invasion. They are not allowed to use force in stopping anyone who is entering. They run around chasing them, if they get their hands on them then they can take them back across the border.

Federal prisons have over 35% illegal's and 20% of Arizona prisons are filled with illegal's. In the last few years 80% of our law enforcement that have been killed or wounded have been by an illegal.

The majority of people coming now are people we need to be worried about. The ranchers told us that they have seen a change in the people coming they are not just those who are looking for work and a better life.

The Federal Government has refused for years to do anything to help the border states . We have been over run and once they are here we have the burden of funding state services that they use. Education cost have been over a billion dollars. The healthcare cost billions of dollars. Our State is broke, \$3.5 billion deficit and we have many serious decisions to make. One is that we do not have the money to care for any who are not here legally. It has to stop.

The border can be secured. We have the technology we have the ability to stop this invasion. We must know who is coming and they must come in an organized manner legally so that we can assimilate them into our population and protect the sovereignty of our country. We are a nation of laws. We have a responsibility to protect our citizens and to protect the integrity of our country and the government which we live under.

I would give amnesty today to many, but here is the problem, we dare not do this until the Border is secure. It will do no good to forgive them because thousands will come behind them and we will be over run to the point that there will no longer be the United States of America but a North American Union of open borders. I ask you what form of government will we live under? How long will it be before we will be just like Mexico , Canada or any of the other Central American or South American countries? We have already lost our language, everything must be printed in Spanish also. We have already lost our history it is no longer taught in our schools. And we have lost our borders.

The leftist media has distorted what SB 1070 will do. It is not going to set up a Nazi Germany . Are you kidding. The ACLU and the leftist courts will do everything to protect those who are here illegally, but it was an effort to try and stop illegal's from setting up businesses, and employment, and receiving state services and give the ability to local law enforcement when there is probable cause like a traffic stop to determine if they are here legally. Federal law is very clear if you are here on a visa you must have your papers on you at all times. That is the law. In Arizona all you need to show you are a legal citizen is a driver license, MVD identification card, Native American Card, or a Military ID. This is what you need to vote, get a hunting license, etc.. So nothing new has been added to this law. No one is going to be stopped walking down the street etc... The Socialist who are in power in DC are angry because we dare try and do something and that something the Socialist wants us to do is just let them come. They want the "Transformation" to continue.

Maybe it is too late to save America . Maybe we are not worthy of freedom anymore. But as an elected official I must try to do what I can to protect our Constitutional Republic . Living in America is not a right just because you can walk across the border. Being an American is a responsibility and it comes by respecting and upholding the Constitution the law of our land which says what you must do to be a citizen of this country. Freedom is not free.

[20100505-05](#) 07:53 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.: "2009 UN 'Human Development' Report"

2009 UN "Human Development" Report:

<http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.

Norway is #1, Iceland #3...ya, people are just dying to get into those countries and freeze! haha The U.S. is 13th [because of the unreasonable prejudices, guilt, and shame of which we speak], Uruguay is 50th, St. Lucia is 69th, the smuggling state of Paraguay is 101st, and Bolivia is right down there with the African countries at 113th, just ahead of Mongolia (at least Bolivia beat Haiti, which was 149th). Although, the reasons that Bolivia is 113th are largely the things which endear her to me.

[20100505-06](#) 07:55 Charis Re: The U.S. of A.

Really, what's so wrong about it? The police can stop us foreigners here in Bolivia just to see if we have papers. They might pick someone who looks foreign. Logical. No problem, U.S., Bolivia, or anywhere.

See: <http://www.boliviabella.com/carry-your-identification-at-all-times.html>.

[20100505-07](#) 08:46 Bill Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Marci,

I admire your graceful observations—and your English.

Without question the E.U. is a fabulous country—today's Rome—with bountiful economic opportunity and a decent government. I agree with you in that entry must be controlled. Favorable conditions cannot be maintained, if we are overrun.

[20100505-08](#) 09:13 Mark Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

Gotta admit Steve.....don't always agree with you.....but with this issue I am in total agreement.....

[20100505-09](#) 08:41 Mark Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power

The area around Fowler IN is now peppered with hundreds of the newest wind powered generators.....my friend JimR says it's called the Fowler Ridge.....

20100507-01 01:04 Marissa Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

Wow! This is definitely becoming a heated debate! I would like to quote SNL's Weekend Update on this matter:

"This week Arizona signed the toughest illegal immigration law in the country, which would allow the police to demand identification papers from anyone they suspect is in the country illegally. I know there are some people in Arizona worried that Obama is acting like Hitler, but can we all agree that there's nothing more Nazi than saying, 'Show me your papers?'

"There's never been a WWII movie that didn't include the line, 'Show me your papers.' It's their catchphrase. Every time someone says 'Show me your papers,' Hitler's family gets a residual check. So heads up Arizona, that's fascism. I know, I know, it's a dry fascism, but it's still fascism."

First...I apologize for my idealistic, hippie comments in advance!

On a more serious note.....One of my best friends in the world is from Peru. Her parents came here on a Visa when she was 3 years old and they never left. Now she is almost 24, hardly speaks Spanish and has never stepped outside the border of the U.S. This is because she is still not a citizen. If she left the states, even just for Spring Break, she would not be allowed back in. She does not have a driver's license, did not go to college and only has had jobs that would allow her to work without a valid Social Security #.

This has been her life because she is petrified of someone saying, "show me your papers". This is her county... this is her home! And she is a talented artist and one of the most amazing people I know. She got married a few years ago, but still has not been granted citizenship or a green card. Forced to get married before 21....and she's a lesbian for crying out loud!!

We are all just humans trying to get by and provide for our families. If I were in a poor Latin American country, I would want to run away for better opportunities in the U.S. just like my friend's parents did all those years ago. If you were living in a poor country with limited opportunities, you would want to come here too. And you would be terrified out of your mind right now with the passing of this law.

I get what you all are saying about the boat and the resources and everything. If people really cared that much about our resources, they would be supporting funds that go toward alternative energy and not offshore drilling. Which we all know is pretty much f*cking up (for lack of a better phrase) a whole slew of our plant and animal life every day as we speak! On the subject of resources, an acre of land can grow 40,000 potatoes, but can only raise 250 lbs. of beef. People don't want to give up their precious steak or stop driving their cars to the grocery store that's a block away. And they certainly don't want to share the wealth and opportunities in this country with these Aliens! GASP!

My friend is not an alien, she is a human! We made these borders, not our creator!

And now...lyrics by Michael Franti:

I don't need a passport to walk on this Earth,
Anywhere I go, because I'm made of this Earth,
I was born of this Earth,
I breath of this Earth,
And even with the pain, I believe in this Earth.

Every bit of land is Holy Land,
every drop of water is Holy Water,
And every single human is a son or a daughter
of the One Earth Mama and the One Earth Papa.

Don't tell a man that he can't come here
because he's got brown eyes and wavy hair.
Don't tell a woman that she can't go there
because she prays to a different kind of God up there.

You say you're a Christian, because God made you.
You say you're a Muslim, because God made you.
You say you're a Hindu and the next man's a Jew,
so let's all kill each other, because God told us to. Nah!!!

I would like to add that although many other countries may throw us in jail or kill us for entering. This IS America and we have to set the example. To the world and to our children. Why should we follow the rest of the world in hatred.

Of course, you can tell, that I would love it if there were no borders at all. But I understand that this would be nearly impossible. It may never happen. But really what I am saying here...is that this "Show Me Your Papers" Law is just ludicrous!

20100507-02 02:03 Charis Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Marissa,

Sylvia Allen writes "Freedom is not free" and I agree. We had to pay a huge price for the country we have. Anyone else who wants a piece of it should have to make some effort don't you think? Like maybe getting legal papers to enter? Just sayin'...

20100507-03 09:36 Ben Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power

Dear Mark,

As you probably know, that's a very open area, south of the glacier lake belt, and north of the woodlands and ravines.

It's also Janice Query's hometown.

Go, Fowler!

Susette and I see vast farms of windmills in northwest Texas, as we pass through the Lubbock area on our way to New Mexico. It's a little weird. Seems like alien construction, reminiscent of War of the Worlds. Just a little spooky.

Interesting, too, that they don't appear to be the massive hazard to birds that environmental activists had feared. I'm sure some get whacked; heck, windows take a toll on avian life, even. But I haven't heard anything about piles of dead birds at the bases of windmills yet.

One thing upon which one might reflect: there's no free energy, at least not until we learn how to extract it from the background energy, or make fusion work. So the question arises: once we have enough windmills to meet the energy demands of present and future civilization... will the earth's rotational rate diminishment increase measurably...? Seems like that would be an inevitable consequence, with all those air brakes in operation. And how much rotational diminishment would be necessary to whack our axis, screw up the electrical nature of the atmosphere, and so forth... and how about biological consequences of a steadily lengthening day?

20100507-04 09:39 Clark Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB and Marissa,

I gotta go with Marissa on this debate. Steve, I think you've raised a terrific daughter.

20100507-05 10:50 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Marissa,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

And I am not one to side with government, law, or the police, but on this issue I must. I've seen the terrible results in Latin America of laws and constitutions on the books not being enforced, while the police hide in their stations, or come out so pi*sed to be bothered that they start shooting. The result is that there is no respect for the law. People have to have walls around their houses, bars on their windows, and guards posted on every block. Every large store and bank has at least one guard just outside the front door holding a loaded sawed-off shotgun or machine gun. No diversion!

If we aren't going to enforce a law, it should be changed. But unchecked immigration would be the death of the U.S. as we know it. It would become like all these Third World Latin American countries that I love, but would not wish upon anyone. Know what I mean?

There is a perfectly fine, not simple, but not overly difficult legal immigration process in place in the U.S. That is what Marci and Saul did. That's what millions do. Why not everyone? Illegal immigration is not fair to those people who follow the law. The law helps keep out people that, believe me, you would not want living next door to you, like the Mexican slave traders and drug lords. I'm not exaggerating.

It is fine to have love for people and to take positions based on love. But surely we can love people, yet hope that they stay in their perfectly fine countries and strive to make them better, instead of running off to the U.S.

I feel sorry for your friend, but I don't understand why she or her parents did not take advantage of either of the two very generous amnesty programs that have transpired during her life here. That is their fault and no one else's. She could still become a legal immigrant, then a U.S. citizen. If she is afraid to do that, she should consult an immigration lawyer who will set her straight as to the process. If she married an American for that reason, why didn't she do it then?

Every country in the world has immigration laws. There is nothing wrong with people wanting to maintain their own cultures, us included. There is no hatred in that, only love of one's native culture. We are taught to respect Indian culture, for example, and taught that it was wrong not to do that. Why then would we not recognize that America has a cultural identity of its own too? And it must be a culture the world loves, because look at the way they flock to our shores.

Every other country enforces their laws, why can't we? Try to emigrate to St. Lucia, Mexico, or Bolivia and you will see what I mean.

20100507-06 11:01 SteveB Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power & from the "Manifesto of the Church of Steve"

Dear Mark and Ben,

It's really too late
Billions are already doomed.
So as we used to say
Hey hey live for today!
—from the "Manifesto of the Church of Steve"

20100507-07 11:06 Clark Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

I don't disagree with you about the need to enforce immigration laws—just about Arizona's in particular, which (while I understand the desperation behind it) strikes me as unconstitutional. I'm less concerned about the effect on illegal immigrants as I am on U.S. citizens, who—as Marissa points out—may be required to "show their papers."

That's giving way too much power to government and law enforcement. (I keep thinking about how I'd feel if the problem were Canadians streaming into NY and I had to possibly produce proof of citizenship every time I went out for a walk. There's just too much latitude there for harassment and abuse.) How about a different tack, like making hiring illegal immigrants a felony and enforcing that?

Enjoy your missives!

20100507-08 11:27 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Clark,

Oh, I'm all in favor of that idea, of course.

But I believe we are already at a state where, with the Supreme Court's blessing, any cop with any possible reason (but not with "no reason") can ask for identification information, are we not?

For me, one time in a Rhode Island state park, the reason was simply that I was there in the middle of the day looking for my cat and some fairly distant houses I could barely see had been burglarized recently. I didn't mind. Why would I? I was happy to see them trying to do their jobs. I am an incredible lover of freedom, but I didn't have any Constitutional issues with their actions in any way.

I don't believe this law changes that. It just extends the same old same old to everybody, including illegal aliens.

20100507-09 11:32 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Charis,

Definitivamente! Same as anywhere else. Europe has sure learned its lesson recently hasn't it?

20100507-10 11:36 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Susette,

Well, she's an Arizona state senator, and I believe you will find that she said every word of it.

<http://tucsoncitizen.com/the-cholla-jumps/2010/05/01/state-senator-sylvia-allenresponds-to-sb1070/>

20100507-11 11:46 Clark Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

We'll have to see how it plays out. The law was amended a bit after initial passage to make it less draconian. My guess, though, is that most AZ cops don't like it at all. Too vague, among other things. But if it's enforced fairly—a big if—and only when someone has been reasonably suspected of breaking a law, it will probably be OK. The best thing that may come out of it is a realization that we need comprehensive reform on a national level, but that's unlikely to happen in an election year.

20100507-12 11:52 Ben Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Marissa,

Bravo!

I'm an old friend of your Dad and Mom; it was your parents, and meeting Laurel as a baby, that softened me to the whole idea of having kids of my own some day. (I have a 22 year old son and a daughter getting close to 20.)

I know we've met but I am pretty sure you wouldn't remember me; any encounter would have been brief. But I am so very glad that your folks raised you to be the person that you are.

[20100507-13](#) 12:41 Dennis Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Marissa, Clark, Ben, and SteveB,

I'm with Clark. Marissa's eloquence and reasoning are impressive.

[20100507-14](#) 12:45 SteveB Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear Dennis, Clark, Ben, and Marissa,

Damn! I'm starting to get outnumbered here! What can I say? She's also beautiful!

[20100507-15](#) 12:49 Ben Re: The U.S. of A.

Dear SteveB,

I wasn't picking on you, but I have to say I sort of drop down on her side. I see so many Mexican workers here every day, who are honest, earnest workers that really DO contribute to our wellbeing. Many are well-educated, too, although there are of course some who are not.

You did well with Marissa.

I see your point, and agree that something needs to change, too, but I don't think stopping people on the street because the look Mexican is a good solution for the U.S.

[20100507-16](#) 12:55 BobK Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power

Dear Ben,

Gee, I hate be the physics geek, but I think the rotation of the earth is safe from windmills.

The energy source for the wind is the sun, the wind just moves the heat energy around.

Windmills are just another way of tapping into solar energy...

[20100507-17](#) 13:07 SteveB Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power

Dear Mark, Ben, and BobK,

But couldn't all those windmills eventually stop the wind, which would stop the earth's rotation, which would plunge the earth into the sun, which would in turn give us too much energy, just before blowing up the sun? And then we'd have a really big problem!

[20100507-18](#) 13:22 Ben Re: Fowler Ridge, Indiana Wind Power

Dear SteveB,

Uh, I don't think that stopping the Earth's rotation on its axis, even entirely, would in and of itself cause any change in its orbit around the sun; after all, its inertial mass will not have changed, nor will its distance from the sun, or will have the gravity of either body.

So, no: we'll still be in orbit.

And of course, the likelihood of drag on the surface layer of the atmosphere, even though it is the densest layer, causing a complete stop, even in geologic time.

But it is certain that a whole lot of windmills would cause SOME drag. Can't get away from that. And at some point, the drag would have an effect. How long before it would be discernible, and what would its effects be? That's my question.

I would have made some comic a great straight man. (I know you know all this.)

20100507-19 13:35 Bill Re: The U.S. of A.

If not strongly, I came down on the other side, but I must give credit to Marissa for her arguments.

20100507-20 18:27 India "GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster"

"GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster" by Rady Ananda, Global Research

May 5, 2010, (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=18988>)

Governments around the world have proposed biofuels, liquid fuels derived from plants, fungi or algae, as a solution to today's energy and environmental crises. But this alternative is as bad as, or worse, than fossil fuels.

Reasons to reject biofuels include:

- Loss of farmland for fuel land, increasing food prices and world hunger.
- Deforestation and conversion of prairie to cropland, causing a net increase in greenhouse gases.
- Increased reliance on eco-destructive pesticides.
- Proliferation of dangerous genetically modified crops.

ActionAid, I-SIS, and others, have produced in-depth reports linking biofuels to increased food prices, increased greenhouse gases thru land use changes, and loss of income for local communities.

These reasons alone are sufficient to deem biofuels a poor alternative to fossil fuels. However, the last two bulleted items raise more grave concerns.

Genetically modified corn, cane, beet, and oil seeds like soy, rapeseed, and palm oil (among other biota) are used to produce biofuels. They require "intensive" chemical inputs with far-ranging consequences for humans, Earth's pollinators, and for the environment.

GM crops have been linked to organ damage and reproductive failure in mammals, and sudden death in plants. They are also linked to the catastrophic bee die-off occurring in the U.S. and elsewhere.

GM crops contaminate natural species, destroy biodiversity and bankrupt farmers who then cannot sell to a No-GMO market. Biotech giants admit they cannot prevent contamination of natural fields.

Further, GM crops fail to yield as promised. "After more than 20 years of research and 13 years of commercialization," the Union of Concerned Scientists reports, "we conclude that GE has done little to increase overall crop yields." When promised yields didn't materialize in India, many farmers — indeed, whole families — committed suicide.

The Organic Center found that "GE crops have been responsible for an increase of 383 million pounds of herbicide use" in the U.S. from 1996 thru 2008. Weed resistance to these chemicals has skyrocketed. Resistant horseweed, ragweed and pigweed are ruining fields.

Terrifying for the biosphere, pesticides cause mass die-offs. Yale Environment 360 noted that, "three new diseases have decimated populations of amphibians, honeybees, and — most recently — bats. Increasingly, scientists suspect that low-level exposure to pesticides could be contributing to this rash of epidemics."

The 100-year experiment in chemical farming is a radical departure from 10,000 years of sustainable agriculture. Chemical farming has proven its failure to humanity and ecosystems. When chemical companies get into the ag business, they aim to sell chemicals. You know a tree by its fruit. Monsanto (Agent Orange, Vietnam), Dow (DDT, Bhopal), and Bayer (Zyklon B, Nazi camps) plan to increase the use of pesticides and biotechnology globally. They must be stopped.

If their history isn't enough cause for alarm, these biotech firms suppress independent scientific study. In Nature Biotechnology, Emily Waltz noted that the industry's "reluctance to share its products with scientists ... is fueling the view that companies have something to hide."

We can have little confidence in an industry that secretly foisted GM crops onto the world while banning independent investigation into potential harm. Waltz reports that so few papers turned up when one researcher reviewed the literature for toxicity studies on commercialized GM crops, that he asked, "Where is the scientific evidence showing that GM plants/food are toxicologically safe?"

A more logical and far saner and safer solution for the energy and environmental crises we face today is to develop programs that reduce energy consumption:

- Expand mass transportation.
- Buy local, and support community gardens and farmers markets.
- Enable the four-day work week.
- Restore public ownership of mass media which thrives on consumerism.
- End biotech subsidies.

We need to shift the entire Western culture toward living simply, in harmony with nature. Instead of finding new fuel, let's use less.

20100507-21	19:30	SteveB	Re: "GM Biofuels: Another Planned Disaster" & "5 Companies Making Fuel from Algae Now"
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Dear India,

I agree completely that using food, like corn, to make fuel is a really stupid idea that raises the price of food for everybody.

But there are some very promising projects using algae that look very good. The algae "eat" carbon dioxide, sometimes from coal burning plants, and produce oxygen as well as fuel. Normally the algae is contained in some sort of bioreactor. There are problems with any form of energy production. It's a very difficult problem, but biofuel surely has to be one of the interim solutions before we get to fusion.

"5 Companies Making Fuel From Algae Now" by Jeremy Jacquot, *Popular Mechanics*

Oct. 13, 2009 (<http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/energy/biofuel/4333722>)



(Algae is now a burgeoning sector in biofuels with several high-profile start-ups. Here are 5 projects leading the pack today.)

Ubiquitous and easy to grow, algae has long been a promising biomass-to-fuel candidate in the eyes of researchers. Now algae is a burgeoning sector in biofuels with several high-profile start-ups, including Craig Venter's Synthetic Genomics, and the interest of big-time investors like Bill Gates and ExxonMobil. Of course, hurdles still exist to make a competitive fuel. Algal biofuels still cost too much to produce—over \$8 a gallon (pdf), according to the DOE. Furthermore, most existing strains do not yield oil in the quantities needed to quickly scale up to commercial production of biofuels. Companies also need to worry about contaminating local ecosystems and the amount of water needed to grow cultures in large batches. Despite these challenges inroads—and actual fuel—are being made in the nascent field. Here are 5 projects leading the pack today.

1. Algenol Biofuels

The Project — \$850 million committed to build algae farm that sells ethanol fuel for \$3 per gallon

The Location — Sonoran Desert (Mexico)

The Technology — The company's goal is to produce fuel directly from the algae without killing or harvesting the creatures, allowing for a shorter turnaround time to make fuel. The company claims its process lets it make around 6000 gallons per acre per year.

To Market — Production is expected to begin by the end of 2010. Algenol intends to produce 1 billion gallons annually by 2012. They say their production costs will be around 85 cents per gallon.

2. Solix Biofuels

The Project — A demonstration facility that could produce up to 3000 gallons of algal biofuels per acre per year by the end of 2009

The Location — Coyote Gulch, Colo.

The Technology — Solix uses specialized photo-bioreactors in which batches of microalgal cultures are grown in large, closed-growth chambers under controlled light and temperature conditions. The company claims its closed systems can produce up to seven times as much biomass as open-pond systems. Once the cultures are fully

grown, their oil is extracted through the use of chemical solvents like benzene or ether. The solvents are mixed into the chambers to separate the oil from the algae, and it is then collected from the surface. Solix is also collaborating with the Los Alamos National Laboratory to use its acoustic-focusing technology to concentrate algal cells into a dense mixture by blasting them with sound waves. Oil can then be extracted from the mixture by squeezing it out; this makes the extraction process much easier and cheaper, obviating the need for chemical solvents.

To Market — Tentatively by the winter of 2009.

3.Sapphire Energy

The Project — A 300-acre integrated algal biorefinery

The Location — Southern New Mexico

The Technology — Sapphire's focus is on "green crude," a liquid that has the same composition as crude oil, and is therefore compatible with existing refineries. The company has already shown that its fuel can be used in cars and even jets. Sapphire has a 100-acre pilot facility near Las Cruces, N.M.

To Market — The plan is to make 1 million gallons of diesel and jet fuel per year by 2011, 100 million by 2018, and 1 billion gallons per year by 2025. There are no figures as of yet for the now-running 300-acre facility.

4.Solazyme

The Project — Along with Sustainable Oils (camelina-based biofuel) and Honeywell subsidiary UOP (biodiesel), Solazyme plans to supply 400,000 gallons of fuel to the Air Force and 190,000 gallons to the U.S. Navy 1500 gallons of jet fuel for the U.S. Navy by 2010.

The Location — South San Francisco

The Technology — Solazyme engineers designer algal cultures using DNA from different strains to maximize oil production and size and grows them in large fermentation vessels before harvesting their oil. It first tested its jet fuel in late 2008.

To Market — Solazyme claims that it is on track to produce over 20,000 gallons of fuel for the Navy by 2010. The company hopes to bring the cost of its fuel down to \$60 to \$80 per barrel within next two to three years.

5.Seambiotic

The Project — 5-hectare commercial plant

The Location — Israel

The Technology — Seambiotic grows microalgal cultures in open ponds using flue gases like carbon dioxide and nitrogen from a nearby coal plant as feedstocks. Its 1000-square-meter facility produces roughly 23,000 grams of algae per day—three tons of algal biomass would yield around 100 to 200 gallons of biofuel. It recently formed a partnership with NASA to optimize the growth rates of its microalgae.

To Market — Up and running since 2003, Seambiotic set up a pilot plant in 2005. Seambiotic expects its commercial plant to be ready by late 2009.

20100507-22 23:48 BrentR Re: The U.S. of A.

Well, well, this has really been fun!! First of all I would like to apologize to GaryF!!! Yes I am sure it is not 99%, but I still hold that it would be a very high number!! There are a lot of Euros who have it almost as good as the Americans have it! All getting fat and sassy and less work more money!! Less Work more benefits!! ETC!! This is coming to an end soon, so enjoy it while it lasts!!

And Marissa had a lot of great thoughts on the subject!! But let's look at immigration just one minute!! One of the reason of the U.S.'s great success in the past was due to immigration!! So many cultures and ideals coming together and the freedom to make those ideals work!! Let's not forget that most of us our grandparents and/or our great grandparents were immigrants to the U.S.!! Most of them (not all) came to this country with not much more then the clothes upon their backs!! Many did very well, some not as well but most did way better than they did back where they came from!!

However, one big difference was most of them went through Ellis Island (or similar) and signed in and most of them applied for citizenship, instead of crossing the Rio Grande under a moonlight night! Although there are many of these illegals that come over and try to live off the free government programs, or live lives of crimes the majority of these people are hard working folks that do the work fat lazy spoiled Americans would never be caught dead doing nowadays!!! I have met many illegals and all are people with red blood beating hearts and feelings just like you and me, with the exception that they were not born into a middle class or high class family as was most of us on this thread!!!!

As for the oil!!! Well I work in the oil business and have for 35 years!! Even though I do work in the biz it does not mean I really support the use of hydrocarbons!!! Yes they are for sure messing up the world at a faster pace in the last 100 hundred years then 10,000 year prior!! However how do we change ??? This is the question!!! It is easy to say stop driving our cars, stop using electricity!! Hummmmm electric cars?? not really because most of the electricity also comes from hydrocarbon generated plants!! Biofuels!! HAHA even worse!! not only does that drive food prices up but the environmental drawbacks are even worse!!

A few years ago I met a girl in Ecuador in a line at the bank waiting to change money!! I obviously knew she was a *gringa*!! So to speak with someone from home was a treat for me and I struck up a conversation!! She told me she was from New York!! She was touring the jungle the mountains and soon going to Galapagos!! She then asked me if I also was a tourist?? I told her no I actually live here in Quito!! "Wow that is so cool, what do you do??" Well I told her I was in the oil business..... you should have seen the look that took over her face!!! "Oh you're one of those guys!!! Destroying the world and the jungle and everything bad that is happening is your fault!!

Well I admitted that I was one of those bad demon guys!! And I am sorry!! I then asked her "How did you get down here??" "Oh we flew on Continental they had a great deal!!" Ah yeah ??? hummmmm so you flew??? Well do you know how much fuel and oil it took to fly your little spoiled a*s down here to Ecuador?? Also you told me you live in New York, I bet it gets cold there!! I bet you have a heater in your house to keep those little buns warm!! Also I bet you have a car!! That takes gasoline and oil to keep it going!! Anyway she thought about it a bit and agreed a bit with me!! I also took her out to our site and showed her the ways that we are trying to take the oil with as little environmental impact as possible!! But truth is guys unfortunately it is big money to a few who control everything and they will fight us tooth and nail to keep us from changing until we all stick together and stand up to them !!! Which I doubt we ever will!!! Because most of us are to comfortable with the way things are!!!

Well I have rattled on long enough again!!

20100508-01	04:22	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 19: "Catholics Sent Predator Priest to Remote Village" & "Pope Accepts Resignation of German Bishop Accused of Abuse"
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I'm just about completely sick of this story, just as I am sick of the Church, itself, but I think just a couple of comments are in order. The Church has proven once and for all what everyone should have already known:

1. It is fully capable of unspeakable evil, then guilty of trying to hide the truth.
2. It is guided solely by men, not by some deity.
3. It can no longer claim some higher moral ground and try to make the rest of us feel guilty or inferior. It can no longer dictate morality as if it had some kind of "hot line" to God. It can be wrong like the rest of us.
4. Gee! Maybe it's even wrong about celibacy, women's rights, gay rights, abortion, birth control, deserving tax free status, divorce, fish on Fridays, etc., etc. Wow! Maybe even the actual words of Christ himself were different than the re-write 100 and more years later, edited by none other than the Church itself!
5. It operates much like the mafia or any other crime family.

6. Gee! If the mighty Church itself can be so wrong, maybe, just maybe, every other charlatan who preaches that he knows the mind of God is also a liar and a fraud. Just maybe.

7. Maybe God is in the hearts of all of us, equally, and all we have to do is know the truth and it will set us free.

People of the world, please wake up! (And join the "Church of Steve". Send those dollars and be saved! haha.) I give you Exhibits 17 and 18 (below).

"Catholics Sent Predator Priest to Remote Village" by Michelle Faul and Carley Petesch, AP

May 8, 2010, (<http://www.newsday.com/news/world/catholics-sent-predator-priest-to-remote-village-1.1901936>)

(MAKANKA, Sierra Leone) A rutted red dirt track leads to the "bar," a couple of homemade wood benches in the shade of an old tree dripping with wild mangoes. Within easy reach, there's a yellow plastic jerry can of the fiery palm wine the American priest loved.

A 40-year-old schoolteacher now charges that the Rev. James Tully gave the palm wine to teenage boys to make them more susceptible to his advances.

This faraway corner of West Africa — with no electricity or piped water — is where the Roman Catholic Church sent Tully, twice. The teacher told The Associated Press that Tully abused him and other boys repeatedly during his first stint in Sierra Leone, from 1979 to 1985. After a conviction in the U.S. for giving minors alcohol and groping them, the church sent Tully back to Sierra Leone for a second stint from 1994 to 1998.

Tully's story is an example of how the church transferred abusive priests from country to country, in a scandal now emerging worldwide. But it also shows the deep reluctance to come out against a Catholic priest in many parts of Africa.

Catholic Archbishop Buti Tlhagale of Johannesburg cautioned this month that the scandals in the church were not particular to the United States and Europe.

"It simply means that the misbehavior of priests in Africa has not been exposed to the same glare of the media as in other parts of the world," Tlhagale said.

The shade and occasional breeze are the only relief from the unrelenting 100-degree (38-degree Celsius) heat matched by 100 percent humidity that has men lifting their shirts to fan bellies and black skin glistening with sweat. The only sound is the chirping of long-billed birds attracted to a nearby rice paddy.

It was in these villages that Tully demanded oral sex, called "lollipopping" in the Krio dialect, the teacher said.

"He would want us to play with his penis, to arouse him; not even to just play with it but to put it in your mouth," said the teacher, who asked to remain anonymous because he works at a Catholic school and fears he could be fired.

Asked if the sex had gone any further, tears welled in the teacher's eyes and he turned away: "I don't want to remember that. After all these years, I still can't talk about it. It makes me hot all over."

Tully would not comment about these accusations when approached by The Associated Press in New Jersey, where he now lives. The Catholic Church says it never received any complaints about Tully's behavior in Sierra Leone.

"No family member or friends or associates of any victim that was sexually abused has come forward to inform or report to me that he has been sexually abused by Father Tully," said Bishop Giorgio Biguzzi of Makeni, who was bishop through all the years Tully was based in his northern diocese.

Such responses do not surprise the Sierra Leonean schoolteacher.

"Who would believe a young village boy over a white priest?" he asked.

He complained about the abuse to his uncle, who had helped bring him up after his father died. "My uncle pleaded with me, asking me if I couldn't 'cope' with this thing since it was the only way for me to get an education."

At least one boy refused to put up with it, according to a police officer from Kamakwei, a northern town near the border with Guinea.

The officer, who asked not to be identified because he is Catholic and fears being shunned by the church, said his cousin and several other youngsters lived in the parish priest's house in Kamalo, where Tully was based in the 1980s.

His cousin lived there for two years with other boys who were receiving scholarships from Tully. The compound was always filled with boys, sometimes playing soccer, and Tully rode around with them on the back of his pickup truck.

That was a familiar sight in many villages, according to more than two dozen people interviewed by the AP. Tully took boys with him on weekend trips to villages where he built up schools and churches, and stayed overnight so he could say Mass on Sundays.

Tully had picked the cousin out as the brightest student in Kamakwie when he was about 14, and told the family he would take care of his education if they let him come to Kamalo. But after two years "(my cousin) ran away and came home. He told us that the priest was always calling him to lie in his bed and urging him to caress him."

The family did nothing, the policeman said, "because we were not sure whether we should believe the boy, and also the status of the man was high." He said Tully was the top-ranking Catholic in the area, and headmasters at Catholic schools there reported to him.

He said his cousin completed his education at the Catholic school in Kamakwie but was killed by rebels during the war.

Tully left Sierra Leone for the United States in 1985. There, a seminarian in Milwaukee, William Nash, accused Tully of abusing him between 1986 and 1988. In 2005, Nash received a \$75,000 out-of-court settlement from the Xaverians, though Tully did not admit to any wrongdoing.

"I had my own experience and I was horrified about it. I'm angry that the church has allowed a man to function in the church in this religious order for 30 years. And that's criminal," Nash told the AP in a telephone interview from his home in western Massachusetts.

In the early 1990s, Tully also was accused of escorting three teenage boys to a baseball game in Franklin, Wisconsin, giving them alcohol and groping one of the youths. Tully signed an affidavit that said, "I am pleading no contest because I understand what I am charged with and believe I would be found guilty."

He was convicted of disorderly conduct in 1992. He was sentenced to two years' probation and barred from unsupervised contact with juveniles.

Tully was transferred to the Institute of the Living in Hartford, Connecticut, which specializes in sexual disorders and has treated hundreds of priests. There he received psychotherapy and made "very good progress," according to a letter from the institute to the Wisconsin court.

"He has never denied responsibility for his sexual behavior and has come to realize the damage that this has inflicted on the others," says the May 1992 letter.

The Rev. Carl Chudy, current U.S. superior of the Xaverian Missionaries order based in Wayne, New Jersey, said Tully's therapist said he could return to Africa so long as he had supervised encounters with youth, therapy and ongoing support.

"I assume Sierra Leone agreed to this because when his probation was over, he left," Chudy said.

Yet the church sent him back to Sierra Leone apparently without ever investigating his activities there. And most of his work was with teenagers — organizing soccer teams, drama clubs and choirs in scrabble-poor villages.

He left in 1998, when he was evacuated during the nation's brutal 10-year civil war.

The Xaverians finally laicized Tully in February 2009, after Nash, the Wisconsin seminarian, went on a mission to have him defrocked. Chudy said the decision was Tully's and was approved by the pope last year.

Chudy said there is a very strict policy in place today: "In the past obvious missteps were made due to what was known at the time. We are quite committed to protecting young people from the few who have caused such great damage," he said.

Rev. Carlo Girola, an official of the Xaverians' general administration in Rome, said there were no accusations or suspicions regarding Tully's first stay in Sierra Leone to make the Xaverians feel they had to investigate.

Girola said the regional supervisor in Sierra Leone, Father Piero Lazzarini, was informed about the "situation and conditions" imposed for Tully's return to the country. Lazzarini spoke of this to Father Luigi Brioni, the pastor in Magburaka where Tully was then sent. According to Girola, Brioni "never informed Lazzarini of any incidents related to this problem."

Some who worked with Tully for years in Sierra Leone praised his good works.

"I know him as someone who was always assisting children, paying their school fees, helping them get into college," said Ahmed Polo Samura, a human rights activist and child protection officer in Kamakwie who knew Tully from the time he was an altar boy in church.

Mark Saidu, a farmer in Makali, said Tully converted him from Islam when he was 14 years old in 1984 and helped pay for his education at Catholic schools.

"Father Jim had lots and lots of friends. He was a man who loved to socialize," Saidu said. "And he was popular around here because he would travel around with a generator and show films in the villages. And with the soccer competitions, that could be the only entertainment people would have for months."

Augustine Sorie Bangura is described by many as Tully's greatest friend in Sierra Leone. Bangura, 48, said Tully encouraged him to write letters to the priest's friends in the United States to garner donations that built the first health clinic to the village. Before that, people had to walk 16 miles (26 kilometers) to the hospital in Kamalo.

Bangura and many others spoke of Tully's love of strong liquor, some said to the point of incoherent drunkenness.

"He would use palm wine to get people together to evangelize them, and he would also use palm wine to encourage the youths to join us in singing. That man loved palm wine," said choir master John Abdulai Kamara.

Some, though, say Tully's use of palm wine was more sinister: "He would take us boys to go palm wine drinking and would always encourage us to drink, saying, 'It's nice. Have some more.' You could say he lured us into drinking, and that stuff is so strong that just one sip can make your head spin," said the teacher who told the AP Tully molested him.

The teacher said he has long been disillusioned with the Catholic Church. "They shattered my dreams," he said.

The man studied to become a monk and teacher with the Irish-based Christian Brothers order, but said he left when the head of the seminary tried to abuse him.

The teacher said that if victims of sexual abuse by priests were assured they would not be punished for telling the truth, "you would see many, many, many people coming forward."

(Carley Petesch reported from Johannesburg. Associated Press writer Frances D'Emilio in Rome and David Porter in Wayne, New Jersey contributed to this report.)

"Pope Accepts Resignation of German Bishop Accused of Abuse" by Frances D'Emilio, AP

May 8, 2010, (http://www.denverpost.com/news/ci_15047220?source=pkg)

(VATICAN CITY) A leading German bishop who has acknowledged slapping children and is being investigated for sexual abuse of minors and financial misconduct lost his job Saturday as Pope Benedict XVI continued cleaning house.

The German-born pontiff formally accepted the resignation offer made April 21 by Bishop Walter Mixa, an outspoken conservative voice in the German church and a military chaplain for Germany, as well as head of the Augsburg diocese.

Mixa's posting to Augsburg in summer 2005 was among the first appointments Benedict made at the start of his papacy.

The terse Vatican announcement, without commenting on the abuse allegations, only said the decision was in line with canon law provisions for bishops no longer fit for service.

Mixa had offered to step down amid persistent allegations that he hit children while a priest decades ago and of financial irregularities at a children's home he was responsible for.

Pressure on the Vatican to get him out of the post increased on Friday, when the Augsburg diocese said, without further details, that it had given prosecutors information in line with German church guidelines for handling sex abuse cases.

Mixa, 69, is the latest in a line of churchmen to be toppled by scandals.

The Vatican is reeling from allegations that bishops and other church hierarchy systematically covered up physical or sexual abuse of minors in several European countries. In some cases, like that of Mixa, bishops have themselves been accused of abuse.

In a reference to the sex abuse revelations staining dioceses in several European countries this year, Benedict said Saturday that the church was being "tried" and "wounded" by sin.

In Germany, We Are The Church, a lobby for church reform, voiced "relief" that Benedict accepted Mixa's resignation but pushed for more aggressive action by the Vatican for transparency on the selection on bishops.

"To not increase further the loss of standing and credibility for the Catholic church well beyond the Augsburg diocese, it remains necessary to clear up all accusations comprehensively and as quickly as possible," it said.

Mixa's resignation, along with those recently of other compromised bishops in Ireland, Norway and Belgium, raise both "increasingly pressing questions" on how bishops are chosen and calls for local church involvement in the vetting process behind the Vatican's selection of bishops, We Are The Church said.

But Belgium's bishops dismissed just such an appeal for local voice when answering a reporter's question shortly after they met with the pope, indicating that the choice of a replacement for the Bruges bishop, who recently resigned after admitted he sexually abused a boy, was firmly in the hands of the Vatican.

In the Mixa case, German daily *Augsburger Allgemeine* reported that Ingolstadt prosecutors had launched a preliminary investigation of allegations that he sexually abused a boy during his time as bishop of Eichstaett from 1996 to 2005.

Prosecutors confirmed a preliminary investigation against Mixa but gave no details.

"I have spoken with him by telephone ... and he said that he resolutely rejects these accusations," Mixa's lawyer, Gerhard Decker, said on n-tv television. Mixa has disappeared from public view since offering his resignation.

Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, who heads Germany's bishops conference, thanked Benedict for letting Mixa resign, saying that "the pope's swift decision brings the necessary clarity."

The Augsburg diocese's vicar general, Karlheinz Knebel, said that "with our actions, we are following the German bishops' demands for transparency and truth." He urged clerics and rank-and-file faithful to "preserve the unity of the church in this difficult time."

Mixa, who has asked of "those whom I may have caused heartache," initially denied ever using violence against youngsters but later, after intense pressure, said he may have slapped children.

The case, coming in the country of Benedict's birth and involving a prelate who was a key member of Germany's bishops conference for more than a decade, was particularly embarrassing for the German church and faithful. German church authorities say the number of people leaving the church has increased sharply since abuse allegations started surfacing in recent months.

The strains of the scandals seem to be dividing the top echelons of the church itself.

An Austrian Catholic news agency Kathpress reported on Friday that Vienna Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn blasted the Vatican's dean of the college of cardinals for seriously harming victims when, during Easter Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square, Cardinal Angelo Sodano dismissed claims of clerical abuse as "petty gossip."

Schoenborn, a confidante of Benedict's and considered by Vatican watchers to be potential pope material himself, had already indirectly blamed Sodano for blocking a probe of sex abuse allegations against late Austrian Cardinal Hans Hermann Groer, who stepped down, officially for advanced age, after the complaints surfaced.

Belgian Archbishop Andre Leonard said that during their meeting Saturday Benedict "made concrete allusion to the drama our church is going through" due to the "grave" abuses which "wounded the church.

Benedict in his speech to the bishops lamented that the Belgian church was afflicted with some of the problems vexing churches in other European countries, notably dwindling numbers of both flock and ministers.

Benedict has been leading a campaign to invigorate what he calls the continent's Christian roots, but his efforts risk being eclipsed by the attention the Vatican has had to dedicate to the sex abuse scandals.

The latest scandals followed Benedict's scathing rebuke earlier this year of Irish bishops, after a government-led probe of church abuse in heavily Catholic Ireland turned up decades of systematic sexual and physical abuse of children in parishes, orphanages, schools and workhouses by priests, brothers and nuns, and cover-ups by church hierarchy.

(Associated Press reporter Geir Moulson contributed to this report from Berlin.)

20100508-02	13:19	Dick	Fw: Illegal Border Crossings
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IF YOU CROSS THE NORTH KOREAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU GET 12 YEARS HARD LABOR.

IF YOU CROSS THE IRANIAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU ARE DETAINED INDEFINITELY.

IF YOU CROSS THE AFGHAN BORDER ILLEGALLY, YOU GET SHOT.

IF YOU CROSS THE SAUDI ARABIAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE JAILED.

IF YOU CROSS THE CHINESE BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU MAY NEVER BE HEARD FROM AGAIN.

IF YOU CROSS THE VENEZUELAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE BRANDED A SPY AND YOUR FATE WILL BE SEALED.

IF YOU CROSS THE CUBAN BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU WILL BE THROWN INTO POLITICAL PRISON TO ROT.

IF YOU CROSS THE U.S. BORDER ILLEGALLY YOU GET:

1. A JOB
2. A DRIVERS LICENSE
3. SOCIAL SECURITY CARD
4. WELFARE
5. FOOD STAMPS
6. CREDIT CARDS
7. SUBSIDIZED RENT OR A LOAN TO BUY A HOUSE
8. FREE EDUCATION
9. FREE HEALTH CARE
10. A LOBBYIST IN WASHINGTON
11. BILLIONS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF PUBLIC DOCUMENTS PRINTED IN YOUR LANGUAGE
12. AND THE RIGHT TO CARRY YOUR COUNTRY'S FLAG WHILE YOU PROTEST THAT YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH RESPECT.

I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE I HAD A FIRM GRASP ON THE SITUATION.

20100510-01 09:12 Ben Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19

from SteveB:

Maybe God is in the hearts of all of us, equally, and all we have to do is know the truth and it will set us free.

Dear SteveB,

This is Alan Steele's premise, presented in his Coyote works as an alien philosophy, that everyone is God, and God is in everyone.

I rather like it; it puts into words exactly what I feel about religion myself. That in almost all individuals, there is a basic good that more often than not prevails. What happens, though, when you get more than a few people together can become something else, quickly.

20100510-02 10:47 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19

Dear Ben,

It's really what is at the heart of Buddhism. Maybe even Christianity. I've read that the supposed words of Jesus (which are totally unknown, really) were mistranslated from the Greek, when he said, "I am a son of God," not, "I am the son of God." Maybe Jesus was a Buddhist, huh? The philosophy of love, the statement that "God is love", the disappearance for, what, seven years...all make me think it is possible. But the Jewish mind of the times was not able to think in that direction. The cultural differences were just too great. In fact, that is probably the case whether Jesus was a Buddhist or not. Too bad he didn't find at least one disciple who could read and write. Wonder why "God" didn't understand all this? If he did, I guess he just doesn't give a damn.

As to "what happens, though, when you get more than a few people together"...evil is also part of the mind of God, same as good, or the entire universe, for that matter...just maybe...

20100510-03 11:46 Ben Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19

Dear SteveB,

The same associate rector at my church who burst out "Come on, people, it's a MYTH!" during a sermon that referred to the resurrection has also mentioned the ablation of articles in the "I am a son of God" passage, and others, often. He's fluent in Greek and Aramaic, and loves to point out the mistranslations that make the English bible so self-contradictory and misleading.

Jesus was probably a pretty good guy, and he and Buda would have got along great. I doubt there would have been any disagreement at all. And I am sure that the real Jesus would have been horrified at the many dogmatic organizations that preach "his" word as law. He was very much against centralized temples and large-scale organization; that much is so very clear even from our edited, politicized remains of what he is said to have taught.

I think this is why the Episcopalians are always happy to hear other views. If you put them all into a box, you'd find just about every possible viewpoint — even mine. I buy almost none of what's in the Bible, least of all in the New Testament, but find the allegory of history in the OT kind of interesting. Rather like the *Pirate Handbook*, it's more like guidelines than a rule book... and even those are often contradictory.

20100510-04 12:15 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 19

Dear Ben,

Cool! The Church of Steve largely agrees. :-)

20100513-01	11:00	Phil	Fw: Coming Changes
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Heads up. A few interesting things that are on the horizon.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Whether these changes are good or bad depends in part on how we adapt to them. But, ready or not, here they come!

1. The Post Office

Get ready to imagine a world without the post office. They are so deeply in financial trouble that there is probably no way to sustain it long term. Email, Fed Ex, and UPS have just about wiped out the minimum revenue needed to keep the post office alive. Most of your mail every day is junk mail and bills.

2. The Check

Britain is already laying the groundwork to do away with checks by 2018. It costs the financial system billions of dollars a year to process checks. Plastic cards and online transactions will lead to the eventual demise of the check. This plays right into the death of the post office. If you never paid your bills by mail and never received them by mail, the post office would absolutely go out of business.

3. The Newspaper

The younger generation simply doesn't read the newspaper. They certainly don't subscribe to a daily delivered print edition. That may go the way of the milkman and the laundry man. As for reading the paper online, get ready to pay for it. The rise in mobile Internet devices and e-readers has caused all the newspaper and magazine publishers to form an alliance. They have met with Apple, Amazon, and the major cell phone companies to develop a model for paid subscription services.

4. The Book

You say you will never give up the physical book that you hold in your hand and turn the literal pages. I said the same thing about downloading music from iTunes. I wanted my hard copy CD. But I quickly changed my mind when I discovered that I could get albums for half the price without ever leaving home to get the latest music. The same thing will happen with books. You can browse a bookstore online and even read a preview chapter before you buy. And the price is less than half that of a real book. And think of the convenience! Once you start flicking your fingers on the screen instead of the book, you find that you are lost in the story, can't wait to see what happens next, and you forget that you're holding a gadget instead of a book.

5. The Land-Line Telephone

Unless you have a large family and make a lot of local calls, you don't need it anymore. Most people keep it simply because they're always had it. But you are paying double charges for that extra service. All the cell phone companies will let you call customers using the same cell provider for no charge against your minutes.

6. Music

This is one of the saddest parts of the change story. The music industry is dying a slow death. Not just because of illegal downloading. It's the lack of innovative new music being given a chance to get to the people who would like to hear it. Greed and corruption is the problem. The record labels and the radio conglomerates simply self-destruct. Over 40% of the music purchased today is "catalog items," meaning traditional music that the public is familiar, with older established artists. This is also true on the live concert circuit. To explore this fascinating and disturbing topic further, check out the book, *Appetite for Self-Destruction* by Steve Knopper, and the video documentary, "Before the Music Dies."

7. Television

Revenues to the networks are down dramatically. Not just because of the economy. People are watching TV and movies streamed from their computers. And they're playing games and doing lots of other things that take up the time that used to be spent watching TV. Prime time shows have degenerated down to lower than the lowest common denominator. Cable rates are skyrocketing and commercials run about every 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

8. The "Things" That You Own

Many of the very possessions that we used to own are still in our lives, but we may not actually own them in the future. They may simply reside in "the cloud." Today your computer has a hard drive and you store your pictures, music, movies, and documents. Your software is on a CD or DVD, and you can always re-install it if need be. But all of that is changing. Apple, Microsoft, and Google are all finishing up their latest "cloud services." That means that when you turn on a computer, the Internet will be built into the operating system. So, Windows, Google, and the Mac OS will be tied straight into the Internet. If you click an icon, it will open something in the Internet cloud. If you save something, it will be saved to the cloud. And you may pay a monthly subscription fee to the cloud provider.

In this virtual world, you can access your music or your books, or your whatever from any laptop or handheld device. That's the good news. But, will you actually own any of this "stuff" or will it all be able to disappear at any moment in a big "Poof?" Will most of the things in our lives be disposable and whimsical?

9. Privacy

If there ever was a concept that we can look back on nostalgically, it would be privacy. That's gone. It's been gone for a long time anyway. There are cameras on the street, in most of the buildings, and even built into your computers and cell phones . But you can be sure that 24/7 "They" know who you are and where you are, right down to the GPS coordinates, and the Google Street View. If you buy something, your habit is put into a zillion profiles, and the ads that you receive will change to reflect those habits. Then "They" will try to get you to buy something related to your first purchase.

All we will have that can't be changed are memories. Alzheimer's will take care of that.

20100513-02	12:42	SteveB	Re: Coming Changes
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Dear Phil,

Very interesting and, I think, very true.

Another technological change that has happened and keeps happening is that all these high tech things, and many other things like cars, become less and less repairable all the time. The components that are repairable are essentially subsystems. TV's, computers, cell phones, etc. are almost as disposable as repairable because they are largely made in factories by machines and robots, but must be repaired by humans.

And the technology of all these things is less and less understood by the average user. We are getting totally out of touch with our technology. I used to understand my car. I could tune it and make quite a few repairs, even though some things were beyond me (mainly because they were beyond the set of tools I could afford, but not beyond my understanding). Now, even good mechanics largely replace subsystems. I don't really understand the way modern cars work...not enough to do anything with them. I'm an electronics/electrical engineer, but I wouldn't begin to try to repair my TV.

All of this puts tremendous power in the hands of a relatively few companies. I don't believe that there are even any universities that completely understand what Intel is up to. And at Intel, most of the engineers really only understand one small part of the whole picture. Surely this will have implications for the future, but I can't predict what they might be. A world ruled by companies like Intel and Toyota?

Civilization becomes more and more fragile the more advanced it becomes.

There is a series of science fiction books, *Ringworld*, by Larry Niven. These books are about a tremendously advanced civilization in the far future. They have discovered, among many other things, a plastic that is superconducting. Their entire civilization of space ships and levitated buildings depends upon this plastic. One day, a roving space ship returns to Ringworld unknowingly carrying a bacteria that happens to love eating the superconducting plastic. Very soon, the entire civilization crashes to the ground, literally, and reverts back, largely, to primitive savages in the jungle.

In another sci-fi series, *The Mote in God's Eye*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, a far future species known as the "Moties", who have an ancient, ancient civilization that goes through cycles of tremendous technological advance, then war, and finally, chaos, with primitives roving the jungles. They have learned that, in order to jump start the process of climbing back toward civilization, they must establish fortified libraries containing all of their advanced knowledge that the primitives can use as they become more advanced.

Maybe it's time that we established something similar.

20100521-01	15:13	SteveB	"A Step to Artificial Life: Manmade DNA Powers Cell"
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Maybe I'm just old-fashioned, but I think this is very bad news indeed!!! And not because of any "God thing". More because of a "non-God thing".

"A Step to Artificial Life: Manmade DNA Powers Cell" by Lauren Neergaard, AP

May 20, 2010, (<http://www.newsday.com/business/a-step-to-artificial-life-manmade-dna-powers-cell-1.1926648>)

(WASHINGTON) Scientists announced a bold step Thursday in the enduring quest to create artificial life. They've produced a living cell powered by manmade DNA.

While such work can evoke images of Frankenstein-like scientific tinkering, it also is exciting hopes that it could eventually lead to new fuels, better ways to clean polluted water, faster vaccine production and more.

Is it really an artificial life form?

The inventors call it the world's first synthetic cell, although this initial step is more a re-creation of existing life — changing one simple type of bacterium into another — than a built-from-scratch kind.

But Maryland genome-mapping pioneer J. Craig Venter said his team's project paves the way for the ultimate, much harder goal: designing organisms that work differently from the way nature intended for a wide range of uses. Already he's working with ExxonMobil in hopes of turning algae into fuel.

"This is the first self-replicating species we've had on the planet whose parent is a computer," Venter told reporters.

And the report, being published Friday in the journal *Science*, is triggering excitement in this growing field of synthetic biology.

"It's been a long time coming, and it was worth the wait," said Dr. George Church, a Harvard Medical School genetics professor. "It's a milestone that has potential practical applications."

Following the announcement, President Barack Obama directed the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues he established last fall to make its first order of business a study of the milestone.

"The commission should consider the potential medical, environmental, security and other benefits of this field of research, as well as any potential health, security or other risks," Obama wrote in a letter to the commission's chairwoman, Amy Gutmann, the president of the University of Pennsylvania.

Obama also asked that the commission develop recommendations about any actions the government should take "to ensure that America reaps the benefits of this developing field of science while identifying appropriate ethical boundaries and minimizing identified risks."

Scientists for years have moved single genes and even large chunks of DNA from one species to another. At his J. Craig Venter Institute in Rockville, Md., and San Diego, Venter's team aimed to go further. A few years ago, the researchers transplanted an entire natural genome — the genetic code — of one bacterium into another and watched it take over, turning a goat germ into a cattle germ.

Next, the researchers built from scratch another, smaller bacterium's genome, using off-the-shelf laboratory-made DNA fragments.

Friday's report combines those two achievements to test a big question: Could synthetic DNA really take over and drive a living cell? Somehow, it did.

"This is transforming life totally from one species into another by changing the software," said Venter, using a computer analogy to explain the DNA's role.

The researchers picked two species of a simple germ named *Mycoplasma*. First, they chemically synthesized the genome of *M. mycoides*, that goat germ, which with 1.1 million "letters" of DNA was twice as large as the germ genome they'd previously built.

Then they transplanted it into a living cell from a different *Mycoplasma* species, albeit a fairly close cousin.

At first, nothing happened. The team scrambled to find out why, creating a genetic version of a computer proofreading program to spell-check the DNA fragments they'd pieced together. They found that a typo in the genetic code was rendering the manmade DNA inactive, delaying the project three months to find and restore that bit.

"It shows you how accurate it has to be, one letter out of a million," Venter said.

That fixed, the transplant worked. The recipient cell started out with synthetic DNA and its original cytoplasm, but the new genome "booted up" that cell to start producing only proteins that normally would be found in the copied goat germ. The researchers had tagged the synthetic DNA to be able to tell it apart, and checked as the modified cell reproduced to confirm that new cells really looked and behaved like *M. mycoides*.

"All elements in the cells after some amount of time can be traced to this initial artificial DNA. That's a great accomplishment," said biological engineer Ron Weiss of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Even while praising the accomplishment — "biomolecular engineering of the highest order," declared David Deamer of the University of California, Santa Cruz — many specialists say the work hasn't yet crossed the line of truly creating new life from scratch.

It's partially synthetic, some said, because Venter's team had to stick the manmade genetic code inside a living cell from a related species. That cell was more than just a container; it also contained its own cytoplasm — the liquid part.

In other words, the synthetic part was "running on the 'hardware' of the modern cell," University of Southern Denmark physics professor Steen Rasmussen wrote in the journal *Nature*, which on Thursday released essays of both praise and caution from eight leaders in the field.

The environmental group Friends of the Earth said the new work took "genetic engineering to an extreme new level" and urged that Venter stop until government regulations are put in place to protect against these kind of engineered microbes escaping into the environment.

Venter said he removed 14 genes thought to make the germ dangerous to goats before doing the work, and had briefed government officials about the work over the course of several years — acknowledging that someone potentially could use this emerging field for harm instead of good.

But MIT's Weiss said it would be far easier to use existing technologies to make bioweapons: "There's a big gap between science fiction and what your imagination can do and the reality in research labs."

Venter founded Synthetic Genomics Inc., a privately held company that funded the work, and his research institute has filed patents on it.

20100526-01 13:17 Paula Fw: Video: Fog Cutter

Dear SteveB,

Thought you would appreciate some of this!

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Here's one that really cuts through the fog! The usual suspects have been trying to get this taken down but, so far, it is still running. [I don't know why anyone would take this down from anywhere, it's no big deal. More of the same lies about socialism and how all the world's problems are Obama's fault. Probably the scare tactics helped in 2010 once again. — SteveB]

<http://www.powerlineblog.com/archives/2010/01/025329.php>

20100526-02 15:07 SteveB Re: Fog Cutter

Dear Paula,

Please allow me to cut a little fog.

OK, I watched the piece. I share your concern over the state and future of our country.

But it is the totally corrupt political system that is at fault. How in the world are campaign contributions, especially big ones, not exactly like bribes? The Democrats are not at fault...nor are the Republicans. They are both equally to blame. They have both sold our country and all of us down the river. That is the truth.

These radical Republican scare tactics and personal attacks don't scare me. But the Republicans scare me, that's for sure. Funny how they always try both tactics, going all the way back to Nixon, at least. And people, I guess, never learn or remember.

This is just more Glenn Beck / Rush Limbaugh BS. Glenn Beck predicted over and over that the dollar would be finished and everything would be at an end, way before now. Yet here we are doing a little better. Where is his catastrophe that he was so hoping and praying for? What does that tell you?

Gloom and doom, gloom and doom. How original! It sounds so Biblical, yet here we are 2000 years later.

What does the amount of money those two make tell you? Gee, they couldn't be in it for the money could they? Yet they don't trust the "system"? haha

Aren't they all in it for the money and the power, not to serve the best interests of the people?

Take heart. It ain't the end of the world...yet. At least we don't have an idiot or a senile old man in the White House. :-)

20100526-03 17:03 Pam Re: Fog Cutter

Dear SteveB,

Did somebody send you this video? How did you come across it? Not that it matters.

Yes, the Republicans do scare me, mostly because I believe they've been cowed by their "base." The crazies are running the show. Or maybe they're not so much crazy as drunk with a belief in their own frenzied success. I'm talking about Glen Beck, Rush Limbaugh, and Sarah Palin specifically, and I include Newt, Cheney, GW and that whole crowd, who are gone but not forgotten. These are, to my mind, exactly the sort of people who stirred things up in 1930s Germany: the lower middle-class who feel disenfranchised and angry. (GW may not be lower middle-class, but he knows how to get into their

heads.) George Orwell wrote a marvelous essay, "Politics and the English Language." It should be required reading for every American. He talks about how propaganda works and how language can be subverted. The Tea Party rants about freedom, but they don't know the meaning of the word. They've made "liberal" a dirty word, and they've convinced themselves that health care reform is code for socialism, as if socialism were by definition a horror like none other. It sickens me that the Republican party, the party of money and privilege, has delivered itself over to the ignorant and ill-educated. What irony.

I am a lifelong Democrat, but I am sadly disappointed in them too. Why doesn't Obama just throw out "don't ask, don't tell", the way Truman integrated the military? Why didn't he push harder for more comprehensive health care reform? Why didn't he—and his minions—explain and educate the public about what is at stake, rather than being so mealy-mouthed? I like Obama; I voted for him, and I am still thrilled that he was elected. And I think that once people realize they're better off with reform than they were before and if/when the economy improves, he'll stand a good chance of re-election. But now there's this dreadful oil situation—not his fault—but they'll hang it on him. Just like the war in Afghanistan, etc. etc. It will take decades to undo the damage the Bush administration did. Bush Sr. was bad enough, but I bet even he despairs at what his son has wrought. I'm not sure Obama will be able to do what needs doing. He's so intelligent and reasonable, but he's dealing with unreasonable people. LBJ might have been a bastard, but he was an s.o.b. who could get things done. I miss him.

There's so much we don't know about the wheels within wheels in government. I'm sure what we see is just the tip of the iceberg. I'm afraid I'm rather jaded. But, as you say, things haven't really changed all that much in 2000 years. Mankind seems to muddle through one crisis after another, without learning much along the way. I do see progress in history when I take the long view, but so long as there are Sudans, Somalias, Congos, and Haliburton, I don't think we're ever getting to the promised land.

Here endeth my rant for the day. :-)

20100527-01	09:04	SteveB	Fw: Mexico's Immigration Laws
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Hypocrisy at its best.

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says it's true. —SteveB]

TAKE A LOOK AT MEXICO'S IMMIGRATION LAW. IT APPLIES AS IS, EVEN TO LEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

The shoe is on the other foot and the Mexicans from the State of Sonora, Mexico don't like it.

Can you believe the nerve of these people? It's almost funny. The State of Sonora is angry at the influx of Mexicans into Mexico. Nine state legislators from the Mexican State of Sonora traveled to Tucson to complain about Arizona's new employer crackdown on illegals from Mexico.

It seems that many Mexican illegals are returning to their hometowns and the officials in the Sonora state government are ticked off.

A delegation of nine state legislators from Sonora was in Tucson on Tuesday to state that Arizona's new Employer Sanctions Law will have a devastating effect on the Mexican state.

At a news conference, the legislators said that Sonora—Arizona's southern neighbor, made up of mostly small towns—cannot handle the demand for housing, jobs and schools that it will face as Mexican workers return to their hometowns from the U.S. without jobs or money.

The Arizona law, which took effect Jan. 1, punishes Arizona employers who knowingly hire individuals without valid legal documents to work in the United States. Penalties include suspension of, or loss of, their business license.

The Mexican legislators are angry because their own citizens are returning to their hometowns, placing a burden on THEIR state government.

'How can Arizona pass a law like this?' asked Mexican Rep Leticia Amparano-Gamez, who represents Nogales. 'There is not one person living in Sonora who does not have a friend or relative working in Arizona,' she said, speaking in Spanish. 'Mexico is not prepared for this, for the tremendous problems it will face as more and more Mexicans working in Arizona, and who were sending money to their families, return to their hometowns in Sonora without jobs,' she said. 'We are one family, socially and economically,' she said of the people of Sonora and Arizona.

Wrong!

The United States is a sovereign nation, not a subsidiary of Mexico, and its taxpayers are not responsible for the welfare of Mexico's citizens.

It's time for the Mexican government and its citizens to stop feeding parasitically off the United States and to start taking care of their own needs.

Too bad other states within the U.S. don't pass a law just like that passed by Arizona.

Maybe that's the answer, since our own Congress will do nothing!

New Immigration Laws: (Read to the bottom or you will miss the message.)

1. There will be no special bilingual programs in the schools.
2. All ballots will be in this nation's language.
3. All government business will be conducted in our language.
4. Non-residents will NOT have the right to vote no matter how long they are here.
5. Non-citizens will NEVER be able to hold political office
- 6 Foreigners will not be a burden to the taxpayers. No welfare, no food stamps, no health care, or other
7. Foreigners can invest in this country, but it must be an amount at least equal to 40,000 times the daily minimum wage.
8. If foreigners come here and buy land, options will be restricted. Certain parcels, including waterfront property, are reserved for citizens naturally born into this country.
9. Foreigners may have no protests, no demonstrations, no waving of a foreign flag, no political organizing, no bad-mouthing our president or his policies. These will lead to deportation.
10. If you come to this country illegally, you will be actively hunted and, when caught, sent to jail until your deportation can be arranged. All assets will be taken from you.

Too strict?

The above laws are current immigration laws of MEXICO!

20100527-02	13:45	Marci	Re: Mexico's Immigration Laws
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All the U.S. has to do it is apply its laws.

They don't want to do it because they pay less to the illegal immigrants. They means the businesses. Only they benefit from illegal immigrants. The taxpayers have to support the illegal immigrants' social needs and the society in general suffers from crime and ugliness.

It is one small group who benefits in detriment to the whole society. It is amazing that the U.S. allows that small group of businesses to damage the U.S. so much. It is a shame.

20100527-03 14:03 SteveB Re: Mexico's Immigration Laws

Dear Marci,

I agree with you completely.

20100527-04 11:29 Tom Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Great political humor:



20100527-05 23:29 Tom "President's Socialist Takeover Must Be Stopped"

[The guy who wrote this is obviously a lunatic. —SteveB]

"President's Socialist Takeover Must Be Stopped" by Jeffrey T. Kuhner, *The Washington Times*

July 22, 2010, (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/22/the-case-for-impeachment-142967590/>)

President Obama has engaged in numerous high crimes and misdemeanors. The Democratic majority in Congress is in peril as Americans reject his agenda. Yet more must be done: Mr. Obama should be impeached.

He is slowly—piece by painful piece—erecting a socialist dictatorship. We are not there—yet. But he is putting America on that dangerous path. He is undermining our constitutional system of checks and balances; subverting democratic procedures and the rule of law; presiding over a corrupt, gangster regime; and assaulting the very pillars of traditional capitalism. Like Venezuela's leftist strongman, Hugo Chavez, Mr. Obama is bent on imposing a revolution from above—one that is polarizing America along racial, political and ideological lines. Mr. Obama is the most divisive president since Richard Nixon. His policies are Balkanizing the country. It's time for him to go.

He has abused his office and violated his oath to uphold the Constitution. His health care overhaul was rammed through Congress. It was—and remains—opposed by a majority of the people. It could only be passed through bribery and political intimidation. The Louisiana Purchase, the Cornhusker Kickback, the \$5 billion Medicaid set-aside for Florida Sen. Bill Nelson—taxpayer money was used as a virtual slush fund to buy swing votes. Moreover, the law is blatantly unconstitutional: The federal government does not have the right to coerce every citizen to purchase a good or service. This is not in the Constitution, and it represents an unprecedented expansion of power.

Yet Obamacare's most pernicious aspect is its federal funding of abortion. Pro-lifers are now compelled to have their tax dollars used to subsidize insurance plans that allow for the murder of unborn children. This is more than state-sanctioned infanticide. It violates the conscience rights of religious citizens. Traditionalists—evangelicals, Catholics, Baptists, Muslims, Orthodox Jews—have been made complicit in an abomination that goes against their deepest religious values. As the law is implemented (as in Pennsylvania) the consequences of the abortion provisions will become increasingly apparent. The

result will be a cultural civil war. Pro-lifers will become deeply alienated from society; among many, a secession of the heart is taking place.

Mr. Obama is waging a frontal assault on property rights. The BP oil spill is a case in point. BP clearly is responsible for the spill and its massive economic and environmental damage to the Gulf. There is a legal process for claims to be adjudicated, but Mr. Obama has behaved more like Mr. Chavez or Russia's Vladimir Putin: He has bullied BP into setting up a \$20 billion compensation fund administered by an Obama appointee. In other words, the assets of a private company are to be raided to serve a political agenda. Billions will be dispensed arbitrarily in compensation to oil-spill victims - much of it to Democratic constituents. This is cronyism and creeping authoritarianism.

Mr. Obama's multicultural socialism seeks to eradicate traditional America. He has created a command-and-control health care system. He has essentially nationalized the big banks, the financial sector, the automakers and the student loan industry. He next wants to pass "cap-and-trade," which would bring industry and manufacturing under the heel of big government. The state is intervening in every aspect of American life - beyond its constitutionally delegated bounds. Under Mr. Obama, the Constitution has become a meaningless scrap of paper.

To provide the shock troops for his socialist takeover, Mr. Obama calls for "comprehensive immigration reform" - granting amnesty to 12 million to 20 million illegal aliens. This would forge a permanent Democratic electoral majority. It would sound the death knell for our national sovereignty. Amnesty rewards lawlessness and criminal behavior; it signifies the surrender of our porous southern border to a massive illegal invasion. It means the death of American nationhood. We will no longer be a country, but the colony of a global socialist empire.

Rather than defending our homeland, Mr. Obama's Justice Department has sued Arizona for its immigration law. He is siding with criminals against his fellow Americans. His actions desecrate his constitutional oath to protect U.S. citizens from enemies foreign and domestic. He is thus encouraging more illegal immigration as Washington refuses to protect our borders. Mr. Obama's decision on this case is treasonous.

As president, he is supposed to respect the rule of law. Instead, his administration has dropped charges of voter intimidation against members of the New Black Panther Party. This was done even though their menacing behavior was caught on tape: men in military garb brandishing clubs and threatening whites at a polling site. A Justice Department lawyer intimately involved in the case, J. Christian Adams, resigned in protest. Mr. Adams says that under Mr. Obama, there is a new policy: Cases involving black defendants and white victims - no matter how much they cry for justice - are not to be prosecuted. This is more than institutionalized racism. It is an abrogation of civil rights laws. The Justice Department's behavior is illegal. It poses a direct threat to the integrity of our democracy and the sanctity of our electoral process.

Corruption in the administration is rampant. Washington no longer has a government; rather, it has a gangster regime. The Chicago way has become the Washington way. Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel is a political hit man. He is an amoral, ruthless operator. It was Mr. Emanuel who reached out to Rep. Joe Sestak, Pennsylvania Democrat, offering a high-ranking job in the hopes of persuading Mr. Sestak to pull out of the primary against Sen. Arlen Specter. It was Mr. Emanuel who offered another government position to Andrew Romanoff to do the same in the Colorado Democratic Senate primary. And it was Mr. Emanuel - as the trial of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has revealed - who acted as the go-between to try to have Valerie Jarrett parachuted into Mr. Obama's former Senate seat. The only question was: What did Mr. Blagojevich want in exchange?

This is not simply sleazy Chicago machine politics. It is the systematic breaking of the law - bribery, attempt to interfere (and manipulate) elections using taxpayer-funded jobs, influence peddling and abuse of power.

The common misperception on the right is that Mr. Obama is another Jimmy Carter: an incompetent liberal whose presidency is being reduced to rubble under the onslaught of repeated failures. The very opposite, however, is true. He is the most consequential president in our lifetime, transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would find not only unrecognizable, but repugnant. Like all radical revolutionaries, he is consumed by the pursuit of power - attaining it, wielding it and maximizing it. Mr. Obama's fledgling thug state must be stopped.

If Republicans win back Congress in November, they should - and likely will - launch formal investigations into this criminal, scandal-ridden administration. Rep. Darrell Issa, California Republican and ranking member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has promised as much. Mr. Obama has betrayed the American people. Impeachment is the only answer. This usurper must fall.

(Jeffrey T. Kuhner is a columnist at *The Washington Times* and president of the Edmund Burke Institute, a Washington think tank. He is the host of "The Kuhner Show" on WTNT 570-AM (www.talk570.com) from 5 to 7 p.m.)

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20100528-01 10:32 Ben Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

This is huge. I love it.

Can't say I share the feelings about Gore; I'd have applied this unhesitatingly and with far better substantiation to GWB. At least, if we're applying the stated qualities in terms of intelligence and morality. If we're talking physicality only, I will sadly concede.

But someone with less logic and reason thought up the joke first, so I will have to appreciate it for its quality as a cartoon.

20100528-02 10:38 SteveB An Economy of Smoke & Mirrors

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

On other matters...the economy and, hence, the government, is based on smoke and mirrors...nothing but confidence. If that goes, the whole thing can crumble. We are on very thin ice. I hate what the two parties have done to our country. As I have said, it is all corrupted very explicitly by big money. I tend to be a Democrat, but I think more along the very conservative lines of our founding fathers or Barry Goldwater. All governments are stupid and incompetent and are not the answer to our problems...they are just more problems. Freedom is very important and dear. But I have given up on trying to change something so huge. It is disheartening.

Remember, I try hard to be apolitical, but I can't help but notice one thing many people are blind to: We want to make the world a better place and we think money is the answer. Then why are people in St. Lucia or Bolivia, for example, happier than the average American? And people seem to be blind to the decline and fall of America, I guess because it happens slowly. Think about Greencastle when we grew up. My barber, Mr. Eitelgeorge (sp), and someone like a guy who worked at one of the little shoe stores (not owning it), or a guy who pumped gas at 26 cents-a-gallon, all could drive an OK car, live in an OK house, and send their kids to college. Now? haha. crycry!

20100528-03 11:38 Pam Re: An Economy of Smoke & Mirrors

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I do so agree with you about the way big money has corrupted not only America but other places too. It's everywhere. It's really hard for me to grasp why some greedy bastards will go to such lengths (dealing drugs, overthrowing governments, cutting corners with oil wells) to make a bit more money when they already have so much. Does it become a madness, as with Bernie Madoff? He must be somewhat crazy. I'm all about people having a decent standard of living and financial security—god knows I'm for that!—but how the really rich can sleep at night, knowing that so many are out of work and struggling to survive, I don't know. I do believe that when you have a two-tiered society—the wealthy and the poor—you have a very unstable situation. A nice big broad middle class is the way to peace and prosperity for everyone. Why can't the super-rich realize that if they cling to their piles of loot and barricade themselves behind walls with gates, one day the poor will rise up and break those walls down? I remember getting into an argument when I was in high school about integration with another student who was a southern bigot. I predicted that black people would eventually turn to violence if they weren't treated fairly—and not so long after the riots broke out and the country burned. The peasants may not always win, but eventually they will pick up the pitchforks and torches, and then, watch out! You'd think self-interest would dictate some fairness, if not simple compassion.

20100528-04 11:55 SteveB Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Dear Tom,

Enjoyed the cartoon, though I, like Al Gore, was too dense for it, at first.

"There is no worse tyranny than to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him." —Robert Heinlein'

So...it would be (is) the worst of tyranny to tax some of these old farts to help pay for our schools, because they don't want to pay? Isn't it good for the whole country if the schools have money and are good? As a great, democratic nation, we have always thought taxes were good for the old farts even though they want to pretend otherwise.

So...it would be (is) the worst of tyranny to tax American Muslims to pay for defense if those Muslims, perhaps, don't want America defended? Yet most of us think defense, in one form or another, is a good thing. We think it is good for the Muslims, because it is good for all of us, even though some Muslims might think otherwise.

So...it would be (is) the worst of tyranny to tax illegal immigrants to help pay for the services they use (are "entitled" to), such as schools or defense, simply because they don't want to pay for those things? Yet most of us think education and defense, in one form or another, is a good thing. We think it is good for the illegals because it is good for all of us, even though illegals might want to pretend otherwise.

Oh...and it must be tyranny to tax the big corporations, such as BP, because they don't want to pay. Yet most of us think there might be good reason to tax these companies (maybe to help regulate them a little?), because it is good for them if it is good for all of us.

I guess Heinlein (otherwise, a very intelligent man) thought taxes are evil and tyrannical, huh? It seems to me more likely that taxes are the salvation of a truly intelligent democracy. And, as a nation, I thought we got beyond this point a long time ago.

As far as the cartoon goes...is Al Gore still the Vice-President? Is that the White House? The "Tennessee White House?" Al Gore's house? I agree Al Gore might be "dense and inert", but this cartoon misses the mark for me.

20100528-05 12:33 Pam Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Dear SteveB,

Al Gore may be boring, but he's right about the environment. I applaud his courage in standing up to ridicule and ignorance. I agree that Americans are under taxed. I don't understand all the fuss and bother about paying for things we all need—like schools, health care, security, etc. etc. When I lived in Canada, taxes were rather high, quite high by American standards. But higher education was free, and health care was covered for everyone. It was worth the higher taxes not to have to think twice about whether or not to take your sick 2-yr. old to the doctor. Aaaaaaargh!

20100528-06 14:39 Ben Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Dear SteveB,

As I said in my preamble, I don't share the obvious feelings about the JAB at Gore, whom I admire as a relatively selfless politician whom I feel has gone a long way to popularize an issue about which I feel strongly.

I thought the analogy of dense, inert material being applied to any particular human was pretty good, and prefer it when applied to the intelligence and morality of our recent lamented GWB.

If you will examine the conversation balloons, you will see that the local speaker is indeed at the White House. It makes sense that a call to a former vice president from a current chief executive's office would originate there, does it not?

Anyway, perhaps if you'd noted that initially, the cartoon would have seemed more clever. Well, heck. Not to worry!

As for HEINLEIN, though—I hadn't noticed that quote; had I read it, I might have had pretty much the same reaction with which you so eloquently reacted. I will share your comments with the guy that sent me the email, who tends to react immediately as a Republican might, but also actually DOES think about things. He's my buddy Tom the Security Guard (here at Apple) who was a Viet Nam—Nicaragua—Panama—Cambodia—and other interesting places Green Beret with 101 Airborne. We became very good friends when I asked him something or another in the early phases of my renewed interest in firearms; not every ex-military guy likes weapons, but the kind who hangs his Airborne cap on the edge of his desk is a good bet. It was through Tom that I met Eric the Sniper, a really likable young man who ... well ... he's an interesting study, especially when you're a visitor among his peers. Very quiet folks, snipers. Calm, collected, keenly observant, and—quiet. But I ramble...

What I was trying to get at is that it seems to me that Heinlein, brilliant though he was, suffered from progressive nodal brain ossification from somewhere close to 1970 onward. Tom, though, is always receptive to other viewpoints and willing to talk about things once you call him on his initial reaction. He's about my age, and, weirdly, was also a biology major who studied salamanders in the tropics. I still found the cartoon funny despite at whom it is jabbing.

20100528-07 15:42 SteveB Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Dear Pam,

Una grande 'si'!

20100528-08 15:54 SteveB Re: Cartoon: BP Oil Spill a Use for Former VP Gore

Dear Ben,

They're on the telephone? That still escapes me. Is that what the woman is holding? Weird looking cell phone if you ask me. Are both panes the same woman? In one pane she has a ring on her left hand and in the next she doesn't and the phone seems to change. But the dresses, nails, hair, etc., seem the same, which is all weird! Does that mean they're on the phone in the third pane? Is Obama calling Gore or some red-headed woman? Or is it a conversation in the White House? Does the woman work for BP? Jeez!

I'm all for the 'vironment, but I never have liked Al Gore! He seems to me to be as stupid as GWB. Maybe stupider! He's also a big, big fake! A good 'ole boy. A Tennessee hillbilly what done well.

20100530-01 14:15 SteveB "Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"

There's no reason to control America's borders! All Latinos must be good people, right? Because, well heck, because they're so poor! Dear me!

Let's help 'em out by giving away the country to them, because we feel sorry for them and so guilty that they aren't rich Americans too. It's absolutely vital to our consciences that everybody in the world be rich Americans, or we can't sleep at night, right?

What a crock!

"Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen" by William Booth, *The Washington Post*

May 29, 2010, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/29/AR2010052903707.html>)

(Small armada of outlaws ambushes bass anglers on lake straddling border.)

(ZAPATA, Tex.) Falcon Lake is famous for its monster bass and for the maniacal obsession of the fishermen who come from all over Texas—and the world—to stalk them. Now this remote reservoir that straddles the international boundary is known for something else: pirates.

In the past month, crews of outlaws in a small armada of banged-up skiffs and high-powered bass boats launched from the Mexican shore have ambushed bass anglers from the Texas side innocently casting their plastic worms over favorite spots. The buccaneers have struck in Mexican waters but within sight of the Texas shore.

Dressed in black, the pirates brandish automatic weapons, carry radio cell phones and board the anglers' boats. They demand weapons or drugs from their captives, but finding neither, seem satisfied with taking \$400 or \$500 as booty, according to law enforcement officials and victims' accounts.

There is a saying about not messing with Texas, and the idea that criminals are preying on American anglers is raising already-high temperatures along the southwest border. Answering calls for help, President Obama last week ordered 1,200 National Guard troops to the region.

The pirates claim to be "federales," or police, but instead are brigands—with the letter "Z" tattooed on their necks and arms—from the notorious drug cartel Los Zetas. The Zetas are on a rampage of killing and extortion along the Mexican border as they fight gun and grenade battles against the military and the rival Gulf Cartel.

"Within the last month, with all the feuding going on over there, the dope smuggling has dropped off and it is starving them. This water is Zeta central. They controlled the whole lake. They distributed everything. Now they're desperate and diversifying," said Jose E. Gonzalez, the second in command of the Border Patrol's Zapata station, which operates an around-the-clock maritime patrol.

At least three armed robberies have been reported in Mexican waters. The Texas Department of Public Safety put out a warning for people to stay on the U.S. side. On Memorial Day weekend, when 200 bass boats would usually be in town, only two dozen were seen at county ramps Friday afternoon.

One group of pirates was savvy enough to demand the memory chip from an angler's camera, lest they be identified. Another fisherman told authorities that armed men came roaring toward him. "I saw 'em, and I saw they were machine guns. They were that close, they were 15 yards away from me," San Antonio bass chaser Richard Drake told a local television station. "I was scared."

'Some bad boys out there'

Last week, Border Patrol agents tried to follow a Mexican boat filled with men wearing ski masks, but it was too fast for the agents and entered Mexican waters, where U.S. law enforcement is forbidden.

Olga Juliana Elizondo, the mayor of Nueva Guerrero, Mexico, said ranchers are harassed on their land, motorboats have disappeared, vehicles have been stolen and tourists have fled. "We hope this ends soon," she said.

"We've all heard about the pirates, and we're all sticking to the American side of the lake, because those are some bad boys out there," said Dwayne Deets, a fisherman from Houston who was sliding \$50,000 worth of cream-colored bass boat, bristling with sonar and GPS electronics, down a ramp in Zapata.

Deets said Texans loved fishing the Mexican side. It is legal to carry a loaded firearm in a boat in Texas, but it is illegal to bring ammunition or weapons into Mexico. "I just pray no one gets killed out there," he said.

The International Falcon Reservoir was born in the early 1950s, when engineers erected a dam on the Rio Grande, flooding the banks and inundating towns on both sides. The 98,960-surface-acre impoundment stretches 60 miles and provides for irrigation, power, flood control and recreation in the area.

"Until this started, we fished everywhere, and we never cared about the border, Texas to Mexico. But now? No. Hardly anybody is fishing the Mexico side of the lake," said Tom Bendele, who with his brother owns the Falcon Lake Tackle shop in Zapata, now serving as the de facto intel center on all things piratical.

Out on the water, with a reporter in tow, Tom Bendele pointed out the picket line of 14 large concrete beacons that mark the international boundary. Some are swimming distance from the Texas shore; others are miles out in the middle of the lake.

Bendele ventured up the Rio Salado cove on the Mexican side, where two of the acts of piracy occurred. Around the bend, the steeple of the church in Old Guerrero is now mostly underwater. The shoreline is lonely mesquite brush, dotted by rough fish camps used by Mexicans who string gill nets along their side of the lake, hauling up tilapia, carp and bass. Though illegal in the United States, the Mexican netters often cross into the Texas side to fish, playing an endless hide-and-peek with Texas game wardens.

Bendele cut off his engine, and the boat rocked in the cove. "You could see how it would be easy to get jumped in here," he said. "Notice you don't see any Americans."

'They watch us'

Out on the water with the U.S. Border Patrol, roaring right down the international boundary line but careful never to cross into Mexico, Gonzalez and a crew pointed out spot after spot where they have intercepted tons of marijuana crossing the lake. The Border Patrol seized 18,000 pounds of marijuana in the lake region last year, worth about \$14 million at \$800 a pound; it will likely confiscate even more this year.

"But, man, they are so good at counter-surveillance," Gonzalez said, describing the lake as kind of a Wild West on the water. "They watch us, they watch our boats, our cars, our homes. The smugglers, they know every move we make."

The traffickers cross day and night, driving boats with bales of marijuana right into the backyards of homes along the lake. They rent cabins at the lakeside state park and stash dope there. The border agents point to a three-story house built like a watchtower on the Mexican shore. The officers frequently see observers with binoculars on the roof. Up and down the lake, netting boats are idled. Nobody waves.

"We're telling folks that right now, Mexico is not safe. Don't cross, because we can't go over and help you. It's just an imaginary line, but it's a line I can't cross," said Jake Cawthon, a Texas game warden. He said that anyone fishing the Mexican side these days has "got to have one hand on their fishing pole and the other on their boat keys, ready to haul back home."

20100530-02	18:33	SteveG	Re: "Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"
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Dear SteveB,

Is it true that the U.S. ranks 42 in the world on infant mortality? If so—why, what are we going to do about it, and when are we going to do it?

20100531-01	20:47	SteveB	Re: "Pirates Get Hooks into Texas Fishermen"
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Dear SteveG,

The healthcare system in the U.S. is broken and hasn't been fixed. The only thing that can be done about any of the problems in the country, and there are so many (see HBO documentary: *Schmatta: Rags to Riches to Rags*), is to change the political system.

All of Congress needs to be voted out of office. Bribes in the form of campaign contributions above \$100 need to be outlawed, lobbying needs to be greatly curtailed. The system is totally corrupt. We have been sold down the river. When are we going to do it? I predict, only when things have fallen completely apart and there are riots in the streets. Maybe not even then. Sad.

20100531-02	15:39	Pam	Expatriate Life
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Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

There's another wonderful Argentinean movie with Norma Alleandro: *The Official Story* (or is it Unofficial? I can never remember). It's an old movie by now, but I thought it was fantastic when I saw it 20 odd years ago. It deals with the Disappeared and violence, without ever showing the actual victims or their abuse. The ending is excruciating and brilliant.

Living abroad certainly does open your eyes, does it not? Especially when you live in a second- or third-world country. All the parts of Europe I've been to have basically been pretty much like America only more picturesque and with accents. I don't denigrate going there, but Afghanistan taught me more. We had servants—a cook and houseboy (boy! He was 40 yrs. old)—only two, because we lived in a small house. There was definitely a class system. (I had many adventures there. :-). Some of them included the Marines who were there to guard the embassy. I was 16; they were 22. You do the math.) One of the most instructive occurred at a rehearsal party for a production of Macbeth that the American community were putting on. It was wild. These were not kids; kids were a small minority in that social world. They were grown up diplomats and their wives, who I thought should have known better. There was always lots of drinking—in a Muslim country. It might have been prudent, if not simply polite, to keep the drunkenness under control so as not to insult our hosts. But this party was off the hook. Many jokes were told at Afghan's expense, jokes involving nose-blowing and defecation (all done by the natives in public with bare hands). Around the periphery of the room were the Afghan servants who were waiting on the revelers, and I noticed that their faces were stony. A small moment, but, I'm sure, typical. And we ask why they hate us.

20100601-01	10:21	Ben	"Flotillas and the Wars of Public Opinion"
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These folks are just soooooo illuminating. Even when, maybe especially when, I think I understand some event, I read their analysis and realize that I hadn't really got it, at all... things are so seldom as simple as they appear in the news...

www.statfor.com

"Flotillas and the Wars of Public Opinion" by George Friedman, Stratfor

May 31, 2010, (http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100531_flotillas_and_wars_public_opinion)

On Sunday, Israeli naval forces intercepted the ships of a Turkish nongovernmental organization (NGO) delivering humanitarian supplies to Gaza. Israel had demanded that the vessels not go directly to Gaza but instead dock in Israeli ports, where the supplies would be offloaded and delivered to Gaza. The Turkish NGO refused, insisting on going directly to Gaza. Gunfire ensued when Israeli naval personnel boarded one of the vessels, and a significant number of the passengers and crew on the ship were killed or wounded.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon charged that the mission was simply an attempt to provoke the Israelis. That was certainly the case. The mission was designed to demonstrate that the Israelis were unreasonable and brutal. The hope was that Israel would be provoked to extreme action, further alienating Israel from the global community and possibly driving a wedge between Israel and the United States. The operation's planners also hoped this would trigger a political crisis in Israel.

A logical Israeli response would have been avoiding falling into the provocation trap and suffering the political repercussions the Turkish NGO was trying to trigger. Instead, the Israelis decided to make a show of force. The Israelis appear to have reasoned that backing down would demonstrate weakness and encourage further flotillas to Gaza, unraveling the Israeli position vis-à-vis Hamas. In this thinking, a violent interception was a superior strategy to accommodation regardless of political consequences. Thus, the Israelis accepted the bait and were provoked.

The *Exodus* Scenario

In the 1950s, an author named Leon Uris published a book called *Exodus*. Later made into a major motion picture, *Exodus* told the story of a Zionist provocation against the British. In the wake of World War II, the British—who controlled Palestine, as it was then known—maintained limits on Jewish immigration there.

Would-be immigrants captured trying to run the blockade were detained in camps in Cyprus. In the book and movie, Zionists planned a propaganda exercise involving a breakout of Jews—mostly children—from the camp, who would then board a ship renamed the *Exodus*. When the Royal Navy intercepted the ship, the passengers would mount a hunger strike. The goal was to portray the British as brutes finishing the work of the Nazis. The image of children potentially dying of hunger would force the British to permit the ship to go to Palestine, to reconsider British policy on immigration, and ultimately to decide to abandon Palestine and turn the matter over to the United Nations.

There was in fact a ship called *Exodus*, but the affair did not play out precisely as portrayed by Uris, who used an amalgam of incidents to display the propaganda war waged by the Jews. Those carrying out this war had two goals. The first was to create sympathy in Britain and throughout the world for Jews who, just a couple of years after German concentration camps, were now being held in British camps.

Second, they sought to portray their struggle as being against the British. The British were portrayed as continuing Nazi policies toward the Jews in order to maintain their empire. The Jews were portrayed as anti-imperialists, fighting the British much as the Americans had.

It was a brilliant strategy. By focusing on Jewish victimhood and on the British, the Zionists defined the battle as being against the British, with the Arabs playing the role of people trying to create the second phase of the Holocaust. The British were portrayed as pro-Arab for economic and imperial reasons, indifferent at best to the survivors of the Holocaust. Rather than restraining the Arabs, the British were arming them. The goal was not to vilify the Arabs but to vilify the British, and to position the Jews with other nationalist groups whether in India or Egypt rising against the British.

The precise truth or falsehood of this portrayal didn't particularly matter. For most of the world, the Palestine issue was poorly understood and not a matter of immediate concern. The Zionists intended to shape the perceptions of a global public with limited interest in or understanding of the issues, filling in the blanks with their own narrative. And they succeeded.

The success was rooted in a political reality. Where knowledge is limited, and the desire to learn the complex reality doesn't exist, public opinion can be shaped by whoever generates the most powerful symbols. And on a matter of only tangential interest, governments tend to follow their publics' wishes, however they originate. There is little to be gained for governments in resisting public opinion and much to be gained by giving in. By shaping the battlefield of public perception, it is thus possible to get governments to change positions.

In this way, the Zionists' ability to shape global public perceptions of what was happening in Palestine—to demonize the British and turn the question of Palestine into a Jewish-British issue—shaped the political decisions of a range of governments. It was not the truth or falsehood of the narrative that mattered. What mattered was the ability to identify the victim and victimizer such that global opinion caused both London and governments not directly involved in the issue to adopt political stances advantageous to the Zionists. It is in this context that we need to view the Turkish flotilla.

The Turkish Flotilla to Gaza

The Palestinians have long argued that they are the victims of Israel, an invention of British and American imperialism. Since 1967, they have focused not so much on the existence of the state of Israel (at least in messages geared toward the West) as on the oppression of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Since the split between Hamas and Fatah and the Gaza War, the focus has been on the plight of the citizens of Gaza, who have been portrayed as the dispossessed victims of Israeli violence.

The bid to shape global perceptions by portraying the Palestinians as victims of Israel was the first prong of a longtime two-part campaign. The second part of this campaign involved armed resistance against the Israelis. The way this resistance was carried out, from airplane hijackings to stone-throwing children to suicide bombers, interfered with the first part of the campaign, however. The Israelis could point to suicide bombings or the use of children against soldiers as symbols of Palestinian inhumanity. This in turn was used to justify conditions in Gaza. While the Palestinians had made significant inroads in placing Israel on the defensive in global public opinion, they thus consistently gave the Israelis the opportunity to turn the tables. And this is where the flotilla comes in.

The Turkish flotilla aimed to replicate the Exodus story or, more precisely, to define the global image of Israel in the same way the Zionists defined the image that they wanted to project. As with the Zionist portrayal of the situation in 1947, the Gaza situation is far more complicated than as portrayed by the Palestinians. The moral question is also far more

ambiguous. But as in 1947, when the Zionist portrayal was not intended to be a scholarly analysis of the situation but a political weapon designed to define perceptions, the Turkish flotilla was not designed to carry out a moral inquest.

Instead, the flotilla was designed to achieve two ends. The first is to divide Israel and Western governments by shifting public opinion against Israel. The second is to create a political crisis inside Israel between those who feel that Israel's increasing isolation over the Gaza issue is dangerous versus those who think any weakening of resolve is dangerous.

The Geopolitical Fallout for Israel

It is vital that the Israelis succeed in portraying the flotilla as an extremist plot. Whether extremist or not, the plot has generated an image of Israel quite damaging to Israeli political interests. Israel is increasingly isolated internationally, with heavy pressure on its relationship with Europe and the United States.

In all of these countries, politicians are extremely sensitive to public opinion. It is difficult to imagine circumstances under which public opinion will see Israel as the victim. The general response in the Western public is likely to be that the Israelis probably should have allowed the ships to go to Gaza and offload rather than to precipitate bloodshed. Israel's enemies will fan these flames by arguing that the Israelis prefer bloodshed to reasonable accommodation. And as Western public opinion shifts against Israel, Western political leaders will track with this shift.

The incident also wrecks Israeli relations with Turkey, historically an Israeli ally in the Muslim world with longstanding military cooperation with Israel. The Turkish government undoubtedly has wanted to move away from this relationship, but it faced resistance within the Turkish military and among secularists. The new Israeli action makes a break with Israel easy, and indeed almost necessary for Ankara. With roughly the population of Houston, Texas, Israel is just not large enough to withstand extended isolation, meaning this event has profound geopolitical implications.

Public opinion matters where issues are not of fundamental interest to a nation. Israel is not a fundamental interest to other nations. The ability to generate public antipathy to Israel can therefore reshape Israeli relations with countries critical to Israel. For example, a redefinition of U.S.-Israeli relations will have much less effect on the United States than on Israel. The Obama administration, already irritated by the Israelis, might now see a shift in U.S. public opinion that will open the way to a new U.S.-Israeli relationship disadvantageous to Israel.

The Israelis will argue that this is all unfair, as they were provoked. Like the British, they seem to think that the issue is whose logic is correct. But the issue actually is, whose logic will be heard? As with a tank battle or an airstrike, this sort of warfare has nothing to do with fairness. It has to do with controlling public perception and using that public perception to shape foreign policy around the world. In this case, the issue will be whether the deaths were necessary. The Israeli argument of provocation will have limited traction.

Internationally, there is little doubt that the incident will generate a firestorm. Certainly, Turkey will break cooperation with Israel. Opinion in Europe will likely harden. And public opinion in the United States—by far the most important in the equation—might shift to a “plague-on-both-your-houses” position.

While the international reaction is predictable, the interesting question is whether this evolution will cause a political crisis in Israel. Those in Israel who feel that international isolation is preferable to accommodation with the Palestinians are in control now. Many in the opposition see Israel's isolation as a strategic threat. Economically and militarily, they argue, Israel cannot survive in isolation. The current regime will respond that there will be no isolation. The flotilla aimed to generate what the government has said would not happen.

The tougher Israel is, the more the flotilla's narrative takes hold. As the Zionists knew in 1947 and the Palestinians are learning, controlling public opinion requires subtlety, a selective narrative and cynicism. As they also knew, losing the battle can be catastrophic. It cost Britain the Mandate and allowed Israel to survive. Israel's enemies are now turning the tables. This maneuver was far more effective than suicide bombings or the Intifada in challenging Israel's public perception and therefore its geopolitical position (though if the Palestinians return to some of their more distasteful tactics like suicide bombing, the Turkish strategy of portraying Israel as the instigator of violence will be undermined).

Israel is now in uncharted waters. It does not know how to respond. It is not clear that the Palestinians know how to take full advantage of the situation, either. But even so, this places the battle on a new field, far more fluid and uncontrollable than what went before. The next steps will involve calls for sanctions against Israel. The Israeli threats against Iran will be seen in a different context, and Israeli portrayal of Iran will hold less sway over the world.

And this will cause a political crisis in Israel. If this government survives, then Israel is locked into a course that gives it freedom of action but international isolation. If the government falls, then Israel enters a period of domestic uncertainty. In either case, the flotilla achieved its strategic mission. It got Israel to take violent action against it. In doing so, Israel ran into its own fist.

20100602-01 07:46 SteveB Re: "Flotillas and the Wars of Public Opinion"

Dear Ben,

Yes, this is very good. Too bad the Israelis weren't a little more intelligent.

20100602-02 15:30 Pam TED, Etc.

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I wonder if it's true that you can tell what's truly important to a person or society by the things they laugh at. Like clean, orderly Germans laugh at poop jokes; Italians make jokes about religion, and American men make jokes about sex. Is it that the subject is inherently uncomfortable, so let's laugh at it? The vacation photos you sent seem to make my point. :-)
As I wrote this, I asked myself what I find funny. It's often not what Mark finds funny. I like humor that plays with language and irony. I like the English sense of humor—not the really stupid kind, but the Monty Python kind. I also like Hugh Laurie and Stephen Fry. They did a TV comedy sketch show 20 or 30 years ago that we just got on video. VERY amusing.

[Can't find the Isabelle Allende reference. —SteveB]

I haven't watched the Isabelle Allende talk yet, but I ADORE those TED lectures. I have watched a lot of them. I love the whole concept: invite really smart, interesting people and have them talk for 20 minutes about something important to them that they've never written or spoken about before. Many of them are absolutely extraordinary. There was a terrific one by a man whose name I can't remember at the moment. Maybe it will come to me. Anyway, he's a very famous, highly respected doctor (I believe), and he talked about a nervous breakdown he had when he was much younger. It was so moving. And Jill Bolte Taylor did one about her stroke. She's a neurologist herself, and she has the real inside story. Then there are the child prodigies. It's a terrific site.

20100605-01 14:52 SteveB BP Gulf Oil Spill

I don't believe in conspiracies. I am neither a Republican, nor a Democrat, just an American. I don't want to be political. I want to spend my time thinking about images, plot technique, and travel descriptions. But, folks, our government has sold us down the river again!

Soon after this whole debacle started, I quoted someone on the scene as saying it was like, "trying to build the fire truck when your house is on fire." But now I know that is not accurate. It's actually like trying to invent the fire truck, internal combustion engine, rubber, alloys, pumps, and all, when your house is on fire. Right?

And you can't really blame BP. Like all giant, multi-national corporations, all they care about is money. If you don't believe that, attend a stockholders' meeting sometime. That's OK, that's what for-profit corporations are supposed to care about, what they're designed to do, no matter what their commercials might try to brainwash you into believing how "good" they are. Do you really think auto companies finally put seatbelts and air bags in cars out of the kindness of their hearts? No! They were dragged kicking and screaming to install them because they were forced by legislation. Legislation, by the way, they fought tooth and nail.

Where were the government regulators BEFORE the oil leak? Why was no one prepared? Where was the legislation? Where were the politicians? Obama finally says he's "furious". I've been furious since the first drops of oil started pouring into the fragile environment of the gulf. Where are the alternatives to oil? Where are the clean coal power plants and electric cars? Where are the millions of American jobs that have been lost to China, India, Mexico, etc.?

Big oil has bribed the politicians through campaign financing. The whole process is exactly the same as the corruption in Latin America. It's precisely like handing the politicians money to put in their pockets. And the regulators are buddies with whatever they are supposed to regulate, especially oil drilling.

Wake-up, people! We have been sold out again. And the only solution I know is to vote every single incumbent politician OUT OF OFFICE, and keep doing so election after election, until they begin to realize once again that they work for you and me. Until they fix things and finally make taking bribes illegal. Then you will see a world of difference, I promise you!

[20100609-01](#) 17:18 Charlie Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat



[20100609-02](#) 17:41 SteveB "Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth & Apple Finally Becomes Microsoft"

"Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth and Apple Finally Becomes Microsoft" by David Gewirtz, ZDnet

June 8, 2010, (<http://www.zdnet.com/blog/government/steve-jobs-demo-god-crashes-to-earth-and-apple-finally-becomes-microsoft/9078>)

Well, it's official. Apple has finally become Microsoft. With all the noise about Apple's market cap over the past few weeks, what most of us failed to consider (until yesterday) was what truly differentiated Apple from Microsoft: the demo.

Steve Jobs has always been a demo god. His ability to hold an audience is legendary. His timing is flawless. His uniform of black turtleneck and jeans is iconic.

Oh, and one more thing... wireless sucks!

Microsoft's demos are supposed to crash, not Apple's. Say what you will about those kids in Cupertino, they've always had rock-solid demos.

But even Apple's near-flawless demo prep can't hold up to the load of a crowded convention center. As my friend and colleague, the very wise Steven J. Vaughan-Nichols described it in Help! I'm out of bandwidth and I can't get my demo up! the problem isn't just the Apple demo. It's that the wireless infrastructure in the United States is inferior—and we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Some regions are talking about replacing wireless phone networks with variants of WiFi. But as Jobs so frustratingly demonstrated, WiFi is vulnerable to overload. So, if you're one of only a few going online, you're fine. But if you're in a crowd, you're scrod. Sjvn is right when he says it isn't just a WiFi problem. He says: The root cause of all of our bandwidth woes is a lack of infrastructure. [Duhhhh!]

Apple announced all sorts of video capabilities on the iPhone 4. If you think AT&T couldn't keep up before, wait until this sexy, new, surprisingly low-priced phone gets into real use. AT&T's network is simply going to melt down. And what of our broadband infrastructure? According to Speedtest's Net Index, the United States comes in 26th in terms of broadband speed.

Let me put this in perspective. The Greatest Country in the World has broadband speeds slower than Latvia, the Republic of Moldova, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Andorra, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Slovakia, and even Estonia.

How can that be? Andorra, a country a smaller population than my home of Palm Bay here in Florida, has better bandwidth speeds than the United States. There's something wrong about that. If I were Glenn Beck, it'd make me cry. So, go ahead and buy your new iPhone 4. You know you're going to do it. But don't use it, or, well, you might break the network.

Can you hear me now?

[20100610-01](#) 08:59 Ben Re: "Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth"

Dear SteveB,

Don't believe everything you read: it's the internet, and almost anybody who bothers to write anything has an agenda, including me.

[20100610-02](#) 09:42 Ben Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat

Dear Charlie,

I have my doubts about Texas; wish I could read the text on the Sheriff's car. Arizona allows Open Carry if you have a carry permit; in fact, concealed carry is illegal there. Arizona is the only state in the southwest that permits this. Texas most definitely does not. (I think Vermont may, but don't know for sure.)

Here in Texas, though, we are conspicuous for our sentiment... so it's a better joke to most people than would be "Arizona Motorcycle Seat"

[20100610-03](#) 10:00 SteveB Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat

Dear Charlie and Ben,

This could also be Montana or Beaver Island, MI. Guns are openly worn (and used) in both places. I would trust most of the people seen carrying them more than I would trust whoever is driving that Sheriff's car, but that's just me.

[20100610-04](#) 10:06 SteveB Re: "Steve Jobs, Demo God, Crashes to Earth"

Dear Ben,

I think the title of this piece was unfortunate.

For me, actually, the point had nothing to do with Jobs or Apple or the demo. It had to do with our sadly lagging infrastructure. We're not even keeping up with ourselves very well. Where is the government "of the people and for the people"? Maybe we need to change that to the **government "of the money and for the money"**!

[20100610-05](#) 10:19 Ben Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat

Dear SteveB,

Beaver Island? I didn't know Michigan allowed open carry, but then, I have only been in Michigan once in the last twenty years. That WAS on Beaver Island, and I didn't notice anyone carrying. Montana doesn't surprise me.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_carry shows me that there are lots more states that allow this than I'd realized.

To my great surprise, California allows open carry of UNLOADED firearms, and of loaded magazines.

Texas allows open carry of shotguns and rifles, but not of handguns.

Michigan doesn't seem to allow open carry at all, unless perhaps on one's own property. Many states' laws appear to preempt more local laws, such as county laws (e.g. Washington state), but not all (e.g. Illinois - Chicago).

From <http://www.businesspundit.com/open-carry-states-list>:

Open carry states:

Alaska
Montana
Idaho
Wyoming
Nevada
Arizona
New Mexico
South Dakota
Vermont
Kentucky
Virginia

Open carry—with restrictions (e.g. permit requirements):

Utah
North Dakota
Minnesota
Iowa
Tennessee
Mississippi
Georgia
Indiana
Maryland
New Jersey
Rhode Island
Connecticut
Massachusetts

We are such a hodgepodge of laws here!

20100610-06 10:34 SteveB Re: Photo: Texas Motorcycle Seat

Dear Ben,

Better open than concealed, in my book.

I'm sure it's not strictly legal on Beaver, but Beaver is a law unto itself. Just about anything goes as long as you don't hurt anybody. I always take one of my handguns over, just to shoot up the place.

My kids used to drive there a lot when they were 8, 10, 12. Heck, they used to drive the ferry over from Charlevoix when they were about 6!

It's still a free land like the old days up there around Beaver.

[20100611-01](#) 11:44 Pam *The Pregnant Widow* by Martin Amis

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I was just reading a review of Amis's latest book, *The Pregnant Widow*. A longish passage is quoted, and I'd like to share it with you.

As the fiftieth birthday approaches, you get the sense that your life is thinning out, and will continue to thin out, until it thins out into nothing. And you sometimes say to yourself: That went a bit quick. That went a bit quick. In certain moods, you may want to put it rather more forcefully. As in: OY! THAT went a BIT F*CKING QUICK!!!... Then fifty comes and goes, and fifty-one, and fifty-two. And life thickens out again. Because there is now an enormous and unsuspected presence within your being, like an undiscovered continent. This is the past.

I love that.

[20100614-01](#) 15:15 SteveB Re: Expatriate Life

from Pam:

I think I don't want to live in Bolivia more than ever. Too many creepy crawlies. I bet it's hot there now. It's 95 here today. I hate it when it's too hot to go outside.

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Actually the weather is perfect here right now. Remember it's "winter". The days have been warm and sunny, dry, not hot. The nights are cool and fresh.

You know, I don't think we have more "creepy crawlies" than you do in the Carolinas or than we had in Indiana. At least, not here in the city. Out in the county, it's a little different. My 2nd wife's father's farm has its own jungle, river, and mountain. His father had his own Indian tribe. Sometimes we would climb the mountain through the jungle to get to the water supply for the farm. The spiders were amazing! And I never saw even one snake there, but Bolivia has, I read, 31 kinds of poisonous snakes. Can you believe it? One of my cows got bitten by something and died a couple of years ago, and dogs often fall victim to rattlesnakes, or *cascabels* (jingle-bells) as they are known here.

But I've never seen anywhere with rattlesnakes and scorpions as bad as Arizona.

Once, in Puerto Rico, I offered to clean-out my girl-friend's shed in her back yard. She had some old furniture, tools etc. in there. I thought it would be easy. It ended up being a three day pitched battle for my life against every kind of crawling thing you can imagine. They were living in everything! I finally bought a bunch of cans of the deadliest spray I could find, bombed the whole place, closed it up, then went back a couple days later. Some of the critters were dead.

[20100618-01](#) 06:59 SteveB Fw: Legal Joe vs. Illegal José

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

JOE LEGAL VS JOSÉ ILLEGAL

You have two families: Joe Legal and José Illegal. Both families have two parents and two children and live in California.

Joe Legal works in construction, has a Social Security number and makes \$25.00 per hour with taxes deducted.

José Illegal also works construction has NO Social Security number and gets paid \$15.00 hour cash "under the table".

Ready? Now pay attention....

Joe Legal: \$25.00 hour x 40 hours =\$1000.00 per week or \$52,000.00 per year. Now take 30% away for state and federal tax: Joe Legal now has \$31,231.00.

José Illegal: \$15.00 hour x 40 hours=\$600.00 per week or \$31,200.00 per year. José Illegal pays no taxes...José Illegal now has \$31,200.00.

Joe Legal: pays dental insurance with limited coverage for his family at \$600.00 month, or \$7,200.00 per year. Joe Legal now has \$24,031.00.

José Illegal has full medical and dental coverage through the state and local clinics at a cost of \$0.00 per year. José Illegal still has \$31,200.00.

Joe Legal makes too much money and is not eligible for food stamps or welfare. Joe Legal pays \$500.00 month for food or \$6,000.00 per year. Joe Legal now has \$18,033.00.

José Illegal has no documented income and is eligible for food stamps or welfare...José Illegal...still has \$31,200.00.

Joe Legal pays \$1,200.00 month rent or \$14,400.00 per year...Joe Legal now has \$9,631.00.

José Illegal receives a \$500.00 per month federal rent subsidy.

Joe Legal pays out that \$500.00 per month, or \$6,000.00 per year José Illegal still has \$31,200.00.

Joe Legal pays \$200.00 month for insurance...Joe Legal now has \$7,231.00.

José Illegal says "we don't need any stinkin' insurance" and still has \$31,200.00.

Joe Legal has to make his \$7,231.00 stretch to pay for utilities, gasoline, etc.

José Illegal has to make his \$31,200.00 stretch to pay utilities, gasoline, and what he sends out of the country every month.

Joe Legal now works overtime on Saturdays and gets a part time job after work. José Illegal has nights and weekends off to enjoy with his family.

Joe Legal's and Jose Illegal's children both attend the same school. Joe Legal pays for his children's lunches while José Illegal's children get a government sponsored lunch. Jose Illegal children have an after school ESI program.

Joe Legal's children go home.

Joe Legal and José Illegal both enjoy the same police and fire services, but Joe paid for them, José did not pay.

Do you get it now? If you vote for any Politician that supports illegal aliens, you are part of the problem!

20100619-01	08:31	SteveB	"Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"
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Well...maybe...

"Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality" by Mark Vaughn, AutoWeek

June 19, 2010, (<http://editorial.autos.msn.com/article.aspx?cp-documentid=1143520>)

(Several automakers announce they'll have hydrogen cars for sale within the next five years. Toyota's target price for its hydrogen fuel cell-powered sedan will be about \$50,000.)

Did you know that hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe? That it powers our very sun? That everything in the hydrogen future is going to be so groovy that we'll need tranquilizer darts shot into our necks just to keep from screaming about how great it'll be?

There are politicians, plutocrats and pundits who believe that H₂ is the future, that ramming it through the membranes of a fuel cell to make electricity is what will power cars in the not-too-far-from-near term. And there are companies betting big bucks on that, too.

All of these elements — people, private industry and government entities — converged this week at the annual National Hydrogen Association's Exposition and Conference in Long Beach, Calif. Even the governor showed up and bench-pressed a few atoms.

The news? One interesting thing was that Toyota chose this week to announce that the target price for its fuel cell-powered sedan, due in showrooms in 2015, will be about \$50,000. That's a far cry from early fuel-cell-car estimates that were usually more like "astronomical."

Toyota, General Motors, Honda, Daimler and Hyundai have all said they'll have fuel-cell cars available for retail sale in the United States within five years. So while it's still off in the future, the fuel-cell revolution is a little less futuristic than it traditionally has been.

And while for years it was easy to dismiss hydrogen-powered anything as being too energy-intensive to be worthwhile, some of the experts at the expo were at least saying that hydrogen makes financial as well as efficiency sense.

"Hydrogen is already made today in large scale at very efficient rates, over 80 to 85 percent efficient in terms of energy in to energy out," said Ed Heydorn, business development manager of Hydrogen Energy Systems for Air Products. "Technologies already exist that can produce hydrogen at efficiencies and costs that meet the needs for transportation and other applications."

Granted, Heydorn is selling the stuff, but he had some interesting points.

"One of the beauties of hydrogen is you can make it out of just about any product that's out there, especially renewable resources," Heydorn continued. "A project that we're undertaking now is one at the local wastewater treatment facility in Orange County, Calif. We're working with a company called Fuel Cell Energy that has a fuel-cell technology that can convert the biogas made from wastewater treatment into electricity. We're taking a slipstream within that electricity production to coproduce hydrogen and make it available for vehicle fuel."

One thing we didn't discuss was how much hydrogen such a process would produce. While there are wastewater treatment facilities throughout the civilized world, is there enough of the stuff to power 140 million cars in the United States and millions more throughout the rest of the world?

Heydorn points out that hydrogen is also available as an off gas from various chemical production processes. However, the majority of H₂ available today comes from steam reformation of natural gas, which is an energy intensive process that releases CO₂. True, CO₂ can at least theoretically be sequestered underground, but that requires still more energy, and there's always the threat that it'll get out again, all at once.

But you can't just write off hydrogen altogether. It's still more efficient than gasoline.

"In today's nonrenewable technologies, using conventional conversion systems, hydrogen is probably 40 percent better than gasoline," Heydorn said. "Now, if you want to get to the long-term 2020, 2050 goals of 80 percent reduction, what you do is bring in renewable components from the production of hydrogen: biomass, solar, wind, the right renewable component depending on the location because there's different optima based on the availability. But if you do that, the footprint for hydrogen for transportation fuels becomes very low."

That's a lot of windmills.

One other advantage is hydrogen made from windmills and solar can be used as an energy storage medium that can be released when the wind dies or the sun don't shine.

Sure, but why not just use all that energy to make electricity that goes straight into an electric battery to power an EV?

"It's actually complimentary in terms of market focus. Hydrogen has range that batteries aren't able to meet with current technology. In terms of efficiencies, it becomes a choice of what's the right use of the different feedstocks that are available, whether renewable or conventional. Hydrogen can provide a pathway that complements what's already happening in the world of electricity production."

Since most hydrogen is made from natural gas, why not just pump the natural gas into a Honda Civic GX NGV?

Bob Boyd, manager of project development and hydrogen solutions for energy giant Linde North America, Inc., said hydrogen is still a better bet.

"If you take a unit of volume of natural gas and put it in a Civic, you might be able to go the EPA equivalent of 35 miles. If you take the same amount of natural gas, convert it into hydrogen, use some of that natural gas to compress the hydrogen and put it into a fuel-cell car, it'll go about 25 percent further."

But even hydrogen specialist Boyd admits the element isn't perfect.

"The biggest drawback is density. It's a light gas. How do you get it into a small space? Other fuels — diesel for instance, is very dense. With hydrogen, the biggest problem is finding a place to put it on the car. Even if we make it into a liquid, it's still four, five, six times less dense than gasoline. That's really the biggest challenge."

That, and what to do as the developing world rises up and starts wanting polyester slacks, big screen televisions and their own fleet of BMWs.

20100620-01 08:39 Mark Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"

Dear SteveB,

I think Ben will agree with me that hydrogen costs much more energy to produce than it returns...government mandates crafted by politicians with no scientific background are responsible for such "dead end" technologies. Great idea, good intentions, but not practical...simply put, the BTU' s aren't there!

20100620-02 13:03 SteveB Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"

Dear Mark,

In a way, I agree with you. I think (at least until fusion comes along, then there's the hydrogen again) that we need to figure out how to burn coal cleanly, sequester the CO2, and make electricity for electric cars.

I suppose some super-catalyst could be developed that could separate water at lower temperatures...

Hydrogen is also highly dangerous.

But, as the article states, hydrogen in fuel cells can easily be more efficient than gasoline. Maybe that's wrong.

Anyone?

20100620-03 21:44 Mark Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"

Dear SteveB,

As far as I understand, with a like amount of gasoline and hydrogen, gasoline will produce more BTU's, diesel even more.....

20100621-01 08:57 SteveB Re: "Hydrogen Cars Closer to Reality"

Dear Mark,

Actually, though it's not really a very fair comparison, a pound of hydrogen will produce far more BTU's than a pound of gasoline (and a much larger explosion!), because the atoms are so tiny and the hydrogen-oxygen bond is so strong. But that's what also makes it a little difficult to break, which is where hydrogen's "inefficiency" comes into possible play.

It's all so very intriguing, no? Hope it's not all too late to save us!

20100621-02 13:09 Ben "The Higgs Boson May Have 'Five Faces'"

Dear SteveB,

This is a link to a discovery.com article on high-energy physicists' pursuit of the Higgs Boson at Fermilab and the Large Hadron collider. It's not long:

The letter to the author by Lubos Motl that follows it is even more fun to read. But you will need the article itself even to follow the letter.

This is the real stuff of "The Big Bang Theory". (Fun TV series, Monday night. Many howlers for anyone who's ever really known a science nerd.)

"The Higgs Boson May Have 'Five Faces'" by Jennifer Ouellette, Discovery News

June 21, 2010, (<http://news.discovery.com/space/the-higgs-boson-may-have-five-faces.html>)

Fermilab's Tevatron accelerator has been making some serious waves the last few months.

Back in May, I wrote about the latest results from the D-Zero collaboration, co-discoverers of the top quark in the 1990s. The D-Zero scientists analyzed data from a bunch of proton-anti-proton collisions and found a 1 percent asymmetry in the number of muons produced compared to anti-muons.

That hinted at "a new particle not predicted by the Standard Model" — colorfully dubbed "the toe of god" by Fermilab scientist Joe Lykken.

And now the team is back with even more intriguing results to announce from their subsequent analysis, published on arVix. See, the Standard Model doesn't fully explain why this asymmetry between matter and antimatter should exist.

Yet, as Fermilab scientist Adam Martin pointed out to BBC News, "What's difficult is to have those large effects without damaging anything else we've already measured. The Standard Model fits just about every test we've thrown at it. To fit in a new effect in one particular place is not easy."

Nonetheless, theoretical physicists are pondering possible alternate explanations that would keep much of the Standard Model's framework intact while still offering a potential explanation of this latest experimental evidence.

And they've come up with a doozy: maybe there isn't just one Higgs boson (the as-yet-undiscovered subatomic particle believed to impart mass); maybe, instead, there are five different versions, with similar masses but different electric charges.

Yes, it's not enough that the Standard Model already has so many types of subatomic particles that it's impossible to keep them all straight without a handy cheat sheet.

Never mind that the theory of supersymmetry would add countless more particles to the mix. Now we have to contend with five — count 'em, five! — Higgs bosons: three with a neutral charge and one each with a negative and positive charge, known as the "two-Higgs doublet model." Apparently this would account for the latest D-Zero results.

Along with many physicists, I hate the term "god particle" to describe the Higgs. Fermilab's Leon Lederman coined the term over a decade ago, and it's been misleading innocent civilians ever since into thinking physicists are trying to prove or disprove the existence of god or something.

But it did give the blog 80 Beats the best line yet about these new results: "If the Higgs boson is the God Particle, then some particle physicists just turned polytheistic."

I guess we'll have to wait and see the future uncovers.

comment posted by Luboš Motl:

It's a nice article. By the way, some genuine newspaper articles about "five face of the [Higgs] God]" haven't even mentioned the word "supersymmetry".

Still, you're making the number "five" sound more mysterious (or unjustified) than it is.

In the Standard Model, one needs the Higgs as a part of a Higgs doublet. It has two complex components - a simple representation of SU(2) - which means four real components. However, three of them are "eaten" by the W+, W-, and Z bosons. The three real components of the Higgs doublet become the longitudinal components of the (now massive) three gauge bosons while the fourth one remains a scalar field with a new particle.

In supersymmetry, one needs the minimum of 2 Higgs doublets rather than one. That's $2 \times 4 = 8$ real components instead of 4 from the SM. Three of them are still "eaten" by the three bosons, W+, W-, Z, whose number can't change because the gauge group doesn't change. So $8 - 3 = 5$ components of the Higgs bosons are left for scalar excitations.

Why does supersymmetry (MSSM) need two Higgs doublets? Because, in SUSY, the Higgs scalars have to come with chiral fermionic partners, the higgsinos. However, charged fermions contribute anomalies - which cancel among quarks and leptons but this would destroy the balance again. The only simple way to cancel the new anomalies from the higgsinos is to add another Higgs multiplet with the opposite charges - the left-right mirror.

Another explanation is that one Higgs doublet in SUSY would only be able to have the Yukawa interactions giving the masses either to the upper quarks only, or the lower quarks only. One actually needs both kinds of the Higgs - two Higgs doublets - to make all quarks (classically) massive.

20100621-03	14:31	SteveB	Re: "The Higgs Boson May Have 'Five Faces'"
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Dear Ben,

Ya, this is pretty cool, heh? I've been keeping up with the God Particle because it plays a central role in my big "Dark Matter" poem.

The five varieties also tends to confirm the 11 dimensions + time that supersymmetry now predicts.

I love physics! Especially cosmology.

But I think, ultimately, the physics of the physical universe are so complex that it turns out that it would have been (or was!) much easier for God to have created a non-physical, illusory universe, just as Buddhism predicts. Of course, it must still appear to be logical to us or we would know it's not real. But the facts are so unreal by now, that I wonder if it's all a hint...hey, dummies, of course this can't be real! That is...if there is a God... If not, the universe is even weirder for his absence.

20100622-01	09:19	Phil	Fw: "Overwhelm the System"
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"Overwhelm the System" by Wayne Allyn Root (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/overwhelm.asp>)

Barack Obama is no fool. He is not incompetent. To the contrary, he is brilliant. He knows exactly what he's doing. He is purposely overwhelming the U.S. economy to create systemic failure, economic crisis and social chaos—thereby destroying capitalism and our country from within.

[Isn't this, instead, what the Republicans are doing? —SteveB]

Barack Obama is [Was? —SteveB] my college classmate (Columbia University, class of '83). As Glenn Beck correctly predicted from day one, Obama is following the plan of Cloward & Piven, two professors at Columbia University . They outlined a plan to socialize America by overwhelming the system with government spending and entitlement demands.

Add up the clues below. Taken individually they're alarming. Taken as a whole, it is a brilliant, Machiavellian game plan to turn the United States into a socialist/Marxist state with a permanent majority that desperately needs government for survival ... and can be counted on to always vote for bigger government. Why not? They have no responsibility to pay for it.

1. Universal health care. The health care bill had very little to do with health care. A, It had everything to do with unionizing millions of hospital and health care workers, as well as adding 15,000 to 20,000 new IRS agents (who will join government employee unions). Obama doesn't care that giving free health care to 30 million Americans will add trillions to the national debt. What he does care about is that it cements the dependence of those 30 million voters to Democrats and big government. Who but a socialist revolutionary would pass this reckless spending bill in the middle of a depression?

[Exactly! Who but a socialist commie pig would recklessly spend on a bill estimated by the GAO to save \$billions. —SteveB]

2. Cap and trade. Like health care legislation having nothing to do with health care, cap and trade has nothing to do with global warming. It has everything to do with redistribution of income, government control of the economy and a criminal payoff to Obama's biggest contributors. Those powerful and wealthy unions and contributors (like GE, which owns NBC, MSNBC and CNBC) can then be counted on to support everything Obama wants. They will kick-back hundreds of millions of dollars in contributions to Obama and the Democratic Party to keep them in power. The bonus is that all the new taxes on Americans with bigger cars, bigger homes and businesses helps Obama "spread the wealth around."

[The pot calling the kettle black, if you ask me. We all know who the kings of this kind of thing are, the Republicans. That's why this guy can explain these kinds of activities so well.—SteveB]

3. Make Puerto Rico a state. Why? Who's asking for a 51st state? Who's asking for millions of new welfare recipients and government entitlement addicts in the middle of a depression?, Certainly not American taxpayers. But this has been Obama's plan all along. His goal is to add two new Democrat senators, five Democrat congressman and a million loyal Democratic voters who are dependent on big government.

4. Legalize 12 million illegal immigrants. Just giving these 12 million potential new citizens free health care alone could overwhelm the system and bankrupt America . But it adds 12 million reliable new Democrat voters who can be counted on to support big government. Add another few trillion dollars in welfare, aid to dependent children, food stamps, free medical, education, tax credits for the poor, and eventually Social Security.

5. Stimulus and bailouts. Where did all that money go? It went to Democrat contributors, organizations (ACORN), and unions— including billions of dollars to save or create jobs of government employees across the country. It went to save GM and Chrysler so that their employees could keep paying union dues. It went to AIG so that Goldman Sachs could be bailed out (after giving Obama almost \$1 million in contributions). A staggering \$125 billion went to teachers (thereby protecting their union dues). All those public employees will vote loyally Democrat to protect their bloated salaries and pensions that are bankrupting America . The country goes broke, future generations face a bleak future, but Obama, the Democrat Party, government, and the unions grow more powerful. The ends justify the means.

[The unions grow more powerful? LOL! —SteveB]

6. Raise taxes on small business owners, high-income earners, and job creators. Put the entire burden on only the top 20 percent of taxpayers, redistribute the income, punish success, and reward those who did nothing to deserve it (except vote for Obama). Reagan wanted to dramatically cut taxes in order to starve the government. Obama wants to dramatically raise taxes to starve his political opposition.

With the acts outlined above, Obama and his regime have created a vast and rapidly expanding constituency of voters dependent on big government; a vast privileged class of public employees who work for big government; and a government dedicated to destroying capitalism and installing themselves as socialist rulers by overwhelming the system.

Add it up and you've got the perfect Marxist scheme—all devised by my Columbia University college classmate Barack Obama using the Cloward and Piven Plan.

Vote these clowns out—now!!!!!!!

[20100622-02](#) 10:07 SteveB Re: "Overwhelm the System"

Dear Phil,

Please excuse me, but I find this to be completely...well...crazy!!!!

First of all...Glenn Beck? This guy predicted that the dollar and all creation would be defunct by now, and hoped and prayed and cheered that it would happen! Why? To increase his ratings? Who knows? He's crazy as a fruitcake!

I don't know who Wayne Allyn Root is, but he's got it all wrong. We have to stop this taking sides for and against Democrats and Republicans when they both are totally corrupt (thanks to campaign contributions), working for big companies or big money instead of the American people.

First of all, it is just as much the big Republican tax cuts of Reagan and Bush, and their free trade and illegal immigration that is leading us down the path to disaster just as much as it is any Democratic spending (which Obama, like Clinton, really hasn't done very much of, but, of course, reality doesn't count with Republicans, right?). And why doesn't Republican spending on war count?

As my mother used to say, "GOODNESS GRACIOUS SAKES ALIVE!!!!!"

[20100622-03](#) 12:47 Dennis Re: "Overwhelm the System"

Dear Phil,

Needless to say, this is a gross distortion of anything proposed by Cloward & Piven, who were advocating a strategy to force reforms for the disempowered poor. It was hardly a "Machiavellian game plan to turn the United States into a socialist/Marxist state."

This cr*p rivals anything conjured up by Joe McCarthy. Furthermore, pinning this imaginary scheme on Barack Obama is a ludicrous joke. The poor guy has proven himself inept at even minor reforms, pretty much establishing his politics as Bush Lite.

Destroying capitalism? If that happens it will be from self-destruction caused by shortsighted greedy corporatists, not anything a politician as feeble as Obama could conceivably accomplish alone.

[20100622-04](#) 13:01 SteveB Re: "Overwhelm the System"

Dear Dennis,

iExactamente!

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says it's bogus, <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/williams.asp>, — SteveB]

YOU HAVE TO LOVE HIM....A MUST READ! HE MADE THIS SPEECH IN NEW YORK.

You gotta love Robin Williams.....Even if he's nuts! Leave it to Robin Williams to come up with the perfect plan. What we need now is for our UN Ambassador to stand up and repeat this message. Robin Williams' plan...(Hard to argue with this logic!)

The Plan! by Robin Williams, wearing a shirt that says 'I love New York ' in Arabic.

I see a lot of people yelling for peace, but I have not heard of a plan for peace. So, here's one plan.

1. The U.S., U.K., CANADA, and AUSTRALIA will apologize to the world for our 'interference' in their affairs, past & present. You know, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Tojo, Noriega, Milosevic, Hussein, and the rest of those 'good 'ole' boys'. We will never 'interfere' again.
2. We will withdraw our troops from all over the world, starting with Germany, South Korea, the Middle East, and the Philippines. They don't want us there. We would station troops at our borders. No one allowed sneaking through holes in the fence.
3. All illegal aliens have 90 days to get their affairs together and leave We'll give them a free trip home. After 90 days, the remainder will be gathered up and deported immediately, regardless of whom or where they are from. They're illegal!!! France will welcome them.
4. All future visitors will be thoroughly checked and limited to 90 days unless given a special permit!!!! No one from a terrorist nation will be allowed in. If you don't like it there, change it yourself and don't hide here. Asylum would never be available to anyone. We don't need any more cab drivers or 7-11 cashiers.
5. No foreign 'students' over age 21. The older ones are the bombers. If they don't attend classes, they get a 'D' and it's back home, baby.
6. The U.S., U.K., CANADA, and AUSTRALIA will make a strong effort to become self-sufficient energy-wise. This will include developing nonpolluting sources of energy, but will require the temporary drilling for oil in the Alaskan wilderness. The caribou will have to cope for a while.
7. Offer Saudi Arabia and other oil producing countries \$10 a barrel for their oil. If they don't like it, we go someplace else. They can go somewhere else to sell their production. (About a week of the wells filling up the storage sites would be enough.)
8. If there is a famine or other natural catastrophe in the world, we will not 'interfere.' They can pray to Allah or whomever, for seeds, rain, cement, or whatever they need. Besides ,most of what we give them is stolen or given to the army anyway. The people who need it most get very little, if anything.
9. Ship the UN Headquarters to an isolated island someplace. We don't need the spies and fair weather friends here. Besides, the building would make a good homeless shelter or lockup for illegal aliens.
10. All Americans must go to charm and beauty school. That way, no one can call us 'Ugly Americans' any longer. The Language we speak is ENGLISH..learn it...or LEAVE!

Now, isn't that a winner of a plan? 'The Statue of Liberty is no longer saying 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.' She's got a baseball bat and she's yelling, 'You want a piece of me?' If you agree with the above, forward it to friends...If not, and I would be amazed, simply DELETE it!!

Grayson is a House Rep. from Florida. Just thought this was kind of interesting. I am not forwarding to support him, just passing on information that seemed interesting.

www.CongressmanWithGuts.com

We merely want to live in peace with all the world, to trade with them, to commune with them, to learn from their culture as they may learn from ours, so that the products of our toil may be used for our schools and our roads and our churches and not for guns and planes and tanks and ships of war. —Dwight D. Eisenhower

I was two years old when President Eisenhower gave a stunningly precise prediction of our fate for the next 50 years. He said that for the first time in human history, America had created a permanent military-industrial complex that employed millions and spent billions. "More than the net income of all United States corporations," he noted.

Now, the military-industrial complex dictates our foreign policy. Wall Street dictates our economic policy. Big Oil dictates our energy policy.

But we're going to stop this, with People Power. On June 28, thousands of us will come together for a 'Peace Party' to fund our reelection campaign. When thousands of us individually give \$35 or \$50, we can raise our voices together, and say in one voice: ENOUGH!

Eisenhower told us that the domination of this military-industrial complex would have "grave implications" for the "very structure of our society." He warned against "the disastrous rise of misplaced power." But he hoped that an "alert and knowledgeable citizenry" would protect us.

If only. As if. You wish.

For the past half century, the military-industrial complex has perpetuated one war after another, at enormous cost in both blood and money. In its lust for oil, it has broken country after country, and now the sea floor. 9/11 cost Osama bin Laden \$500,000, while U.S. military action afterward cost us well over \$500,000,000,000.

Now, it's nine years later. And the war goes on. My five children cannot remember a time in their lives when America was at peace.

And no one in power seems to be able to deliver on the things that matter to us—deliver on jobs, on health, on education, on clean water and air, on better roads. On peace. On meeting human needs.

I've done my best in Congress to show the way. Now I need your help. On June 28, we're going to hold an online 'Peace Party' event, where thousands of us come together to support this campaign. We need to raise \$200,000 or more by that day, to show BP and other corporate behemoths that the "small people" (as BP put it) still matter.

We need a peace dividend. We need new priorities. We need people in government who will tell the military-industrial complex, and Wall Street, and Big Oil, to go to hell. And I'm one of them.

Courage, Alan Grayson

P.S. Here is what Eisenhower said:

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense. We have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security alone more than the net income of all United States corporations.

Now this conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every

office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources, and livelihood are all involved. So is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and [it] will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.

[20100624-01](#) 12:12 Bill Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear SteveB,

Politics comprises interest groups, and there probably isn't much to be done about that; some members of our legislative bodies will always be bought and paid for in a sense. But the endless war dimension of what Grayson laments is absolutely right.

Surely the United States can be adept enough in international relations to be the global leader without endlessly engaging in war and feeding the execrable military-industrial complex.

[20100624-02](#) 14:39 Ben Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear SteveB,

Yep: familiar turf.

We need a system that ensures that the people who get 'em elected are simply individual citizens. Like I've told others: let corporations influence elections through their employees, not lobbyists; corporations should have no direct contact with government. One man (or woman), one vote. Period. Of course, this applies to any kind of non-voter entity, such as churches, Bob's Restaurant, and the Boy Scouts or NRA.

The problem with rising up as a body of voters is just that: rising up as a body of voters. It ain't gonna happen. Ross Perot (maybe) tried to make an honest dent in it. I reacted, I actually voted for Ross. In retrospect, maybe it IS a good thing he didn't make it, but it felt good to "send the message". But—it was futile.

Don't bother to tell us to rise up as a group that will never be. It ain't gonna happen. We'll have to be completely subjugated before the majority will believe that's what has to happen, and then, it will be too late. The folks who most strongly believe voters should rise up are all Republicans. Figure out how to get rid of lobbyists, and campaign contributions, permanently. I don't think Congress will go for it, though...

[20100624-03](#) 15:19 SteveB Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear Ben,

Of course "congress won't go for it"! It's a non sequitur, completely. Congress hasn't gotten rid of the corrupt system because the system is corrupt.

I don't advocate anything except something very simple.

We all work to convince enough people to fire every incumbent politician, good or bad. The good ones can run again and get elected next time because they ain't the incumbent.

The big money is only used to brainwash us through the media. We have to stop listening. We have to stop thinking in terms of political parties...one fictitiously good and one fictitiously bad. Or even one politician fictitiously good and his opponent fictitiously bad. They all must go!

Eventually, the politicians will get the idea who is in charge and the system and, hopefully, the corruption will change. The voice of the people will be heard. Peacefully, but forcefully!

Nothing in existence can do the job except the votes of the people. The history of our generation has proven that.

20100624-04 15:31 SteveB Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

It's really all so simple. It's so simple that I'm only going to spell it out one time. It's so simple that I don't understand why it is not more openly discussed.

Our free, elective system of government works incredibly well! The Founding Fathers were geniuses. The ancient Greeks and the old Brits were brilliant. (Everything else is derivative, right?)

Freely elected politicians are motivated to work for those responsible for getting them elected. Let me say that again. Freely elected politicians are motivated to work for those responsible for getting them elected.

Ideally, that means the people who voted for them. That's the way the system was designed to work. Few politicians have the *huevos* to go against what or whom got them elected or keeps them in power. That's human nature. The system was designed with an understanding of human nature and implemented in such a way as to control human motives to serve the will of the people.

But throughout history, certain people have figured out ways to pervert the system to their own ends. It used to be that party bosses and union bosses could get out the vote in such numbers that they became responsible for election results, not the people actually voting. Now, during my lifetime, it is big money, not the people, that controls politicians.

Huge campaign contributions skew the entire system. And, just in case that's not enough, lobbyists and regulators are almost unfettered in their associations, dealings, obligations, and manipulations. Yes, folks, all the really bad stuff is legal. They ain't stupid!

If you don't believe the system is corrupt, ask yourself this: why do giant corporations continue to spend billions of dollars contributing to the campaigns of elected officials, then billions more on lobbyists to make sure the obligations get paid? Do you assume these intelligent men are so stupid as to throw money away all these years? No, put simply, they do this because it works. The corruption itself proves the corruption, does it not?

Why do you think the jobs have been shipped to other countries? Why are we locked in interminable wars that accomplish little or nothing, but cause much pain and suffering?

Why is the country going bankrupt? Why have we not been able to solve any of the problems of our generation...energy, immigration, education, health care, the disappearing middle class, balance of payments, deficits, environment, war? I could go on and on.

Surely the people don't desire this situation. If the people were truly in control...things might be different, but they are not in control, big money is. Politicians are not motivated to serve the people who vote for them. They are motivated to serve the people with money responsible for getting them elected. This must be the situation desired by the people who control the process with their money, is it not?

Few politicians have the *huevos* to go against what or whom got them elected or keeps them in power.

To blame one party or the other, to support one party or the other is ludicrous, in my opinion. It is the system which is corrupt and the people need to ignore the brainwashing, ignore the media, ignore the lies of the politicians, and rise up with their votes and force a change. It's as simple and as difficult as that, my friends.

20100624-05 15:57 Ben Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear SteveB,

Hey, I'll vote for a not-incumbent. I often do!

But, uh, is there any way besides researching every one that I can know that the non-incumbent isn't corrupt...?

Therein lies the problem.

[20100624-06](#) 16:05 SteveB Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear Ben,

That's not the point. The point is to provide a wake-up call to the system, to all the politicians. Of course, the non-incumbent is corrupt! That's my assumption.

What must be broken by the people is the one-to-one connection, in the minds of politicians, between getting big money and getting elected.

Get it? I don't know any other way to do it non-violently. [Now I do: via Constitutional change. —SteveB]

[20100624-07](#) 15:15 SteveB Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear Bill,

You're right about deficit spending. But that's just a small part of the corrupt process. See my list of the problems our generation has failed to solve.

[20100624-08](#) 17:18 Dennis Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

from Ben:

The folks who most strongly believe voters should rise up are all Republicans.

Dear Ben,

Surely you jest!

[20100624-09](#) 17:32 SteveB Re: "Half a Century Under the Whip"

Dear Ben,

Haha! No jest!

There are no Republican or Democratic politicians. That's obsolete thinking.

There is only the enemy! :-)

Pogo said it so well, "We have met the enemy and they is us!"

[20100627-01](#) 13:26 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 20: "Pope Deplores Belgian Sex Raids, Stresses Autonomy"

The Church obviously still feels that it is above the law...from the Pope down. Why should these criminals or, to give them the benefit of the doubt, potential criminals, be treated any differently than anyone else? Does being part of a religious organization exempt any citizen from the law? I don't think so.

See...they still haven't learned their lesson. They evidently intend to continue abusing our children and feel they should be able to do so with impunity. What in the world would it take to wake these perverts up?

I have an idea. Arrest the Pope! He's the one ultimately responsible and, in this case, maybe very directly responsible for much of the cover-up.

"Pope Deplores Belgian Sex Raids, Stresses Autonomy" by Nicole Winfield, AP

June 27, 2010, (<http://dailycaller.com/2010/06/27/pope-belgian-sex-abuse-raids-deplorable/>)

(VATICAN CITY) The pope on Sunday called the raids carried out by Belgian police investigating priestly sex abuse "surprising and deplorable" and voiced his support for the Belgian bishops who were held during the searches.

In a message of solidarity to the head of the Belgian bishops' conference, Pope Benedict XVI said justice must take its course but also asserted the right of the Catholic Church to investigate abuse alongside civil law enforcement authorities.

It was first time the pope himself had commented on the June 24 raids, and his message to Monsignor Andre Joseph Leonard capped a daily ratcheting up of the Vatican's criticism. On Saturday, the No. 2 Vatican official said the raids were unprecedented even under communism.

In the raids, police searched the home and former office of former Archbishop Godfried Danneels, taking documents and his personal computer. The raid came as the country's nine bishops were starting their monthly meeting; the men were held for nine hours and — along with diocese staff — had to surrender their cell phones.

Police and prosecutors have not said if Danneels is suspected of abuse himself or simply had records pertaining to allegations against another person.

Separately, police seized the records of an independent panel investigating sexual abuse by priests, some 500 cases in all. The head of the panel called the raid a huge violation of the privacy of people — mostly men now in their 60s and 70s — who have lived with the shame of abuse.

Benedict said he wanted to write to Belgium's bishops "at this sad moment" to express his solidarity "for the surprising and deplorable way in which the searches were conducted." He noted that the monthly meeting of the bishops was to discuss precisely clerical abuse.

He stressed that such crimes are handled by both civil and canon law "respecting their reciprocal specificity and autonomy."

"In that sense, I hope that justice takes its course, guaranteeing the fundamental rights of people and institutions with respect to the victims, recognizing without prejudice all those who are committed to collaborating with justice and refuting all that which seeks to obscure its noble goals," he wrote.

The Belgian justice minister, Stefaan De Clerck, stressed that the procedures used in the raids were correct and that the bishops were treated normally, according to the Belga news agency. He bristled at the criticism by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican No. 2, saying his suggestion that the raids were unprecedented even under communism had been excessive, based on false information.

20100627-02	14:16	Ben	Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20
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Dear SteveB,

Aren't there similar stories with a variety of sects of the Mormon Church and to a lesser degree to the cult of Scientology?

20100627-03 14:21 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20

Dear Ben,

Maybe as far as abuse goes (though we're talking about thousands of known cases versus handfuls), but these other sects or cults or whatever don't seem to claim so vehemently (or effectively) that they are above the law. Right?

20100704-01 19:27 GaryF Fw: "Happy 4th!"

Dear SteveB,

These are the kind of morons I have to deal with in this part of the U.S.

"Happy 4th!" posted by Timothy Ramsey, July 4, 2010, FirstCoastTeaParty.org

I to am a child of the fifties and sixties (in fact I turn sixty in a few days). I to traveled the same road from Hippydom (I actually lived in Haight Asbury) to our current state of affairs and saw the beginnings of the end of our culture starting with the Viet War and now culminating with our first Communist President, Mr. Obama. We have almost lost everything that generations have sacrificed to gain simply because the left has played on our decency, honesty and unfortunately our gullibility. The Alinsky method , even before it was enumerated in the sixties, was at work starting in the late 1800's, and building brick by brick the Progressive's brick wall of stupidity has now almost surrounded us. We have stood by as the radicals have taken everything that made us great and used those very actions against us. Talk about reverse psychology, we have been playing into their hands for almost, if not the better part of, a century.

We now live in a culture that believes we need CHANGE, but at what cost and what outcome?

The founding Fathers had a vision of the future that gave all an equal chance before the law and although maybe seemingly harsh to some it has given us the greatest bounty a nation or people have ever known. Now the corruption from Chicago has erupted in our heartland and spread to almost every corner of our once brilliant nation.

The sad thing is the Progressives started with our children via their teachers with the desire for unionization. We stood by and gave tacit approval to the utter nonsense being taught to our children by leftist teachers in order not to be singled out by the left for ridicule. We allowed the very sort of people that McCarthy tried to expose take over our media outlets and look what they have given us; pornography, lies, deviancy, and lockstep complacency all cloaked in the garb of supposed enlightened behavior that was to transcend our old hackneyed ways. The left preached about a new road that was supposed to bring us in to a new and better sort of society that would be truly equal. What the Progressives failed to tell us was that the equality they preached was of the lowest common denominator and that anyone trying to have or be more was a pariah.

So now we have leadership that is rather like the Wizard of Oz, in that Obama and Co. keep insisting that we ignore the man behind the curtain (actual video and sound bites showing what they promised) and pay attention only to the image projected on the smoke arising from the front of the curtain (What they say as opposed to what they actually do and enact. We are asked to forget the false promises of the manipulator behind the curtain whose actions actually show what was promised but not delivered). Smoke and mirrors are all they have to offer at this point, but as any refugee from any Socialist nation or regime will tell you what comes next is the "Boot on the Neck" for us as a country and a culture. Jackboots and guns are how the left intend to proceed, this is shown by Obama's desire to have an internal Army equally armed and supplied for the purpose of controlling our "unruly population".

We don't have to stand for this sort of treatment by our elected servants, we can still (at least for now) vote, and voting at this moment in time is the only recourse we have without falling into chaos. Every one of us needs to spread the word that we can and must take back our government and our society and rid ourselves of the scourge that we have so far willingly allowed to bully and cower us for too long. If we don't start acting and behaving as though our lives depended on it we won't have to worry about anything because those lives will have been lost to the executioners' bullets. Remember Wm. Ayers (Obama's mentor) freely advocates eliminating upwards of 25 % of the population in order to achieve their stated goals, the likes of which Obama denies but is all the while emplacing in our nation.

So on this hallowed day I urge you to stand up and spread the word we can and must take back our God given birth right and shed the Socialistic and corrupt leadership we now suffer under. God blessed this nation but that blessing isn't his job to keep or maintain, it's ours, and now is the time to recognize that fact and get back to our job of maintaining what was so wonderfully given to us but what we have for too long taken for granted. That Vet with tears in his eyes needs to serve as a wakeup call for all true Americans of every stripe, a call to Duty and Honor, and so far not yet a call for arms. If we act now perhaps we will never have to hear a call for arms within our borders, but rather we will hear a clarion call for the true equality, goodness and justice laid out in our Founding Fathers original intent as laid out in the three greatest works of mankind our Constitution ,Bill of Rights, and the original ideal set forth by the Declaration of Independence.

[20100705-01](#) 19:15 SteveB Re: "Happy 4th!"

Dear GaryF,

It's really funny, you know, that we all sense that something is drastically wrong. That there are many problems to be solved.

But how do they ever get solved when there is such a disconnect among people as to what the problems actually are?

To my mind, both extremes (left and right) wish to enslave us, but if incompetent Obama is one extreme, as this idiot believes, then bring it on!

[20100707-01](#) 09:14 SteveB Fw: Constitutional Amendment Idea

SteveG,

OK. This is a good one.

I'll do my part...

But while we're at it, there should also be Constitutional Amendments to do the following:

1. Make all lobbying illegal. The government can hire people to gather and present information more impartially.
2. Make all campaign contributions larger than \$100 strictly illegal.
3. Remove all "revolving doors" between regulating agencies and the industries or concerns regulated.

In the meantime, turn all incumbents out of office until our governmental servants get the idea of whom they work for.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Dramatic Hope and Change in November

(This will take less than thirty seconds to read. Please pass it on.)

Governors of 35 states have already filed suit against the federal government for imposing unlawful burdens upon them. It only takes 38 states to convene a Constitutional Convention.

For too long we have been too complacent about the workings of Congress. Many citizens had no idea that members of Congress could retire with the same pay after only one term, that they didn't pay into Social Security, that they specifically exempted themselves from many of the laws they have passed, while ordinary citizens must live under those laws. The latest is to exempt themselves from healthcare reform.. Somehow, that doesn't seem fair. We do not have an elite that is above the law. I truly don't care if they are Democrat, Republican, Independent or whatever. The self-serving must stop. This is a good way to do that. It is an idea whose time has come.

Have each person contact a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in the nation will have the message. This is one proposal that really should be passed around.

Proposed 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution:

"Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States."

You are one of my 20.

Don't forget to "Take out the trash this November!"

[20100707-02](#) 13:01 SteveG Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea

Dear SteveB,

Please consider adding:

1. All federal elections follow the same process and use the same equipment as well as having a paper trail.
2. Term limits for the Senate and House of Representatives.

[20100707-03](#) 13:23 SteveB Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea

Dear SteveG,

I like 'em!

And maybe add that the federal (and maybe all state) budgets must be balanced, unless there is some dire emergency.

That would make an "even" 7.

[20100707-04](#) 14:26 SteveG Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea

Dear SteveB,

It amazes me that during the 60-70's we had street protests about the war, civil rights, and women's rights. Over the past 30-40 years we have allowed companies to rule our government, the past 10 years we have allowed the U.S. to get into 2 wars that cannot be won/ We have allowed our government to become gridlocked, and we sit at home.

We need more than 2 parties.

We need to do away with the electoral college too.

[20100708-01](#) 16:55 SteveB Re: Constitutional Amendment Idea

SteveG,

Always happy to know you're a fellow radical, my old friend!

[20100708-02](#) 16:18 SteveG Corruption in Iraq; TV

Dear SteveB,

If you go to <http://www.channelsurfing.net>, you can access some of the American TV channels. MSNBC is a little left, but I like "Countdown" and "The Rachel Maddow Show". Rachel has been in Afghanistan the past couple of days. Part of last night they were showing some of the mansions built—25 bedrooms—by politicians using U.S. tax money—some of the defense spending. They weren't living in the homes, but leasing them to foreign contractors and then using the "rent money" to live in Dubai or other countries.

Hooked our desktop to a 26" TV for a monitor and about a \$14 antenna, From the antenna we get Fox, ABC, CBS, NBC, and 2 PBS channels. The rest we get from the computer. Kind of liberating in a lot of ways.

<http://www.fancast.com> is another sight you can get some TV shows and movies.

20100709-01 06:53 SteveB Re: Corruption in Iraq; TV

SteveG,

Thanks. I'll take a look at channelsurfing.net. I love Keith & Countdown and miss it. Like Rachel too. She's so gay! If I were a woman, I'd be gay too!

I get CNN Int'l in English & CNN in Spanish. I have a lot of good movie channels in English & Spanish, a channel in English that only shows reruns of U.S. cop shows like CSI Miami, and one in English that only shows reruns of U.S. sitcoms like "Seinfeld" & "Everybody Loves Raymond". I listen to the BBC on the radio.

So I get a lot more international news than I ever got in the States, but U.S. news is kind of lacking, except on the internet

20100709-02 06:56 SteveG Re: Corruption in Iraq; TV

Dear SteveG,

Oh, I thought of another good Constitutional Amendment—a simple flat income tax! And, if not unconstitutional, the States should be mandated to do the same. I'd be for getting rid of the sales tax altogether. It was great in Montana not having to deal with that.

[Mar., 2012: Have totally changed my mind. NO FLAT TAX! It's a trick! —SteveB]

20100715-01 09:15 SteveB "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"
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["'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert" by David Emery, About.com Guide](#)

http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/socialpoliticalissues/ss/illegal_super_highway.htm



[20100715-02](#) 12:54 Pam Re: "Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear SteveB,

Wow. Why DOESN'T the mainstream news media talk about this???

[20100715-03](#) 13:05 Pam Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20

Dear SteveB,

Jon Stewart did a funny piece the other night. First, he quoted all the stuff Jews are supposed to do: lots of dreadful, violent things. He quoted directly from the Torah. Then when everyone was all stoked up about that, he came back with all the stuff Christians are supposed to, and they were just as bad. All religions are bunk as far as I'm concerned. I try to exercise tolerance, because many of my friends are religious to one degree or another, but religion is nothing but fairy tales and worse. A plague on all their houses.

I just heard on NPR that the oil has stopped gushing. Let's hope it lasts.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I keep wanting to recommend books to you. I'm reading *This Is Where I Leave You* by Jonathan Tropper right now. It's a hoot.

[20100715-04](#) 15:11 SteveB The "Church"—Chpt. 21: "Vatican Issues Sex Abuse Guidelines after Crisis" & "UN: Vatican Child Rights Report 13 Years Overdue"

Just thought you should know...

Why have people allowed these monsters to get away with what they have over the centuries? And all in the name of God! What an evil institution!

"Vatican Issues Sex Abuse Guidelines after Crisis" by Nicole Winfield, AP

July 15, 2010 (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/9174865>)

(VATICAN CITY) The Vatican issued a revised set of in-house rules Thursday to respond to clerical sex abuse, targeting priests who molest the mentally disabled as well as children and priests who use child pornography, but making few substantive changes to existing practice.

The new rules make no mention of the need for bishops to report clerical sex abuse to police, provide no canonical sanctions for bishops who cover up for abusers and do not include any "one-strike and you're out" policy for pedophile priests as demanded by some victims.

As a result, they failed to satisfy victims' advocates, who said the revised rules amounted to little more than "administrative housekeeping" of existing practice when what was needed were bold new rules threatening bishops who fail to report molester priests.

The rules cover the canonical penalties and procedures used for the most grave crimes in the church, both sacramental and moral, and double the statute of limitations applied to them. One new element included lists the attempted ordination of women as a "grave crime" subject to the same set of procedures and punishments meted out for sex abuse.

That drew immediate criticism from women's ordination groups, who said making a moral equivalent between women priests and child rapists was offensive.

The Vatican's sex crimes prosecutor acknowledged it was "only a document," and didn't solve the problem of clerical abuse. He defended the lack of any mention of the need to report abuse to police, saying all Christians were required to obey civil laws that would already demand sex crimes be reported.

"If civil law requires you report, you must obey civil law," Monsignor Charles Scicluna told reporters. But "it's not for canonical legislation to get itself involved with civil law."

Victims' groups have accused the church's internal justice system of failing to deal with abuse allegations and allowing bishops to ignore complaints in order to protect the church.

"The first thing the church should be doing is reporting crimes to civil authorities," said Andrew Madden, a former Dublin altar boy who took the first public lawsuit against the church in Ireland in 1995.

"That's far, far more important than deciding whether a criminal priest should be defrocked or not," he told the AP in Dublin. "The church's internal rules are no more important than the rules of your local golf club."

Barbara Dorris, of Survivors' Network for Those Abused by Priests, said the new guidelines "can be summed up in three words: missing the boat."

"They deal with one small procedure at the very tail end of the problem: defrocking pedophile priests," she said. "Hundreds of thousands of kids, however, have been sexually violated (by) many other more damaging and reckless moves by bishops and other church staff."

Earlier this year, the Vatican advised bishops to follow civil reporting laws and report abuse "crimes" — not allegations — to police. But that call was included in a nonbinding guideline posted on the Vatican website, not an official church document or piece of church legislation.

Sex crime allegations are handled by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger from 1981 until he was elected pope in 2005. The congregation's procedures call for canonical trials or administrative punishments which can result in a priest being dismissed from the clerical state.

Recent efforts by civic authorities to investigate abuse allegations have again cast a spotlight on the church's efforts to deal in-house with a crime that is criminally prosecutable in most of the world: Just last month, police raided the residence of the Brussels archbishop and carted off boxes of documents as part of an investigation into clerical sex abuse amid concerns the Belgian church was protecting pedophiles.

The new rules extend the statute of limitations for the congregation's handling of alleged priestly abuse to 20 years, from 10 after the victim's 18th birthday, and can be extended beyond that on a case-by-case basis. Such extensions have been routine for years. Defining the possession or distribution of child pornography as a canonical crime also simply makes current practice official.

The new rules represent the first major Vatican document since the clerical abuse scandal erupted earlier this year, with hundreds of new cases coming to light of priests who molested children, bishops who covered up for them and Vatican officials who turned a blind eye for decades.

But the bulk of the new document merely codifies existing norms for dealing canonically with pedophile priests, making previous guidelines set down in 2001 and updated in 2002 and 2003 to speed up defrocking of abusive priests permanent and legally binding. The document — a letter from the Congregation to bishops around the world — represents a permanent piece of church legislation, as opposed to the ad hoc guidelines used until now.

"That is a step forward, because the norm of law is binding and is certain," Scicluna said. But he acknowledged that the document was just an instrument, a set of norms, and that its application both in Rome and in diocese around the world was key.

"It does not solve all the problems," Scicluna said. "It is a very important instrument, but it is the way you use the instrument that is going to have the real effect."

With so few real changes, Scicluna said he didn't expect a new flood of cases to come forward, as happened in 2003-2004, after the abuse scandal exploded in the United States and some 80 percent of the 3,000 cases handled by the Congregation were opened.

"These new norms on sexual abuse really put into law the practice of the Congregation," he said, adding that it was important to publish them so everyone could know what the rules were.

New elements in the text, as first reported last week by The Associated Press, include treating priests who sexually abuse the mentally disabled — or an adult who "habitually lacks the use of reason" — with the same set of sanctions as those who abuse minors. Punishments can include being dismissed from the clerical state.

The rules also list the attempted ordination of a woman as a "grave crime" to be handled according to the same set of procedures as sex abuse — despite arguments that grouping the two in the same document would imply equating them.

"The idea that women seeking to spread the message of God somehow defiles the Eucharist reveals an antiquated, backwards church that still views women as unclean and unholy," said Erin Saiz Hanna, executive director of the Women's Ordination Conference, a U.S.-based organization that works to ordain women as priests, deacons and bishops.

Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have said the question of ordaining women priests — often raised as an antidote to the priest shortage and to bring about more gender equality in the church — is not up for discussion.

The Vatican in 2007 issued a decree saying the attempted ordination of women would result in automatic excommunication for the woman and the priest who tries to ordain her. That is repeated in the new document, adding that the priest can also be punished by being defrocked.

At a briefing Thursday, Scicluna defended the inclusion of both sex abuse and ordination of women in the same document as a way of codifying two of the most serious canonical crimes against sacraments and morals that the congregation deals with.

"They are grave, but on different levels," he said, and noted that the document also lists crimes against the sacraments including apostasy, heresy and schism for the first time.

Archbishop Robert Zollitsch, the dean of Germany's bishops conference, welcomed the new guidelines as a clear signal stressing that cases of sexual abuse of children and youths have to be thoroughly investigated and punished.

"The injustice of the past is being cleared, and the conclusions for the present and the future are being drawn," he said in a statement.

Benedict's native Germany has seen a flood of abuse allegations surface, and even the pontiff's own tenure as archbishop of Munich has come under scrutiny since a pedophile priest in his archdiocese was allowed to resume pastoral work while being treated.

A spokesman for Germany's Justice Ministry cautioned that the guidelines were an internal matter of the Roman Catholic Church, but welcomed them as a move in the right direction.

German Justice Minister Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger wants to push for an extension of the statute of limitations for victims of sexual abuse who are seeking damages in civil law suits from three to 30 years, the ministry said in a statement Wednesday.

"UN: Vatican Child Rights Report 13 Years Overdue" by Frank Jordans, AP

July 15, 2010, (<http://wwrn.org/articles/33874/>)

(GENEVA) The Vatican has failed to send the United Nations a report on child rights that is now almost 13 years overdue, the head of a U.N. panel has told The Associated Press. [Gee, what a surprise! —Steve]

Like all countries that have signed the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Vatican is required to submit regular reports on its efforts to safeguard child rights.

But the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, despite sending repeated reminders, has received no explanation from the Holy See for why it missed a 1997 deadline, according to the committee's chairwoman Yanghee Lee. In the years since, the Vatican has come under intense scrutiny over its handling of child sex abuse allegations around the world and recently admitted that up to one in 20 priests may be implicated.

"I've made contact with the Holy See on several occasions," Lee said in a recent telephone interview. "I haven't received anything."

Officials at the Vatican's mission in Geneva declined comment Thursday, saying the Catholic city state's envoy to the U.N., Silvano Tomasi, was unavailable.

Tomasi refused to discuss the report last month, saying he was "only the messenger," not the author of the report.

A Vatican representative told the U.N. last year that the report was being "finalized as we speak."

Appearing before the U.N.'s Human Rights Council in September, Hubertus Matheus Van Megen said "a paragraph will be dedicated to the problem of child abuse by Catholic clergy."

The Vatican has faced claims that it has covered up clerical sex abuse around the world, such as by not investigating allegations or transferring accused priests to other duties without punishing them.

Van Megen told the Geneva-based council that the church was "very conscious of the seriousness of the problem" but insisted critics had misrepresented the situation.

"While many speak of child abuse as pedophilia, it would be more correct to speak of ephebophilia, being a homosexual attraction to adolescent males," he told the rights council. "Of all priests involved in the abuses, 80-90 percent belong to this sexual orientation minority, which is sexually engaged with adolescent boys between the age of 11 and 17 years old."

"From available research we know now that in the last 50 years somewhere between 1.5 and 5 percent of the Catholic clergy has been involved in sexual abuse cases," he said.

While the Vatican delivered an initial report in 1995, the second, third and fourth reports are now overdue, according to Lee. This puts it on a par with the Caribbean nation of St. Kitts and Nevis. Only five Pacific minnow states — the Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, Tuvalu and Tonga — have failed to deliver any kind of report.

Mongolia, Senegal and Togo, which also had a 1997 deadline, have since filed their second reports.

Lothar Krappmann, another member of the committee, said many governments see the reports as a nuisance that has little impact on the way they protect child rights.

"Still, in many cases the reports aren't pointless because they give non-governmental organizations the opportunity to pick up on themes and influence policy through public channels," Krappmann told The AP.

Lee, the committee chairwoman, said the treaty contains no penalties for countries that fail to deliver their reports on time — or even at all.

[20100716-01](#) 08:04 SteveB Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear Pam,

As you know, I try to stay out of politics as much as I can. I'm not some kook who sees conspiracies everywhere.

But, to me, the answer to your question is very simple. Big business controls politics via the campaign finance laws, giant campaign contributions, lobbying, and by making sure their own people do all the regulating. They control the media because they are the media. The media is big business, right? It is not completely controlled, but that doesn't seem to change anything, does it?

Big business wants cheap labor and big profits, no matter how it is accomplished—busting unions, shipping all manufacturing to other countries, and illegal immigration. No matter the cost to America or her middle class. No matter the cost to our children and grandchildren.

If this is not the truth, then what is? Get it?

[20100716-02](#) 08:25 SteveB Re: The "Church"—Chpt. 20

Dear Pam,

Yes, I agree. All religion (actually, "spirituality", because the word "religion" implies and includes the organizations we dislike) should be simply between a person and that person's God or gods or world or universe or whatever. How can anything else have any validity? Anything else is, by definition, socialization, brain washing. Yet...

[20100716-03](#) 08:43 Pam Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear SteveB,

I agree with you totally on this. Corporations are the tail that wags the dog. Maybe they're both the tail AND the dog. I heard on NPR that with the new finance regulations, banks are just going to find other ways to keep their profits up. How much money do people need anyway? The rich who only want to get richer are infected with a selfishness that is beyond my understanding. Make good money, accomplish something—fine. But don't reduce the majority of the world's population to penury to do it. I'm glad the Chinese are paying their factory workers more. Why don't they deserve a decent wage as much as Americans do? It's infuriating. We pretend that the voters actually can make a difference. Maybe they do, a little. But Big Daddy gets what Big Daddy wants—every time.

[20100716-04](#) 08:55 SteveB Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Lugubrious? That's more than OK. I, too, have found myself thinking more about the end and all that has been lost. But, like you, not really in a sad way. We seem to share some expectancy...

I'm trying to wrap all such thoughts and feeling into my *grande* poem (which, in Spanish means simply large, not grandiose), "Dark Matter", which I find I have been working on for nearly two years now. Not typical of me. But neither is the subject matter. I've always tried to live my life as fully as I can, but also thought of it as somehow infinite. Lately, I find the infinite harder to attain. "Dark Matter" I hope to finish soon.

The rich and the super-rich: Well, look at Cuba, the U.S.S.R., and China before capitalism. I guess people need the motivation of being rich to create wealth for all of us. Very Ayn Randish, no? And many, many people are poor because they lack motivation or are lazy or however you want to define it. Is that their fault? I don't know. But, like you, I find the extremes difficult to deal with. But without that rare genius, brilliance, motivation, we'd all still be living in the jungle. I'll take the Taj Mahal over "equitable mediocrity" any day. And that idea of Christianity and communism, "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need" is somehow repugnant to me.

In this universe, if we are free to succeed, we are also free to fail, it seems. Yet it makes me so sad to see the homeless and I try to help as many people as I can.

20100716-05 09:06 SteveB Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear Pam,

You know that I am quite a capitalist pig myself (though not a rich one) and I believe in capitalism, profit, and freedom very, very much.

Yet I agree with what you have said.

I think when I first truly realized that something was wrong and got pissed off was when I used to do a lot of sailing. Being from a small land-locked town in Indiana, I got a late start (though I used to dream of building a raft and floating down the Big Walnut to New Orleans. Wonder where I got that idea? :-). Then I sailed tiny boats on big Michigan lakes when I was in college. Then I lived in Portland, Maine, and had a friend in the Coast Guard who had access to some larger sailboats. We had some adventures with fog and storms that I am still amazed we survived.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

In all my days of ports and boat yards and marinas everywhere I have been, one thing really struck me—how many people there are who are really rich! A typical sailboat (or motor yacht, which I loathe) costs as much as a house. If you find one for less than \$100,000, you are lucky, but you are going to have some problems and some fixing up to do. What you want to be in for minimal comfort and safety is something at least about 40' long that costs in the neighborhood of \$400,000 or \$500,000. It's pretty easy to pay a million or two for something a little larger.

All up and down the U.S coasts, the shores of the Great Lakes, Mexico, all the Mediterranean ports of Europe, and all the islands of the Caribbean, the bays and marinas are chock full of these super-expensive toys. Sometimes I would be in my little dinghy, motoring in from some distant anchorage to the dock, passing rows and rows of huge, monster luxury boats, wondering how there could be so many people so rich. If these are their toys, what are their houses and their lives like? How the hell do they do it? And most of the boats, of course, are seldom used. Some rich, gay prince of Denmark and Oprah Winfrey used to have their fancy motor yachts brought to my bay in St. Lucia every year. They would fly down and spend a little time tooling around in their little \$50,000,000 toys. Another guy came every year who's yacht had a helicopter and cigar boat parked on the deck. I don't think I ever even knew his name, but he'd fly all around the island just because he could. None of these people knew the sea. They were dilettantes with full crews. And there would be the Rastas and local people, trying to make a few pennies selling them beads and bananas. Sometimes it was almost enough to make me puke.

20100722-01 07:23 Pam Re: "'Illegal Super Highway' in Arizona's Sonoran Desert"

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I feel strongly, as you do, that the world (for lack of a more precise term) is a deeply unfair place. I would NOT WANT to be rich, don't even fantasize about it. I don't see how the really wealthy sleep at night, knowing what misery is just beyond their vision. I know Oprah Winfrey gives a lot to good causes, as do Bill Gates and others. But, still. A \$50,000,000 boat?! I guess it keeps the boat builders employed. I am deeply ambivalent about this. Throughout history the great works of art have been produced because of the great wealth behind them: Michelangelo had the Catholic Church; Versailles had Louis XIV; great museums have had their patrons, like the Guggenheims and Whitneys. Do we really wish the Taj Mahal didn't exist? I always used to ask my students if a "slave class" were inevitable if even part of man's achievements were to be accomplished. I love it that there is talk of a labor shortage and higher wages in China. If you had to choose between a flat world of equitable mediocrity and a radically unequal world that contained wonders, which would you choose? It's like that Ursula Le Guin story about the village that sacrifices one child a year so the rest can prosper. I think, I know, that's one reason I like the Arts and Crafts Movement so much. William Morris had the right idea: aesthetics for the masses. I also like the movement toward sustainability, eating local, and living small. Perhaps the choice doesn't have to be as stark as I pictured it. Maybe we can have large-scale comfort along with accessible beauty. Maybe the gargantuan spectacles of the past (not that we don't have our own) will be replaced by humbler yet beautiful objects.

You amaze me. I think of my life as perhaps more adventuresome than most, but you have had so many once-in-a-lifetime experiences. Another thing I used to tell my students was to have adventures when they're young so they'll have things to think about when they're old. I stand by that. But this catches me on the horns of another dilemma of choice. My kids and grandsons are central to my life day to day. I know Saskia would love to spend a year in Europe—she and Ben went to Paris once for a week—and travel, and I would love for her to have memorable experiences, yet I don't want her to leave Greensboro, at least not for long. I'm not clingy. I do not intrude into their life or tell them what to do. I encourage them in all their endeavors, and if they were to go abroad for a time, I'd celebrate with them—then go home and cry my eyes out. I feel like this time right now is doubly precious because it won't last, and I want to keep it for as long as I can. I cannot imagine what comes next.

When my kids were small and we lived in Canada, I was very happy. I didn't have a job, and I was free to order my days as I wished, be with my children, and read and write. I knew at the time how happy I was, and I feared the future because I knew that time in my life couldn't last. I couldn't imagine anything that could possibly replace the joy I found with my kids when they were little. Jump ahead a bit, and I'm in Greensboro, going to grad. school, finding new friends, discovering the deep pleasures of my studies. That is what took the place of early motherhood. My relationship with my second husband seemed to be the next big thing. What I'm saying is, one big thing seems to come along and take the place of the last, and you never know ahead of time what it's going to be. Sometimes I feel as I did back in Canada. In many ways my life now is not so very different from my life then. I know I am happy, and I know it won't last. What will be the next thing? Will there even be a next thing? At some point, we will all run out of places to move on to.

20100724-01	12:26	SteveB	"22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
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This is what I've been talking about when I say we've been "sold down the river" by a corrupt political system (both parties, not one or the other, please! Don't stupidly try to tell me this is all Bush's fault or Obama's fault!). Is this really the kind of nation we want for our children and grandchildren?

"22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" by Michael Snyder, *The Business Insider*

July 15, 2010, (<http://www.businessinsider.com/22-statistics-that-prove-the-middle-class-is-being-systematically-wiped-out-of-existence-in-america-2010-7>)

(Editor's note: Michael Snyder is editor of theeconomiccollapseblog.com.)

The 22 statistics detailed here prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the middle class is being systematically wiped out of existence in America.

The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer at a staggering rate. Once upon a time, the United States had the largest and most prosperous middle class in the history of the world, but now that is changing at a blinding pace.

So why are we witnessing such fundamental changes? Well, the globalism and "free trade" that our politicians and business leaders insisted would be so good for us have had some rather nasty side effects. It turns out that they didn't tell us that the "global economy" would mean that middle class American workers would eventually have to directly compete for jobs with people on the other side of the world where there is no minimum wage and very few regulations. The big global corporations have greatly benefited by exploiting third world labor pools over the last several decades, but middle class American workers have increasingly found things to be very tough.

Here are the statistics to prove it: [The sources of the statistics would be a nice touch here. —SteveB]

1. 83 percent of all U.S. stocks are in the hands of 1 percent of the people.
2. 61 percent of Americans "always or usually" live paycheck to paycheck, which was up from 49 percent in 2008 and 43 percent in 2007.
3. 66 percent of the income growth between 2001 and 2007 went to the top 1% of all Americans.
4. 36 percent of Americans say that they don't contribute anything to retirement savings.
5. A staggering 43 percent of Americans have less than \$10,000 saved up for retirement.
6. 24 percent of American workers say that they have postponed their planned retirement age in the past year.
7. Over 1.4 million Americans filed for personal bankruptcy in 2009, which represented a 32 percent increase over 2008.
8. Only the top 5 percent of U.S. households have earned enough additional income to match the rise in housing costs since 1975.
9. For the first time in U.S. history, banks own a greater share of residential housing net worth in the United States than all individual Americans put together.
10. In 1950, the ratio of the average executive's paycheck to the average worker's paycheck was about 30 to 1. Since the year 2000, that ratio has exploded to between 300 to 500 to one.
11. As of 2007, the bottom 80 percent of American households held about 7% of the liquid financial assets.
12. The bottom 50 percent of income earners in the United States now collectively own less than 1 percent of the nation's wealth.
13. Average Wall Street bonuses for 2009 were up 17 percent when compared with 2008.
14. In the United States, the average federal worker now earns 60% MORE than the average worker in the private sector.
15. The top 1 percent of U.S. households own nearly twice as much of America's corporate wealth as they did just 15 years ago.
16. In America today, the average time needed to find a job has risen to a record 35.2 weeks.
17. More than 40 percent of Americans who actually are employed are now working in service jobs, which are often very low paying.

18. For the first time in U.S. history, more than 40 million Americans are on food stamps, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture projects that number will go up to 43 million Americans in 2011.

19. This is what American workers now must compete against: in China a garment worker makes approximately 86 cents an hour and in Cambodia a garment worker makes approximately 22 cents an hour.

20. Approximately 21 percent of all children in the United States are living below the poverty line in 2010—the highest rate in 20 years.

21. Despite the financial crisis, the number of millionaires in the United States rose a whopping 16 percent to 7.8 million in 2009.

22. The top 10 percent of Americans now earn around 50 percent of our national income.

Giant Sucking Sound

The reality is that no matter how smart, how strong, how educated or how hard working American workers are, they just cannot compete with people who are desperate to put in 10 to 12 hour days at less than a dollar an hour on the other side of the world. After all, what corporation in their right mind is going to pay an American worker 10 times more (plus benefits) to do the same job? The world is fundamentally changing. Wealth and power are rapidly becoming concentrated at the top and the big global corporations are making massive amounts of money. Meanwhile, the American middle class is being systematically wiped out of existence as U.S. workers are slowly being merged into the new "global" labor pool.

What do most Americans have to offer in the marketplace other than their labor? Not much. The truth is that most Americans are absolutely dependent on someone else giving them a job. But today, U.S. workers are "less attractive" than ever. Compared to the rest of the world, American workers are extremely expensive, and the government keeps passing more rules and regulations seemingly on a monthly basis that makes it even more difficult to conduct business in the United States.

So corporations are moving operations out of the U.S. at breathtaking speed. Since the U.S. government does not penalize them for doing so, there really is no incentive for them to stay.

What has developed is a situation where the people at the top are doing quite well, while most Americans are finding it increasingly difficult to make it. There are now about six unemployed Americans for every new job opening in the United States, and the number of "chronically unemployed" is absolutely soaring. There simply are not nearly enough jobs for everyone.

Many of those who are able to get jobs are finding that they are making less money than they used to. In fact, an increasingly large percentage of Americans are working at low wage retail and service jobs.

But you can't raise a family on what you make flipping burgers at McDonald's or on what you bring in from greeting customers down at the local Wal-Mart.

The truth is that the middle class in America is dying—and once it is gone it will be incredibly difficult to rebuild.

20100724-02

12:31

Pam

Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"

Dear SteveB,

I know, I know. It's awful. A society is only as healthy as its middle class. I see so many things eroding in this country, including our civil liberties. There's a lot of secret stuff going on, and too often the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing. You've never said whether you plan to stay in Bolivia forever. Maybe you don't know. But I would imagine that Bolivian corruption makes the U.S. look like an Amish farm community. Does it not bother you if it's not America? It always amazes me that people (as seen in the media) are so surprised and outraged by the corruption in Afghanistan, as if this were something new or unusual. The kind of "corruption" that so bothers Americans is simply business as usual there, and it's always been that way. Do we really believe we can go in there and "clean it up"?! I don't mean to insult

your adoptive homeland, but I think I'd go crazy living in an even more corrupt society than the American. Is there a thriving middle class in Bolivia, or are you one of the "elite"? I'm not being critical, just curious.

20100724-03	13:06	Dennis	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
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from SteveB:

This is what I've been talking about when I say we've been "sold down the river" by a corrupt political system (both parties, not one or the other, please! Don't stupidly try to tell me this is all Bush's fault or Obama's fault!). Is this really the kind of nation we want for our children and grandchildren?

Dear Steve et al.,

The political system only reflects the economic self-interest of the dominant class. Is it any secret that the last 30 years of conservatism have all been about smoothing the way for the wealthy to consolidate their dominance? Anyone pointing out the facts in this article over the last three decades would be dismissed or accused by the right of provoking class struggle. Well, the class struggle has quietly been won by the elite of the corporatist state as the poor and middle classes have acquiesced without much of a struggle. The game is just about up. Ignorant, complacent Americans may not deserve what they got, but they got what they deserved.

20100725-01	07:21	SteveB	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America"
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Dear Dennis,

"the last 30 years of conservatism"...I would change that to "the last 60 years of Republican and Democrat corruption".

20100725-02	08:05	SteveB	Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption
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Dear Pam,

Don't worry...you never offend me.

This is a subject I've done a lot of thinking about...the comparative corruption of America and other countries. I can speak only of Bolivia and St. Lucia, because I know them so well, but I assume most "Third World" countries are very similar.

Here and in St. Lucia, the corruption is what I call "small". Yes, the police and government officials are often "on the take". To get anything done in either country, you have to bribe someone. I consider it a form of efficient taxation. Instead of government employees being paid a decent wage from taxes, you pay the taxes directly to them, eliminating the middle-man. Maybe it's not the best system, I prefer the American way, but in places where nothing is efficient, the bribes grease the wheels of government so that they will actually turn. Often, a bribe permits fairness where the law can be cruel.

But what America has is what I call "big" corruption. Ya, we've eliminated most of the "small" corruption, but all of our politicians are bought and sold by big campaign contributions, mainly from big companies and organizations. In all this time, the corrupt politicians have, uh...conveniently, failed to reform the system, despite numerous attempts. It's a terrible form of corruption invisible to most people, for reasons beyond my understanding.

In Bolivia and St. Lucia, this "big" corruption does not exist so openly. Perhaps it occurs, but very little money is required to be elected. Television and radio advertising are forbidden. There are posters, interviews, and rallies. Maybe politicians take personal bribes, but those are very dangerous and easy to catch compared to the "big" bribes of campaign contributions. All that has to happen is a newspaper hire an investigator to tape a politician taking a bribe. Piece of cake, if you think about it. Even the idiots in the FBI can handle a stupid sting operation.

In Bolivia, every 18-year-old and up citizen and foreign national with at least a two-year visa must vote by law or be fined. If you don't vote or pay the fine, you find it impossible to renew your driver's license or ID or buy a home or start a business, etc. The ballots are paper, which can be recounted. They require signatures of the person voting and an official and thumbprints.

I'd prefer to have a state with no corruption, like maybe New Zealand, Iceland, or Switzerland, but barring that, I'll take the "small" corruption, thank you.

But in a country like Afghanistan, I suspect they have both kinds of corruption. Those are the worst places.

The middle class in both Bolivia and St. Lucia seems to be growing, but there is still great disparity between the "haves" and "have nots". I would have to be called one of the "elite" I guess, even though I don't employ any servants at the present time. My father-in-law's farm is like Feudal Europe of hundreds of years ago. He is not a rich man (except in his land, I suppose), but has many workers and their families who live in their own little houses with thatched roofs scattered about the farm. He pays them little, but takes care of all their needs...medical, education, etc. It gets harder and harder to keep these workers on the farm, yet production and profit rely on them.

He has one worker, I call him Tarzan, who lives alone in a hut beside a clear little river in the part of the huge farm which is jungle (the place is so big it even has its own little mountain range). Tarzan raises the fruits for the farm...yucca, bananas, oranges, sugar cane, mangoes, etc. He has a wife and family way off in town, but he prefers to live in the jungle alone and sees them rarely. He also raises wild bees for honey and can make them "dance"...something very hard to describe, but fascinating. He knows everything about which plants can kill and which can cure. He sometimes has a pet monkey. He is Indian, of course.

[I'm sorry to say that "Tarzan" passed away recently—very much a disappearing breed and a good man. —SteveB]

My father-in-law's father had a much larger farm. Five times larger, at least. He had five children and left each one of them a big farm and a nice house in the city. He had an entire tribe of Indians who were "his". He not only provided for them, he was the "law" for them. If something was stolen, for instance, he was the sheriff, judge, and jury. Wild, huh?

Yes, things are more stable here, but the eventual outcome is still a little cloudy for me...

20100725-03

11:18

Pam

Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption, Words

Dear SteveB,

Back in the day when I was teaching English comp., I'd give the students (freshmen) the assignment of coming up with a list of the ten most ugly words and the ten most beautiful words, in their opinion. That was all. Just a list. I said, don't think of the meaning, just the sound of the word itself. Most of them couldn't do it. So then, I said, OK, five words in each list. There were still many who couldn't do it. I was dumbfounded. Henry James's favorite phrase was "summer afternoon." I like words like willow, silver, lake, hollow, moon, galleon, lick—lots of ooohs and els. I love George Carlin's list of the words you can't say on TV. I love(d) George Carlin. Remember the Hippy-Dippy Mailman?

I enjoyed your defense of "small corruption" vs. "big corruption." That makes sense to me. I don't want to live in a society of small corruptions; I'm too used to things being (apparently) on the up and up. But I am convinced that our system (government, society, culture, call it what you will) is deeply corrupt in a big way. Did you ever read Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*? It's a brilliant novel about political corruption based on the life of Huey Long. I think Jimmy Carter probably came as close as anyone to being uncorrupted, and we see how far that got him. I don't know if you've been following the life and times of Rod Blegoyavich (sp?), the former governor of Illinois, but there's a piece of work! What an a*s-hole. Talk about delusions of grandeur. Corruption in high places infuriates me, it really does, but what truly puts me over the edge is someone who is blatantly corrupt and runs around screaming about how pure they are. Sarah Palin also comes to mind.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I suppose we all cut corners according to someone. I read about a teacher who got fired because she admitted she had slept with her husband while they were still engaged. (Some Christian school, but still.) I think that's absurd, but someone didn't.— More later—my grandson is awake and fussing. He seems quiet again.—I believe it's better to err on the side of live and let live, rather than impose any personal or institutional (i.e. church) imperative on others, but at what point do you say, this goes too far? And when it's someone you care about, what do you do? Or more to the point, what do you think? Do you just put that bit off in a separate box and set it aside? A certain amount of that is inevitable, I'm convinced. And perhaps the same sort of thing operates at a macro- social level. If so, how much corruption is too much? How much is just enough to get a good job done? Huey Long was super corrupt, but he helped a hell of a lot of poor people. That's what Warren's novel explores. It's something I still think about.

I guess this is along the lines of my earlier question about whether some must be at the bottom for there to be a top. I read about how unfair it is to American business that Chinese workers work for so little, taking our jobs abroad. Well, we could keep those jobs at home if we passed a law that required American businesses to pay their foreign workers the same wages as they pay Americans. Why is it fair for Chinese (or Mexican or whatever) workers to earn a pittance, but it's a tragedy if an American is reduced to that? They're both equally tragic, if you ask me. I agree with you about people taking initiative and responsibility for their own lives, but I also know that all too often, circumstances are just too overwhelming. There are those who are too ill, too old, too DUMB to do anything. I don't think we should just kick them to the curb. If it takes a village to raise a child, then doesn't it also take a society to assure a decent life for all its citizens? I guess you could call me a capitalist-socialist. I don't see a contradiction there.

20100726-01	08:25	SteveB	"Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
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Maybe one of these is near you.

"Ten Best Beach Towns in America" by Jaclyn Liechti, SmarterTravel

July 25, 2010, (<http://www.smartertravel.com/photo-galleries/editorial/ten-best-beach-towns-in-america.html>)

20100726-02	09:24	Ben	Re: "Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
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from SteveB:

Maybe one of these is near you.

<http://www.smartertravel.com/photo-galleries/editorial/ten-best-beach-towns-in-america.html?id=27>

Also see:

<http://www.smartertravel.com/photo-galleries/editorial/>

Dear SteveB,

Well, no, none near me. I rate Daytona and Sanibel highly, and Hapuna beach on the Big Island, as well as some of the ones less seen farther south. Maui has fabulous beaches, too. And - of course - Michigan City and the Dunes National Lakeshore are every bit as amazing as Mackinac. Beaver Island isn't shabby, either! My son found Cannon Beach in Oregon amazing at the turn of last year; not swimming weather, but an awesome oceanfront.

Then, there are those little pocket beaches among the cliffs in northern California.

Have you ever been on the lake side of Sleeping Bear Dune?

20100726-03	12:13	SteveB	Re: "Ten Best Beach Towns in America"
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They left off many great beaches...concentrating on the beach towns, I guess. I love the "sugar sand" on Siesta Key (and the little town) and Clearwater Beach (and the grouper sandwiches) in Florida. My favorite beaches are the deserted ones in the Tobago Cays.

I once climbed down Sleeping Bear Dune, then carried a young Laurel back to the top. I have also illegally hiked in, down a less precipitous part of the dune a little further north, walked up the beach and, a little inland, camped for the night. On the way in, we (4 of us) ran into a ranger who asked why we had backpacks. We made up some story I guess the ranger didn't believe, but he just us continue. So we camped almost on the beach, but just over a little dune. We didn't build a fire, all we had to eat for the night was one pack of M&M's, and we spent time on the beach. It was an amazing night! The next morning we hiked up the beach to make our way back to the car we had left in some parking lot. The rangers were waiting for us there on the beach to give us all tickets for illegally camping. They told us that they had looked for us all night. I guess it happened often that people attempted what we did and got arrested or expelled the night they tried. But everyone else always camped right on the beach and built a fire. We had outsmarted them and they weren't happy about it. Those are two of my Sleeping Bear stories.

[20100727-01](#)

11:07

SteveB

Re: "22 Statistics That Prove the Middle Class Is Being Systematically Wiped Out of Existence in America" & Corruption, Words

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Yes, Rod Blagojevich is especially infuriating. Corruption knows no party boundaries. During the last election, I wrote a sort of daily email blog entitled "Senile Moment of the Day". I don't think a day went by that McCain or Palin didn't do or say something truly stupid and/or senile. I would quote some news article that gave then details, then expound on the true meaning. I was merciless! I really hate both big political parties and politics in general, but I considered it a matter of utmost urgency to keep those two idiots out of power. Generally, I took a humorous, satirical approach that most of my friends, etc. enjoyed. We had some lively debates too. But one old friend from Greencastle and Tucson, brainwashed by the right, couldn't take the truth. We had been in close contact for years, but he told me off and I haven't heard from him since. What an imbecile!

Many of us seem to think that it's OK to steal from or defraud big, anonymous companies, but I don't think I could find it in my heart to rip-off the store like that. However, I consider ATM's to be part of the street, so if I ever get so lucky as to find money in one, well, finders keepers. When I was young, I always used to check the pay phones and vending machines for change left behind. That's why I was able to retire young. haha. I can remember a coke machine in the basement of the Methodist Church in Greencastle. This is when cokes were 5 or 10 cents, I can't remember which. It had a mechanical flipper you would rotate by pushing down after inserting your money. This would bring your coke to a little door to be retrieved. I discovered that if you rotated the lever backwards, then downwards, you got a free coke. Did I ever take advantage of it? Heck yes! Would I now? No.

Yes, Robert Penn Warren has been around long enough that, amazingly, I've read him.

I had a good friend, Alan, who was a criminal. A great guy, but a criminal. He was brilliant, but dropped out of college to rob drugstores. Once he stole Pernell Robert's (the eldest son on *Bonanza*) new Porsche and drove it from California to Virginia, stopping by Indiana to visit me. He was using the actor's or the actor's son's credit cards, found in the car, for the trip. My first wife didn't want him in the house and was furious with me. She wouldn't go out to dinner with us. So Alan, his girlfriend, Bunny, and I went out to eat on Pernell Robert's credit card. We had, as I remember, some great steak and wine. When it was time to pay, just in case, Bunny and I went to the car first. This was the moment when I learned about the credit card! She was ready for a getaway. Inside, Alan gave them the card, I guess. Pretty soon, we saw him come running out of the restaurant and into a nearby cornfield. This was not a good sign. It seems that the bank or the police had finally gotten wise. Bunny put the fine machine into gear and off we roared down a long driveway that led to/from the restaurant. On our way out, we passed a police car with lights flashing and siren wailing, speeding in to try to arrest my friend. Very fortunately and amazingly, he didn't seem to notice us pas right by him in the famous stolen car. We drove to my apartment and waited with my now even more furious wife. A few hours later, a muddy and bedraggled Alan arrived, having made his way though cornfield after cornfield to our place. The next morning, Alan and Bunny left for Virginia. There, he kept driving the stolen car until he got caught. Pernell Roberts flew to Virginia, not to be vindictive, but actually tried to help my friend and was able to get him a lighter sentence. He turned-out to be a really great guy. But, in short order, Alan went to prison for a different, additional crime (he didn't learn that crime doesn't pay,

I guess), ended up killing another prisoner there, and never got out. He died fairly young from a heart attack probably caused by the fatty prison food he always complained of. He was a criminal, but I loved him like a brother. We were brothers. Did I shut-off the bad parts of him into a separate box? I guess I must have.

I don't think there should be a law to pay foreign workers what American workers are paid. The cost of living in the States is so much higher that this would not be fair or work either. Free trade has inevitably doomed the American middle-class and enriched the big international corporations. In China, even though a worker might receive pay that puts him squarely in the middle class (of China), he is treated like a slave and his pay is very low by American standards. Workers enjoy cheap public transportation, so they don't need cars. Food and fuel are subsidized by the government. Pollution is the worst I have ever seen anywhere in the world. Manufacturers in the States must pay a lot of money to keep from polluting so much. The playing field is just totally uneven. We had it made, but our politicians sold us down the river. Has this helped the rest of the world? Well, yes, it has helped the rest of the world become more like the U.S. Is this a good thing? Not in my opinion.

20100727-02 13:23 SteveB "Right-Wing America: Rascism and Religion"

"Right-Wing America: Rascism and Religion" by Liam Fox, News Junkie

July 24, 2010, (<http://newsjunkiepost.com/2010/07/24/right-wing-america-racism-and-religion/>)



"When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in a flag and carrying a cross."
—Sinclair Lewis

There are struggles and challenges with race relations and understanding across just about every demographic of American society. Even at its best it is a learning process much like the inspirational story shared by Shirley Sherrod. With civil rights legislation only forty five years old, the entire current population of African American seniors over 65 years old have had the experience of being denied the legal right to vote in their own country. Race relations in America, among a society of equal citizens, is relatively new.

In this stage of relative infancy growing pains are to be expected. Trying to figure out how to implement and enforce equality has been a challenge that requires discussion and at times debate. Debate as cooperative fellow citizens is necessary, but there is a preponderance of malicious and racially controversial rhetoric emanating from a particular area within the body politic. The same population of political and social conservatives that espouse their Christianity, and wish to impose it on the rest of the nation, are the instigators of much of the current, racially divisive, rhetoric.

Tea Party Express rallies, that have been instrumental in campaigning for Sarah Palin, Sharron Angle, Rand Paul, Scott Brown, and several others, have featured at least as many signs demanding that America become a Christian Nation, as they have mocking the President based on his race and ethnicity. Aside from their vague platform of 'smaller government' and 'lower taxes' that lacks any proactive alternatives, the message of their signs and slogans present an overwhelming impression that the Tea Party attendees make a clear correlation of non-white = foreign = non-Christian = un-American.

This isn't a misinterpretation based on observing a minority fringe at the otherwise multicultural and pluralistic events. These are identifiable truths, with well documented photo evidence, of a predominantly homogeneous group of individuals who claim to have unified values and beliefs. From these same events that featured Palin, Angle, Bachmann, et al, who claimed their guidance from God to make America a Christian nation, came invitations for Obama to return to Kenya, with placards showing the President as both a witchdoctor and a monkey.

Mark Williams, the purportedly dethroned leader of the Tea Party Express, who has stood shoulder to shoulder with almost every Tea Party candidate on the November ballot, including Palin and Angle, penned the disgustingly insensitive and racist sounding parody letter to Abraham Lincoln, written as if it had been authored by NAACP president Benjamin Jealous. Although it has been claimed that Mr. Williams was fired by some authority within the Tea Party hierarchy, which claims to have no such centralized hierarchical authority, his letter, and conflict with the NAACP, has sparked a firestorm of activity from the Conservative Religious Right claiming to be victimized by 'reverse racism' from the White House.

Much of these sentiments seem to originate with Glenn Beck who, when not insisting that America become a Christian Theocracy, has repeatedly accused President Obama of being a racist with a deep seated hatred for white people. This unscrupulous fear-mongering is as fallacious as Beck's entire Christian Reconstructionist campaign, and has had an equally deleterious effect on our current national conversation and political climate.

Andrew Breitbart, the infamous Tea Party activist and propagandist who spearheads a large portion of the Internet component of the right-wing echo-chamber, was the architect behind the recent smear campaign of U.S.D.A. official Shirley Sherrod. Fortunately, Mr. Breitbart was foolish enough to underestimate Mrs. Sherrod before attempting a character assassination based on trumped up charges of racism.

Although Mr. Breitbart has re-represented his motivations several times, ranging from an attack on Mrs. Sherrod and the supposedly racist Obama Administration, to an expose of NAACP racism, the fundamental truth remains the same; Mr. Breitbart attempted to use material that he knew to be an incomplete and misleading representation of the facts in order to support false claims of racism and inflame racial tensions and divisiveness.

In the same manner that Fox News blends overtly Christian dogma with revisionist American history and anti-Obama propaganda, Conservative politics have become synonymous with Christian Reconstructionism and deliberate racial divisiveness. O'Reilly, Hannity, and Beck present a consistent ideology and theology on these matters, relinquishing First Amendment rights to the supremacy of Christianity while defending their own race-baiting by playing victim to the very tactics they employ.

Thursday evening past, on Sean Hannity's Fox cable show, in the aftermath of Mark Williams' letter and Andrew Breitbart's smear campaign, in a segment with Pat Caddell called 'Media Fueled Racism(?)', Anne Coulter stated that there is "no racism in America." Believe it or not, whether it's profound ignorance or deliberate denial, it runs that deep. The same woman that claimed that Jews needed to be 'perfected' by becoming Christians claims that there is no racism in America.

Their own bigotries seem to be completely invisible to them. Combined with the delusion that, as white people, they are subject to the oppressive bigotry and racism of non-white Americans, their psychosis would be laughable if it wasn't so damaging. The ingredients and motivation for their revolution of Angry White Christians wanting to "take their country back" is, whether they realize it or not, a model of transparency.

The white, conservative, racially biased, religious right, has embraced a theology that unsurprisingly creates their God in their own image; a white skinned Jesus, wrapped in a flag, carrying a cross, and packing heat.

This version of Christianity is nothing more than part of the definition of exclusivity that bolsters the mindset of 'Us versus Them'. It is a theology based more on identity than doctrine. It is an only slightly watered down version of white Christian nationalism, and a not so distant cousin to the White Citizens Council or the Ku Klux Klan. It's the sentiments, the desires, and the anger, without all the messy honesty. It provides them with what they think is a cloak of credibility for their otherwise distasteful prejudices; sheltering them from political backlash as well as personal admission.

The same motivations that drive the religious right to impose their Christian dogma on every citizen of this country fuels the underlying racism they are struggling to deny. The only things deemed acceptable to them are those things that agree with them, and appear to be like them. It is an affective community of insecure individuals intent on creating a homogeneous society to provide their weakened self-esteem and faltering self-image with the comfort of conformity. If

you want to be accepted or even tolerated by them, you must be just like them. You must look like them and believe like them. They are the schoolyard bullies of American politics. There is no room for difference or dissent in their America.

America's Religious Right is a community that craves exclusivity. They insist on exclusivity from anyone that is not just like them. They claim the exclusive right to have guaranteed rights, and the exclusive right to decide who is worthy to have those rights. In order to achieve this, they claim Divine prescription for their manifest destiny and ordained authority over others, The Constitution be damned.

Their religion, other than part of the construct of their identity, is a medium for the expression of their hatreds and biases. This is not a Christianity of love and charity designed for personal enlightenment and growth. This is a dogmatic Christianity of White Nationalism to be imposed on others. Calling themselves 'Real Americans', to the exclusion of all the 'Fake Americans' that don't look, act, and believe as they do, is the proof they offer of this point.

Perhaps someday Christian Conservative Nationalists will realize that their theology, as well as their social views, are based on fear and ignorance. Perhaps one day they will realize that acceptance, tolerance, and enlightenment, are not synonymous with bias, exclusion and control. Perhaps, but until then, America will only be "One Nation Indivisible" if it manages to keep out from under them and their God.

Jesus Was
*a bleeding heart, long-haired,
peace-loving, anti-establishment,
liberal hippie freak with
strange ideas*
**Everything
Conservatives Hate.**

20100728-01 08:05 SteveB Fw: Let's Say I Break into Your House

I would also have to add that your son-in-law no longer has a job, so he and your daughter and their baby have had to move back home to your house. Also, your son, who worked as a carpenter, no longer makes enough money to live independently, so he's moved back home too. Your house is really bursting at the seams. Of course, you could always move into your garage...but it has six families of illegal aliens living there already...

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Let's Say I Break into Your House

Recently large demonstrations have taken place across the country protesting the fact that Arizona is addressing the issue of illegal immigration. Certain people are angry that the U.S. might protect its own borders, might make it harder to sneak into this country and, once here, to stay indefinitely. Let me see if I correctly understand the thinking behind these protests.

Let's say I break into your house. Let's say that when you discover me in your house, you insist that I leave. But I say, 'No! I like it here. It's better than my house. I've made all the beds and washed the dishes and did the laundry and swept the floors. I've done all the things you don't like to do. I'm hard-working and honest (except for when I broke into your house).

According to the protesters: You are Required to let me stay in your house. You are Required to feed me. You are Required to add me to your family's insurance plan. You are Required to pay for the birth of my children and make them

citizens. You are Required to pay welfare to me to support my babies. You are Required to educate my kids. You are Required to Provide other benefits to me & to my family. (My husband will do all of your yard work because he is also hardworking and honest, except for that breaking in part).

If you try to call the police or force me out, I will call my friends who will picket your house carrying signs that proclaim my RIGHT to be there. It's only fair, after all, because you have a nicer house than I do, and I'm just trying to better myself. I'm a hard-working and honest, person, except for well, you know, I did break into your house.

And what a deal it is for me!!! I live in your house, contributing only a fraction of the cost of my keep, and there is nothing you can do about it without being accused of cold, uncaring, selfish, prejudiced, and bigoted behavior.

Oh yeah, I DEMAND that you learn MY LANGUAGE!!! So you can Communicate with me.

Why can't people see how ridiculous this is? Only in America! If you agree, pass it on. Share it if you see the value of it. If not, blow it off.....along with your future Social Security Funds, and a lot of other things.

20100803-01	09:08	Ben	"Why Some Republicans Want to 'Restore' the 13th Amendment"
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This is like rounding off pi to three. Or, to take a completely irreverent different tack, as senseless as the way California defined assault weapons.

In fact, it's sooooo silly to associate an industrialist's surname with a feudalistic monarchy that I am reminded of a gaff I heard on NPR this morning: it was a report on the drug war in Mexico that stated, more or less, that "...homicides are never investigated, granting impunity to the perpetrators..." So, by its inaction (whether because of the sheer volume, or social pressures is not the point), the Mexican government is granting violent citizens contemptuous disregard? Weird...

I don't really feel that it's necessary or even desirable to force all citizens to acquire a level of proficiency in English, or even to declare it the national and legal language of the U.S. But I sure wish folks who work with the language professional would exercise a little professional responsibility.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Calling all Republicans—please get a grip, you're making us look really ignorant and stupid. It's making my brain hurt. I mean come on, can you please bring some sanity back, just a little, please? Pretty please... with sugar on top. The complete story is from *Newsweek* below.

Iowa Republicans want to "Restore" the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—you know... the amendment banning slavery? Actually, this is not specifically about reinstating slavery, it's even wackier.

These wingnuts are trying to build a case to impeach Obama for accepting the Nobel Peace prize!!!! by stating that he has violated the to "Titles of Nobility Amendment" (TONA) (which was part of the 13th amendment).

Essentially, their point is that acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize confers a title of nobility on the recipient of the NPP and is therefore subject to revocation of United States citizenship! This would not just apply to Obama, this would apply to ANY American who would have the *audacity* to accept the Nobel Peace prize.

Titles of Nobility Amendment (TONA): "If any citizen of the United States shall accept, claim, receive or retain, any title of nobility or honour, or shall, without the consent of Congress, accept and retain any present, pension, office or emolument of any kind whatever, from any emperor, king, prince or foreign power, such person shall cease to be a citizen of the United States, and shall be incapable of holding any office of trust or profit under them, or either of them." [1810. Ratified by 12 state legislatures. —SteveB]

"Why Some Republicans Want to 'Restore' the 13th Amendment" by Jerry Adler, *Newsweek*

July 26, 2010, (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/07/27/why-some-republicans-want-to-restore-the-13th-amendment.html>)

(No, it's not about slavery; like so much of our politics these days, it's about Barack Obama.)

If there is an aspect of the human condition that is unaddressed by the platform of the Republican Party of Iowa, adopted last month at the state convention in Des Moines, you'd have to look awfully hard to find it. Its 387 enumerated planks and principles range widely over politics, culture, and economics, from sweeping statements of belief ("America is good") to the fine nuances of agricultural policy ("We support the definition of manure as natural fertilizer") and touching on the mythical "North American Union" (against) and the gold standard (for). Even so, it's a little startling to come upon section 7.19, which calls for "the reintroduction and ratification of the original 13th Amendment, not the 13th amendment in today's Constitution." Since the existing 13th Amendment bans slavery, while the "original" one was about something else entirely, the wording might give the impression that Iowa Republicans wish to reverse emancipation, which is not at all the case, according to state GOP Communications Director Danielle Plogmann. Like many aspects of Republican politics this year, it's actually about embarrassing President Obama.

But you have to wonder whether the delegates knew what they were getting into. In making common cause with "Thirteenthers," as those who seek to restore the long-lost amendment are known, the party has ventured beyond the far fringes of conspiracy theory, into a mysterious lost land without lawyers or taxes. Maybe they knew what they were doing after all.

Return with us now to the tumultuous years leading up to the War of 1812, when fear of "foreign influence"—by England or France, depending on whether you were a Republican or Federalist—was a dominating issue in American politics. Jerome Bonaparte, the younger brother of Napoleon, had recently spent several years in the United States, where he married Elizabeth Patterson, the beautiful, ambitious daughter of a wealthy Baltimore merchant. In 1810, Jerome was on the throne of Westphalia, while Elizabeth was in America with their son, Jerome Napoleon. (The couple would never see each other again.)

According to historian Michael Vorenberg of Brown University, having a nephew of the emperor of France growing up on American soil might have made the pro-British Federalists uneasy, or, just as likely, suggested to them a way to tie the Republicans to the French Legion of Honor, the Trilateral Commission of its day. Desiring to get out in front of the issue—or possibly seeking to score points against the Federalists, who had their own embarrassing ties to the British aristocracy—Republican Sen. Philip Reed of Maryland introduced an amendment meant to strengthen the existing "emoluments clause" in Article I, Section 9, of the Constitution.

This clause reads: "No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State."

Reed's proposed amendment extended the ban from office-holders to "any citizen of the United States" and made the penalty loss of citizenship:

"If any citizen of the United States shall accept, claim, receive or retain any title of nobility or honour, or shall, without the consent of Congress accept and retain any present, pension, office or emolument of any kind whatever, from any emperor, king, prince or foreign power, such person shall cease to be a citizen of the United States and shall be incapable of holding any office of trust or profit under them, or either of them."

Reed's bill passed both houses easily, and as of Dec. 9, 1812, had been ratified by 12 states and seemed headed for adoption, at which point war intervened. Here, histories diverge. The mainstream view is that the "Titles of Nobility Amendment" (TONA) never achieved the necessary 13 ratifications—three quarters of the 17 states as of 1810—and fell further behind as more states joined the union. That ought to have been the end of it, says Jol A. Silversmith, a lawyer in private practice who has written the definitive account of the "missing amendment." And so it was until the 1980s, when a conspiracy-minded researcher named David Dodge came across an 1825 copy of the Constitution including this provision. Further research led Dodge to conclude that TONA had been ratified by Virginia no later than 1819 and was an accepted, if largely unnoted, part of the Constitution from then until its mysterious disappearance around the time of the Civil War.

If you find it hard to believe that an amendment to the Constitution could have been in effect for four decades and then mysteriously excised and forgotten, well, the times were different. There was no single reference copy of the Constitution to which scribes with quill pens ceremoniously added amendments as they were ratified. Dodge claims to have turned up numerous pre—Civil War copies of the Constitution containing the missing amendment, but that doesn't add up to proof.

Even Congress was confused about the status of TONA and requested clarification from President James Monroe, who turned the question over to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, who reported that it had not been ratified. The evidence that Virginia ever did approve TONA is circumstantial, but, as Silversmith points out, it's also irrelevant, because already by Apr. 30, 1812, with the admission of Louisiana, ratification required 14 states (of 18). To hang the argument on what Virginia may have done in 1819 assumes that adoption required ratification only by three quarters of the states in the union at the time the amendment was submitted in 1810, i.e., 13 of 17. That view has had its adherents over the centuries, but apart from its inherent illogic—surely the high hurdle the Founding Fathers erected to Constitutional amendments wasn't meant to shrink as the country grew—we now have a clear precedent that establishes the opposite. That's the 27th Amendment (on Congressional pay), which was proposed in 1789 but was deemed ratified only in 1992 when it was passed by 38 states—three quarters of 50, not of 13.

In the world of the Thirteenthers, though, it's all a conspiracy, and the leading suspects are those shady characters who put "esquire" after their names. To quote the Web site Constitutional Concepts, "This Amendment was for the specific purpose of banning participation in government operations by attorneys and bankers who claimed the Title of Nobility of 'Esquire.' These people had joined the International Bar Association or the International Bankers Association and owed their allegiance to the King of England." In other words—well, we're not sure how to explain it any better, but Constitutional Concepts CEO Jim Barrus says in an e-mail that enforcement of the 13th Amendment would strike a blow against "the elected politicians who have grand plans of ruling every facet of America," and would essentially delegitimize virtually every act of the federal government since 1819. Who wouldn't want that?

Naturally, most lawyers see it differently. "The esquire thing is ridiculous," says R. B. Bernstein, a professor at New York Law School and author of *Amending America*.

"'Esquire' is not a title of nobility. Back then, they were worried about people accepting literal titles of aristocracy that convey land or privileges, things you can leave to your kids." Lawyers obviously command certain privileges, but they are not inherited.

There are, of course, other implications of Thirteenthism, such as ensuring that the United States never again suffers the humiliation of having a president win the Nobel Peace Prize.

That was just what the Iowa Republicans had in mind, according to Plogmann, who wrote in an e-mail that the plank "was meant to make a statement about the delegates' opinion about Mr. Obama receiving the prize." (Presumably they didn't mind if, in the process, they were also making a statement about any American scientist or writer unlucky enough to win a Nobel.) Unfortunately for them, the Department of Justice looked into whether Obama needed Congressional approval to accept the Nobel under the existing emoluments clause, and based on the meaning of "foreign state" (which would not cover the Nobel Prize Committee) concluded that he did not.

But they could be playing with fire. "We're in a constitutional silly season," says Bernstein, "and whether you are of the left or the right, if you take the Constitution seriously, it's very troubling." The threat posed by the 13th Amendment is remote; as far as can be determined, no other state has followed the Iowa GOP in calling for ratification, and no bill of ratification has been introduced into the Iowa legislature. As far as their platform goes, we should all be willing to defer to Iowa Republicans on the definition of manure as natural fertilizer. So long as they keep it on the fields, where it belongs.

20100804-01	09:15	SteveB	North & South
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Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Is that book you referred me to, *The Mind of the South*, by Johnny Cash? haha. My favorite portrait of the South is *Deliverance* by the poet James Dickey, and the movie. That's the South I'm all too familiar with.

But you are very right: Southerners are friendly people, and I like that. Indiana is actually pretty Southern too, so maybe that's why people are so friendly there. But in some parts of the South, I think people can get a little too damned friendly and it turns into nosiness, especially in smaller towns. I would never want to live in New York City with its rude people. Actually, the people in the streets of Santa Cruz remind me of New York a lot...no eye contact, no hello, no help, no friendliness, no smiles, only not outright rude. Yet when you get to know them, they are so sweet. Living in Maine, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts, I found the people to be rather cold, at first...being used to Hoosiers. But I grew to appreciate

the New Englanders' respect for privacy and individualism, even for eccentricity. And friends made there seem to be friends for life, not shallow Southern friends, as happens. I like that.

North Carolina, I think, has very rapidly become much like Florida...full of Northerners, and maybe that's a good thing. :-)

I know of two places that combine the friendliness of the South with the New England respect for the individual—Beaver Island, Michigan, and Montana. In both places, people will wave and honk at you from their pick-ups as you pass on the road (not a main highway) and are very friendly, but if you want to be you, whatever that may mean, well...have at it! It's OK.

20100804-02 09:44 SteveB Re: "Why Some Republicans Want to 'Restore' the 13th Amendment"

Dear Ben,

This has got to be one of the craziest things I've ever heard of!

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Take care. Hope you guys are all having a great summer.

20100810-01 21:06 Dick Fw: Current European Tax Rates

Dear SteveB,

Do you agree on this one?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I am passing this along as I received it, except I added the URL which confirms the numbers below. I will add 1 comment: I believe these European nations take much better care of their aging population than the U.S.

http://www.ask.com/wiki/Tax_rates_of_Europe

I don't know if these numbers are all accurate, but food for thought.

Startling Numbers...Is this where we are headed?

Current European Tax Rates: [Note: Inaccurate to "Total"! Not done in article. —SteveB]

Country	Income Tax	V.A.T.	Total [bogus]
Denmark	58.0%	25.0%	83.0%
Finland	53.0%	22.0%	75.0%
France	40.0%	19.6%	59.6%
Germany	45.0%	19.0%	64.0%
Greece	40.0%	25.0%	65.0%
Netherlands	52.0%	19.0%	71.0%
Norway	54.3%	25.0%	79.3%
Portugal	42.0%	20.0%	62.0%
Spain	45.0%	16.0%	61.0%
Sweden	55.0%	25.0%	80.0%
United Kingdom	50.0%	17.5%	67.5%

If you've started to wonder what the real costs of "socialism" are going to be, once the full program in these United States hits your wallet, take a look at the table. As you digest these mind-boggling figures, keep in mind that in spite of these astronomical tax rates, these countries are still not financing their social welfare programs exclusively from tax

revenues! They are deeply mired in public debt of gargantuan proportions. Greece has reached the point where its debt is so huge it is in imminent danger of defaulting. That is the reason the European economic community has intervened to bail them out. If you're following the financial news, you know Spain and Portugal are right behind Greece.

The United States is now heading right down the same path. The "VAT" tax in the table is the national sales tax that Europeans pay. Stay tuned because that is exactly what you can expect to see the administration proposing after the fall elections. The initial percentage in the United States isn't going to be anywhere near the outrageous numbers you now see in Europe . Guess what, the current outrageous numbers in Europe didn't start out as outrageous either. They started out as miniscule—right around the 1% or 2% where they will start out in the United States. Magically however, they ran up over the years to where they are now. Expect the same thing here.

It's time to rethink the 'American Dream' idea: It is the notion that with hard work and perseverance, anybody can get ahead economically here. Do you think that can ever happen with tax rates between 60% and 80%? Think again. With the government taking that percentage of your money, your life will be exactly like life in Europe . You will have difficulty in buying a home or car. You will never send your children to college. Let's not shuffle the battle cry of the socialists under the rug either. It's always the same cry. "Equalize" income. "Spread the wealth" to the "poor" (whoever they are). "Level" the economic playing field. Accomplish that and everything will be rosy.

It's time to take a really hard look at reality. Greece is a perfect example. Despite the "socialism" system that has ruled this country for decades, with a 65% tax rate, they are drowning in public debt, would have defaulted without hundreds of billions in bailout money, and still. . .20% of their population lives in "poverty." What has all that "socialism" money bought, besides ultimate power for the politicians running the show? Do you think these people are "free"? They're not. They are slaves to their economic "system."

People, we are at a tipping point in America . We all know it. Turn this around right now or your grandchildren will be massing in the streets of this once-great country, just as the people of Greece now are. Economic slavery is slavery, just the same. Carefully and deeply consider what it takes to throw off the yoke of slavery, once it takes hold and settles over your neck.

20100813-01	12:53	SteveB	Re: Current European Tax Rates & "Think Your Taxes Are Bad?"
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Dear Dick,

Well, yes and no...the current "socialism" panic is a crock of sh*t. People should be worried why there are no jobs!

In Europe, people pay higher taxes but get a lot in the way of healthcare, retirement, and social services. Our rates are much lower, which makes me wonder what the Republicans, especially the rich Republicans, think they have to complain about. Socialism, indeed!

[The chart, below, shows the most up-to-date numbers from the ask.com website given in Dick's original email. The problem with Dick's post is that you can't simply add these rates to get the effective tax rate. (http://www.ask.com/wiki/Tax_rates_of_Europe) —SteveB]

From Wikipedia, Oct. 13, 2011, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tax_rates_of_Europe):

This is a list of the maximum potential tax rates around Europe for certain income brackets. It is focused on three types of taxes: corporate and individual taxes and value added taxes (VAT). It is not intended to represent the true tax burden to either the corporation or the individual in the listed country.

The quoted income tax rate is, except where noted, the top rate of tax: Most jurisdictions have lower rate of taxes for low levels of income. Some countries also have lower rates of corporation tax for smaller companies.

Country	Corporate tax	Maximum Income tax rate	Standard VAT rate
Albania ^[1]	10%	10%	20%
Austria	25%	50%	20% ^[2]

Belarus	24%	30%	20% ^[1]
Belgium	33.99%	50%	21% ^[2]
Bosnia and Herzegovina ^[3]	10%	5% Federal + 0%-15% per location	17%
Bulgaria ^[4]	10%	10% / 15% for self employed individuals	20% ^[2]
Croatia	20%	45%	23%
Cyprus	10%	30%	15% ^[2]
Czech Republic	21%	15%	20% ^[2]
Denmark	25%	51.5% ^[5] At U.S. \$75,000 (child allowances and other credits available) additional 15% tax, total = 34.67%, not 51%	25% ^[2]
Estonia	21%	21%	20% ^[2]
Finland	26%	53%	23% ^{[2][6]}
France	33.33%	41%	19.6% ^[2]
Germany	15.825 % (federal) plus 14.35 % to 17.5 % (local)	45%	19% ^[2]
Georgia	20%	12%	18%
Greece	25%	45%	23% ^[2]
Hungary	10%	16% (20.32%, w/ 27% social security paid by employer is income) ^[7]	25% ^{[2][8]}
Iceland	18% ^[9]	46.28% ^[9]	25.5% ^[9]
Ireland	12.50%	41%	21% ^[2]
Italy	31.4%	45%	21% ^[2]
Latvia	15%	23%	22%
Lithuania	20% ^[10]	21% ^{[2][11]}	21%
Luxembourg	28.59%	38.95%	15% ^[2]
Macedonia ^[12]	10%	10%	18%
Malta	35%	35%	18% ^[2]
Montenegro	9% ^[13]	9% ^[13]	17% ^[13]
Netherlands	25%	52% ^[14]	19% ^[2]
Norway ^{[15][16]}	28%	54.3%	25%
Poland	19%	32%	23% ^[2]
Portugal	12.5%-27.5% (Mean tax rate: 15%)	46.5%	23%
Romania	16%	16%	24% ^{[2][17]}
Russia	20%	13%	18%
Serbia	10%	14%	18%
Slovakia	19%	19%	19% ^[2] (Increasing to 20% from Jan. 2011)
Slovenia ^[18]	20%	41%	20% ^[2]
Spain	30% (28% Basque Country & Navarra, 4% ZEC companies in Canary Islands)	45%	18% ^[2]
Sweden	26.3%	56.6%	25% ^[2]
Switzerland	25%	45.5%	8% ^[19]

Turkey	20%	40%	18%
Ukraine	23%, from 1.01.2012—21%, from 1.01.2013—19%, from 1.01.2014—16%	17%	20%
United Kingdom	20%-27% (further annual decreases planned) ^[20]	50% ^[21]	20% ^[2]

"Think Your Taxes Are Bad?" by Debora Vrana, MSN Money

Apr. 14, 2006 (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1617753/posts>)

Every year, you grimace as you sign your return. Imagine what it's like in Belgium or Hungary, where taxes can take half your pay. Plus: the wackiest taxes on record.

Believe it or not, Americans enjoy some of the lowest income tax rates in the world. Today of all days, it might not seem so.

When you look at the overall tax burden, the U.S. is quite low," said Eric Toder, a senior fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C., and former director of the office of research for the Internal Revenue Service.

For a family with one wage-earner and two children, only Iceland and Ireland have a lower income tax burden than the U.S., according to the most recent data for 2005.

At the top, Sweden, Turkey, France and Poland impose the biggest tax burdens on families, but in most of those countries families get added social services, such as secure pensions and health care.

Citizens in these other countries are paying more money, but they are getting more back, in terms of social programs, said Christopher Heady, head of tax policy for the Paris-based think tank Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD. It's a choice the electorate makes.

The OECD collects data on 30 member countries and annually calculates what it calls the tax "wedge" for each—the combined effects of personal income tax, employee and employer social security contributions, payroll taxes and cash benefits.

Tax burdens around the world (Source: OECD, 2005 data)

The first rate is for Single persons, no kids; the second is for Married, 2 kids (in order of family rate).

<u>Country</u>	<u>Indiv.</u>	<u>Family</u>
Turkey	42.7%	42.7%
Sweden	47.9%	42.4%
Poland	43.6%	42.1%
France	50.1%	41.7%
Belgium	55.4%	40.3%
Hungary	50.5%	39.9%
Greece	38.8%	39.2%
Finland	44.6%	38.4%
Germany	51.8%	35.7%
Austria	47.4%	35.5%
Italy	45.4%	35.2%
Spain	39.0%	33.4%
Denmark	41.4%	29.6%
Norway	37.3%	29.6%
Netherlands	38.6%	29.1%
Czech Republic	43.8%	27.1%
United Kingdom	33.5%	27.1%
Portugal	36.2%	26.6%

Japan	27.7%	24.9%
Slovak Republic	38.3%	23.2%
Canada	31.6%	21.5%
Switzerland	29.5%	18.6%
Mexico	18.2%	18.2%
Korea	17.3%	16.2%
Australia	28.3%	16.0%
New Zealand	20.5%	14.5%
Luxembourg	35.3%	12.2%
United States	29.1%	11.9%
Iceland	29.0%	11.0%
Ireland	25.7%	8.1%

Mysteries of the code

In 2003, total federal state and local taxes in the United States were 24.2% of our gross domestic product, ranking among the lowest in the world, with only Mexico at 19.5% with a lower tax rate. Along with the higher taxes, the difference between the U.S. and some of the other industrialized countries are increased social services, such as pensions and health-care funding.

But for many Americans laboring to file income taxes before the Apr. 17 deadline, the main complaint is not the tax burden, but that confusing document called the U.S. tax code.

The tax system is much more complicated in America, said Toder. Taxes have become a much more stressful and complicated event, even if you are getting money back, he said.

In addition, there are often idiosyncratic taxes each state can levy. These taxes can be as wacky and as quirky as the character of each state. The local taxes can reflect what is important to residents and what activities residents may hope to curb.

Some of these are humorous and some probably don't bring in much revenue, said Lily Batchelder, an assistant professor at New York University who specializes in taxes and social policy. There are a lot of ways we need to simplify taxes. For example:

1. Last year, Tennessee became the latest of more than 20 states to tax illegal drugs. Under the law, when you acquire an illegal drug, you have 48 hours to report to the state and pay your tax, although you aren't required to identify yourself. Once you've paid, you'll receive stamps to put on your illegal substance to show evidence you paid the tax.
2. To help clean up Chesapeake Bay, Maryland residents must pay a flush tax tacked onto septic and sewer bills.
3. In Maine, anyone who grows, purchases or sells blueberries there will pay a tax.
4. In Utah, owners of sexually explicit businesses, where someone appears nude or partially nude, must pay a 10% tax.
5. If you want to buy a deck of playing cards in Alabama, be prepared to pay a tax.
6. In Mississippi, you'll pay a 7% tax on all amusements, unless you are going to hear gospel music and the program is not mixed with hillbilly or popular singing, according to tax experts.
7. In Arkansas, you'll pay a tax if you get a tattoo or nose ring.
8. Canada isn't exempt. In Ontario, boxes of breakfast cereal that contain a toy or bonus item are not subject to retail sales tax, provided the item is not liquor, wine or beer.

It wasn't always this way. America, founded after a revolution sparked in part on tax resistance, had few taxes in its early history. From 1791 to 1802, the U.S. government was supported by taxes mostly on distilled spirits, refined sugar,

corporate bonds and slaves. In 1817, Congress abandoned all internal taxes, instead relying on taxes levied on imported goods.

During the Civil War, however, Congress enacted the nation's first income tax law. Under that, people earning from \$600 to \$10,000 per year paid a tax of 3%, and those who made more than \$10,000 paid higher tax rates. It was the beginning of our modern income tax system.

In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the Constitution made the income tax a permanent fixture. The withholding tax on wages was introduced in 1943 and was instrumental in increasing tax collections to \$43 billion by 1943.

This year [2006], about 132 million tax returns will be filed in the U.S., and about 43 million returns will get back every dollar that was withheld from their paycheck. The remaining 90 million returns will end 2005 having paid about \$1 trillion in federal income tax.

Noncompliance is hard to estimate, but by most international comparisons, Americans are paying the highest fraction of what they owe, experts said.

So we may bellyache, but we pay, said Bill Ahern, spokesman for the Tax Foundation Inc., a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research group, who said part of that compliance may be the result of fear of the IRS. But it may also be the amount is more reasonable. The higher the tax, the greater the incentive to evade, he said.

Hate these taxes?

Well, you can take the path of one of the original tax protesters, Englishwoman Lady Godiva. In the 11th century, she successfully reduced a tax assessment on her husband, the Earl of Mercia, by riding naked on a white horse through the streets of Coventry.

In fact, taxes have been around nearly as long as there have been kings and queens, dictators and governments to levy them. And historically, some taxes were even wackier than those we have today. For example:

1. In England, William Pitt the Younger introduced a tax on every property with more than six windows. The taxes, levied during the 1700s and into the early 1800s, were used to pay for military campaigns in Ireland and elsewhere. As a result of the tax, many windows were bricked up.
2. Also in England, during 1795 William Pitt introduced a tax on wig powder when the French fashion for wearing wigs was all the rage. The unpopular tax was short-lived.
3. Salt, such an important commodity that the word "salary" stems from the practice of using it as part of a Roman soldiers wages, has been taxed periodically by various nations. It has been taxed in China for thousands of years.

Americans' resistance to taxes is as strong as ever. And so is confusion and anger about the U.S. tax code. Last year, the President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform solicited ideas from the public to find out what exactly is wrong with the system. Complaints poured in from individuals, businesses and experts, with many upset about complexity. The panel is trying to simplify the tax code without losing its progressive nature, which forces Americans to pay more as they earn more. Some suggested a national sales tax that would replace the income tax. Others want a flat tax, exempting the poorest Americans. Some want value-added taxes, or VATs, which are common in Europe. These taxes are collected in small increments at every state of production of an item, such as a car.

20100824-01 08:40 SteveB "China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
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Another brilliant idea! What "Free Trade" has wrought: no jobs in the U.S. and this! (See below.) Gee, maybe if we put our minds to it we could figure out a way to use up the world's limited resources even faster? No, I doubt it! What could use them up faster than turning the whole planet into one gigantic consumer economy so the rich can get richer?

"China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks" by Anita Chang, AP

Aug. 24, 2010, (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/levin031/transportationist/2010/08/chinas-60-mile-traffic-jam-cou.html>)

(Gridlock stems from roadwork that won't be finished until next month.)

(BEIJING) A massive traffic jam in northern China that hit its 10-day mark on Tuesday stems from road construction in Beijing that won't be finished until the middle of next month, an official said. Bumper-to-bumper gridlock spanning 60 miles—with cars moving little more than a half-mile a day at one point—has improved since this weekend, said Zhang Minghai, director of Zhangjiakou city's Traffic Management Bureau general office.

But he said he wasn't sure when the situation along the Beijing-Zhangjiakou highway would return to normal.

The traffic jam started Aug. 14 on a stretch of the Beijing-Zhangjiakou highway. That section has frequently been congested, especially after large coalfields were discovered in Inner Mongolia, Zhang said. Traffic volume has increased 40 percent every year.

Drivers stranded in the gridlock in the Inner Mongolia region and Hebei province, headed toward Beijing, passed the time sleeping, walking around or playing cards and chess. Local villagers were doing brisk business selling instant noodles, boxed lunches and snacks, weaving between the parked trucks on bicycles.

The highway construction in Beijing that is restricting inbound traffic flow and causing the jam "will not be finished until Sept. 17," he said.

Authorities were trying to speed up traffic by allowing more trucks to enter Beijing, especially at night, Zhang said. They also asked trucking companies to suspend operations and advised drivers to take alternate routes.

China's roadways are increasingly overburdened as the number of private vehicles booms along with commercial truck traffic hauling materials like coal and food to cities. Traffic slowdowns because of construction and accidents are common, though a 10-day traffic jam is unusual even in China.

20100824-02	09:25	Ben	Re: "China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
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Dear SteveB,

Not to start a long thread, but it's my feeling, based on years of observation, that what really caused our loss of jobs is the loss of manufacturing capacity that began when major industries declined both to re-tool and to adopt the metric system back in the 1960s and 1970s, and more pervasively, the utter lack of consideration of long-range planning in the face of short term greed and the business executives' compensation based on quarterly reports and stock price. It's this last thing that caused the sellout to overseas manufacturing, and the reason that we are strategically utterly impaired with regard to all but the most mundane, and the highest-of-high-tech, manufacturing.

Greed shot us all in the foot.

20100824-03	12:53	SteveB	Re: "China's 60-Mile Traffic Jam to Last Weeks"
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Dear Ben,

Nope! What happened was free trade and union busting. We were sold lock, stock, and barrel to the big money by our corrupt politicians. It's not about stupidity (except that of "the people"). Why re-tool America when slave labor exists elsewhere? The metric system is a bogus issue. What needs to be metric is easily metric. Even in America. I've worked in industry all my life and all the mechanics the world over had two sets of tools. No problem. The world has adapted to both systems at this time. But our goods were always too expensive for the rest of the world. Hell yes! Because we had the highest standard and cost of living. But yes, it is about greed. But the greedy rich didn't shoot us in the foot...they shot us in the head!

20100826-01	16:57	Dick	Fw: Countries with Birthright Citizenship
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[Source of original email unknown. This has been debunked (see below). —SteveB]

HERE ARE ALL THE DEVELOPED NATIONS OF THE WORLD THAT OFFER BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP TO THE BABIES OF TOURISTS AND ILLEGAL ALIENS:

The United States of America.

That's right, every other modern Developed nation in the world has gotten rid of birthright citizenship policies. Yet, most of U.S. news media and politicians the last two weeks have ridiculed the comments by some other politicians that it is time for the U.S. to put an end to birthright citizenship for tourists and illegal aliens.

Folks, the U.S. stands alone.

There used to be all kinds of Developed countries that gave away their citizenship as freely as we do in the U.S. But one by one they all have recognized the folly of that policy.

SOME MODERN COUNTRIES THAT RECENTLY ENDED THEIR BIRTHRIGHT CITIZENSHIP POLICY:

Canada was the last non-U.S. holdout. Illegal aliens stopped getting citizenship for their babies in 2009. Australia's birthright citizenship requirements are much more stringent than those of H.R. 1868 and took effect in 2007. New Zealand repealed in 2006. Ireland repealed in 2005. France repealed in 1993. India repealed in 1987. United Kingdom repealed in 1983. Portugal repealed in 1981.

The United States is the laughing stock of the modern world. Only the U.S. values its citizenship so lowly as to distribute it promiscuously to the off-spring of foreign citizens visiting Disney World on tourist visas and to foreign citizens who have violated their promises on their visitor, work and student visas to stay illegally in the country, as well as to those who sneak across our borders.

20100827-01	13:02	SteveB	"Obama Will Triumph—So Will America"
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I don't agree with all of this, but have been thinking along these same lines myself recently. I wonder how Glenn Beck and Ross Limbaugh can sleep at night knowing their dire predictions for an American disaster never materialized? They were so sure! They were so wrong! I'm sure they are so disappointed! Yes, they predicted disaster because they wanted disaster and disaster improves their ratings. The true idiots always show themselves. Wake up, America!

"Obama Will Triumph—So Will America" by Frank Schaeffer, OpEd News

Sept. 30, 2010, (<http://www.opednews.com/articles/Obama-Will-Triumph—So-W-by-Frank-Schaeffer-100930-495.html>)

Before he'd served even one year President Obama lost the support of the easily distracted left and engendered the white hot rage of the hate-filled right.

But some of us, from all walks of life and ideological backgrounds—including this white, straight, 57-yearold, former religious right wing agitator, now progressive writer and (given my background as the son of a famous evangelical leader) this unlikely Obama supporter—are sticking with our President.

Why? Because he is succeeding.

We faithful Obama supporters still trust our initial impression of him as a great, good, and uniquely qualified man to lead us.

Obama's steady supporters will be proven right. Obama's critics will be remembered as easily panicked and prematurely discouraged at best and shriveled hate mongers at worst. The Context of the Obama Presidency Not since the days of the rise of fascism in Europe, the Second World War, and the Depression has any president faced more adversity. Not since the Civil War has any President led a more bitterly divided country. Not since the introduction of racial integration has any president faced a more consistently short-sighted and willfully ignorant opposition—from both the right and left.

As the President's poll numbers have fallen, so has his support from some on the left that were hailing him as a Messiah not long ago; all those lefty websites and commentators that were falling all over themselves on behalf of our first black president during the 2008 election.

The left's lack of faith has become a self-fulfilling "prophecy"—snipe at the President, then watch the poll numbers fall, and pretend you didn't have anything to do with it!

Here is what Obama faced when he took office—none of which was his fault:

1. An ideologically divided country to the point that America was really two countries.
2. Two wars; one that was mishandled from the start, the other that was unnecessary and immoral.
3. The worst economic crisis since the Depression.
4. America's standing in the world at the lowest point in history.
5. A country that had been misled into accepting the use of torture of prisoners of war.
6. A health care system in free fall.
7. An educational system in free fall.
8. A global environmental crisis of history-altering proportions. (about which the Bush administration and the Republicans had done nothing).
9. An impasse between culture warriors from the right and left.
10. A huge financial deficit inherited from the terminally irresponsible Bush administration.

And those were only some of the problems sitting on the President's desk!

"Help" from the Right?

What did the Republicans and the religious right, libertarians, and half-baked conspiracy theorists (which is what the Republicans were reduced to by the time Obama took office) do to "help" our new President (and our country) succeed?

They claimed that he wasn't a real American, didn't have an American birth certificate, wasn't born here, was secretly a Muslim, was white-hating "racist", was secretly a communist, was actually the Anti-Christ, (!), and was a reincarnation of Hitler and wanted "death panels" to kill the elderly!

They not-so-subtly called for his assassination through the not-so-subtle use of vile signs held at their rallies and even a bumper sticker quoting Psalm 109:8. They organized "tea parties" to sound off against imagined insults and all government in general, and gathered to howl at the moon. They were led by insurance industry lobbyists and deranged (but well financed) "commentators" from Glenn Beck to Rush Limbaugh. The utterly discredited Roman Catholic bishops teamed up with the utterly discredited evangelical leaders to denounce a President who was trying to actually do something about the poor, the environment, to diminish the number of abortions through compassionate programs to help women, and to care for the sick! And in Congress the Republican leadership only knew one word: "No!"

In other words, the reactionary white, rube, uneducated, crazy American far right, combined with the educated but obtuse, neoconservative, war mongering, religious right shills for big business, libertarian Fed Reserve-hating, gold bug, gun-loving crazies, child-molesting acquiescent "bishops", frontier loons, and evangelical gay-hating flakes found one thing to briefly unite them: their desire to stop an uppity black man from succeeding at all costs!

"Help" from the Left?

What did the left do to help their newly elected President?

Some of them excoriated the President because they disagreed with the bad choices he was being forced to make regarding a war in Afghanistan that he'd inherited from the worst President in modern history!

Others stood up and bravely proclaimed that the President's economic policies had "failed" before the President even instituted them! Others said that since all gay rights battles had not been fully won within virtually minutes of the President taking office, they'd been "betrayed"! (Never mind that Obama's vocal support to the gay community is stronger than any other President's has been. Never mind that he signed a new hate crimes law!)

Those that had stood in transfixed legions weeping with emotion on election night turned into an angry mob saying how "disappointed" they were that they'd not all immediately been translated to heaven the moment Obama stepped into the White House! Where was the "change"? Contrary to their expectations, they were still mere mortals!

And the legion of young new supporters was too busy texting to pay attention for longer than a nanosecond. "Governing"?! What the hell does that word, uh, like mean?"

The President's critics left and right all had one thing in common: impatience laced with little-to-no sense of history (let alone reality) thrown in for good measure. Then, of course, there were the white, snide, know-it-all commentators/talking heads, who just couldn't imagine that maybe, just maybe they weren't as smart as they thought they were and certainly not as smart as their President. He hadn't consulted them, had he? So he must be wrong!

The Obama critics' ideological ideas defined their idea of reality rather than reality defining their ideas—say, about what is possible in one year in office after the hand that the President had been dealt by fate, or to be exact, by the American idiot nation that voted Bush into office twice!

Meanwhile back in the reality-based community—in just 12 short months—President Obama:

1. Continued to draw down the misbegotten war in Iraq (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
2. Thoughtfully and decisively picked the best of several bad choices regarding the war in Afghanistan (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
3. Gave a major, precedent-setting speech supporting gay rights (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
4. Restored America 's image around the globe. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
5. Banned torture of American's prisoners. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics)
6. Stopped the free fall of the American economy. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics)
7. Put the U.S. squarely back in the bilateral international community. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
8. Put the U.S. squarely into the middle of the international effort to halt global warming. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
9. Stood-up for educational reform. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
10. Won a Nobel Peace Prize. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
11. Moved the trial of terrorists back into the American judicial system of checks and balances. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics)
12. Did what had to be done to start the slow, torturous, and almost impossible process of health care reform that seven Presidents had failed to even begin. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
13. Responded to hatred from the right and left with measured good humor and patience. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.)
14. Stopped the free fall of job losses. (But that wasn't good enough for his critics.).

15. Showed immense personal courage in the face of an armed and dangerous far right opposition that included the sort of disgusting people who show up at public meetings carrying loaded weapons and carrying Timothy McVeigh-inspired signs about the "blood of tyrants" needing to "water the tree of liberty". (But that wasn't good enough for his critics).

16. Showed that he could not only make the tough military choices but explain and defend them brilliantly (But that wasn't good enough for his critics).

Other than those "disappointing" accomplishments—IN ONE YEAR—President Obama "failed"! Other than that, he didn't "live up to expectations"!

Who actually has failed.....are the Americans who can't see the beginning of a miracle of national rebirth right under their jaded noses. Who failed are the smart-ass ideologues of the left and right who began rooting for this President to fail so that they could be proved right in their dire and morbid predictions. Who failed are the movers and shakers behind our obscenely dumb news cycles that have turned "news" into just more stupid entertainment for an entertainment besotted infantile country.

Here's the good news: President Obama is succeeding without the help of his lefty supporters" or hate-filled Republican detractors!

The Future Looks Good

After Obama has served two full terms (and he will), after his wisdom in moving deliberately and cautiously with great subtlety on all fronts—with a canny and calculating eye to the possible successes, after the economy is booming and new industries are burgeoning (they will be), after the doomsayers are all proven not just wrong but silly: let the record show that not all Americans were panicked into thinking the sky was falling. Just because we didn't get everything we wanted in the first short year Obama was in office, not all of us gave up. Some of us stayed the course. And we will be proven right.

PS. If you agree that Obama is shaping up to be a great President, pass this on!

20100828-01	06:19	SteveB	Re: Countries with Birthright Citizenship
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Dear Dick,

Not quite...below is from Wikipedia:

Jus Soli

In naturalization, jus soli (Latin: law of ground), also known as birthright citizenship, is a right by which nationality or citizenship can be recognized to any individual born in the territory of the related state.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, nation-states commonly divided themselves between those granting nationality on the grounds of jus soli (France, for example) and those granting it on the grounds of jus sanguinis (right of blood) (Germany, for example, before 2000). However, most European countries chose the German conception of an "objective nationality", based on blood, race or language (as in Fichte's classical definition of a nation), opposing themselves to republican Ernest Renan's "subjective nationality", based on an every-day plebiscite of one's appertenance to his Fatherland. This non-essentialist conception of nationality allowed the implementation of jus soli, against the essentialist jus sanguinis.

However, today's increase of migrants has somewhat blurred the lines between these two antagonistic sources of right.

Countries that have acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness will grant nationality to otherwise stateless persons who were born on their territory, or on a ship or plane flagged by the country.

Lex soli

Usually a practical regulation of the acquisition of nationality or citizenship of a state by birth on the territory of the state is provided by a derivative law called *lex soli*. Most states provide a specific *lex soli*, in application of the respective *jus soli*, and it is the most common means of acquiring nationality. A frequent exception to *lex soli* is imposed when a child was born to a parent in the diplomatic or consular service of another state, on a mission to the state in question.

Blurred lines between *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*

There is a trend in some countries toward restricting *lex soli* by requiring that at least one of the child's parents be a national of the state in question at the child's birth, or a legal permanent resident of the territory of the state in question at the child's birth.

Specific national legislation

Jus soli is observed in 16% of the world, the United States being the largest practitioner.

States that observe *jus soli* include:

Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile (children of transient foreigners or of foreign diplomats on assignment in Chile only upon request), Colombia, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji[5], Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Lesotho[6], Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Modification of *jus soli*

In a number of countries, the automatic application of *jus soli* has been modified to impose some additional requirements for children of foreign parents, such as the parent being a permanent resident or having lived in the country for a period of time. *Jus soli* has been modified in the following countries:

United Kingdom on Jan. 1, 1983, Australia on Aug. 20, 1986, Republic of Ireland on Jan. 1, 2005, New Zealand on Jan. 1, 2006, South Africa on Oct. 6, 1995, France also operates a modified form of *jus soli*.

German nationality law was changed on Jan. 1, 2000 to introduce a modified concept of *jus soli*. Prior to that date, German nationality law was based entirely on *jus sanguinis*.

Modification of *jus soli* has been criticized as contributing to economic inequality, the perpetuation of unfree labour from a helot underclass, and statelessness.

Abolition of *jus soli*

Some countries which formerly operated *jus soli* have moved to abolish it entirely, only conferring citizenship on children born in the country if one of the parents is a citizen of that country. India did this on Dec. 3, 2004, in reaction to illegal immigration from its Muslim neighbor Bangladesh, though *jus soli* was progressively weakened since 1987.[7] Malta also changed the principle of citizen to *jus sanguinis* on Aug. 1, 1989, in a move that also relaxed restrictions against multiple citizenship.

20100903-01	14:06	Dennis	"5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
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Screwing yourself is patriotic?

So how's that Tea Party agenda workin' out for ya, freedom lovin' Americans? Read all about it in the attached article.

"5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters" by Adele M. Stan, AlterNet

Sept. 3, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/147911/>)

If people could be counted on to vote in their own best interests, there would be no Tea Party movement, for if the economic agenda embraced by Tea Partiers—a vastly pro-corporation, government-killing plan—were ever to be enacted, Tea Partiers would find themselves among the people most hurt by it.

To hear Tea Party activists tell it, they seek to save future generations from the crushing demands of big government. Yet the agenda they advocate, dictated by the big-money players behind the muscular interest groups that keep the movement growing, will likely render the Tea Partiers themselves the economically squeezed subjects of a corporate state, one in which the elderly will be left to scrounge for crumbs, small businesses will be crushed by lack of capital, and their own ground-level online organizing supplanted by the networks built by giant, corporate-funded Astroturf groups.

As George Lakoff and Drew Westen remind us, people don't vote on the facts: they vote on emotion, according to Westen, and their notion of morality, according to Lakoff. The resentment of Tea Partiers toward liberals, East Coast elites, the poor and people who don't look like them has been effectively marshaled in service of a "free market" ideology cleverly packaged as "freedom." Never mind that free markets are anything but free for ordinary people. The packaging strikes the necessary emotional and moral chords: Free markets = freedom = liberty = endowed by the Creator, as written in the Declaration of Independence by the founders. It's the perfect exploitation of the worldview of conservative middle-class white people—all in the service of enriching the super-rich at the expense of their unwitting, patriotic ground troops.

Casting themselves as an organic uprising in opposition to a federal government they see as the greatest threat to their freedom, Tea Party supporters conveniently look past the likely consequences of the no-holds-barred, anti-regulatory aims of Rupert Murdoch and David Koch, the billionaires whose dollars grease the skids on which the Tea Party movement rides. Murdoch leads News Corporation, the parent company of Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*, the movement's evangelists. Koch is a principal in Koch Industries, the second largest privately held corporation in the U.S., and heir to its fortunes.

The billionaires give the activists lots of entertainment to distract them from this reality, especially in the form of sideshows, such as Glenn Beck's travesty at the Lincoln Memorial, designed to fan the flames of racial resentment while making Tea Partiers feel holy about it. At other times, the demonization or infantilization of the nation's first black president serves up the same charge of adrenaline to the fearful, angry throngs who seek to blame their troubles on anyone other than the corporatist manipulators in whom they've placed their trust.

How else to explain the embrace of the billionaires' agenda by the middle-aged, middle-class folks of the Tea Party movement—the very ones likely to find themselves screwed by it? Here we examine five positions advanced by Tea Party leaders, and what they would mean for Tea Party supporters.

1. Ending Social Security.

Rep. Michele Bachmann, doyenne of the congressional Tea Party Caucus, has outlined a plan for an abrupt phase-out of Social Security. Speaking before an audience of Tea Party supporters at the RightOnline conference convened in July, Bachmann referred to Social Security and Medicare as "welfare" that had seen its day. The event was convened in Las Vegas by the Americans For Prosperity Foundation, whose board is chaired by David Koch. There, more than 1,000 Tea Partiers—the majority of whom are over the age of 45—sat in rapt silence as Bachmann outlined a plan to end Social Security for all those who will be under the age of 65 at the time her potential dream Congress enacts the legislation.

The growth of the federal debt and deficit require a drastic cutback in federal spending, Bachmann said. "Spending comes first, so we have to cut it first," she explained, speaking of her plan to devastate Social Security. "And in my opinion, it'll take us about a long weekend to get that done, and then we'll be fine."

For those between the ages of 55 and 65 at the time Bachmann's Kill Social Security Plan hypothetically passes into law, there would be a means-tested program for "those who truly need it—the truly disadvantaged, those who truly can't go forward." For everybody else, there would be unspecified "alternatives and adjustments." Those under the age of 55 would apparently be squat out of luck, regardless of how truly disadvantaged they are. From the assembled Tea Partiers, not a discouraging word was heard, even as Bachmann outlined a plan to essentially rob them of the money they've been putting into the system all their lives.

According to a *New York Times*/CBS News poll conducted in April, 46 percent of Tea Party supporters fall into the 45-64 age group. (Untouched by the Bachmann plan would be the 29 percent of Tea Party supporters the poll

cited as being over the age of 64.) The same survey revealed that among 47 percent of self-identified Tea Party supporters, either they or a member of their household was receiving Social Security retirement benefits. When asked whether the outlay for programs such as Social Security and Medicare are worth the taxpayer expense, 62 percent said they were.

What to do with all those freed-up dollars? Why not give them back to the corporations and wealthy individuals who bankroll the Tea Party movement? Segueing out of her nuking of the social safety net for the nation's elderly—and stealing the payroll taxes of all those Americans who paid into Social Security over the course of their lifetimes but would never see a dime of their contributions come back to them under her plan—Bachmann launched into a pitch for a corporatist agenda that began with her call for a roll-back of the corporate tax from its current 34 percent to 9 percent, which, according to Bachmann, would make it "one of the lowest in the industrialized world."

Actually, make that possibly the lowest in the world (excluding the handful of mostly broken nations that have none), never mind "industrialized." I mean, even Kazakhstan and Burkina Faso have higher corporate tax rates than 9 percent. And India, where all the good jobs are said to be going? Try 43 percent.

Bachmann also called for zeroing out the estate tax—even for the very wealthiest Americans—and repeal of the Sarbanes-Oxley law, a bill passed in the wake of the Enron scandal that sets standards for corporate accountability. What would that mean for Americans under the age of 64 whose retirement savings would be entirely invested in the private sector after the demolishing of Social Security? That the same kinds of accounting tricks and corruption that destroyed the retirement savings of thousands in the Enron caper would become standard operating procedure. Sorry, Tea Partiers—you're screwed.

2. Ending Medicare (see #1, Ending Social Security).

"Within seven [years], Medicare is dead, bankrupt, broke—broke," Bachmann told the Tea Partiers. Her solution? End it for everybody but "the truly needy and the truly disabled." (I shudder to think what constitutes "truly needy" in the Bachmann moral universe.) Her solution? You can buy your own health insurance policy on the private market with pre-tax dollars. Sure, you're 70 years old: How much do you think an insurance company is going to charge you for your coverage? Pre-taxed or not, you're going to need a whole lotta dollars to make that one work for you.

But Bachmann's fans likely found comfort in her sunny optimism. "It is possible for every American to be able to retire a millionaire," Bachmann told the Tea Partiers. "It's entirely possible to do that if you plan early and you put away money—and there are alternatives that we can put forward." Just what those "alternatives" might be were left to the audience's imagination.

3. Opposition to Internet Freedom (aka Net Neutrality).

Earlier this month, news media, ranging from mainstream to righty to lefty, breathlessly reported that leaders of 35 "Tea Party" groups signed a letter to the Federal Communications Commission in opposition to any efforts made by the FCC to "regulate the Internet." At issue is Internet freedom and potential regulations that could prevent Internet providers from saddling small-time Web sites unable to pay for an added jolt of Web juice with slower loading speeds for their sites than, say, big-money players like Google. (This is the crux of the issue in the Google-Verizon deal.) Now, Tea Party supporters fancy themselves to be rugged individualists, dedicated to the preservation of individual freedoms. But it wasn't until the big-money groups that bankroll the national organizing of the Tea Party movement began garnering opposition to Internet freedom that you began to see any of those quaint, homely signs carried at Tea Party rallies dedicated to the subject.

Tea Party activists pride themselves on their movement's apparent leaderless state, reveling in the homegrown, local character of ground-level Tea Party groups, which often organize on hastily organized listservs and homemade local Web sites. But should they succeed in halting the FCC's net neutrality plan, they may find themselves with no decent option for Web-based organizing other than the big networking sites built by the national money groups that form the Tea Party Inc. uberstructure. So much for self-agency.

And what of those "35 Tea Party groups" whose leaders signed that letter to the FCC? Well, 24 of those entities are either part of or affiliated with Americans For Prosperity. Among the signatories was AFP president Tim Phillips, as well as the directors of 22 state chapters of Americans For Prosperity—each counted as a separate

"Tea Party group." In addition, the signature of AFP policy director Phil Kerpen (who is also a columnist for Murdoch's FoxNation) appears with the affiliation, "director, NoInternetTakeover.com." Also present was Linda Hansen, who leads the Wisconsin Prosperity Network and is the author of a "worker education" program that is a project of the Americans For Prosperity Foundation, and promoted by John Fund and Stephen Moore of Rupert Murdoch's *Wall Street Journal*.

Others signatories aren't leaders of Tea Party groups at all, but heads of the old corporatist, anti-government groups such as Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform and David Keene of the American Conservative Union. There are even a couple of stalwarts of the old New Right: Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum and Morton Blackwell of the Leadership Institute.

Bottom line for Tea Partiers: deviate from the AFP/Ayn Rand line on any issue, and you could see your little homemade Web site begin to load verrrry slowwwly.

4. De-Funding Public Education.

While it's common knowledge that Tea Partiers hate all things government (except their personal Social Security checks and Medicare reimbursements), they hold a special contempt for public school teachers. This stems from a number of causes, but mostly from the fact that teachers are unionized government workers who have authority over one's children for a good chunk of the day. The very fact of their unionization implies a different value system from that of the Tea Partiers, who fear that value system having an influence on their children. Teachers tend to be more liberal than the general population. And to the worker wed to the private enterprise system, a teacher's deal can look pretty sweet by comparison: It generally comes with a pension, tenure and the prospect of early retirement.

That's why even candidates like Sharron Angle, the GOP/Tea Party contender for Nevada's U.S. Senate seat, can call for the elimination of the Department of Education and still be taken seriously by the Tea Party faithful. And that's why calling the federal jobs bill passed last month a "teacher bailout" was an effective means of summoning Tea Party opposition to the bill that provided \$26 billion in aid to cash-strapped states to maintain all manner of services and programs, including money to prevent some 300,000 teacher lay-offs.

For the billionaires of Tea Party Inc., gutting public education is just another way to grab more marbles for themselves by marginalizing unions and shrinking the overall size of government—not to mention the convenience of having a gullible and uneducated population to snooker down the road. They have little need for an educated workforce in the U.S., since they'll offshore whatever jobs they can.

Yet, according to the *New York Times*/CBS News poll, 65 percent of Tea Party supporters with children under the age of 18 have those children enrolled in public schools. And although parents of school-age children account for only 20 percent of Tea Party supporters, it's safe to assume that a sizable number of the older people who comprise the bulk of the Tea Party have grandchildren in public schools. The education those children receive will clearly suffer if schools are forced to lay off significant numbers of teachers but, for Tea Partiers, that fact pales beside the prospect of sticking it to the teachers they've been taught to resent. Better to short-change one's own kids than to keep one more teacher employed, despite all the rhetoric about the Tea Party movement being the guardian of the legacy owed to those yet unborn.

5. Opposition to Wall Street Reform and Financial Reform.

Perhaps the most confounding aspect of the Tea Party agenda is its opposition to reform of Wall Street and banks. Even as Tea Party leaders and activists rail against the bailouts of U.S. automakers, and the minimal assistance offered homeowners with underwater mortgages, Tea Party leaders and those who follow them voice hostility toward any and all measures that would demand increased accountability from purveyors of financial instruments or the credit-card industry, like those contained in the financial reform bill passed by Congress in July (a bill that liberal critics regard as rather toothless).

In her speech to Tea Party supporters at the RightOnline conference, Michele Bachmann described the recently passed financial reform bill as nothing more than a punitive measure against Wall Street, when the real culprit in the nation's financial woes was the Housing and Community Redevelopment Act passed in 1977. Another particular object of scorn by the Tea Party set is the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection created by the bill.

Financial reforms such as those signed into law by President Barack Obama last month are designed to benefit the middle class, where 50 percent of Tea Party supporters locate themselves, according to the *New York Times*/CBS poll. The reforms are expected to be especially good for small businesses, whose fortunes Tea Partiers often claim to care most about.

Failure of Logic, Rule of Emotion

So, how do they do it, those unscrupulous billionaires? How do they get everyday Americans to embrace an agenda that runs counter to their own interests? Their mouthpieces—people like Bachmann and Sarah Palin and Glenn Beck—couch it all in the language of heroic patriotism, with the Tea Partiers cast as patriots at war with people set to defile the founders' dream of America. Do that, and a billionaire will find himself the general of an army of ground troops ready to do battle in his service, despite his unwillingness to share the spoils of his war on everyday Americans.

In her speech to the Tea Party faithful in Nevada, Michele Bachmann neither began nor ended her speech with her plan to rob the Tea Partiers (and the rest of us) of their Social Security. She began with a sustained attack on the nation's first black president (who was portrayed as immature, greedy, incompetent and corrupt). Her plan was explained just before she wrapped up the speech, which she ended with the truly poignant patriotic story of the sinking of an Army transport ship, the *Dorchester*, in World War II. Bachmann recounted how four Navy chaplains went down with the ship after giving their life jackets to younger soldiers. She made a point of citing the last names of two of them: Washington and Goode.

In Bachmann's telling, the brave chaplains gave up the lifeline that was rightfully theirs in order to save the younger generation. Kind of like giving up your Social Security to save your country for your grandchildren—except that your sacrifice is more likely to line the pockets of a billionaire than save your grandson from a life of debt, a possibility you just don't consider.

(Adele M. Stan is AlterNet's Washington bureau chief.)

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20100904-01	01:01	Mary	Re: "5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
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Dear Dennis,

Wow, I would have thought you would have sent something factual not the rants of the liberal elitists.

20100904-02	07:24	SteveB	Re: "5 Ways the Tea Party Agenda Screws Tea Party Supporters"
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Dear Mary,

What do you find to be not factual? Are the goals stated not the goals of the Tea Partiers? I think they are.

Are these goals detrimental to middle class Americans? Of course they are.

To me, this article is a perfect portrait of America in 2010.

20100907-01	14:18	Dennis	"America's Empire & Endless Wars Are Destroying the World & Ruining Our Great Country"
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Something fundamentally amiss...

If you want to know how the foreign policy of every American president since Eisenhower has worked against America's interest (yep, Obama too), read this interview with former army colonel Andrew Bacevich on Washington Rules.

["America's Empire and Endless Wars Are Destroying the World, and Ruining Our Great Country" by Terrence McNally and Andrew Bacevich, AlterNet](#)

Sept. 6, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148094/>)

Andrew Bacevich speaks with a fairly unique mix of experience, authority, passion and wisdom in questioning our nation's priorities: specifically our willingness to place so much of our national identity, wealth, attention, moral practice, and finally the life and blood of many thousands of our citizens and millions of those of other countries in the hands of our military. A professor of history and international relations at Boston University, Bacevich served twenty-three years in the U.S. Army, retiring with the rank of colonel. He lost his son in Iraq. A graduate of the U. S. Military Academy, he received his Ph. D. in American Diplomatic History from Princeton University. He is the author of several books, including *The New American Militarism*; *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*; and his newest, *Washington Rules: America's Path to Permanent War*.

McNally: Your book, *Washington Rules*, opens with a moment that you offer as a turning point: could you share that experience?

Bacevich: The moment occurred shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. I was still in the army at the time. I'd spent a considerable time serving in Germany with my family, but this was the first time we visited Berlin. I wanted to visit the Brandenburg Gate, because for me, it had been for decades this quintessential symbol of international politics in our time. Late on a rainy, very cold winter night, we approached the Gate from the old East Berlin side and found young men huddled between its columns peddling bits and pieces of Soviet military gear: buttons, hats, parts of uniforms. I bought a wristwatch emblazoned with the symbol of the Soviet tank corps, which broke about two weeks later. It was all junk, and the men, who clearly were off-duty Russian soldiers, looked anything but ten feet tall.

At that moment—I'm not going to say my worldview was suddenly transformed—but certain seeds of doubt were planted. I began to wonder if I had misperceived the "other" that I was now confronting for the first time. As I considered that possibility, I began to entertain the possibility that I had misperceived many other things, and so began an intellectual journey that has continued now for about 20 years.

McNally: You set forth on a process of inquiry and self-education to learn what had been obscured to you in the past. You began this process while you were still in the military?

Bacevich: Well, I left the army maybe two years later, and that's when the questions began to come fast and furious. I came to realize—and it's not some startling insight—that when you exist inside of an institution, particularly an institution that has an all-encompassing role such as a religious order or the military, it's very difficult to view that institution critically. It's very difficult even to understand some of the assumptions that define the institution's view of truth. It's only when you're able to stand apart from the institution, that critical thought becomes possible. When I left the army in 1992, the process of seeking to identify and to answer first order questions really began.

McNally: What do you mean by first order questions?

Bacevich: A couple of the first order questions that have preoccupied me: **What exactly drives U.S. policy? What makes us do what we do with regard to the rest of the world?**

As a young boy growing up and as a serving officer, I generally accepted the official view that we did what we did because it was necessary to respond to external threat: that our policy in a sense was defensive and reactive. I subsequently came to believe that's not true. We do what we do largely in response to domestic, political, economic and ideological imperatives, and the motive for U.S. policy emerges from within; it does not come from without.

A second first order question had to do with the nature of war and the efficacy of force. I think most military professionals accept the conviction within their professions that war continues to be an effective instrument of statecraft. Despite my own service in Vietnam—which I recognized had been a disaster—I still largely subscribed to that idea. It was only after I got out of the army—and in particular after the U.S. embarked upon what seemed to be a never-ending series of interventions abroad, most of which failed to deliver on the promises that had justified them—that I really began to rethink my view of war itself.

McNally: What to you is the crucial evidence that America's approach to foreign and military policy is broken, that it doesn't work?

Bacevich: I think that an effective approach to national security is one that will keep us safe, and that will preserve and even enhance our prosperity, thereby enabling citizens to pursue life, liberty and happiness; and it will do all that at a relatively reasonable cost. And I think it's pretty clear, especially if we look at the post-9/11 period, that the existing approach to national security policy—what I call the Washington Rules—fails on every point. It's not keeping us safe; it's certainly depleting our resources; it's not building our prosperity; and it's costing a ton of money. The Washington Rules that I try to describe in the book originated in the immediate wake of World War II. They were expressions of a national security consensus that may well have worked at one time, but I would argue strongly that they no longer work at all. This consensus, having outlived its utility, is badly in need of being junked.

McNally: What are those rules? You say they consist of a credo and a trinity of means, right?

Bacevich: The credo asserts a claim, and out of that claim comes a demand that the United States be able to exercise certain prerogatives. The second piece of the Washington Rules I label the sacred trinity, core principles that define the way we conceive of and use our military power. The elements of the sacred trinity are the following: first of all, a demand that the United States exclusively maintain a global military presence; second, the practice of configuring U.S. forces not to defend the country, but so that they can serve as instruments of power projection; and then finally, to combine that global presence with those global power projection capabilities to support a policy of global interventionism.

This sacred trinity is really what distinguishes the United States' military power. The Brits at one time had a dominant battle fleet; France in the time of Napoleon had a people in arms; what we have is the sacred trinity. And, to emphasize what I think is the key point, it doesn't do what it's supposed to do.

McNally: You make the point that all of this consistently goes unquestioned, and that both political parties and the mainstream media begin at second and third order questions.

Bacevich: Exactly right. One of the reasons that I use religiously loaded language—an American credo and the sacred trinity—to describe the Washington Rules is that I think this approach to national security policy has ascended to the point that it's kind of a quasi-religion.

Washington subscribes to these principles as a matter of faith. There is no empirical evidence to suggest that the American credo is valid or is true, but every president, up to and including President Obama, in their speeches and their language repeatedly—in somewhat different words from one president to the next—reaffirms the credo. And the policies pursued by the Pentagon, supported by the Congress, and largely endorsed by the mainstream media, reaffirm the elements of the sacred trinity.

McNally: Let me read a piece of Obama's speech last December when, after the very public period of analysis, he announced that the U.S. would send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan. "More than any other nation, the United States of America has underwritten global security for over six decades, a time that for all its problems has seen walls come down, markets open, billions lifted from poverty, unparalleled scientific progress, advancing frontiers of human liberty. For unlike the great powers of old, we have not sought world domination. Our union was founded in resistance to oppression. We do not seek to occupy other nations; we will not claim another nation's resources or target other people because their faith or ethnicity is different from ours. What we have fought for, what we continue to fight for is a better future for our children and grandchildren, and we believe that their lives will be better if other people's children and grandchildren can live in freedom and access opportunity."

To me, that very much has that sense—whether he and his speechwriters are aware of it or not—of a credo handed down, untouchable and unquestionable.

Bacevich: It is such a sanitized version of our history in the past five or six decades that it shouldn't pass the laugh test. Yet I think it's an excellent example of the way political leaders perpetuate the credo: Obama putting his own stamp of approval on an image of our role in the world that everybody, at least since Franklin Roosevelt, has embraced.

McNally: Again using the religious metaphor, it's as if someone ascends to the cardinalship, and then publicly pledges allegiance to the credo that's been handed down to them.

Bacevich: Exactly.

McNally: What are the causes, the history and the culprits? In this book, although you certainly deal with the present predicament, with Iraq and Afghanistan, you also take us back. There are characters I hadn't read about in quite a while—Allan Dulles, Curtis Lemay and Maxwell Taylor. How did we get here from the end of WWII?

Bacevich: I think the short version goes like this. When the national security consensus was forged in the wake of WWII and the Washington Rules came into existence, they were not entirely irrational. I think you can make a strong case that American leadership and American military power were necessary in order to try to deal with the wreckage left behind by the war, to help to rebuild the liberal democratic world in order to resist the ambitions of Joseph Stalin. But the world that existed at the end of the 1940s no longer exists today, yet people in Washington tend to act as if the world has not changed at all.

So where did things go wrong? Things went wrong when the institutions—the Pentagon, the CIA, components of the military industrial complex—came to value the Washington Rules because they were good for the institutions, and gradually lost sight of the extent to which adhering to this national security consensus was good or not good for the nation itself.

Let's get specific here. In the wake of WWII, our global military presence first took shape in Western Europe and Japan, and it was probably necessary in the near term. That presence abroad contributed to our safety and our wellbeing. But fast-forward to the post-Cold War period and our increasing military presence in places like the greater Middle East. You'd have to be crazy to think that the American military presence in Saudi Arabia after the first Gulf War, in Iraq after 2003, or in Afghanistan ever since 9/11, contributes to stability and security. That presence abroad actually enhances anti-Americanism and creates greater instability, but the Pentagon, committed to the proposition that we need to maintain this global military presence, is blind to the down side.

McNally: Let's look at the current situation in Afghanistan. You note that over the years there's been flexibility in interpretation of the rules. For example, Kennedy comes in, reverses Eisenhower's stance, and ends up going to Vietnam. Another example, Petraeus at one point seems absolutely against anything that would ever be considered counterinsurgency and later becomes the god of counterinsurgency. There's flexibility with how we do what we do, but never with why.

Bacevich: Periodically in this roughly six decade long period that the book tries to evaluate, there arises a great desire to create new instruments of military power that will make that power more useable. You cite two very good examples of this tendency.

By the time we get to the end of the 1950s, the end of the Eisenhower era, Ike and those around him had pretty much concluded that war as traditionally conceived had reached a dead end, that nuclear weapons for the most part made war unusable. Eisenhower's policy was to wave the big stick of massive retaliation to keep the Soviets from doing anything. The people that came into office with Kennedy thought that was inadequate, they wanted to make force useable. They pursued this idea under the rubric of flexible response, one of the defective ideas that put us on the road to Vietnam.

Fast forward to the Iraq war and the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, when the U.S., thinking that it achieved a great victory, suddenly found itself faced with an insurgency and the prospect of never-ending conflict. Now David Petraeus leads the way, but he's not alone in trying to revive an approach to warfare that once again would make American military power useful. There is a reoccurring tendency to want to find ways to make force work.

McNally: The Founding Fathers are constantly referred to by the Right, more than the Left, as the source of direction and wisdom. Yet, as you point out, their counsel on foreign policy is absolutely the opposite of where we are now and where we've been for the past 50 years. Let me read a quote of yours: "We are headed towards ever greater more difficult economic times that will result in us failing in our most fundamental obligation laid out in the preamble of the Constitution which is to provide the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity. The path on which we have embarked and which we continue to pursue is very much at odds with what the founding purpose of this republic was supposed to be."

Bacevich: To my mind, the most important word in that quote is "posterity". The purpose of the Union is not simply to act in ways that will make you and me happy, but we are called upon to pursue a path that will also enable those who follow us to have an opportunity to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. Of course, everybody mouths that cliché, but our failure is becoming increasingly apparent, above all, in the enormous debt that we are piling up—not entirely due to our misguided national security policy, but in part. I think that we are increasingly approaching the point where it's going to

become impossible for posterity to have the same opportunities that we have, and that is an enormously important reason to take stock of our over militarized approach to policy.

McNally: Let me remind people: When presidents, who now love to call themselves Commander in Chief, take the oath of office, it is not to defend our shores, our geography, or even our populace, it is to defend our constitution. As you point out, Adams, Washington and others said our role is as an exemplar not as an enforcer.

Bacevich: I think, to the extent that we have a responsibility to the world, it's time to renew that argument. Should we try to fulfill that responsibility, as we have for the past 60 years, based on expectations of what military power can do? Or is it possible that we can best serve others by demonstrating that liberal values do have value?

Could fulfilling the aspirations expressed in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution serve at least modestly to help other peoples in other nations to take their own paths toward self-determination—rather than acting, as we do in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, as if we know best how to determine their futures.

I find it preposterous that President Obama—someone who I think is a tremendously smart man, someone who basically I respect—could believe that we have the ability to create a state, create a government, create institutions across the vast cultural divide that separates Afghans from Americans.

McNally: I walked along the beach the afternoon of 9/11, shell-shocked as we all were, and I asked myself what question should we be asking now? And to me it was, "Have we done everything we could to minimize the possibilities of such terrorism?"

Of course, security would be part of the answer, but much more it would be whatever we could do to isolate such terrorists as pariahs in their own society. This would be about being an exemplar, perhaps things like Marshall Plans, possibly finding a way to expand education that wouldn't trample on culture, etc.

July 2010 was the deadliest month for the U.S. military in Afghanistan, 66 deaths, a devastating month for Afghans, more than 270 civilians killed, 600 wounded. Rather than ask you what do you think needs to happen in Afghanistan right now, let me ask a larger question—what exactly is the threat that the U.S. faces from these radical violent Islamists and what strategy should the U.S. pursue in order to deal with that threat?

Bacevich: That's an excellent question. First of all, the threat is not Islam or Fascism; the threat is not Nazi Germany in some sort of new guise. Those sorts of notions that were frequently voiced after 9/11, and are still voiced in the more militarized quarters of the right wing, are ludicrous. Violent anti-Western Jihadism does pose a real threat, but the threat falls well short of being existential.

The notion that we should take seriously the ambitions of Osama Bin Laden to create a new caliphate, uniting the entire Islamic world under his control, is preposterous. He's no more likely to create a new caliphate than I am to become the next pope in Rome. The threat ought to have been categorized, and today should be categorized, as a form of international criminal conspiracy: a kind of Mafia that derives a certain amount of its energy by perverting a religious tradition. And the proper response to an international criminal conspiracy is an international police effort.

Our approach—President Bush's approach now continued in Afghanistan by President Obama, which emphasizes invading, occupying and then trying to transform countries—doesn't work, costs way too much money, expends far too many American lives, and at the end of the day probably serves more than anything else to simply exacerbate the number of people who see us as infidels and occupiers.

McNally: On the response side, you say treat it as a criminal conspiracy. Countries who have done so, or even the instances where we have done so, have found some success. What should we do in terms of prevention?

Bacevich: Here I suspect I may differ from you. You mentioned things like a Marshall Plan. I'm pretty skeptical about our ability to mobilize resources in ways that can engineer positive change in the Islamic world. My belief would be that the people of the Islamic world are going to have to find their own path to reconciling their religious traditions with the demands of modernity. I don't mean that we should turn our backs on this dilemma that they are wrestling with. Let's have exchange programs; let's bring young people from that part of the world to study in our universities; let's encourage cultural exchanges. But I don't believe that in Afghanistan or Iraq or Pakistan or Yemen, that a set of programs put together by the federal government of the U.S. can make anything more than a marginal difference.

My own view is that we need to let Islam be Islam. They are going to have to sort out their own future.

What we need to do in the interim is to insulate ourselves from any violence that the internal crisis in the Islamic world may give rise to. To my mind, the most important thing to take from 9/11 is that our federal, state and local agencies charged with defending us, failed. If you leave the front door of your house wide open every night and sooner or later somebody comes in and steals your family silver, well, certainly the crooks need to be pursued and brought to justice, but shame on you for leaving your front door open. In effect that was what the agencies responsible for aviation security had done up until 9/11.

McNally: I realize that some of the thoughts I had on 9/11 have shifted by now. For one, the America that could afford a Marshall Plan after WWII is not the one that we exist in right now.

Bacevich: I think that's tremendously important. We don't live in the world that existed when the Marshall Plan was enacted. In 1947 we had the money and we made the stuff that everybody else wanted to buy around the world. We now live in a world in which the Chinese have the money and everybody makes stuff that our never-ending appetite for consumption insists we need to buy—despite the fact that it just makes us go deeper in debt.

McNally: You go much more into our hunger for consumption and our ignorance of meaning in your previous book, *Limits of Power*, which I highly recommend. To return to Petraeus for a moment: You point out that when he reflected on Vietnam, he thought counterinsurgency had no future. He then he writes a reformulation of counterinsurgency and it becomes the solution. What has gone unnoticed or at least unspoken is that the whole notion of the surge is based on the recognition that victory is impossible.

Bacevich: In the wake of Vietnam, the army in particular wanted to run away from counterinsurgency as fast as it possibly could, and return to the business of conventional war. Experiences in Desert Storm in 1991 and in the second Iraq War in 2003 for a time seemed to show that the U.S. military had figured out how to gain a quick and decisive victory. That was an illusion that the insurgencies in Iraq and now in Afghanistan have dispatched. The counterinsurgency doctrine revised by Petraeus in effect declares that there is no such thing as a military solution to conflicts like these, and certainly there is no such thing as military victory. That may not seem odd to many people, but the whole notion that victory is possible forms the basis of the military profession's claim to have a distinct professional existence.

McNally—and value.

Bacevich: Because if we can't count on the army to win the war quickly and expeditiously, then why would we ever go to war in the first place?

McNally: Right. You need to say, "Wait a minute, we have to consider the tools of soft power and other forms of engagement because military force has enormous cost—and if it can't ensure success..."

Bacevich: We've spent probably close to a trillion dollars on the Iraq war. Had we instead spent a trillion dollars elsewhere in the Islamic world promoting education programs or economic development or women's rights, would we have gotten more for our money? Even a skeptic of soft power like me would say, I have no doubt that we would have gotten more.

McNally: In an op-ed in the *New York Times*, Nick Kristof wrote that at the cost of \$1 million per soldier per year in Afghanistan, that same money could open 20 schools.

Based on the fact that counterinsurgency recognizes the unlikelihood of victory, I want you to respond to this statement by Obama: "The United States of America does not quit once it starts on something. You don't quit. The American armed services does not quit, we keep at it, we persevere and together with our partners we will prevail. I am absolutely confident of that."

Bacevich: I don't know why he says things like that. My assumption is that politicians always place politics at the heart of what they say and do, or at least they're surrounded by advisers who are acutely sensitive to the political considerations.

We have a president who embraced counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, and then proceeded preposterously to establish a deadline of the summer of 2011 to begin withdrawing U.S. forces. The likelihood of being able to successfully prosecute a

counterinsurgency over a period of 18 months is not very great. So the president I think, come Dec., 2011, when political considerations will really be moving to center stage...

McNally: It won't be Congress he's worried about, but his own re-election.

Bacevich: Exactly right. How the heck he is going to deal with these "we never quit", "I know we will prevail" promises if the war is still going badly at that point? I think the President's going to be in a real fix.

McNally: Let me quote a July article you wrote called *Non Believer*, in which you contrast George Bush and Barack Obama. You write: "When Bush stands before his maker he will say without fear of contradiction, 'I did what I thought was right.' On the other hand, when called upon to account for his presidency, honesty will prevent Obama from making a comparable claim. 'The problems I inherited were difficult ones,' he will say. 'None of the choices were good ones. Things were complicated.' The question demands to be asked, who is more deserving of contempt: the commander in chief who sends young Americans to die for a cause, however misguided, in which he sincerely believes, or the commander in chief who sends young Americans to die for a cause in which he manifestly does not believe and yet refuses to forsake?"

Bacevich: I think with the Afghanistan decision, the President was trying to finesse a set of problems. At that point, I think he wanted to spend his chips on certain domestic reform propositions: healthcare and economic stimulus. My guess is that he or those around him decided that to take on the Washington Rules would have been very difficult. Indeed it would have been.

My guess is that he decided that the more expedient course was to continue to play along with the Washington Rules in Afghanistan, to make good on his domestic reform plans, and then go back to the war. My belief is that it's going to be too late; that having become Obama's war, it is not something that he's going to be able to easily back away from in 2011. Yet, if he persists in fighting Obama's war, then many of us who supported him for the presidency in the first place are going to wonder if maybe our votes should go elsewhere.

McNally: At this point let's turn to the deeper question: we can't expect you to read the President's mind, his advisers' mind, or that of anyone who's been in power for the last 50 years—but what is it that keeps the Washington Rules going despite the failure in Vietnam, the fall of the Soviet Union, plus Iraq, Afghanistan, and all of the other adventures? Under Reagan, Bush Sr. and Clinton, the use of force became more frequent and less controversial. Who are they beholden to? What is the calculus that keeps them doing this when it seems to have so much downside?

Bacevich: Well, there's a downside for the country, but the Washington Rules benefit Washington. They provide enormous profit for the military industrial complex. Out of those profits come campaign contributions to members of Congress, who are always worried about reelection. They justify the budget of the Pentagon and the intelligence community; they provide a source of prerogatives for institutions and for people; they allow ambitious military officers and senior officials to believe that they are engaged in important and historic events; and they create the rush that I think so many journalists seek; nobody gets more excited about war than the press.

McNally: They love their pictures in a war zone.

Bacevich: The Washington Rules persist partly because we the people are conditioned to think that there are no alternatives, and therefore we've lost our ability to think critically. But more importantly, they persist because they deliver a variety of goods to Washington itself.

McNally: Finally, if you could look back from a decade in the future—It's 2020, did the U.S. turn things around in this regard? And if your answer is no, what were some of the consequences; if your answer is yes, how did we do it?

Bacevich: My guess is that we will not have turned it around. The only way that we will is if the American people become truly cognizant of the negative effects of persisting in the Washington Rules. Effectively the volunteer army means that most of us don't really share in the service and sacrifice of perpetual war. The fact that wars are funded through deficit spending means that we don't even feel them in our pocket book. If there is some further economic calamity, or—and I obviously don't want this to happen—if there is some further 9/11 style calamity, perhaps that would jolt Americans into a recognition that something is fundamentally amiss and something needs to change. My guess, however, is that it's not all that likely.

(Read an excerpt from Bacevich's new book, *Washington Rules*, on TomDispatch.com. Interviewer Terrence McNally hosts Free Forum on KPFK 90.7FM, Los Angeles and WBA 199.5FM, New York (streaming at kpfk.org and wbai.org). He also advises nonprofits and foundations on communications. Visit terrencemcnally.net for podcasts of all interviews and more.)

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Check out this list of American military bases and ask yourself: Why?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_military_bases

20100908-01	00:49	Dick	Fw: What You <i>Won't</i> Hear from President Obama on Foreign Policy
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

You can bet we won't be hearing it from the current president!!!

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO TURN ON THE TV AND HEAR ANY U.S. PRESIDENT, DEMOCRAT OR REPUBLICAN, GIVE THE FOLLOWING SPEECH?

"My Fellow Americans: As you all know, the defeat of the Iraq regime has been completed.

Since Congress does not want to spend any more money on this war, our mission in Iraq is complete. This morning I gave the order for a complete removal of all American forces from Iraq. This action will be complete within 30 days. It is now time to begin the reckoning.

Before me, I have two lists. One list contains the names of countries which have stood by our side during the Iraq conflict. This list is short: The United Kingdom, Spain, Bulgaria, Australia, and Poland are some of the countries listed there.

The other list contains every one not on the first list. Most of the world's nations are on that list. My press secretary will be distributing copies of both lists later this evening.

Let me start by saying that effective immediately, foreign aid to those nations on List 2 ceases indefinitely. The money saved during the first year alone will pretty much pay for the costs of the Iraqi war. THEN EVERY YEAR THEREAFTER IT'LL GO TO OUR SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM SO IT WON'T GO BROKE IN 20 YEARS.

The American people are no longer going to pour money into third world Hell holes and watch those government leaders grow fat on corruption. Need help with a famine? Wrestling with an epidemic? Call France.

In the future, together with Congress, I will work to redirect this money toward solving the vexing social problems we still have at home. On that note, a word to terrorist organizations. Screw with us and we will hunt you down and eliminate you and all your friends from the face of the earth. Thirsting for a gutsy country to terrorize? Try France or maybe China.

I am ordering the immediate severing of diplomatic relations with France and Russia. Thanks for all your help, comrades. We are retiring from NATO as well. I have instructed the Mayor of New York City to begin towing the many UN diplomatic vehicles located in Manhattan with more than two unpaid parking tickets to sites where those vehicles will be stripped, shredded and crushed. I don't care about whatever treaty pertains to this. You creeps have tens of thousands of unpaid tickets. Pay those tickets tomorrow or watch your precious Benzes, Beamers and limos be turned over to some of the finest chop shops in the world. I love New York.

A special note to our neighbors: Canada is on List 2. Since we are likely to be seeing a lot more of each other, you folks might want to try not p*ssing us off for a change. Mexico is also on List 2. Its president and his entire corrupt government really need an attitude adjustment. I will have a couple thousand extra tanks and infantry divisions sitting around. Guess where I am going to put 'em? Yep, border security.

Oh, by the way, the United States is abrogating the NAFTA treaty—starting now. We are tired of the one-way highway. Immediately, we'll be drilling for oil in Alaska—which will take care of this country's oil needs for decades to come. If you're an environmentalist who opposes this decision, I refer you to List 2 above: pick a country and move there. It is

time for America to focus on its own welfare and its own citizens. Some will accuse us of isolationism. I answer them by saying, 'darn tootin.'

Nearly a century of trying to help folks live a decent life around the world has only earned us the undying enmity of just about everyone on the planet. It is time to eliminate hunger in America . It is time to eliminate homelessness in America. To the nations on List 1, a final thought. Thank you guys. We owe you and we won't forget. To the nations on List 2, a final thought: You might want to learn to speak Arabic.

God bless America. Thank you and good night. If you can read this in English, thank a soldier.

20100908-02	14:57	Dennis	"The Great American Stickup: How the Political Class Mugged America & Handed the Money Over to Wall St."
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Did the meltdown of the U.S. economy start with Clinton?

Did liberal Clinton Democrats collude with Wall Street to wreck the U.S. economy? Is Obama still part of the problem? Whatever you may think now, the following discussion will surely be of interest...

"The Great American Stickup: How the Political Class Mugged America and Handed the Money Over to Wall St." by Amy Goodman and Robert Scheer, Democracy Now!

Sept. 7, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148107/>)

Goodman: As we continue our discussion on the state of the economy, we're visited by veteran journalist and Truthdig.com editor Robert Scheer. His book is just out; it's called *The Great American Stickup: How Reagan Republicans and Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street While Mugging Main Street*. What is wrong with the economy today? And how did we get here?

Scheer: Well, you know, you say a longtime journalist. I worked for the Los Angeles Times as a national reporter, and I covered these hearings in Washington when the Clinton Administration in the '90s basically fulfilled the promise of the Reagan Revolution. Reagan was not able to reverse the sensible regulations of the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt designed to prevent us from getting into another depression. And those regulations of Glass-Steagall, which Feingold was against, said that investment banks playing with supposedly rich people's money should not be allowed to merge with commercial banks that were using the deposits of people that were insured by the taxpayers and that these were different activities. And Reagan could never pull off that kind of deregulation. In fact, because of the savings and loan scandal at the end of his term, he actually had to sign off on increased financial regulation. But when Clinton came in, he brought in one of the big players on Wall Street, Robert Rubin, who has been head of Goldman Sachs, and basically turned to him and said, "You know, what do I need to do to get Wall Street on my side?" And they said, reverse what they considered to be onerous financial regulation. And Clinton delivered on that. He brought in Rubin then to be his Treasury secretary, who was followed by Lawrence Summers, who's now the top economic adviser in the Obama White House.

And in addition to the Gramm bill that reversed Glass-Steagall, he did something even more significant for our current crisis. He—after Summers had pushed it through Congress—signed off on the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000. He was already a lame duck president. It was in the closing weeks of his administration. And this is the source of our whole problem, really, in terms of the housing meltdown, because we had these suspect derivatives that sensible people in the administration, like Brooksley Born, had warned against. No one knew what these toxic investments all about, the bundling of mortgages, which is what encouraged all of the wild subprime and Alt-A financing, because they were then going to be packaged together, made into securities, and then backed by credit default swaps, and all of this stuff that really didn't exist. It certainly didn't exist in Adam Smith's capitalism, but it didn't really exist even in Ronald Reagan's capitalism. This newfangled—these gimmicks that were developed and spiraled wildly out of control were made possible because of that Commodity Futures Modernization Act, which Clinton signed and which said in Titles III and IV, no existing government regulation, no existing government regulatory body, will be allowed to supervise these credit default swaps, these collateralized debt obligations that were there.

And as a result, we had this wild run-up of irresponsible mortgage lending. The banks no longer did, as in the old days, worry about whether you could make your payments, whether there was value in the house, because they weren't going

to hold that mortgage for thirty years like in the old days. They were going to sell it, you know? And that wild run-up of the market—I call it the Clinton bubble. I think his administration deserves or should be given the main responsibility. And that is at the source of our problem. And this has not gone away. This is why we're threatened with a possible 'nother steep decline, or we're threatened with a decade of Japanese-type stagnation. And the reason is because we now, taxpayers, are holding, you know, trillions of dollars of this stuff, these toxic investments. And as a result, housing right now is in a terrible state of affairs. There are 11 million homeowners that are underwater. They owe more on their mortgages than their houses. That translates to about 50 million people living in houses that are now worth less than what they owe on them, and they're tempted to walk away from them. That's why we don't have any consumer demand. And it's not just the people who are in trouble with their own houses, which is a tragic enough story, but even if somebody's made every payment, even if they own their home outright. If you foreclose a house or two in that neighborhood, it brings everyone else down.

And all this stuff that Obama has been talking about really does not meet the problem. And the basic problem is, instead of throwing money at Wall Street, which is what Bush did and what Obama continued to do, you should have had a moratorium on housing foreclosures. You should have said, "OK, Wall Street, we'll help you, but you are now going to be forced, through bankruptcy courts, new rules we're going to put in place, to adjust people's mortgages so they can stay in their home." And all this malarkey about "We'll do more infrastructure," you know, and so—they always do that. We'll spend \$50 billion on this—what he said in Wisconsin. What is that \$50 billion? It's chump change compared to, say, the \$300 billion of toxic investments by one group, Robert Rubin's bank, Citigroup. He went, after he left the administration, to be a top big shot at Citigroup, made possible by the reversal of Glass-Steagall. And, you know, \$300 billion. So compare that to the \$50 billion they're going to do for infrastructure for the whole nation.

And I think the sad thing about Obama—you know, obviously, I supported him. I wrote columns thinking he was going to be great. An enormous disappointment. Somebody—no one can explain to me—I haven't seen a satisfactory explanation. But in my book, I reprint the speech that Obama gave in the spring of '08, when he was a candidate. And it came three months after Robert Rubin had given a speech at Cooper Union saying we had no financial problem, we had no crisis. Three months later, Obama, at that same Cooper Union, said, you know, this is all due to reversal of Glass-Steagall, all due to reckless, radical deregulation. He spelled it out. And then, you know, mysteriously—maybe not so mysteriously when you think that Wall Street became his biggest, financial community became his biggest campaign contributor—he turned to the disciples of Robert Rubin—the Lawrence Summers, Timothy Geithner, the very people that had, with Rubin, created this mess—and said, "OK, you guys, fix it all." And they haven't fixed it. They've taken care of Wall Street. And as my subtitle in my book said, they mugged Main Street.

Goodman: Robert, you said this is what President Obama should have done. For example, a moratorium on all bankruptcies. What should he do now? Why "should have"? What could he do starting today?

Scheer: Oh, immediately he should push for bankruptcy courts to have the power to force the banks to readjust these mortgages. You know, we picked up their bad paper. Why don't they help people now who are stuck? You know, the basic idea of the New Deal was that these were not innocent victims of Wall Street scams. So we have—this is why you have all this anger in the tea party and everything else. It's very legitimate.

I'm not one of—and by the way, you mentioned Feingold in your—it would be a tragedy to lose Feingold. If there's one person in the United States Congress that has called this correctly, that has stood up for the interest of ordinary people, it's Russ Feingold. I mean, I can't think—you know, maybe Bernie Sanders, but Russ Feingold has been at it longer in the Senate. I mean, he just has been right on this stuff from day one. And the idea that rage about what's happened to the economy is now going to take its toll on him, the one guy who—one of the few who got it right, is really frightening. But that's what happens when you have an economic breakdown. We saw it in Germany, for God's sake. You know, you look—the demagogues scapegoat all the people. You know, they scapegoat immigrants. And what you have now is a lot of money, a lot of money, from the big banks and everyone else, going into lunatics' camp—the campaign of lunatics. But why? Because, "Oh, get government off our back. You know, big government," ignoring the fact that, you know, this government did not get big and the debt did not rise because we're trying to help firemen or school teachers keep their jobs. It happened because we have, literally, through the Fed and through the federal government, spent, you know, what? Three, four—committed three, four trillion dollars to make the banks whole.

So when you say what we should do right now, Obama could call for a moratorium. A moratorium, what? Two, three years on mortgage foreclosures. You know, that's what you do when you're facing a crisis. He could call for and push through a regulation, as well as legislation, saying the bankruptcy courts—remember, we had the change in bankruptcy law to hurt consumers, make it harder for consumers to declare bankruptcy. Well, they could push for new regulation, new laws, say, no, we're not going to leave it voluntarily, as he's now doing with the banks to somehow make

readjustments of which there have been very few, has not dealt with the problem. They should say, no, this is the ball game right now. The ball game is keeping people in their homes. The ball game is preventing all those boarded-up buildings in suburbs of South Florida, Riverside, California.

I mean, if you travel in this country, there's enormous pain, because people's life savings, their sense of their worth, their piece of the American Dream, were tied up in their family. When you lose that home or when you're suffering or you're facing foreclosure, you lose not only your pride, you lose your ability to retire, to send your kids to school. I mean, the dreams of Americans are wrapped up in their home. And I don't know why we're talking about anything else right now. If we want to get the economy going again, if we want to get people back to work, if we want to get consumption up, what you've got to do is help people with that nest and that nest egg, which is their home. And there's very little, precious little in Obama's speeches, and certainly almost nothing in his actions, to help those homeowners.

Goodman: And how do you help people who don't have a home?

Scheer: Well, you know, I know—there's lots of things to do to help people home. But let me tell you, this is not a division between haves and have-nots when it comes to home owning. And one of my anger with some of the liberals around in the Democratic Party who supported this deregulation, they said this was going to help minority people get homes. You know, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were as rapacious as any—as Citigroup or Goldman Sachs. And the so-called liberal—this is dealt with in great detail in my book, which takes very few prisoners on either side, in either party. But Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, with the support of people like Barney Frank and even many in the Black Caucus, said, "No, no, don't touch Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. They'll help poor people get into their homes." Sure, a lot of minorities got into homes. They lost their savings. They're now hurting. They can't hold on to their homes. They're being foreclosed. So, you know, the dream of American housing was not a have/have-not thing. It was supposed to be emancipation of Americans. It was supposed to be of them a piece of the pie.

So, first thing is, if we do this thing of keeping people in homes, we're helping a lot of working people and poorer people. This is not something to benefit the rich. The rich make out like bandits in this kind of market. But secondly, if we can't put a floor on housing foreclosures, if we can't stem this bleeding right now, we're not going to get consumption back, you know, and if we don't get consumption back, because people were consuming based on their sense of what they're worth, we're not going to get the jobs back—jobs in construction, but jobs generally. And so, I would not divide the interest of homeowners and keeping them in their homes from the rest of the population.

Goodman: Robert Scheer, your last chapter, "Sucking Up to the Bankers: Crisis Handoff from Bush to Obama"—has Obama done anything different about the economy than Bush, do you feel?

Scheer: No. Obama has been a disaster. And I say this as someone who was suckered into contributing to his campaign financially. You know, my wife maxed out in her contributions, pushing those buttons every time. I still get emails from the Obama campaign telling "We're winning here, we're winning there." But it's been a disaster. Now, maybe, you know, if he could appoint Elizabeth Warren, you know, to the consumer agency, there will be a little bit of value in this deregulation—in this new regulation.

Goodman: What about that?

Scheer: Russ Feingold was absolutely right to vote against it. Hello?

Goodman: But what about Elizabeth Warren, seen as the frontrunner for this job, but seen as a—there's a quiet campaign in the White House, or perhaps not so quiet, among people like Rahm Emanuel, who supposedly, rumor has it, are opposing her?

Scheer: Yeah, well, look, come on. You can't look to the Democratic Party, you know, hacks, for leadership on this. First of all, most of these people are veterans of the Clinton administration. They're the same people who destroyed Brooksley Born. Brooksley Born was one of the most competent lawyers in this country, dealing—she represented banks. She understood more about these derivatives than anyone around, actually, when she was appointed to what was supposed to be a lesser agency, you know, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. And she spotted this problem. You know, seventeen times in testimony before congressional committees, Brooksley Born sounded the alarm that there was going to be a housing meltdown, that this thing had gone wild, that we had enabled Wall Street graft. She knew the inside outside. It was people like Summers, who's now in this administration, I think, who don't want Elizabeth Warren—Timothy Geithner, and there are plenty of others. There are many Goldman Sachs veterans and other big Wall Street

veterans in this administration, as well. And they destroyed Brooksley Born. And they're threatened by Elizabeth Warren, because Elizabeth Warren represents consumers. She's a brilliant legal mind, and just as Brooksley Born is. And Elizabeth Warren said, "Wait a minute. You know, what kind of, you know, government is this, when you're caring about Wall Street and you're ignoring the pain out there?"

And I have to stress this, Amy. This is not some abstract—you know, I studied economics in graduate school, and I could do some mathematical modeling and all that stuff. This is not a game. It's not a political game. It's not a mathematics game. They're real human beings who invest their whole life putting shelter over their family, caring about their family. And when you go out in these communities—and I've done some of that—you know, it's so depressing. You know, I mean, I talked to people in Riverside who cleaned office buildings, you know, in Long Beach and commuted to Riverside so their kids could live in a better neighborhood. And they bought this house, and they made the payments. They made the payments. They did everything they were supposed to do. And the neighborhood went into the toilet, and they lose everything. They lose everything. And that story is repeated millions of times in America.

And the guys who did it to us, they weren't those vicious right-wingers. And, you know, it wasn't all the people that we liberals like to attack. It was our friends. Let's get that straight, you know? When I call this the Clinton bubble, you know, I mean it very seriously. It was our friends. It was people, you know, like the heads of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, who claim to be liberal Democrats. But they were being rewarded with enormous bonuses. You know, enormous bonuses. They made out just as well as the people running Citigroup. These were not government agencies.

These were actually traded on the stock market, but posing as government supported agencies. And the fact of the matter is that the damage that was done to us was done by people who talk a very good game. You know, Robert Rubin contributed money to the Harlem dance group, you know? Jesse Jackson even supported the reversal of Glass-Steagall. There's a whole chapter in my book, you know? The people who acted in a very bad way, in this book, were people who we would probably be more comfortable talking to, you know, over a drink somewhere than the others. So, you know, my book, you know, it's called *How Reagan Democrats—Reagan Republicans and Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street and Mugged Main Street*. And the Clinton Democrats, who now control the Obama administration, are—you know, this is turning the henhouse over to the foxes. And I would say the record of Obama on this has been abysmal. He has been a front man for Wall Street, and it is shocking.

Goodman: Robert Scheer, I want to thank you very much for being with us, longtime journalist based in California, worked for the *Los Angeles Times* for some thirty years, editor at Truthdig.com, author of many books. The latest, just out today in paperback, is *The Great American Stickup: How Reagan Republicans and Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street While Mugging Main Street*.

(Amy Goodman is the host of the nationally syndicated radio news program, Democracy Now!. Robert Scheer is Editor in Chief of Truthdig, where he publishes a weekly column, and author of a new book, *The Pornography of Power: How Defense Hawks Hijacked 9/11 and Weakened America*. © 2010 Democracy Now!)

20100908-03	19:37	Tom	"President's Socialist Takeover Must be Stopped"
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The case for impeachment...

"President's Socialist Takeover Must be Stopped" by Jeffrey T. Kuhner, *The Washington Times*

July 22, 2010, (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/22/the-case-for-impeachment-142967590/>)

President Obama has engaged in numerous high crimes and misdemeanors. The Democratic majority in Congress is in peril as Americans reject his agenda. Yet more must be done: Mr. Obama should be impeached.

He is slowly - piece by painful piece - erecting a socialist dictatorship. We are not there - yet. But he is putting America on that dangerous path. He is undermining our constitutional system of checks and balances; subverting democratic procedures and the rule of law; presiding over a corrupt, gangster regime; and assaulting the very pillars of traditional capitalism. Like Venezuela's leftist strongman, Hugo Chavez, Mr. Obama is bent on imposing a revolution from above - one that is polarizing America along racial, political and ideological lines. Mr. Obama is the most divisive president since Richard Nixon. His policies are Balkanizing the country. It's time for him to go.

He has abused his office and violated his oath to uphold the Constitution. His health care overhaul was rammed through Congress. It was - and remains - opposed by a majority of the people. It could only be passed through bribery and political intimidation. The Louisiana Purchase, the Cornhusker Kickback, the \$5 billion Medicaid set-aside for Florida Sen. Bill Nelson - taxpayer money was used as a virtual slush fund to buy swing votes. Moreover, the law is blatantly unconstitutional: The federal government does not have the right to coerce every citizen to purchase a good or service. This is not in the Constitution, and it represents an unprecedented expansion of power.

Yet Obamacare's most pernicious aspect is its federal funding of abortion. Pro-lifers are now compelled to have their tax dollars used to subsidize insurance plans that allow for the murder of unborn children. This is more than state-sanctioned infanticide. It violates the conscience rights of religious citizens. Traditionalists - evangelicals, Catholics, Baptists, Muslims, Orthodox Jews - have been made complicit in an abomination that goes against their deepest religious values. As the law is implemented (as in Pennsylvania) the consequences of the abortion provisions will become increasingly apparent. The result will be a cultural civil war. Pro-lifers will become deeply alienated from society; among many, a secession of the heart is taking place.

Mr. Obama is waging a frontal assault on property rights. The BP oil spill is a case in point. BP clearly is responsible for the spill and its massive economic and environmental damage to the Gulf. There is a legal process for claims to be adjudicated, but Mr. Obama has behaved more like Mr. Chavez or Russia's Vladimir Putin: He has bullied BP into setting up a \$20 billion compensation fund administered by an Obama appointee. In other words, the assets of a private company are to be raided to serve a political agenda. Billions will be dispensed arbitrarily in compensation to oil-spill victims - much of it to Democratic constituents. This is cronyism and creeping authoritarianism.

Mr. Obama's multicultural socialism seeks to eradicate traditional America. He has created a command-and-control health care system. He has essentially nationalized the big banks, the financial sector, the automakers and the student loan industry. He next wants to pass "cap-and-trade," which would bring industry and manufacturing under the heel of big government. The state is intervening in every aspect of American life - beyond its constitutionally delegated bounds. Under Mr. Obama, the Constitution has become a meaningless scrap of paper.

To provide the shock troops for his socialist takeover, Mr. Obama calls for "comprehensive immigration reform" - granting amnesty to 12 million to 20 million illegal aliens. This would forge a permanent Democratic electoral majority. It would sound the death knell for our national sovereignty. Amnesty rewards lawlessness and criminal behavior; it signifies the surrender of our porous southern border to a massive illegal invasion. It means the death of American nationhood. We will no longer be a country, but the colony of a global socialist empire.

Rather than defending our homeland, Mr. Obama's Justice Department has sued Arizona for its immigration law. He is siding with criminals against his fellow Americans. His actions desecrate his constitutional oath to protect U.S. citizens from enemies foreign and domestic. He is thus encouraging more illegal immigration as Washington refuses to protect our borders. Mr. Obama's decision on this case is treasonous.

As president, he is supposed to respect the rule of law. Instead, his administration has dropped charges of voter intimidation against members of the New Black Panther Party. This was done even though their menacing behavior was caught on tape: men in military garb brandishing clubs and threatening whites at a polling site. A Justice Department lawyer intimately involved in the case, J. Christian Adams, resigned in protest. Mr. Adams says that under Mr. Obama, there is a new policy: Cases involving black defendants and white victims - no matter how much they cry for justice - are not to be prosecuted. This is more than institutionalized racism. It is an abrogation of civil rights laws. The Justice Department's behavior is illegal. It poses a direct threat to the integrity of our democracy and the sanctity of our electoral process.

Corruption in the administration is rampant. Washington no longer has a government; rather, it has a gangster regime. The Chicago way has become the Washington way. Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel is a political hit man. He is an amoral, ruthless operator. It was Mr. Emanuel who reached out to Rep. Joe Sestak, Pennsylvania Democrat, offering a high-ranking job in the hopes of persuading Mr. Sestak to pull out of the primary against Sen. Arlen Specter. It was Mr. Emanuel who offered another government position to Andrew Romanoff to do the same in the Colorado Democratic Senate primary. And it was Mr. Emanuel - as the trial of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has revealed - who acted as the go-between to try to have Valerie Jarrett parachuted into Mr. Obama's former Senate seat. The only question was: What did Mr. Blagojevich want in exchange?

This is not simply sleazy Chicago machine politics. It is the systematic breaking of the law - bribery, attempt to interfere (and manipulate) elections using taxpayer-funded jobs, influence peddling and abuse of power.

The common misperception on the right is that Mr. Obama is another Jimmy Carter: an incompetent liberal whose presidency is being reduced to rubble under the onslaught of repeated failures. The very opposite, however, is true. He is the most consequential president in our lifetime, transforming America into something our Founding Fathers would find not only unrecognizable, but repugnant. Like all radical revolutionaries, he is consumed by the pursuit of power - attaining it, wielding it and maximizing it. Mr. Obama's fledgling thug state must be stopped.

If Republicans win back Congress in November, they should - and likely will - launch formal investigations into this criminal, scandal-ridden administration. Rep. Darrell Issa, California Republican and ranking member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has promised as much. Mr. Obama has betrayed the American people. Impeachment is the only answer. This usurper must fall.

(Jeffrey T. Kuhner is a columnist at *The Washington Times* and president of the Edmund Burke Institute, a Washington think tank. He is the host of "The Kuhner Show" on WTNT 570-AM (www.talk570.com) from 5 to 7 p.m.)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Other articles by Jeffrey T. Kuhner: [Very instructional as to possible bias. :-) —SteveB]

- "How Obama Lost Iraq" (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/2/how-obama-lost-iraq/>)
- "Bloomberg for President?" (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/26/bloomberg-for-president/>)
- "Obama's Islamic Agenda" (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/19/obamas-islamic-agenda/>)
- "Why God Is Great" (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/12/why-god-is-great/>)
- "Radical Islam's Conquest of America" (<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/5/radical-islams-conquest-of-america/>)

Comments... [On the webpage are crazy enough to make entertaining reading. —SteveB]

20100909-01 07:10 SteveB Re: "President's Socialist Takeover Must be Stopped"

Dear Tom,

What a crock! Show me one single invasion of the Constitution equivalent to that of Bush, etc. This article cleverly presents zero evidence of anything.

This "socialist", "communist" pack of lies is being trotted out because everything else is failing for our precious little Republicans. When that happens, they crank-up the "big lie" machine, just as they did in the last election. Ho-hum! I just hope the American people turn-out to be smart enough not to believe these lies.

America has serious problems. Why is the right doing nothing but screaming lies and names and crying like a bunch of silly babies, while the left implements its agenda? Why don't the Republicans get busy and do some work, like they were elected to do?

20100909-02 07:27 SteveB Re: "The Great American Stickup..."
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Dear Dennis and Lianne,

I have no axe to grind, but this article gets at a lot of truth, it seems to me.

I don't mind saying Obama ain't perfect. Funny, though, I don't hear any Republicans expressing any opposition to any part of their stupid agenda, which has already been rejected many, many times by the American people...no abortion, indeed! Creationism, indeed! Free trade, indeed! Business (corruption) as usual, indeed! De-regulation, indeed!

"Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson" by Michael Moore

Sept. 7, 2010 (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148106/>)

Dear Rahm Emanuel,

I read this week that—according to a new book by Steven Rattner, your administration's former "Car Czar"—during White House meetings about how to save the tens of thousands of jobs that would be lost if GM and Chrysler collapsed, your response was, "F*ck the UAW!"

Now, I can't believe you actually said that. Maybe Rattner got confused because you drop a lot of F-bombs, or maybe your assistant was trying to order lunch and you said (to Rattner) "F*ck you" and then to your assistant "A&W, no fries."

Or maybe you did mean F*ck the UAW. If so, let me give you a little f*cking lesson (a lesson I happen to know because my f*cking uncle was in the sit-down strike that founded the f*cking UAW).

Before there were unions, there was no middle class. Working people didn't get to send their kids to college, few were able to own their own f*cking home, nobody could take a f*cking day off for a funeral or a sick day or they might lose their f*cking job.

Then working people organized themselves into unions. The bosses and the companies f*cking hated that. In fact, they were often overheard to say, "F*ck the UAW!!!" That's because the UAW had beaten one of the world's biggest industrial corporations when they won their battle on Feb. 11, 1937, 44 days after they'd taken over the GM factories in Flint. Inspired by their victory, workers struck almost every other f*cking industry, and union after union was born. Had World War II not begun and had FDR not died, there would have been an economic revolution that would have given everyone—everyone—a f*cking decent life.

Nonetheless labor unions did create a middle class for the majority (even companies that didn't have unions were forced to pay at or near union wages in order to attract a workforce) and that middle class built a great country and a good life. You see, Rahm, when people earn a f*cking good wage, they spend it on stuff, which then creates more good paying jobs, and then the middle class grows f*cking big. Did you know that back when I was a kid if you had a parent making a union wage, only one parent had to work?! And they were home by 3 or 4 pm, 5:30 at the latest! We had dinner together! Dad had four weeks paid vacation. We all had free health and dental care. And anyone with decent grades went to college and it didn't f*cking bankrupt them. (And if you ever used the F-word, the nuns would straighten you out in ways that even you couldn't bear to hear about).

Then a Republican fired all the air traffic controllers, a Democrat gave us NAFTA and millions of jobs were moved overseas (hey, didn't you work in that White House, too? "F*ck the UAW, baby!"). Unions got scared and beaten down, a frat boy became president and, like a drunk out of control, spent all our f*cking money and our children's money, too. F*ck.

And now your assistant's grandma has to work at f*cking McDonald's. Ask her for pictures of what the middle class life used to look like. It was effing cool! I'll bet grandma doesn't say "F*ck the UAW!"

Hey, don't get me wrong, Rahm. I f*cking like you. You single-handedly got the House returned to the Dems in 2006. But you and your boss better do something f*cking quick to put people back to work. How 'bout making it a crime to take an American job and move it out of the country? In other words, treat it as if it were a f*cking national treasure like you would if someone stole the Declaration of Independence out of the National Archives or some poacher stole eggs out of the nest of an America bald eagle.

Or how 'bout arresting some of those Wall Street guys who f*cking stole our money, the money that ran the American economy. Now that would take some f*cking guts. And maybe, just maybe, that one act of real guts might save your a*s come Nov. 2nd.

Oh, I can just hear you now: "F*ck Michael Moore!" No problem. But F*ck the UAW? How 'bout if I just leave off the 'A' and the 'W'?

Yours, Michael Moore

(Michael Moore is an Academy Award-winning filmmaker and author. He directed and produced *Rogue & Me*, *Bowling for Columbine*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and *Sicko*. He has also written seven books, most recently, *Mike's Election Guide 2008*)

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[20100909-04](#) 08:23 SteveB Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"

It's so sad to me how truly uneducated we Americans are any more. Most of the rest of us seem subject to brainwashing. That doesn't leave very many thinking, knowing people to keep things going in a positive direction (for most of us). One of the greatest examples of all this is how the right, essentially unchallenged, has re-written the true history and nature of the unions. Gee, that was in our interest, of course? Next, they'll be telling us Ahmajizzardom is right and there was no Holocaust? There was one...right...?

In the end, one party or the other (or...long shot...a third?) is eventually going to have to face, wrestle, and throw to the carpet this beast with three heads, called "Money", "Power", and "Greed", aided and abetted by its two powerful swords, "Damned lies" and "Bigger damned lies"). Otherwise...we are all nothing but slaves already...

Maybe it is time for the pu*sy politicians to engage in that fight, and rather sooner than later (Big Money doesn't seem to be losing any power anywhere in the world.) Unions? Sorry, we got child slaves in sweatshops all over the world doing our bidding now. Of course, the goods had better be cheap, 'cause we don't have many real jobs any more.

We opened-up Free Trade, we crushed the unions (or allowed their crushing), we opened our borders as if they were the legs of a Tijuana slut (thought you'd like that one). We "leveled the playing field". We made America poorer and grew more debt-ridden. We made the world the sweatshop for the world. We re-made the world in the image of America. Now, almost the whole world thinks it needs to be part of that image of America. And they think they need the automobiles, the energy, and all the other consumption to be part of that image. Duhhhh, let me see...who just happens to be selling that very stuff? The same Big Money that has now moved the world into this dangerous and precarious age.

[20100909-05](#) 18:25 Dennis Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"

Dear SteveB,

In a message dated 9/9/10 8:06:55 am, SteveB writes:

It's so sad to me how truly uneducated we Americans are any more.

Hope you don't mind that I borrowed your "cure for stupid" line for my signature. I'm using it in all communications with my brothers and cousins.

"In the United Stupid of America, there is no cure for stupid!" —Steven W, Baker (SteveB)

[20100909-06](#) 18:40 SteveB Re: "Michael Moore Teaches Rahm Emanuel a F*cking Economics Lesson"

Dear Dennis,

Cool! I'm flattered!

[20100910-01](#) 07:59 Laurel Fw: The Photos Say It All

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The photos say it all!

Self explanatory: Just look at the paraphernalia that his "aides" have to carry into a school in order for him to speak to school kids. Unbelievable! I think these 2 pictures make some kind of statement!!!!!!!!!!

Here is what Obama needs set up to talk to a few school children. Not much room for kids. Still needs to have the Teleprompters. The secret service guy in back keeps eyes out for any terrorist-type-8-year-olds with tea partying parents. His I.Q. gives him away!!!



Here's what the last guy needed:



Dear SteveB,

When the article is couched in terminology full of emotional bias it makes me suspect of the goals of the author. I wonder if he really went to Bachman's rally to observe the "rapt attention" of the audience. Second why is George Soros ok for the liberals and Koch is not. Perhaps Soros is giving the liberals lots of entertainment to distract them from reality. When you call someone a racist because his opinion is different than yours leave me cold. We do have to address social security, Medicare, public pensions, runaway budgets of all government departments because we are out of money. the wealth that we created after WWII is gone.

[It's not gone at all. It's just in the hands of a few. —SteveB]

If you want a classic case study of the world to come pay attention to what's going on in my town of Muncie. All the big corporations (members of the evil empire in author's opinion) are gone and with them all the tax dollars they paid as well as all the wages and benefits. We are left with Ball State, Ball Hospital and local government. none of them pay taxes and we don't have the revenues to continue business as usual, but nobody wants to make the hard choices and we are in gridlock. You can worry about the Tea Party, but look over your shoulder at the liberal democrats as they will tax us into socialism.

When it comes to Social Security...

20100917-01	11:42	Dennis	"This Country Just Can't Deal with Reality Any More"
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When America went wacko...

"This Country Just Can't Deal with Reality Any More" by Robert Parry, Consortium News

Sept. 16, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148206/>)

As Election Day 2010 approaches—as the United States wallows in the swamps of war, recession and environmental degradation—the consequences of the nation's three-decade-old decoupling from reality are becoming painfully obvious.

Yet, despite the danger, the nation can't seem to move in a positive direction, as if the suctioning effect of endless spin, half-truths and lies holds the populace in place, a force that grows ever more powerful like quicksand sucking the country deeper into the muck—to waist deep, then neck deep.

Trapped in the mud, millions of Americans are complaining about their loss of economic status, their sense of powerlessness, their nation's decline. But instead of examining how the country stumbled into this morass, many still choose not to face reality.

Instead of seeking paths to the firmer ground of a reality-based world, people from different parts of the political spectrum have decided to embrace unreality even more, either cynically as a way to delegitimize a political opponent or because they've simply become addicted to the crazy.

The latest manifestation of the wackiness can be found in the rise of the Tea Party, a movement of supposedly grassroots, mad-as-hell regular Americans that is subsidized by wealthy corporate donors (such as the billionaire Koch brothers) seeking to ensure deregulation of their industries and to consolidate their elite control over the political process.

The Tea Party madness is aided and abetted by a now fully formed right-wing media apparatus that can popularize any false narrative (like Islam planning to conquer Christian America as represented by the building of an Islamic community center near Ground Zero).

The Right sees an advantage in spreading even the nuttiest of smears against President Barack Obama. So you have right-wing author Dinesh D'Souza and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich concocting a toxic brew of racist nonsense about Obama somehow channeling the anti-colonialism of his late Kenyan father.

"Incredibly, the U.S. is being ruled according to the dreams of a Luo tribesman of the 1950s," D'Souza wrote in *Forbes*. "This philandering, inebriated African socialist, who raged against the world for denying him the realization of his anti-

colonial ambitions, is now setting the nation's agenda through the reincarnation of his dreams in his son." Incredibly, indeed.

The "factual" basis of this "analysis" apparently is that Obama entitled his touching story about his youth, *Dreams of My Father*, which was a book that focused on the absence of his father from his life. In a less crazy time, one might have expected D'Souza's claptrap to be denounced by politicians across the political spectrum, but that is not the time we live in.

Instead, Newt Gingrich, a leading figure in the Republican Party and a potential candidate for President in 2012, praised D'Souza's racist psycho-babble as the "most profound insight I have read in the last six years about Barack Obama," adding that D'Souza unlocked the mystery of who Obama is by addressing his "Kenyan, anti-colonial behavior."

Gingrich also pretended that he and D'Souza were the truth-tellers here, not just propagandists spreading a smear. Gingrich said they simply were unmasking Obama who has "played a wonderful con, as a result of which he is now president."

How It Happened

But how did the United States of America get here? How could the most powerful nation on earth with a sophisticated media that is constitutionally protected from government censorship have stumbled into today's dreary place filled with such up-is-down commentary?

As a journalist in Washington since 1977, I have had a front-row seat to this sad devolution of American reason. As the process advanced, I have at times felt like a Cassandra trying to warn others about the risks of abandoning fact and rationality in favor of propaganda of whatever stripe.

I also have watched Newt Gingrich since he was a freshman congressman in 1979, when I was a congressional correspondent for the Associated Press. Though I have met many politicians in my career and know they can be an egotistical bunch, Gingrich's burning ambition—his readiness to do whatever was necessary—stood out even then.

Unlike many other congressional Republicans of the time, Gingrich cared little for constructive governance but a great deal for political gamesmanship. He was already plotting his route to national power and was ready to use whatever tactics would advance his personal and ideological cause.

However, America's decoupling from reality—and its disappearance into the swamp of unreality—began in earnest with the rise of actor and ad pitchman Ronald Reagan, who crafted a host of get-something-for-nothing policies that appealed to a nation that was struggling to adjust to a more complex world.

Reagan promised that tax cuts tilted to the rich would generate more revenue and eliminate the federal debt; that this money also could finance a massive military buildup which would frighten America's enemies and restore national prestige; that freeing corporations from government regulations and from powerful unions would herald a new day of prosperity; that the country could turn its back on alternative energy and simply drill for more oil; that whites no longer had to feel guilty about the plight of blacks; that traditional "values"—i.e. rejection of the "counter-culture"—would bring back the good old days when men were men and women were women.

Despite the appeal of Reagan's message to many Americans, it was essentially an invitation to repudiate reality. Before joining Reagan's ticket as his vice presidential nominee, George H.W. Bush had famously denounced the tax-cut plan as "voodoo economics." Early in Reagan's presidency, his budget director David Stockman acknowledged that the tax cuts would flood the government in red ink.

But tax policy wasn't Reagan's only ignore-the-future policy. While rejecting President Jimmy Carter's warnings about the need for renewable energy sources, Reagan removed Carter's solar panels from the White House roof and left the nation dependent on oil. Reagan also led campaigns to break unions and to free corporations from many government regulations.

Scaring the Public

In foreign policy—although the Soviet Union was in rapid decline—Reagan put ideological blinders on the CIA's analysts to make sure they exaggerated the Soviet menace and justified his military buildup.

Reagan achieved this "politicization" of the CIA by placing in charge his campaign chief William Casey, who, in turn, picked a young CIA careerist named Robert Gates to purge the analytical division of its long tradition of objectivity. Gates arranged the scariest intelligence estimates possible.

Reagan also credentialed a group of young intellectuals who became known as the neoconservatives—the likes of Elliott Abrams, Richard Perle and Robert Kagan—who emerged from an elitist tradition (advocated by philosopher Leo Strauss) that it was their proper role to manipulate the less-educated masses and guide them in certain directions.

After Reagan gave the neocons oversight of his Central American policies, the neocons worked with seasoned CIA propagandists, like Walter Raymond Jr. who was moved over to the National Security Council, to develop what they called "perception management" strategies for controlling how the American people would see and understand things.

The neocons used fear, exaggeration and outright lying to get the American people behind Reagan's support for brutal military regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala and the contra rebels seeking to overthrow Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government. Truth was subordinated to policy.

Perception management operatives targeted honest journalists, human rights activists and congressional investigators who dug up unwanted facts that challenged Reagan's propaganda. To discredit truthful messages, the neocons "controversialized" the messengers.

These techniques proved very successful, in large part, because many senior executives at leading news outlets—from the AP where general manager Keith Fuller was a Reagan enthusiast to the *New York Times* where executive editor Abe Rosenthal was himself a neocon—sided with the propagandists against their own journalists. [For details on "perception management," see Robert Parry's *Lost History*.]

Meanwhile, the American Right began building its own media infrastructure with wealthy foundations footing the bills for a host of political magazines. Far-right religious cult leader Sun Myung Moon poured billions of mysterious dollars into the *Washington Times* and other media operations. [See *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

By contrast, the American Left mostly under-funded or even de-funded its scattered media outlets. Some, like Ramparts, were shuttered, while other formerly left-of center publications, such as The New Republic and The Atlantic, changed hands to neocon and conservative owners. [See Consortiumnews.com's "The Left's Media Miscalculation."]

Whatever the long-term costs, Reagan made many Americans feel good in the short run. They liked the idea of not having to pay for government services (by simply putting the bill on the government's credit card) and many bought into Reagan's notion that "government is the problem." So, in 1984, Reagan's gauzy "Morning in America" vision won big over Walter Mondale's appeal for fiscal responsibility.

The Iran-Contra Window

Perhaps the last best hope to reassert reality came with the Iran-Contra scandal, which played out from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. Reagan's secret arms-for-hostages deals with Iran had the potential to unravel an interconnected series of national security cover-ups and scandals, including cocaine smuggling by Reagan's contras and creation of the "perception management" operation itself.

However, again, truth about these complex scandals was not considered that important, either in Congress or within the Washington news media. The governing Democrats, the likes of Rep. Lee Hamilton and later President Bill Clinton, chose to sweep the scandals under the rug in the hope that the Republicans would reciprocate through a renewed bipartisanship. [See *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

Not only were those hopes unrequited, the Republicans actually grew more emboldened and more partisan. The GOP and its allies ramped up personal attacks on Clinton by turning loose its powerful new media infrastructure, which by the 1990s featured the Right's domination of AM talk radio.

A typical example of the Right's propaganda was to distribute lists of "mysterious deaths" of people somehow connected to President Clinton. Though there was no evidence that Clinton was implicated in any of the deaths, the sophistry of the argument rested simply on the number of cases.

When I checked out some of the cases and relayed my findings of Clinton's innocence to one right-wing source, he told me that maybe I could show that Clinton wasn't responsible for some of the deaths but I couldn't account for all and that it would be "a big story" if the President was responsible for even a few deaths. I responded that it would be a "big story" if the President were responsible for even one, but the problem was that there was no evidence of that, just the insidious impression created by a long list of vague suspicions.

What the Right learned was that it could achieve political gain by circulating an endless supply of baseless or wildly exaggerated allegations. Many Americans would believe them just because of the repetition over right-wing talk radio, especially by the most prominent talker Rush Limbaugh.

On Election Night 1994, Democrats were stunned by how effective the tactic of using bogus and hyped anti-Clinton charges proved to be. Between the smearing of Bill and Hillary Clinton and the voters desire to punish Democrats for raising taxes to close the Reagan-Bush-41-era deficits, the Republicans swept to control of the House and Senate.

Newt Gingrich achieved his long-held goal of becoming House Speaker, and Rush Limbaugh was made an honorary member of the Republican congressional caucus. In the years that have followed—especially with the emergence of Fox News in the mid-to-late 1990s—the dominance of right-wing propaganda over non-ideological reality moved to the center of the American political process.

As in the 1980s, much of the blame should fall on the mainstream news media. Rather than push for difficult truths, many journalists in the corporate media protected their careers by going with the flow or turned their attention to trivial and tabloid stories.

The Bush-43 Era

During Campaign 2000, journalists from publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ganged up on Al Gore. They even made up quotations to put in his mouth so they could haze him as if they were the cool kids on campus and he was the goofy nerd.

By contrast, journalists knew to fawn all over the ultimate big man on campus, George W. Bush, as he made them feel important by giving them nicknames. [For details, see *Neck Deep*.]

When Gore still narrowly defeated Bush in Election 2000, the major news media stood aside as Bush and the Republicans stole the White House. After Bush's allies on the U.S. Supreme Court stopped the counting of votes in Florida to give him the "victory," some executives at major publications felt that pointing out the fact that Gore actually won—if all votes legal under Florida law had been counted—would undermine Bush's "legitimacy" and thus it was better not to let the public know. In other words, ignorance had become bliss.

Some columnists, like the *Washington Post's* Richard Cohen, went so far as to hail the overturning of the popular will under the theory that Bush would be a uniter, while Gore would be a divisive figure.

The see-no-evil attitude hardened after the 9/11 attacks when mainstream outlets, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and CNN, consciously misreported their own findings of a Gore victory in Florida, based on an unofficial media recount. Instead of leading with that remarkable fact, they buried the lead and highlighted that Bush would still have won some partial, hypothetical recounts. [See *Neck Deep*.]

The media mood after 9/11—a combination of misguided patriotism and fear of rightwing retaliation—caused the mainstream press to retreat further into self-censorship and even collaboration. Key journalists, such as the Times' reporter Judy Miller and the *Post's* editorial page editor Fred Hiatt, became handmaidens to Bush's propaganda about Iraq.

With only a few exceptions, the U.S. news media let itself become silly putty in the hands of the neocons, who had returned to power under Bush-43 with a much broader foreign policy portfolio than Reagan had ever given them. Whereas Reagan confined them mostly to Central America, Bush-43 gave them the strategically vital Middle East.

Not surprisingly, the neocons reprised their old strategy of perception management, stoking excessive fears of Iraq's mythical WMD programs and stomping out any counter embers of doubt. For millions of Americans, the WMD lies became truth as they were repeated everywhere, from Fox News and Rush Limbaugh to the pages of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.

Aping the Right

After watching the success of the Bush administration's propaganda, some on the Left decided that their only hope was to give the neocons a taste of their own disinformation medicine. Though the 9/11 evidence pointed to Bush's incompetence in ignoring warnings and failing to stop al-Qaeda's terrorist operation, some American leftists felt that it wasn't enough to convince the people that Bush was simply a bonehead. The feeling was that Bush had so bamboozled the people that they needed to be shocked out of their trances by something bigger.

So, this small group brushed aside the evidence-backed narrative of Bush's incompetence and even a competing interpretation of that factual framework, claiming that Bush had "let 9/11 happen." Instead, this group insisted that the only way to wake up America was to make a case that Bush "made it happen," that he was behind the 9/11 attacks.

To accomplish this feat, these activists, who became known as "9/11 truthers," threw out all the evidence of al-Qaeda's involvement, from contemporaneous calls from hijack victims on the planes to confessions from al-Qaeda leaders both in and out of captivity that they indeed had done it. The "truthers" then cherry-picked a few supposed "anomalies" to build an "inside-job" story line.

The "truthers" even recycled many of the Right's sophistry techniques, such as using long lists of supposed evidence to overcome the lack of any real evidence. These sleight-of-hand techniques obscured the glaring fact that not a single witness has emerged to describe the alleged "inside job," either the supposed "controlled demolition" of the Twin Towers or the alleged "missile" attack on the Pentagon. Some supporters of the "inside-job" theory may have simply been destabilized by all the years of right-wing disinformation. Reality and real evidence may have lost all currency, replaced by a deep and understandable distrust of the nation's leaders and the news media.

Other "truthers" whom I've talked with view their anti-Bush propaganda campaign as a success because it injected some doubts among the American people about Bush. One told me that this was the only attack line against Bush that had gained any "traction."

However, after President Obama's election in 2008, the Right again demonstrated its mastery of the disinformation techniques. Unlike the Left, the Right could roll out the heavy artillery of a multi-layered media apparatus that pounded the public with barrage after barrage of conspiracy theories.

Falsehoods took on the color of truth simply by their endless retelling. For instance, the canard that Obama was born in Kenya, not Hawaii as his birth certificate shows, has gained credibility with large numbers of Americans including about half of Republicans, some polls show. Similarly, the Right has convinced tens of millions that Obama is a Muslim, though he is Christian.

The Right's media power has enabled the Republicans to portray Obama as some un-American "other," while the GOP has little fear that its spreading of racist-tinged conspiracy theories will hurt the party's election chances.

The latest example is Dinesh D'Souza's bizarre theorizing about Obama's channeling his late father's opposition to British colonialism in Kenya, a reincarnated dream which somehow has morphed into Obama's "socialist" agenda which is "alien" to American values.

Instead of roundly condemning D'Souza for this strange and racist article, Gingrich—one of the supposed intellectuals of the Republican Party—went out of his way to praise the nonsense as "profound."

As former Bush-43 speechwriter David Frum noted in a blog post, "With the Forbes story and now the Gingrich endorsement, the argument that Obama is an infiltrating alien, a deceiving foreigner—and not just any kind of alien, but specifically a Third World alien—has been absorbed almost to the very core of the Republican platform for Nov., 2010."

Despite some internal GOP critics like Frum, the Republican Party clearly feels that it has a winning formula, using such psychological warfare to exploit a confused and embittered electorate. That confidence will be tested on Nov. 2, although if most prognosticators are correct, the Republicans have good reason to feel confident. Whatever happens on Election Day, the longer-term challenge will be to rebuild an old-fashioned commitment to fact and reason within both American journalism and the broader political system.

Though lying is not foreign to U.S. politics and media, telling the truth has always been a fundamental American value, one that is vital to democracy. The great task of restoring the Republic must include honest efforts to dig out recent history's ground truth, which can then be used to build a path out of the disinformation swamp and onto the dry land of rational political discourse.

(Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and *Newsweek*. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there. Or go to Amazon.com.)

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20100918-01	11:20	Pam	So...?
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Dear Steve,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I remember my mother once telling me that she had too much time to think. Maybe that's my problem. I am so dispirited by the political climate in this country that I could weep. Tea Party candidates are winning elections, Sarah Palin is probably planning to run for President, the Senate is broken, and the working class has forgotten whom to blame for their economic woes. I guess they don't remember that under the last Democratic President we had a budget surplus. Why this country would want to return to the bad old days of Republican administration is beyond me. I agree with you that all politicians are suspect at best, but the Republicans win the prize for corruption and selfishness in my estimation. I've lost all faith in the media, except for the *New Yorker* magazine, *Harper's*, the *New York Review of Books*, and the "Daily Show" with Jon Stewart. Truth and good sense are out there, but their voices are so muted in comparison to all the ranting and raving. We are not a compassionate people; we are selfish and arrogant, and no wonder the world hates us. I feel so helpless, it makes me depressed. I just read Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom* where he describes the despair of liberals during the Bush regime. Despair and helplessness, for me, lead to withdrawal and a dark fatalism, neither of which does anyone any good.

I keep imagining scenarios where Sarah Palin becomes President and leads a drive to evict all Hispanics and Muslims from the country. People will be encouraged to carry guns openly, and children will have to pray in school. The economy will collapse, and in response Palin will lead us into yet another war to distract the populace from what is really screwed up with their lives. I swear, if she had a mustache, she'd look like Hitler to me. People didn't take him seriously at first either, and it was just the same social class that he appealed to. Educated, sophisticated folks couldn't believe this bumpkin could ever be taken seriously. Boy, were they wrong.

I need to shake this off. My own life is good, and I should be grateful for that, and I am. If I wait for the world to be perfect to be happy, I'll have a sad life. I am just so incredibly aghast at how stupid people can be, and when "good" people are stupid, it's especially galling. Out and out criminals are less disturbing to me (at least to contemplate) than that ding-a-ling who just won a primary in Delaware, who thinks masturbation is adultery. My husband's solution is for us to go to the soccer game tonight and cheer for the home team. My answer is to get lost in a book that takes me away from the here and now to the there and then. *Freedom* did that, and I was sorry to finish it.

I had tea yesterday afternoon with a friend who lives in the neighborhood. She used to teach in the English dept. at UNCG; her husband still does. They are super Christian and conservative, so I steer clear of politics and religion, but we talked about literature, and that was fun. She's terribly intelligent—and beautiful, I might add—but she can seem chilly and aloof. There's a bitterness in her that is unsettling. I suspect she may have some depression (I can relate to that), and I know she feels thwarted professionally. I wonder if she's lonely. She doesn't reveal much, so it's hard to know what's really going on. Her husband obviously adores her (they have three kids, two in college), but she seems chilly about him too. I guess I tend to view people as characters in a book and try to figure them out. It makes life interesting.

OK. I've gone on long enough. I don't know that I feel much better, but writing in itself is a distraction.

20100918-02	13:10	Dennis	"Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell: Largest Pro-wanking
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Demonstration in History"

News from Delaware...

"Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell: Largest Pro-wanking Demonstration in History" by Andy Borowitz

Sept. 17, 2010, (<http://www.borowitzreport.com/2010/09/17/delaware-masturbators-march-against-odonnell/>)

(WILMINGTON) Galvanized by Republican senatorial nominee Christine O'Donnell's anti-masturbation stance, masturbators from across the state converged on Wilmington today in what some are calling the largest pro-wanking protest in American history.

Carrying signs reading, "O'Donnell: Hands Off Our Masturbation," the angry masturbators clogged downtown Wilmington, stopping traffic for blocks.

Harley Farger, a leading Delaware masturbator and planner of the Million Masturbators March, said it was difficult to organize masturbators "because they're used to acting alone."

Mr. Farger, the executive director of the pro-monkey-spanking group MasturNation, said that the "wank and file" of his organization believe that masturbation is an inalienable right guaranteed by the Constitution.

"Our country was founded by rugged individualists," he said. "And you know what individualists like to do."

He said that Ms. O'Donnell's anti-whacking position was "ill-timed," adding, "In this economy, masturbation is one of the few simple pleasures people still can afford."

Tracy Klugian, a homemaker and masturbator from Dover, Delaware, said she is "puzzled" by what she sees as the contradictory nature of candidate O'Donnell's position: "If you're against masturbation, why would you want to serve in Congress?"

[20100919-01](#) 07:37 SteveB Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear Dennis,

See? You ask...and help is on the way. Maybe it would help if you would come out of the closet and start a "wankers" organization in your community?

I just don't get this at all! I mean, we all know that masturbation is wrong and kills brain cells, but I always thought everybody did it. Now, after a lifetime of masturbation, during which time I have suffered the terrible consequences, I am to learn that some conservatives somehow manage not to do it?

I feel so cheated and lost in a landscape without morals! I always thought there were just two kinds of people in the world: those who spank their monkey (hello, George Carlin) and say they do, and those who spank their monkey and say they don't. Now, after a lifetime of sin and scoundrel abuse, I am to learn that there is a third kind of person? A person who is probably a professional monkey spanker, who makes me look like an amateur, but who, being a Republican, shouts her lie from the pulpits and rostrums of America so vociferously, even she begins to believe it.

Hey, Christine O'Donnell, go f*ck yourself!

[20100919-02](#) 07:56 GaryC Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear SteveB,

I always felt that by masturbating I was killing the weaker brain cells thus I actually believe masturbation makes me smarter.

[20100919-03](#) 07:59 SteveB Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear GaryC,

Ah...so maybe not masturbating explains how so many of these Republicans have gotten so frickin' stupid!

[20100919-04](#) 09:23 Pam Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear SteveB,

You're right. The best thing to do is laugh at the ridiculous. I've decided that I'm going to stop getting depressed and angry and just say, f*ck 'em all. That'll show 'em.

We have a friend who is English and a soccer fan. His favorite cheer at games is, "Wanker!" Aimed at the ref., of course. I don't think anyone in the stands knows what it means.

[20100919-05](#) 14:25 SteveB Redistribution of Wealth

The "redistribution of wealth" that strikes so much fear into the Teabaggers mostly refers to the fact that it is the solution to the social injustice that 1% of the population controls over 80% of the nation's wealth, while the poorest 50% of the citizens controls less than 1% of the nation's wealth. The top 1% pay 37% of the taxes (but control 80% of the money!) How is this arrangement good or fair or just?

Oh... and Jesus was no fan of the stingy rich. He never castigated gays, but he sure did say that the uncharitable wealth hoarders shouldn't expect an engraved invitation to Heaven.

[20100919-06](#) 20:01 GaryC Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear SteveB,

Since you are a policy and political wanker, what party do you vote for if you are a social liberal and a fiscal conservative?

[20100919-07](#) 09:06 SteveB Solutions

Dear GaryC,

What party to vote for?

I think we should vote for whatever puppets they put up for election who are not in power. Term limits might be good, but not enough. Also, there's a long learning curve to becoming a good legislator, a breed you don't see much anymore.

Have been thinking about it a lot lately...even toying with the idea of doing a political/historical book, essentially for my kids and grandkids...but I got so much else goin' on. I want to be apolitical, but this whole political thing in the U.S. has gotten out of control. For now, my agenda is based on the following rather long and dreary road:

1. The political attacks and lies need to stop. The rhetoric needs to be toned down. We have serious problems to solve, without really the means necessary for the solutions. Instead of taxes, education, immigration, foreign policy, regulation, free-trade, our too many of our politicians are shouting about masturbation and socialism. When I was young, politicians would argue, but with respect, with the knowledge that, in reality, they were on the same side. That attitude seems to have died and must be resurrected. We have to stop being ugly, brutal, stupid people. At least a little bit. We've done it before, why not again?

2. Every incumbent must be turned out of office, every election (good or bad)! Despite what I said about the learning curve, above. The good ones can run again after sitting out a term. They'll be the better for it.

3. No. 2 has to be done as religiously as possible across the country until we somehow shake things up enough (but not too much, democracy is, after all, fragile) to make our elected representatives comprehend who their bosses truly are. We, the people. Not big business, not the special interests. Now, finally, the system has somehow shed enough corruption to actually be able to function like a democracy. In that bright future, we will know we have reached this milestone when the following measures are taken by Congress, the President, the Courts, and the electorate:

a. Completely revamp campaign finance law. End the corrupt power of big business, the military, and special interests. This problem is easily fixed if the will is there.

b. Get the lobbyists out of the Houses of Congress and the White House and into some special governmental "fact finding" bureaucracy. That ought to keep them out of trouble. They can only communicate openly to Congress, the President, etc. and the rest of us via the internet.

c. Completely end all "swinging door" opportunities between regulators and what they regulate. Anything else, as is the case in all three of these points, is simply rank corruption of the worst kind.

4. OK, now that we have established, by law, a reasonably rational, non-corrupt government, at this time and not prior to this time, we can start to solve our huge national problems. Now we can actually put our democratic, open-fair-public-debate, solve-the-problem-on-the-merits system to work for us. Now we have the means to do it once again...the means we had at one or more times in history and threw away due to ambition and greed. But everything is a cycle.

20100920-01 13:36 Mary Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear Dennis,

By sending this, **you become part of all that is wrong with politics.**

O'Donnell was in her 20's when she founded S.A.L.T. and took that stand as part of her sexual purity message to kids. Criticize her and her politics all you want....just please be fair and relevant.

Not going to waste any more of my time on your sophomoric forwards. Save it for the likes of SteveB, who tends to thrive on that sort of stuff. [Now I'm sophomoric? At 64? And a pervert too! LOL —SteveB]

20100920-02 13:55 SteveB Re: "Delaware Masturbators March Against O'Donnell"

Dear Mary,

"All that is wrong with politics" is that the system is totally corrupt.

The toughest issue is jobs, and most of our good American jobs have been sold abroad by both parties and the "big money". The middle class and the American way of life are at risk. None of this is something that will be solved with the traditional, dogmatic right-left debate. It's a problem other than what the right and the left are all about.

If I am pro-masturbation (haha) and anti-witchcraft (hey, now, that's serious stuff!), I reserve every right to express those opinions and will always strive to listen fairly to yours. On whatever subject on whatever level you deem worthy.

If, despite our dire problems as a nation, a little humor cannot be injected into politics, then I, for one, am appalled. If I'm in the wrong, blame Abe Lincoln, Will Rogers, Winston Churchill, Ronald Regan, Monty Python, and John Stewart.

I'll be sorry if you don't reply to any more sophomoric forwards from one of the smartest people I've ever known.

Since I am neither of the right, nor of the left, but outside of all that, what exactly is the sort of stuff I "thrive on", please? That which is humorous? That which is true? That which might someday lead us closer to being the nation we strive to become, embodying our highest ideals?

Dear SteveB,

I just read an essay in *Harper's Magazine* (an excerpt from a book that is due out soon) that sums up exactly my thinking. It is always gratifying to read something that encapsulates my own thought. The book is *The Mendacity of Hope: Barack Obama and the Betrayal of American Liberalism* by Roger D. Hodge. It's all about how the top 1% of American society, in terms of wealth, control everything.

I am with you about all politics. Next time, if Ralph Nader runs, I'm voting for him. I always thought a vote for him was a wasted vote, but now I think it doesn't matter who you vote for—R or D. The real conflict is not between Republicans and Democrats but between the rich and everyone else. I wish I could find a reason to hope that our democracy will not fail, just as so many others have before us. Plato in "The Republic" predicted that democracy would end in demagoguery and dictatorship. It did in Athens, in Rome, and in the Renaissance. I fear we're headed for the same fall.

I also agree that humor is our last salvation. So long as we can laugh at and mock our "leaders" we are not completely in the sh*t. No one laughed at Stalin. Irreverence, mockery, satire—that's what we need more of. Thank god for Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. Especially Jon Stewart. I wonder how his Million Moderates March will fare. It's good that people are angry. More people need to be angry all across the political spectrum.

My son Tanner was here today and we got into a big discussion. He is so committed—to animal rights, the environment, etc. etc. He lives what he believes—way more than I do—and I always feel like a sell-out when I talk to him. Still, I do what I can. But I still eat meat and give my grandsons cows' milk, despite what I know about big agriculture. I still use plastic, despite what I know about its dangers. Sometimes it's so damned hard to be good.

"Speak, Money" by Roger D. Hodge, *Harper's Magazine*

Oct., 2010, (<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2010/10/0083125>)

(From *The Mendacity of Hope: Barack Obama and the Betrayal of American Liberalism*, out this month from HarperCollins. Hodge is the former editor of *Harper's Magazine*.)

As we prepare yet another round of offerings to the demigods of America's political religion, we would do well to remind ourselves of what our electoral votives truly signify. Ideally, our ballots purport to be expressions of political will, which we hope and pray will be translated into legislative and executive action by our pretended representatives. Through hard and painful struggles, against daunting odds, our forebears and elders fought so long for voting rights—for unpropertied men, for women, for blacks—that we may perhaps be forgiven the error of thinking that casting a ballot is the perfection of civic virtue, the ultimate and sovereign duty of the citizen-ruler. Alas, the agony of citizenship is never ending; voting is the beginning of civic virtue, not its end, and as suffrage has expanded so has its value been steadily debased. The locus of real power is elsewhere. Wealth and property qualifications, poll taxes, and the like are very far from being historical curiosities; they have simply mutated. Campaign contributions and other forms of political spending have assumed that old exclusionary function, and only those who can afford to pay are able truly to manifest their political will. Voters still "matter," of course, but only as raw material to be shaped by the actual form of political influence—money—which molds the body politic by realizing itself in the ductile mass of common voters.

The Atlantic republican tradition that informed the minds of our founding generation had a name for this state of affairs: corruption, a term that suggested far more than mere bribery. Corruption, in its institutional sense, denotes the degeneration of republican forms of government into despotism, and typically comes about when the private ends of a narrow faction of citizens succeed in capturing the engines of government; its prevention was one of the primary concerns of the framers of the Constitution. Citizens, like states, are susceptible to the disease of corruption, and in the classical republican understanding a corrupt citizenry is one that has allowed its private and narrow personal interests to trump those of the general public. The radicalism of the American revision of republicanism consisted in founding a state on the premise that the public interest might be served by the assertion of private interest, and that a large, well-regulated republic might withstand corruption by absorbing the manifold competing interests of a large and diverse population. Most republicans throughout history have viewed history through a tragic lens; the life cycle of republics—their degeneration into anarchy, oligarchy, or monarchy—was thought to be inescapable. James Madison, in particular,

sought to escape that tragic cycle. His principles were sound, his institutional design was brilliant, and yet he failed. Perhaps the time has come for us to reckon with that tragedy.

The corruption of our institutions manifests itself in a variety of ways, but in none so dramatic as the imbalance of national wealth, which in recent decades has shattered records formerly set in the late 1920s. Although it is often claimed that the gap between rich and poor began decisively to widen in the late 1970s, as if to absolve Ronald Reagan for what his followers no doubt count as his primary accomplishment, the total share of income of the wealthiest 10 percent of American families was well within the postwar norm until 1982, when Reagan's policies began a massive, decades-long transfer of national wealth to the rich. Under Bill Clinton, who shamelessly appropriated the Reaganite agenda, the transfer was even more dramatic, as the top 10 percent captured an ever growing share of national income. The trend continued under George W. Bush, and by 2007 the wealthiest 10 percent of Americans (families earning more than \$109,630) were taking in 50 percent of the national income. In 1980 the top 1 percent of Americans received 10 percent of the national income; by 2007 the superrich (those with income above \$398,900) had increased their share to 23.5 percent. The average increase in real income for the bottom 99 percent of American families between 1973 and 2006 was a mere 8.5 percent, whereas the richest 1 percent saw a 190 percent rise in real income.

Such a distortion of the nation's balance of wealth did not come about by accident; it was the result of a long series of policy decisions—about industry and trade, taxation and military spending, by flesh-and-blood humans sitting in concrete-and-steel buildings—that were bought and paid for by the less than 1 percent of Americans who participate in our capitalist democracy by contributing at least \$200 to political campaigns. Gross inequalities in wealth not only create a perverse feedback loop in which the interests of the wealthy and the centers of power in government recede ever further from those of the general public; such inequality also distorts the political psychology of voters. Some of the best recent empirical work in political science has shown that most Americans attempt to vote in accordance with their economic interests, rather than by the dictates of ephemeral antagonisms over God, gays, or guns. Unfortunately, economic improvements for the vast majority of Americans over the past three decades have been so marginal that they are easily overshadowed by cynical manipulations of the political business cycle, the timing of economic expansions with election years, and by the strange fact that lower-income voters are more sensitive, in terms of voting behavior, to income growth among the wealthy than they are to their own economic well-being.

Since the early 1980s, the Democratic Party has largely abandoned its commitment to policies that serve the material interests of most Americans and has joined the Republican Party in a shameless competition for the patronage of large corporations and the superrich. Add to these complexities the proven power of campaign spending to influence election outcomes (Larry Bartels has calculated that each additional dollar spent per voter by a candidate increases the probability of a given undecided voter's support by almost four percentage points), and it is easy to see that the average American has no hope of safeguarding his interests, whether they pertain to life, liberty, or happiness. We cast our empty ballots for one party; then, disgusted with the inevitable betrayals, pray for a redeemer from the opposing party to rescue us from politics and history, only to repeat the cycle once again. Meanwhile, most of our citizens are fully absorbed in their personal affairs, oblivious and largely ignorant of the details of politics and governance. We are so very far from the classical republican ideal of ruling and being ruled, of exercising political agency and participating in the life of our commonwealth, that, incapable of pursuing even narrow self-interest effectively, we instead offer ourselves up as impotent, obsequious subjects, the unresisting tools of interests we scarcely comprehend.

Occasionally, however, the political class expresses itself in unmistakable terms, unintentionally disclosing the true nature of our political economy. In January, in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the United States Supreme Court held that restrictions on independent corporate expenditures in political campaigns are unconstitutional infringements on the freedom of speech. Much of the judicial literature on the subject, including Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion in *Citizens United*, simply substitutes the words "speech" and "speak" for the words "spend" and "buy." Corporations, according to the court's majority faction, are speakers, persons who have constitutional rights. When they spend, they speak. Kennedy admits that favoritism and influence can result from campaign spending but he asserts that far from being objectionable or avoidable, favoritism and influence are the essence of representative politics, that it is right and natural that a representative should favor certain "voters and contributors." Indeed, he continues, "it is well understood that a substantial and legitimate reason, if not the only reason, to cast a vote for, or to make a contribution to, one candidate over another is that the candidate will respond by producing those political outcomes the supporter favors. Democracy is premised on responsiveness." With admirable frankness if less than impeccable logic, Kennedy equates not only the act of spending money with speech but also the act of making a campaign contribution with voting. The idea of corruption resulting from the quid pro quo of contribution for legislation troubles him not at all. "The appearance of influence or access, furthermore," he repeats, as if a lie may be converted into truth by mere reiteration, "will not cause the electorate to lose faith in our democracy."

If there were any doubts about what sort of government we live under, Kennedy's opinion should lay them to rest. Indeed, civic virtue has now completed its centuries-long metamorphosis from the republican ideal of the free citizen-ruler to the degraded economic norm of the consumer buying on credit; virtue for us is no more than a spotless credit rating. Thus the terror of a credit crisis; it strikes at the very foundation of public personality. The more abstract and financialized our commercial expressions, the more virtuous they become; corporations, fictional beings of pure commerce, predicated on our collective fantasies, are now the highest expression of political art. Corporations are evolving under judicial legislation into the perfect, immortal citizen-rulers of our capitalist democracy, a virtual republic in which all political speech is advertising and all real citizens are commercial fictions.

It is a curious metaphysical doctrine, is it not? Corporations are artificial beings, theoretically immortal, which come into existence by means of state charters and reproduce like amoebas by splitting into subsidiaries; midwived by lawyers, they combine in bizarre mating rituals called mergers; they are owned, like slaves, by shareholders who buy and sell their chattel daily; and they possess constitutional rights. Oddly, however, our corporate citizens are denied the right to vote. By what logic can a corporation be granted personhood and the constitutional right to speak money, yet be denied the constitutional right to vote? How can our system permit these corporate persons to be enslaved through ownership? Does not the force of all logic and morality require us either to deny the personhood of corporations, or to grant them the right to vote and to free them from slavery? If we insist on maintaining their status as persons, at least let us give ourselves the power, if they commit serious crimes against property, to put corporations to death.

Given the weird First Amendment metaphysics to which a majority of our Supreme Court justices subscribe, it is obvious that mere campaign-finance reform is a dead letter, notwithstanding President Obama's pious noises following the *Citizens United* verdict. It seems only a matter of time and litigation before all limits to political expenditures are erased in the name of free speech; the radical doctrines of the Roberts Court admit no foreseeable limit. Even so, the Republican Party and its ideological lawyers in the Federalist Society may yet have reason to regret their determined advocacy on behalf of the money-equals-speech heresy. Obama outspent McCain two-to-one during the last election, and there is no reason to believe that all or even most corporate spending will ultimately be channeled to the party of Abraham Lincoln and Sarah Palin. On the contrary, Democrats are likely to benefit as much or more than the G.O.P., even after Kennedy, Scalia, et al. finally get their chance to liberate flesh-and-blood persons, especially that wise and judicious 1 percent who wish to make their money speak, from the fetters of financial censorship and disenfranchisement. As Obama's purported reforms, in health care no less than in finance, have demonstrated, the Democrats have made certain that their contributors will secure enviable returns on their political investments.

Citizens United is not the cause of our troubles; it merely highlights the essential character of our system, and for that we should be grateful. Nevertheless, given this judicial perversion of the First Amendment, our only sure remedy is constitutional. The Democratic Party's lamentable DISCLOSE Act, which this summer failed to muster sixty votes in the Senate, would do nothing, if passed, to curb the flow of cash and the further disenfranchisement of the vast majority of the citizenry. It is no great burden for large corporations and wealthy individuals to hire more clerks to file additional disclosure forms, and under current law we already know a great deal about who buys and sells our commodified rulers and their derivative legislation. Far more robust is the Fair Elections Now Act, which would establish a system of public financing of elections, yet even if it survived a Supreme Court review, such a law would fail to contain the disproportionate power of the wealthy. In an ideal system of public campaign financing, in which all political speech has been equalized by law, in which political advertising is banned and persuasion stripped of its commercial aspect—the corporate businessman and the millionaire (not to mention the billionaire) would still stand taller than the common citizen. In fact, as the political theorist John P. McCormick has argued, the wealthy are likely to dominate any political regime that chooses its magistrates and lawmakers solely by means of election.

Republican theorists have traditionally recognized the centrality of economic class in politics and in the design of stable republican institutions. Past republics, in antiquity and in the Renaissance, were particularly concerned to contain the power of the rich and prevent them from dominating the institutions of government. Historically, it has been the insolence and dominating ambition of the wealthy that has led to the decline of great republics, not the revolutionary or leveling fervor of the lower classes, who mostly wish to be left to their own devices. The Roman tribunes vigorously defended the rights and privileges of the plebs against the depredations of the rich, and the tribunate had the power to veto actions proposed by the Senate and to accuse patricians of political crimes. Florentine constitutional thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini gave much thought to such questions, and a variety of devices—including lotteries and class quotas, often in combination with election—were considered and employed. No doubt these classical republicans would consider our Constitution's silence on the matter of class a debilitating and perhaps fatal defect.

It is perfectly legitimate for the rich to pursue their own interests; what is not legitimate is the current exclusion of all other interests from the reason of state. A constitutional amendment establishing public financing of elections would be

an obvious and reasonable first step toward correcting this imbalance, as would an amendment stripping corporations of their rights as persons. Even better would be a convention, in which we might attempt to introduce new constitutional devices designed to more equitably distribute access to political deliberation.

Admittedly, however, the prospects for a constitutional remedy appear dim. Is it possible that the majority of Americans whose interests are not being served have no political will? As James Madison asked long ago: Are we utterly without civic virtue? If so, then we are truly wretched. "To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without any virtue in the people is a chimerical idea."

Although we have always benefited from the activities of public-spirited individuals, even men and women of great wealth who recognize that greed as a principle of public conduct often leads to perverse outcomes, the United States Constitution was emphatically not founded on the assumption that either citizens or magistrates could be trusted to act selflessly. If my argument can be taken as a call to republican virtue, it is only so within the modern realist framework devised by Madison and his colleagues in 1787, according to whom government is a response to humanity's inherent wickedness. Men are not angels, Obama notwithstanding. A properly American call to republican virtue is not a utopian exhortation that our citizens cast aside their private and selfish interests and embark on a course of austere political action, with their eyes fixed on some transcendent public good apart from their own. No, what is required is that Americans take a stand on behalf of their selfish material interests and against those of the monopolies and transnational corporations that have captured our institutions of government. The paradoxical character of our popular corruption is that the people have become slothfully selfless, too absorbed by their ephemeral entertainments and petty cultural disputes to assert their self-interest against the plunderers who rule them.

Surely, however, the American people have not become so servile that they will forever submit to the rule of 1 percent. Surely we are capable of recognizing that the perverse corporate regime that has arisen in our country is a usurpation of popular government. Our Constitution unquestionably recognizes the right of a people to alter its mode of government; we have done so twenty-seven times. We may do so again. We may throw off these bonds and provide new guards for our future security.

20100920-04	17:35	GaryC	Re: "Speak, Money"
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Dear Pam and SteveB,

Here is what I saw happen. When the Dems finally lost power in the 90s two things happened. The Republicans wanted to punish the Dems for all of the years of being treated as second class citizens. The Dems didn't want to give up their power easily so they became obstructionists. The political partisanship was ramped up by more national news coverage of Congress. Now, both parties use the media to grand stand and accommodate the kooks on the fringes who tend to be more active both monetarily and organizationally. There is no advantage to working out compromises now. When I worked in DC, there was a lot of give and take and a whole lot less partisanship. Both parties were inclined to work for the common good. There was a lot less prying daily coverage from the media.

I can't see the present situation changing due to the inherent vested interest of the media to stir things up and play gotcha. The first step is to get term limits to reduce the desire to play politics daily to retain your power base. A further refinement would be to find a moderate fiscally conservative, socially liberal third party that could get a meaningful number of candidates elected that would cause both major parties to learn to compromise again.

I don't like the parliamentary system of governance but a meaningful third party would make both parties abandon their fringe elements if they wanted to stay viable. Another reform that is grossly needed is the reform of the primary system. What we need is 4—6 regional primaries over a two month period about two months before the general election to separate the loons from the professionals. Our current system is too much subject to the fringe elements getting candidates nominated that are not really suitable for the general population. In the last primary cycle, the two worst candidates were put up by the Republicans and Democrats because they appealed to the fringe elements of each party. Now we have a community organizer ruining the country. And, I am not a fan of McCain either.

Another reform as long as I am on a roll, is to prohibit sitting Senators, Congressmen or Vice-presidents from running for office. Let them resign first so we can still have someone representing their district's interest while they are seeking votes.

20100921-01 06:54 SteveB Fw: Larry the Cable Guy

from Larry:

[Source of original email unknown. Maybe Larry's "people". —SteveB]

Everyone concentrates on the problems we're having in Our Country lately: Illegal immigration, hurricane recovery, alligators attacking people in Florida... Not me — I concentrate on solutions for the problems — it's a win-win situation.

Dig a moat the length of the Mexican border. Send the dirt to New Orleans to raise the level of the levees. Put the Florida alligators in the moat along the Mexican border.

Any other problems you would like for me to solve today? Think about this: 1. Cows 2. The Constitution 3. The Ten Commandments.

COWS

Is it just me, or does anyone else find it amazing that during the mad cow epidemic our government could track a single cow, born in Canada almost three years ago, right to the stall where she slept in the state of Washington? And, they tracked her calves to their stalls. But they are unable to locate 11 million illegal aliens wandering around our country. Maybe we should give each of them a cow.

THE CONSTITUTION

They keep talking about drafting a Constitution for Iraq .why don't we just give them ours? It was written by a lot of really smart guys, it has worked for over 200 years, and we're not using it any more.

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

The real reason that we can't have the Ten Commandments posted in a courthouse is this — you cannot post 'Thou Shalt Not Steal' 'Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery' and 'Thou Shall Not Lie' in a building full of lawyers, judges and politicians, it creates a hostile work environment.

GET ER DONE!

20100921-02 07:11 Lianne Re: Larry the Cable Guy

Dear SteveB,

This is an uneducated rant.... Please don't send these. My morning coffee just curdled.

20100921-03 07:34 SteveB Re: Larry the Cable Guy

Dear Lianne,

Wow! That is not a "rant" from Larry—a cry for help, maybe, but not a rant. It is simply comedy with modest points that I would think impossible to offend even your sensitive nature. Your prejudices are very real and showing clearly, my dear.

20100921-04 07:53 SteveB "For the Unemployed Over 50, Fears of Never Working Again"

Jobs are the problem. Where are they?

The politicians of both parties allowed most of the good manufacturing jobs to be shipped to China, etc.

Why? Campaign contributions from big business seeking lower wages and larger profits.

Many of the rest of the jobs have been taken by illegal immigrants. Why has this been allowed?

Campaign contributions from big business seeking lower wages and larger profits.

Result: the decline and fall of the American way of life within our lifetimes.

Why would we expect anything but profit seeking behavior from institutions created only to seek profits? That part of the system seems to work pretty well. The part that doesn't work is part where our political institutions regulate and control the greed for the betterment of America. We decided we didn't need that part of the equation. Instead of assuming the reins of control ourselves, we let money have the reins. See where we are now?

And here we are embroiled in petty party bickering? Wake-up people! You've been sold down the river by both parties! Why would you choose to be loyal to either party of traitors? Do you really think there is some philosophical issue at stake here? Think again.

"For the Unemployed Over 50, Fears of Never Working Again" by Motoko Rich, *New York Times*

Sept. 21, 2010, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/20/business/economy/20older.html?pagewanted=all>)

(Patricia Reid, 57, lost her job at Boeing four years ago and has struggled to find a new position.)

Patricia Reid is not in her 70s, an age when many Americans continue to work. She is not even in her 60s. She is just 57.

But four years after losing her job she cannot, in her darkest moments, escape a nagging thought: she may never work again.

College educated, with a degree in business administration, she is experienced, having worked for two decades as an internal auditor and analyst at Boeing before losing that job.

But that does not seem to matter, not for her and not for a growing number of people in their 50s and 60s who desperately want or need to work to pay for retirement and who are starting to worry that they may be discarded from the work force—forever.

Since the economic collapse, there are not enough jobs being created for the population as a whole, much less for those in the twilight of their careers.

Of the 14.9 million unemployed, more than 2.2 million are 55 or older. Nearly half of them have been unemployed six months or longer, according to the Labor Department. The unemployment rate in the group—7.3 percent—is at a record, more than double what it was at the beginning of the latest recession.

After other recent downturns, older people who lost jobs fretted about how long it would take to return to the work force and worried that they might never recover their former incomes. But today, because it will take years to absorb the giant pool of unemployed at the economy's recent pace, many of these older people may simply age out of the labor force before their luck changes.

For Ms. Reid, it has been four years of hunting—without a single job offer. She buzzes energetically as she describes the countless applications she has lobbed through the Internet, as well as the online courses she is taking to burnish her software skills.

Still, when she is pressed, her can-do spirit falters.

"There are these fears in the background, and they are suppressed," said Ms. Reid, who is now selling some of her jewelry and clothes online and is late on some credit card payments. "I have had nightmares about becoming a bag lady," she said. "It could happen to anyone. So many people are so close to it, and they don't even realize it."

Being unemployed at any age can be crushing. But older workers suspect their resumes often get shoved aside in favor of those from younger workers. Others discover that their job-seeking skills—as well as some technical skills sought by employers—are rusty after years of working for the same company.

Many had in fact anticipated working past conventional retirement ages to gird themselves financially for longer life spans, expensive health care and reduced pension guarantees.

The most recent recession has increased the need to extend working life. Home values, often a family's most important asset, have been battered. Stock portfolios are only now starting to recover. According to a Gallup poll in April, more than a third of people not yet retired plan to work beyond age 65, compared with just 12 percent in 1995.

Older workers who lose their jobs could pose a policy problem if they lose their ability to be self-sufficient. "That's what we should be worrying about," said Carl E. Van Horn, professor of public policy and director of the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, "what it means to this class of the new unemployables, people who have been cast adrift at a very vulnerable part of their career and their life."

Forced early retirement imposes an intense financial strain, particularly for those at lower incomes. The recession and its aftermath have already pushed down some older workers. In figures released last week by the Census Bureau, the poverty rate among those 55 to 64 increased to 9.4 percent in 2009, from 8.6 percent in 2007.

But even middle-class people who might skate by on savings or a spouse's income are jarred by an abrupt end to working life and to a secure retirement.

"That's what I spent my whole life in pursuit of, was security," Ms. Reid said. "Until the last few years, I felt very secure in my job."

As an auditor, Ms. Reid loved figuring out the kinks in a manufacturing or parts delivery process. But after more than 20 years of commuting across Puget Sound to Boeing, Ms. Reid was exhausted when she was let go from her \$80,000-a-year job.

Stunned and depressed, she sent out resumes, but figured she had a little time to recover. So she took vacations to Turkey and Thailand with her husband, who is a home repairman. She sought chiropractic treatments for a neck injury and helped nurse a priest dying of cancer.

Most of her days now are spent in front of a laptop, holed up in a lighthouse garret atop the house that her husband, Denny Mielock, built in the 1990s on a breathtaking piece of property overlooking the sound.

As she browses the job listings that clog her e-mail in-box, she refuses to give in to her fears. "If I let myself think like that all the time," she said, "I could not even bear getting out of bed in the morning." With her husband's home repair business pummeled by the housing downturn, the bills are mounting. Although the couple do not have a mortgage on their 3,000-square-foot house, they pay close to \$7,000 a year in property taxes. The roof is leaking. Their utility bills can be \$300 a month in the winter, even though they often keep the thermostat turned down to 50 degrees.

They could try to sell their home, but given the depressed housing market, they are reluctant. "We are circling the drain here, and I am bailing like hell," said Ms. Reid, emitting an incongruous cackle, as if laughter is the only response to her plight. "But the boat is still sinking."

It is not just the finances that have destabilized her life.

Her husband worries that she isolates herself and that she does not socialize enough. "We've both been hard workers our whole lives," said Mr. Mielock, 59. Ms. Reid sometimes rose just after 3 a.m. to make the hour-long commute to Boeing's data center in Bellevue and attended night school to earn a master's in management information systems.

"A job is more than a job, you know," Mr. Mielock said. "It's where you fit in society."

Here in the greater Seattle area, a fifth of those claiming extended unemployment benefits are 55 and older.

To help seniors polish their job-seeking skills, WorkSource, a local consortium of government and nonprofit groups, recently began offering seminars. On a recent morning, 14 people gathered in a windowless conference room at a local community college to get tips on how to age-proof their resumes and deflect questions about being overqualified.

Motivational posters hung on one wall, bearing slogans like "Failure is the path of least persistence." Using PowerPoint slides, Liz Howland, the chipper but no-nonsense session leader, projected some common myths about older job-seekers on a screen: "Older workers are less capable of evaluating information, making decisions and problem-solving" or "Older workers are rigid and inflexible and have trouble adapting to change."

Ms. Howland, 61, ticked off the reasons those statements were inaccurate. But a clear undercurrent of anxiety ran through the room. "Is it really true that if you have the energy and the passion that they will overlook the age factor?" asked a 61-year-old man who had been laid off from a furniture maker last October.

Gallows humor reigned. As Ms. Howland—who suggested that applicants remove any dates older than 15 years from their resume—advised the group on how to finesse interview questions like "When did you have the job that helped you develop that skill?" one out-of-work journalist deadpanned: "How about 'during the 20th century?'"

During a break, Anne Richard, who declined to give her age, confessed she was afraid she would not be able to work again after losing her contract as a house director at a University of Washington sorority in June. Although she had 20 years of experience as an office clerk in Chattanooga, Tenn., she feared her technology skills had fallen behind.

"I don't feel like I can compete with kids who have been on computers all their lives," said Ms. Richard, who was sleeping on the couch of a couple she had met at church and contemplating imminent homelessness.

Older people who lose their jobs take longer to find work. In August, the average time unemployed for those 55 and older was slightly more than 39 weeks, according to the Labor Department, the longest of any age group. That is much worse than in Aug., 1983, also after a deep recession, when someone unemployed in that age group spent an average of 27.5 weeks finding work.

At this year's pace of an average of 82,000 new jobs a month, it will take at least eight more years to create the 8 million positions lost during the recession.

And that does not even allow for population growth. Advocates for the elderly worry that younger people are more likely to fill the new jobs as well.

"I do think the longer someone is out of work, the more employers are going to question why it is that someone hasn't been able to find work," said Sara Rix, senior strategic policy adviser at AARP, the lobbying group for seniors. "Their skills have atrophied for one thing, and technology changes so rapidly that even if nothing happened to the skills that you have, they may become increasingly less relevant to the jobs that are becoming available."

In four years of job hunting, Ms. Reid has discovered that she is no longer technologically proficient. In one of a handful of interviews she has secured, for an auditing position at the Port of Seattle, she learned that the job required skills in PeopleSoft, financial software she had never used. She assumes that deficiency cost her the job.

Ms. Reid is still five years away from being eligible for Social Security. But even then, she would be drawing early, which reduces monthly payments. Taking Social Security at 62 means a retiree would receive a 25 percent lower monthly payout than if she worked until 66.

Ms. Reid is in some ways luckier than others. Boeing paid her a six-month severance, and she has health care benefits that cover her and her husband for \$40 a month.

And she admits some regrets: she had a \$180,000 balance in her 401(k) account, and paid \$80,000 in penalties and taxes when she cashed it out early. She did not rein in her expenses right away. And now, her \$500-a-week unemployment benefits have been exhausted.

She has since cut back, forgoing Nordstrom shopping sprees and theater subscriptions, but also cutting out red meat at home and putting off home repairs.

In order to qualify for accounting posts, she is taking an online training course in QuickBooks, a popular accounting software used by small businesses. She recently signed up for a tax course at an H&R Block tax preparation office in Seattle.

And she is plugging ahead with her current plan: to send out 600 applications to accounting firms in the area, offering her services for the next tax season. Eventually, she wants to open her own business. With odd jobs and her husband's—albeit shriveled—earnings, she could stagger along. For now, she stitches together an income by gardening for neighbors, helping fellow church members with their computers, and participating in Internet surveys for as little as \$5 apiece.

"You don't necessarily have to go through the door," Ms. Reid said. "You can go around it and go under it. I can be very creative. I think that I will eventually manage to pull this together."

20100922-01	07:54	SteveB	"Jimmy Carter Hasn't Been Mincing Many Words of Late"
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Dear Lianne,

I can't help but like Jimmy Carter. He's such an outsider! And he's done a lot of good things.

It's too bad Kennedy killed Carter's Public Health Care legislation attempt. (This is the truth because I remember this happening and thought it amazingly strange at the time, though I didn't know how much Kennedy opposed Carter. And Kennedy's reasons were petty, not lofty service to the people.)

You know, the truth in politics is almost always different than what we think we know. Only history illuminates...later. Sometimes it's good to withhold judgment a little...especially on people.

"Jimmy Carter Hasn't Been Mincing Many Words of Late" by Brett Michael Dykes, The Upshot/Yahoo! News

Sept. 21, 2010, (http://news.yahoo.com/s/yblog_upshot/20100921/pl_yblog_upshot/jimmy-carter-hasnt-been-mincing-many-words-of-late)

Since leaving the White House some 30 years ago, former President Jimmy Carter has, for the most part, steered clear of controversy. He's won a fair amount of attention for building houses with Habitat for Humanity, and for the occasional foray into post-presidential diplomacy. (He recently traveled to North Korea to secure the release of an imprisoned American.) And he drew some headlines for publishing a harshly critical book about Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. But on balance, Carter has maintained a relatively quiet life out of office.

No longer. With a new book, "White House Diary," hitting the shelves, Carter seems to be everywhere, waging a full-scale media blitz. The book — which is, as the title suggests, a collection of the journal entries Carter wrote as president — has afforded the 85-year-old Democrat the chance to mount fresh defenses of his presidency, while lobbing more than a few attacks on political opponents.

Carter made news for remarks during an interview with Brian Williams that aired Monday on the "NBC Nightly News." Carter told Williams that the humanitarian work he's performed through his foundation means that his post-presidency career has been "superior" to that of other former presidents.

"I feel that my role as a former president is probably superior to that of other presidents'," Carter said. "Primarily because of the activism and the — and the injection of working at the Carter Center and in international affairs, and to some degree, domestic affairs, on energy conservation, on — on environment, and things of that kind. We're right in the midst of the — of the constant daily debate."

After his comments aired and caused a stir, Carter released a statement to clarify what he intended to say: "What I meant was, for 27 years the Carter Center has provided me with superior opportunities to do good."

You can watch the interview here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9b5xoUHCBSk>.

Perhaps the most combustible recent Carter interview aired over the weekend on CBS' "60 Minutes." In the segment, Carter tells correspondent Lesley Stahl that he tried to reform the nation's health care system — only to have his efforts thwarted by Ted Kennedy, the longtime senator from Massachusetts who made national health care the signature crusade of his political career.

"The fact is that we would have had comprehensive health care NOW, had it not been for Ted Kennedy's deliberately blocking the legislation that I proposed in 1978 or '79," Carter said. "It was his fault. Ted Kennedy killed the bill."

Asked by Stahl if he believed Kennedy — who ran unsuccessfully against Carter for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1980 — blocked the plan just to spite him, Carter replied, "That's the implication. He did not want to see me have a major success in that realm of American life."

And Monday night, Carter also appeared on "The Daily Show," where he offered some candid thoughts on the current state of American politics. Asked by Jon Stewart whether the direction the country's headed in gives him hope, Carter replied flatly, "No."

"Things have gone downhill, I think, in the last few years with the polarization of our country," Carter said. "With the evolution of a new kind of politics, with the birth of Fox News, which now distorts everything rather than telling the truth."

Carter also slipped in a couple of barbs aimed at the GOP's controversial candidate to fill Vice President Joe Biden's former Senate seat, Christine O'Donnell. He noted that even though he launched his national profile as an anti-Washington politician, he probably wouldn't be welcome within the tea party movement, since unlike O'Donnell, he has never "been involved with witchcraft," and added that as a young man he "was not 100 percent against" a certain act that O'Donnell is famous for targeting in her past political career. We'll leave the rest to your imagination.

20100922-02	12:46	Dennis	"Socialism in America? You Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie"
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"Socialism in America? You Ain't Just Whistlin' Dixie" by Michael Ford, Huffington Post

Aug. 8, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-ford/socialism-in-america-you_b_675072.html)

Have you heard rumblings of a counter Tea Party movement afoot in the land that calls the Tea Party "the-bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you caucus?" A rogue e-mail making the rounds called the movement "freeloading, progress-blocking, benefit-grabbing, resource-sucking, violent and hypocritical."

Southern politicians, in particular, complain about big government and taxes because it resonates easily and conforms to the post-Civil War self-perception of that region as victims of northern conspiracies.

However, as it turns out, in spite of their persistent anti-government rhetoric, Southern politicians are completely comfortable accepting the last line of Tennessee Williams' play, *A Streetcar Named Desire*: "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." Down South it has become habitual to do just that. Southerners get back a whole lot more than they give in taxes.

America's wealth is, indeed, being redistributed—from what the independent Tax Foundation calls the "giving states" of New York, New Jersey, New England, most of the northeast and California—to the "receiving states" consisting of all of the south and, ironically, Alaska.

For example, those poor socialists in New Jersey only get back \$0.56 on the tax dollar. But for every tax dollar Mississippi sends to Washington they get back \$2.02, more than doubling their money! That's a Madoff return paid by the "giving states." Same for Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, West Virginia, Rand Paul's Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina. Then, of course, there is Alaska.

The South gets the biggest redistribution of federal tax money because it seems least capable of helping itself out. It has:

1. The lowest per capita percent of high school diplomas.
2. The fewest college degrees per capita.
3. The highest rates of adult illiteracy, and often their illiteracy rate exceeds their unemployment rate. For example, in Mississippi, adult illiteracy is 16 percent and unemployment is 11.5 percent. Illiteracy in Alabama is 15 percent and unemployment is 11 percent. This means that Southern states have many adults working who can't read beyond the 5th-grade level. Thus:

4. The highest poverty rates and the lowest average household income in the nation.
5. The highest percentages of citizens without health insurance, yet most likely to call health care reform "socialism."
6. The most unhealthy region in the nation, leading in obesity, smoking, hypertension, diabetes, cancer deaths per 100,000 while managing to exercise the least.
7. The most violent region in the country being a majority of the top 18 states in deaths by firearms. (Louisiana: 19.5 firearm deaths per 100,000. Mississippi: 17.3 deaths per 100,000, etc., as opposed to New York with 5.1 per 100,000 or Massachusetts with 3.1 per 100,000 etc.)
8. With 35 percent of the population, the South has created only 17 percent of the nation's patents over the last 25 years. California alone, with 10 percent of the national population, has nearly 20 percent of the patents over the last 25 years.
9. Louisiana is a special welfare case having a long-established dysfunctional dependence on the oil industry in its economy, its politics and in its winking willingness to debase the environment, combining to create an oil-based modern plantation mentality. They attack the federal government on the national news every day for being slow or for failing to act to "restore our way of life" after the BP disaster, as if American taxpayers are morally obligated to maintain the oil plantation to which Louisianans' sold out long ago.

Now some Southern public office holders and seekers from Tennessee to Texas are directly or indirectly talking about secession, and this has many others wondering if that is a threat or a promise.

Redistribution of wealth? The South appears to be on the dole, and things there have a way of never managing to get any better. Perhaps our Southern brethren should stand up for their outspoken beliefs and send the money back. Or perhaps they should consider jumping on the streetcar named get serious.

(This article posted originally at <http://www.xavier.edu/politics>.)

20100922-03	17:02	Dennis	"Poverty Is Through the Roof & Billionaires Are Getting Pu*sy About Not Enough Profits"
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"Poverty Is Through the Roof, and Billionaires Are Getting Pu*sy About Not Enough Profits" by Les Leopold, AlterNet
 Sept. 17, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148217/>)

The ranks of the working-age poor in the United States climbed to the highest level since the 1960s as the recession threw millions of people out of work last year, leaving one in seven Americans in poverty. The overall poverty rate climbed to 14.3 per cent, or 43.6 million people, the Census Bureau said yesterday in its annual report on the economic well-being of U.S. households.

While 43.6 million Americans live in poverty, the richest men of finance sure are getting pu*sy. First Steve Schwartzman, head of the Blackrock private equity company, compares the Obama administration's effort to close billionaires' tax loopholes to "the Nazi invasion of Poland." Then hedge fund mogul David Loeb announces that he's abandoning the Democrats because they're violating "this country's core founding principles"—including "non-punitive taxation, Constitutionally-guaranteed protections against persecution of the minority, and an inexorable right of self-determination." Instead of showing their outrage about the spread of poverty in the richest nation on Earth, the super-rich want us to pity them?

Why are Wall Street's billionaires so whiny? Is it really possible to make \$900,000 an hour (not a typo—that's what the top ten hedge fund managers take in), and still feel aggrieved about the way government is treating you? After you've been bailed out by the federal government to the tune of \$10 trillion (also not a typo) in loans, asset swaps, liquidity and other guarantees, can you really still feel like an oppressed minority?

You'd think the Wall Street moguls would be thankful. Not just thankful—down on their knees kissing the ground taxpayers walk on and hollering hallelujah at the top of their lungs! These guys profited from puffing up the housing bubble, then got bailed out when the going got tough. (Please see *The Looting of America* for all the gory details.) Without taxpayer largess, these hedge fund honchos would be flat broke. Instead, they're back to hauling in obscene profits.

These billionaires don't even have to worry about serious financial reforms. The paltry legislation that squeaked through Congress did nothing to end too big and too interconnected to fail. In fact, the biggest firms got even bigger as they gobbled up troubled banks, with the generous support of the federal government. No bank or hedge fund was broken up. Nobody was forced to pay a financial transaction tax.

None of the big boys had a cap placed on their astronomical wealth. No one's paying reparations for wrecking the U.S. economy. The big bankers are still free to create and trade the very derivatives that catapulted us into this global crisis. You'd think the billionaires would be praying on the altar of government and erecting statues on Capitol Hill in honor of St. Bailout.

Instead, standing before us are these troubled souls, haunted by visions of persecution. Why?

The world changed. Before the bubble burst, these people walked on water. Their billions proved that they were the best and the brightest—not just captains of the financial universe, but global elites who had earned a place in history. They donated serious money to worthy causes—and political campaigns. No one wanted to mess with them.

But then came the crash. And the things changed for the big guys—not so much financially as spiritually. Plebeians, including me, are asking pointed questions and sometimes even being heard, both on the Internet and in the mainstream media. For the first time in a generation, the public wants to know more about these emperors and their new clothes. For instance:

- What do these guys actually do that earns them such wealth?
- Is what they do productive and useful for society? Is there any connection between what they earn and what they produce for society?
- Did they help cause the crash?
- Did these billionaires benefit from the bailouts? If so, how much?
- Are they exacerbating the current unemployment and poverty crisis with their shenanigans?
- Why shouldn't we eliminate their tax loopholes (like carried interest)?
- Should their sky-high incomes be taxed at the same levels as during the Eisenhower years?
- Can we create the millions of jobs we need if the billionaires continue to skim off so much of our nation's wealth??
- Should we curb their wealth and political influence?

How dare we ask such questions! How dare we consider targeting them for special taxes? How dare we even think about redistributing THEIR incomes... even if at the moment much of their money comes directly from our bailouts and tax breaks?

It's true that the billionaires live in a hermetically sealed world. But that doesn't mean they don't notice the riffraff nipping at their heels. And they don't like it much.

So they've gotten busy doing what billionaires do best: using their money to shield themselves. They're digging into their bottomless war chests, tapping their vast connections and using their considerable influence to shift the debate away from them and towards the rest of us.

We borrowed too much, not them. We get too much health care, not them. We retire too soon, not them. We need to tighten our belts while they pull in another \$900,000 an hour. And if we want to cure poverty, we need to get the government to leave Wall Street alone.

Sadly, their counter-offensive is starting to take hold. How can this happen? Many Americans want to relate to billionaires. They believe that all of us are entitled to make as much as we can, pretty much by any means necessary. After all, maybe someday you or I will strike it rich. And when we do, we sure don't want government regulators or the taxman coming around! Billionaires are symbols of American individual prowess and virility. And if we try to hold them back or slow them down, we're on the road to tyranny. Okay, the game is rigged in their favor. Okay, they got bailed out while the rest of us didn't—especially the 29 million people who are jobless or forced into part-time work.

But what matters most is that in America, nothing can interfere with individual moneymaking.

That only a few of us actually make it into the big-time isn't a bad thing: It's what makes being rich so special. So beware: If we enact even the mildest of measures to rein in Wall Street billionaires, we're on the path to becoming North Korea.

Unfortunately, if we don't adjust our attitudes, we can expect continued high levels of unemployment and more people pushed below the poverty line. It's not clear that our economy will ever recover as long as the Wall Street billionaires keep siphoning off so much of our wealth. How can we create jobs for the many while the few are walking off with \$900,000 an hour with almost no new jobs to show for it?

In the old days, even robber barons built industries that employed people—steel, oil, railroads. Now the robber barons build palaces out of fantasy finance. We can keep coddling our financial billionaires and let our economy spiral down, or we can make them pay their fair share so we can create real jobs. These guys crashed the economy, they killed millions of jobs, and now they're cashing in on our bailout.

They owe us. They owe the unemployed. They owe the poor. Dwight D. Eisenhower was no radical, but he accepted the reality: If America was going to prosper—and pay for its costly Cold War—the super-rich would have to pony up. It was common knowledge that when the rich grew too wealthy, they used their excess incomes to speculate. In the 1950s, memories of the Great Depression loomed large, and people knew that a skewed distribution of income only fueled speculative booms and disastrous busts. On Ike's watch, the effective marginal tax rate for those earning over \$3 million (in today's dollars) was over 70 percent. The super-rich paid. As a nation we respected that other important American value: advancing the common good.

For the last thirty years we've been told that making as much as you can is just another way of advancing the common good. But the Great Recession erased that equation: The Wall Streeters who made as much as they could undermined the common good. It's time to balance the scales. This isn't just redistribution of income in pursuit of some egalitarian utopia. It's a way to use public policy to reattach billionaires to the common good.

It's time to take Eisenhower's cue and redeploy the excessive wealth Wall Street's high rollers have accumulated. If we leave it in their hands, they'll keep using it to construct speculative financial casinos. Instead, we could use that money to build a stronger, more prosperous nation. We could provide our people with free higher education at all our public colleges and universities—just like we did for WWII vets under the GI Bill of Rights (a program that returned seven dollars in GDP for every dollar invested). We could fund a green energy Manhattan Project to wean us from fossil fuels. An added bonus: If we siphon some of the money off Wall Street, some of our brightest college graduates might even be attracted not to high finance but to jobs in science, education and healthcare, where we need them.

Of course, this pursuit of the common good won't be easy for the billionaires (and those who indentify with them.). But there's just no alternative for this oppressed minority: They're going to have to learn to live on less than \$900,000 an hour.

(Les Leopold is the executive director of the Labor Institute and Public Health Institute in New York, and author of *The Looting of America: How Wall Street's Game of Fantasy Finance Destroyed Our Jobs, Pensions, and Prosperity—and What We Can Do About It* (Chelsea Green, 2009).)

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Thought you all would appreciate the sentiment.



Dear SteveBA,

This might be funny if it weren't such a BIG LIE! And I'm no giant fan of Obama, but not for these fictitious reasons. In fact, he has done none of these things. Where is the light of truth from the right?

Let's be honest. About all Obama has been able to do so far is to keep the sinking Bush ship of state afloat.

That he has been able to do that is testimony to his merits.

Your post today was right-on, Dennis.

Dear GaryC,

I pretty much agree with you. But I think the system is too corrupt to create more term limits. And it takes a long time for someone to become a good legislator. A third party might work but the instability scares me. And it seems like third parties are almost impossible in the U.S. for several good reasons. So we're never able to take them very seriously. Maybe that could change, but I'm not hopeful.

McCain, Palin, and most of the other Republicans seem like idiots to me. And gigantic liars.

Ya, I don't understand this running for office while holding office. All the more reason to streamline the process, as you suggest.

But while we're at it, why not just end all the corruption and see what happens? No campaign contributions over \$100 or so. No lobbyists with direct access to officials in power. No regulatory or lobbyist swinging doors. Regulators punished for not regulating.

It is not the will of the people that now rules, it's the will of the big money. The consequences are similar to when Standard Oil, etc. ruled—insufficient money for a middle class, the lifeblood of America.

20100923-04 12:03 SteveB Re: "Speak, Money"

Dear Pam,

Washington, DC is exactly like Tijuana or Warez or any of the other Mexican border communities. The murder rates aren't even that different. Money rules! Not justice or fairness or kindness. Greed! Power!

This is about what I expect, given the circumstances, but I know many of my liberal friends are very disillusioned. My conservative friends are simply insane, but no more so than the liberals. Both parties, both philosophies, both poles are wrong. (One more so than the other!) That's all there is to it. We live in a time of disconnect from the truth.

Your son, Tanner, sounds a lot like my daughter, Marissa. She's a vegan. She subscribes to every liberal cause...right or wrong. She feels sorry for illegal immigrants. She doesn't think any of her professors do any brain washing or have had theirs washed. She loves nothing more than to camp out like a hippie and listen to live music all night.

I say, more power to her! She's a wonderful, loving, very smart girl with lots of friends. I'm very proud of her, even if we don't always agree.

Plastic? What's with plastic? My Bolivian father-in-law won't touch plastic or eat anything that has. He's been like that his whole life. He won't even permit a plastic tablecloth in his house. Should I stop eating plastic now too?

Tomorrow is Bolivia's 200th Birthday! This means a 5-day weekend. The parties started yesterday, but the big beauty pageant, live concert, and fireworks will be tonight, near my condo. I'll probably just stay home and watch the fireworks from my balcony. Forget trying to conduct any business for most of the five days.

20100923-05 15:47 Dennis "GOP's New 'Pledge to America': A Pathetic, Destructive Sham"

Newest Contract on America by GOP...

The devil must be in the details. What? There are no details....

"GOP's New 'Pledge to America': A Pathetic, Destructive Sham" posted by stevebenen

Sept. 23, 2010, (<http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/09/23/gops-newly-unveiled-pledge-to-america-is-a-destructive-sham/>)

(This post first appeared on the *Washington Monthly*.)

Months in the making, House Republicans will unveil a new agenda this afternoon, and it's called the "Pledge to America." It won't be formally released for a few hours, but the contents are already online, offering us a chance to see what the GOP has in store.

Barring a dramatic last-minute overhaul, the "Pledge" appears to be something of a joke. I saw one analysis last night that characterized the document as "ridiculous," "laughable," and "dreck." The review added, "This document proves the GOP is more focused on the acquisition of power than the advocacy of long term sound public policy."

Did this come from the DNC? No, it came by way of a leading Republican media personality.

Looking at the bigger picture, it's tempting to think House Republicans deserve at least some credit for making the effort. After all, the GOP hasn't even tried to craft a policy agenda in many years. The point of the "Pledge," presumably, is to help demonstrate that congressional Republicans aren't just the "party of no"; this is a new GOP prepared to reclaim the mantle of "party of ideas."

But that's precisely why the endeavor is such an embarrassing failure. The document combines old ideas, bad ideas, contradictory ideas, and discredited ideas. The Republican Party that lost control of Congress four years ago has had an abundance of time to craft a policy vision that offered credible, serious solutions. Instead, we're confronted with a document that can best be described as tired nonsense.

Ezra Klein's take was entirely in line with my own:

You're left with a set of hard promises that will increase the deficit by trillions of dollars, take health-care insurance away from tens of millions of people, create a level of policy uncertainty businesses have never previously known, and suck demand out of an economy that's already got too little of it.

You're also left with a difficult question: What, exactly, does the Republican Party believe? The document speaks constantly and eloquently of the dangers of debt—but offers a raft of proposals that would sharply increase it. It says, in one paragraph, that the Republican Party will commit itself to "greater liberty" and then, in the next, that it will protect "traditional marriage." It says that "small business must have certainty that the rules won't change every few months" and then promises to change all the rules that the Obama administration has passed in recent months. It is a document with a clear theory of what has gone wrong—debt, policy uncertainty, and too much government—and a solid promise to make most of it worse.

If Republicans set out to prove that they're wholly unprepared and incapable of governing effectively, they've succeeded beautifully. That may have been obvious when there was an actual GOP majority and they failed on a spectacular, generational scale, but any hopes that the party has since learned valuable lessons quickly fade with the release of the "Pledge to America."

Indeed, the moral of the story this morning is very likely the fact that Republicans probably shouldn't even try. Last year, the House GOP released an alternative budget, which was so tragically pathetic, it neglected to include any numbers. Several months later, the House GOP released an alternative health care reform plan, which made no effort to actually improve a dysfunctional system.

And today, the House GOP will release a "Pledge" that simply doesn't make any sense to those who take reality seriously. It's a reminder that the Republican Party just isn't good at this sort of thing. It excels in attack ads, smear campaigns, and media manipulation; but the GOP struggles badly, to the point of comedy, when asked to do substantive work.

Ultimately, it may not matter. Voters are frustrated by a weak economy, and so Democrats are very likely to lose badly in November, even if they're being punished for trying to clean the GOP's mess. But electoral success for Republicans in the fall need not translate to an endorsement of this "Pledge." It's a transparent sham.

20100923-06	19:43	SteveB	Re: Motivational Poster: A Finger for President Obama
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Dear SteveBA,

You know, I can't help but wonder...

If Obama and his administration were so incompetent as to allow Al-Qaeda to bomb us, as Bush and his boys were. (Yet I don't recall much criticism of this fact.) Then, if Obama decided to start yet another worthless war in retaliation with maybe Iran or Pakistan this time...

Would the Republicans be happy and stand behind him or would he still be just a black non-American Democrat?

My guess is the latter. What a sad state of affairs our great country has sunk to.

20100924-01 08:18 SteveB "Hidden Under Tax-Exempt Cloak, Political Dollars Flow"
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U.S.A.: #1 in Corruption!

Mexico and Afghanistan may have their drug cartel corruption. You might have to bribe an official in Bolivia or China to get him to do his job. But the mother of all corruption is right in good ol' America. This is one of the ways the rich and powerful manage to buy our politicians, stealing our freedom and way of life right from under our noses.

"Hidden Under Tax-Exempt Cloak, Political Dollars Flow" by Mike McIntire, *New York Times*

Sept. 23, 2010, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/24/us/politics/24donate.html?pagewanted=all>)

(Nonprofit advocacy groups allow the wealthy to influence elections without revealing themselves, watchdogs claim.)

Alaskans grew suspicious two years ago when a national organization called Americans for Job Security showed up and spent \$1.6 million pushing a referendum to restrict development of a gold and copper mine at the headwaters of Bristol Bay. It seemed an oddly parochial fight for a pro-business group based in the Washington suburbs that had spent tens of millions of dollars since the late 1990s roughing up Democrats with negative advertisements around election time.

But after the mine's supporters filed a complaint with the state, it became clear that what was depicted as grass-roots opposition was something else entirely: Americans for Job Security, investigators found, had helped create the illusion of a popular upwelling to shield the identity of a local financier who paid for most of the referendum campaign.

More broadly, they said, far from being a national movement advocating a "pro-paycheck message," the group is actually a front for a coterie of political operatives, devised to sidestep campaign disclosure rules.

"Americans for Job Security has no purpose other than to cover various money trails all over the country," the staff of the Alaska Public Offices Commission said in a report last year.

The report went mostly unnoticed outside Anchorage. But its conclusions suddenly loom large in the current debate over nonprofit advocacy groups like Americans for Job Security, which campaign watchdogs say allow moneyed interests to influence elections without revealing themselves. Congress is now wrangling over a bill that would require some disclosure.

With every election cycle comes a shadow army of benignly titled nonprofit groups like Americans for Job Security, devoted to politically charged "issue advocacy," much of it negative.

But they are now being heard as never before—in this year of midterm discontent, Tea Party ferment and the first test of the Supreme Court decision allowing unlimited, and often anonymous, corporate political spending. Already they have spent more than \$100 million—mostly for Republicans and more than twice as much as at this point four years ago.

None have been more active than Americans for Job Security, which spent \$6 million on ads during the primary season.

Political attack ads

This week, emboldened by the court ruling, the group paid close to \$4 million more for ads directly attacking nine Democratic candidates for Congress. That made it among the first to abandon the old approach of running ads that stopped just short of explicitly urging voters to elect or reject individual candidates.

Americans for Job Security says it is careful to hew to tax and campaign-finance laws: It may not spend the majority of its resources on political activity or coordinate with party committees, and may keep its donors secret only as long as their contributions are not intended for specific ad campaigns close to an election. Instead of earmarked donations, the group says, it collects membership dues and then decides, on its own, how to spend the money.

"We believe issue advocacy is much more effective than banging down doors of members of Congress," said the group's president, Stephen DeMaura. "And you now have the Supreme Court of the United States reaffirming our rights."

An examination of Americans for Job Security—based on a review of its recent activities, as well as on interviews and previously unreleased documents from the Alaska case—provides a rare look inside the opaque world of these ascendant advocacy organizations.

Its deep ties to a Republican consulting operation raise questions about whether, under cover of its tax-exempt mission "to promote a strong, job-creating economy," the group is largely a funnel for anonymous donations.

"A lot of nonprofits game the system, but A.J.S. is unusual in that they so blatantly try to influence elections and evade disclosure," said Taylor Lincoln, a research director at the watchdog group Public Citizen, which has filed complaints against the group in recent years. "By any common-sense, reasonable interpretation of what they do, they are in violation of the rules."

Drop box address

The group's Republican connections begin with location: While its public address is a drop box at a United Parcel Service store in Alexandria, Va., Mr. DeMaura actually works out of space that is sublet from a Republican consulting shop, Crossroads Media, whose other clients include the national Republican Party, the Republican Governors Association and American Crossroads, a Karl Rove-backed group raising millions to support Republican candidates.

Crossroads Media is run by Michael Dubke and David Carney, who along with several business groups helped start Americans for Job Security in 1997.

Mr. Carney had been political director for President George Bush, and Mr. Dubke was the first executive director and then president of Americans for Job Security until Apr., 2008, when Mr. DeMaura, recruited by Mr. Carney, took over.

The office space in Alexandria that the group shares with Crossroads Media—Suite 555 at 66 Canal Center Plaza, overlooking the Potomac—is home to at least three other political consulting firms, including the Black Rock Group, which Mr. Dubke runs with Carl Forti, a longtime Republican operative who is political director for American Crossroads.

As for Mr. DeMaura, it turns out he is the sole employee of Americans for Job Security, a 25-year-old former executive director of the New Hampshire Republican Party who cut his political teeth as an undergraduate by starting an anti-Hillary Clinton Facebook page.

The chairwoman of the group's board of directors is listed in tax filings as Tabitha Connor, a Columbia University graduate student, also in her 20s. She did not respond to requests for comment.

According to testimony in the Alaska case, the board meets once every two years, and there are no committees or written policies shaping decisions about ad campaigns. Mr. DeMaura said he made those calls. He disputed suggestions that he was influenced by the consultants with whom he shares an office.

"I work with them closely on a day-to-day basis, but we don't discuss our work or coordinate anything," he said. "It's firewalled off."

'The letter of the law'

Mr. Dubke, too, denied that the agenda of Americans for Job Security was driven by the political interests of his firms.

"Nothing is ever done in coordination with another campaign," he said. "I'm always trying to follow the letter of the law."

Still, while he is no longer an officer of Americans for Job Security, Mr. Dubke remains a consultant and has authority to countersign its checks. Crossroads Media also places many of the group's ads.

It is sometimes hard to discern the boundaries separating Americans for Job Security from the consultants in its office suite and the interests of their Republican clients. This month in upstate New York, the National Republican Congressional Committee—a sometime client of Mr. Dubke's—sent local reporters an Americans for Job Security announcement and transcript of a new ad opposing a Democratic congressman, Representative Michael Arcuri. A committee spokesman said he was not coordinating anything with the advocacy group, but merely passing along "a public document." The document, however, could not be found on the group's Web site, and a reporter who received it said the committee was his only source for it. In May, the group ran an ad attacking a labor-backed Democrat in an Arkansas Senate primary, Bill Halter, for having served on the board of a technology company that opened an office in India.

The ad—placed by Crossroads and produced by another Republican-connected company in the office suite, WWP Strategies—played ethnic music, featured Indians in colorful garb expressing gratitude toward Mr. Halter for their jobs, and was widely derided as insulting toward people from India.

And in Texas in 2008, while Mr. DeMaura's office mates were consulting for the state Republican Party, he requested records from the Nueces County sheriff's office on an incident in which a woman ran naked from the home of a prominent Democratic donor, who was arrested after flashing a phony badge at the police.

The disgraced donor was soon featured in a Republican Party television ad linking him to Democratic candidates for the Texas legislature. Mr. DeMaura said his request was not connected to the ad, but would not explain why he had sought the records.

Electioneering complaint

Other aspects of the group's operations have come under scrutiny as well. In 2007, Public Citizen filed complaints with the Internal Revenue Service and the Federal Election Commission, contending that Americans for Job Security spent the vast majority of its resources electioneering—running ads close to elections—contrary to I.R.S. guidelines for tax-exempt, nonprofit business groups.

Public Citizen said it never heard back from the I.R.S. At the election commission, staff lawyers agreed that there was "reason to believe" that the group had violated campaign finance laws, and recommended a full investigation. But the commission deadlocked along party lines, and the complaint was dropped.

Because Americans for Job Security was formed as a tax-exempt business league—known as a 501(c)(6) in the tax code—it does not have to report its sources of income. Federal election rules, though, require that when a group accepts a donation earmarked for an electioneering ad, the donor must be identified. Americans for Job Security avoids disclosure by reporting all its revenue as "membership dues." It claims more than 1,000 members. But a review of its tax returns shows membership revenue fluctuating wildly depending on election cycles—similar to the fund-raising of political committees that escalates during campaign season.

"Membership dues and assessments" totaled \$7 million in the 2004 presidential election, and dipped to \$1.2 million the following year before climbing back to \$3.9 million for the 2006 midterm elections. Then, in 2007, they plunged to zero before shooting up to \$12.2 million for the 2008 presidential race.

Asked how it could have collected no dues in 2007, neither Mr. Dubke nor Mr. DeMaura offered an answer. Mr. DeMaura said that there is no set membership fee and that members are not required to pay annually.

"They can if they want," he said.

A hidden hand in Alaska

Probably the most extensive look at the operations of Americans for Job Security came during the inquiry in Alaska. Through a public information request, The New York Times obtained records from the investigation, including the group's internal emails and memorandums, as well as the sworn testimony of Mr. Dubke and others.

The group ended up in Alaska through Mr. Dubke's work for opponents of the proposed Pebble Mine, led by an Alaska financier, Robert Gillam, whose private fishing lodge could be affected.

The opponents said the mine would endanger commercial fishing and pushed a ballot initiative aimed at imposing clean-water restrictions on it; its backers said the mine would create jobs.

Mr. Dubke's work for Mr. Gillam was called Operation Trenchcoat, documents show, and involved finding out who was behind a pro-mine Web site called Bob Gillam Can't Buy Alaska.

Mr. Gillam testified that he spoke with Mr. Dubke about Americans for Job Security, and decided to join by giving \$2 million in "membership fees," and that he "had high hopes" the money would be used to oppose the mine. (The ballot initiative ultimately failed.)

State investigators found that the advocacy group quickly passed almost all the money to another nonprofit, Alaskans for Clean Water, set up to campaign for the referendum by a group that included Art Hackney, a local Republican consultant and board member of Americans for Job Security.

Mr. DeMaura told investigators that while he may have talked to Mr. Dubke about the mine issue, he decided to spend the money "based upon his own research and judgment," and that there was no prior agreement with Mr. Gillam or Mr. Dubke. The Alaska Public Offices Commission's staff report called this "completely implausible" and concluded that Americans for Job Security had violated state law by acting as an improper conduit. It also took a shot at the group's explanation that it protects its members' identities so they can speak out without fear of reprisals.

"One would hardly expect reprisals for 'promoting a healthy and vibrant economy,'" the report said.

The group's lawyers accused the staff of making "reckless and baseless" accusations and of "misrepresenting a respected entity like A.J.S., known nationally for its skill and sophistication in conducting educational and issue-related campaigns."

In a legal filing, they also worried that the allegations could be noticed "by the local, and potentially national, press."

Americans for Job Security eventually paid a \$20,000 settlement without admitting guilt and agreed not to help anyone make anonymous contributions in an election in Alaska—with the condition that its pledge "does not apply to any other jurisdiction which may have laws dissimilar to the state."

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[20100924-02](#) 08:22 SteveB Re: "GOP's New 'Pledge to America': A Pathetic, Destructive Sham"

Dear Dennis,

Ludicrous! (Not the article, the pledge.)

[20100924-03](#) 12:06 SteveB Re: The Photos Say It All

Dear Laurel,

True enough. But one of them started wars, and one of them ends them. One of them completely sold his soul to the big money, and one of them is still thinking about what price he would need. They're all corrupt politicians, but my point #1 might be more important than the equipment they use.

[20100924-04](#) 12:24 SteveB Fw: "Stupid is, as Stupid Does....."

Dear Laurel,

No, "They can't possibly be Americans!" LOL!!!!

I'm thinking... they're from another planet!

Maybe Photoshopped? haha. Actually, from, I guess, 2002.

See: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/obama/photos/lefthand.asp>.

All things are not what they seems, and the Obamas being un-American is apparently one of them!

But I can understand the confusion with this issue, since the Republican "lie-machine" has been grinding on it for quite some time now, 'ey? The troops drift off to sleep...and begin to lose their grip on reality...holy sh*t!

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Stupid is, as Stupid Does.....

Unbelievable

As any American knows, we place our right hand over our heart when we recite the Pledge of Allegiance. And for anyone who thinks this may be a mirror-image picture, please note the wedding rings on the ring fingers of their LEFT HANDS and the RIGHT side of the Messiahs suit coat where the buttons are. They can't possibly be Americans!



[20100925-01](#)

12:34

Dennis

"New Rule: Rich People Who Complain About Being Vilified Should Be Vilified"

What wimpy-a*sed Democrats won't say...

"New Rule: Rich People Who Complain About Being Vilified Should Be Vilified" by Bill Maher, Huffington Post

Sept. 24, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-maher/new-rule-rich-people-who- b_737429.html)

New Rule: The next rich person who publicly complains about being vilified by the Obama administration must be publicly vilified by the Obama administration. It's so hard for one person to tell another person what constitutes being "rich", or what tax rate is "too much." But I've done some math that indicates that, considering the hole this country is in, if you are earning more than a million dollars a year and are complaining about a 3.6% tax increase, then you are by definition a greedy a*s-hole.

And let's be clear: that's 3.6% only on income above 250 grand—your first 250, that's still on the house. Now, this week we got some horrible news: that one in seven Americans are now living below the poverty line. But I want to point you to an American who is truly suffering: Ben Stein. You know Ben Stein, the guy who got rich because when he talks it sounds so boring it's actually funny. He had a game show on Comedy Central, does eye drop commercials, doesn't believe in evolution? Yeah, that a*s-hole. I kid Ben—so, the other day Ben wrote an article about his struggle. His struggle as a wealthy person facing the prospect of a slightly higher marginal tax rate. Specifically, Ben said that when he was finished paying taxes and his agents, he was left with only 35 cents for every dollar he earned. Which is shocking, Ben Stein has an agent? I didn't know Broadway Danny Rose was still working.

Ben whines in his article about how he's worked for every dollar he has—if by work you mean saying the word "Bueller" in a movie 25 years ago. Which doesn't bother me in the slightest, it's just that at a time when people in America are desperate and you're raking in the bucks promoting some sleazy Free Credit Score dot-com... maybe you shouldn't be asking us for sympathy. Instead, you should be down on your knees thanking God and/or Ronald Reagan that you were lucky enough to be born in a country where a useless schmuck who contributes absolutely nothing to society can somehow manage to find himself in the top marginal tax bracket.

And you're welcome to come on the show anytime.

Now I can hear you out there saying, "Come on Bill, don't be so hard on Ben Stein, he does a lot of voiceover work, and that's hard work." Ok, it's true, Ben is hardly the only rich person these days crying like a baby who's fallen off his bouncy seat. Last week Mayor Bloomberg of New York complained that all his wealthy friends are very upset with mean ol' President Poopy-Pants: He said they all say the same thing: "I knew I was going to have to pay more taxes. But I didn't expect to be vilified." Poor billionaires—they just can't catch a break.

First off, far from being vilified, we bailed you out—you mean we were supposed to give you all that money and kiss your a*s, too? That's Hollywood you're thinking of. FDR, he knew how to vilify; this guy, not so much. And second, you should have been vilified—because you're the villains! I'm sure a lot of you are very nice people. And I'm sure a lot of you are jerks. In other words, you're people. But you are the villains. Who do you think outsourced all the jobs, destroyed the unions, and replaced workers with desperate immigrants and teenagers in China. Joe the Plumber?

And right now, while we run trillion dollar deficits, Republicans are holding America hostage to the cause of preserving the Bush tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest 1% of people, many of them dead. They say that we need to keep taxes on the rich low because they're the job creators. They're not. They're much more likely to save money through mergers and outsourcing and cheap immigrant labor, and pass the unemployment along to you.

Americans think rich people must be brilliant; no—just ruthless. Meg Whitman is running for Governor out here, and her claim to fame is, she started e-Bay. Yes, Meg tapped into the Zeitgeist, the zeitgeist being the desperate need of millions of Americans to scrape a few dollars together by selling the useless cr*p in their garage. What is e-Bay but a big cyber lawn sale that you can visit without putting your clothes on?

Another of my favorites, Congresswoman Michele Bachmann said, "I don't know where they're going to get all this money, because we're running out of rich people in this country." Actually, we have more billionaires here in the U.S. than all the other countries in the top ten combined, and their wealth grew 27% in the last year. Did yours? Truth is, there are only two things that the United States is not running out of: Rich people and bullsh*t. Here's the truth: When you raise taxes slightly on the wealthy, it obviously doesn't destroy the economy—we know this, because we just did it—remember the '90's? It wasn't that long ago. You were probably listening to grunge music, or dabbling in witchcraft. Clinton moved the top marginal rate from 36 to 39%—and far from tanking, the economy did so well he had time to get his dick washed.

Even 39% isn't high by historical standards. Under Eisenhower, the top tax rate was 91%. Under Nixon, it was 70%. Obama just wants to kick it back to 39—just three more points for the very rich. Not back to 91, or 70. Three points. And they go insane. Steve Forbes said that Obama, quote "believes from his inner core that people... above a certain income have more than they should have and that many probably have gotten it from ill-gotten ways." Which they have. Steve Forbes, of course, came by his fortune honestly: he inherited it from his gay egg-collecting, Elizabeth Taylor fag-hugging father, who inherited it from his father. Of course then they moan about the inheritance tax, how the government took 55% percent when Daddy died—which means you still got 45% for doing nothing more than starting out life as your father's pecker-snot.

We don't hate rich people, but have a little humility about how you got it and stop complaining. Maybe the worst whiner of all: Stephen Schwarzman, #69 on Forbes' list of richest Americans, compared Obama's tax hike to "when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939." Wow. If Obama were Hitler, Mr. Schwarzman, I think your tax rate would be the least of your worries.

20100925-02 15:55 Dennis Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..." [see 09/02/08, above]

from SteveBA:

Hope Columbo comes up with the right answers. I imagine some is already public record.

Dear SteveBA,

Geez, doesn't the extreme right wackosphere get tired of recirculating these garbage e-mails year after year? This faux Columbo tripe was long ago discredited by Fact Check:

<http://www.factcheck.org/2010/01/clueless-columbo/>.

20100926-01 07:44 SteveB Re: "Ah...Sorry to Bother You..."

Dear Dennis and SteveBA,

AMEN!

But I'm sure Obama's record at Harvard must have been pretty bad...he was only the editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. Right?

And I'm sure the University of Chicago Law School would never think to check Obama's credentials before hiring him as a law professor.

The birth certificate crock reminds me of "facts: like we never landed on the moon and it's made of green cheese. I guess the world must be flat too.

Why is it that Republicans seem to be so unable to find lies that are actually believable?

None of this kind of stupidity serves our nation well!!!!!!!

20100926-02 08:09 SteveB Re: "New Rule..."

About as plainly as it can be said!

The big, greedy Republican lie-machine has been at it again!

Now we're supposed to feel sorry for American billionaires! It boggles the mind!

20100926-03 12:55 Mary Re: "New Rule..."

Dear SteveB,

You want me to assign credibility to an article written by Maher? And wasn't it you who agreed with Dennis (article he'd sent) that ignorant people think with emotion? What is THIS article filled with? Besides 1/2 truths and childish name calling, it epitomizes that "sophomoric humor" I'd accused you of earlier that you didn't think was a fair description. Article was very nasty.....you show no respect by forwarding it, and you will forthwith be filtered from my email, as will Dennis. BUT FIRST.....since you're so into humor, let me share some "Reaganisms" with you:

The trouble with our liberal friends is not that they're ignorant; it's just that they know so much that isn't so.

The most terrifying words in the English language are: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help."

Government is like a baby: An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other. [Yet, perhaps (one hopes) a greater sense of responsibility than big business, big finance, and the super-rich. —SteveB]

20100926-04 14:34 SteveB Re: "New Rule..."

Dear Mary,

Once again, you completely fail to appreciate a little mere humor. You're going to filter me from your email? And Dennis? LOL

What is that? You can't stomach other views? You're afraid of them? Can't take the heat? The truth will out, but I'm sorry to hear that you're going to join our little roundtable just to run away again, almost immediately.

I am reminded of your response (which I guess I deleted) to my comments concerning the article Dennis sent 'round about Christine O'Donnell's stance that masturbation should be illegal (essentially).

Your response to me was basically, "Why would you pick-on poor Christine and try to hurt her for positions she took years ago when she was young." You never stated whether you also thought the position was stupid, but I suppose you don't want to find yourself in agreement, even on something as cut and dry (and important) as this.

But I'll tell you the truth: Stupidity is not a problem alleviated by age. Maybe ignorance, but not stupidity. Just the opposite. I'm certain O'Donnell's positions and thinking remain as stupid today as they were then. It's only logical.

Could it be possible that many of the extreme right-wing, Tea Party, Sarah Palin positions are just as stupid as the masturbation one? Excluding of course the witchcraft one. Do they have a position on UFO's and abductions? I'd love to know their thoughts on that. I'm sure they all think (maybe you too?) that masturbation, witchcraft, and UFO's are the important political issues of the day.

Meanwhile, the real important issues of the day go unaddressed by the right (in particular)—jobs, free trade, healthcare, realistic taxation, immigration, education, war, deficit spending, the disparity of rich and poor in America...the list could go on forever because these issues have gone unaddressed, pretty much, in our entire lifetimes.

Do you really feel the America George Bush and Dick Cheney left us with is the one you want to pass on to your grandchildren? If so, I'm amazed that you don't like your grandchildren better than that (just kidding). Personally, I dream of a more perfect union.

Thank you for your contributions.

20100926-05 23:09 SteveG Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear SteveB and Mary,

All politicians in the U.S. seem to be snakes in the grass at this point. Their biggest concern seems to be getting elected or re-elected and they will do or say whatever they think or their campaign folks will fly. I really don't think any can be trusted on a long term basis. Campaign reform is a must and term limits are a must, but never will happen.

20100927-01 08:32 SteveB Re: Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear SteveG and Mary,

I agree completely, except that I have hope. If the electorate would just get itself together and defeat every incumbent, every election, every time, I don't think it would take many election cycles (maybe just one!) to wake these corrupt bastards up. Then, once they learn who their bosses really are, maybe real campaign finance, lobbying, and regulatory reform can begin.

I'm not ready to give up yet, but it's going to take some kind of non-violent, "gentle" revolution like this to take the country back from the big money, military, and special interests. Maybe it will require a third party, though I find that a scary proposition I'd rather not be needed. Call me a traditionalist at heart.

[20100927-02](#) 13:37 Dennis Re: Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear Steve,

Hate to be skeptical of any ideas that are the least bit hopeful, but electing new politicians every cycle would just produce more lobbyists with legislative connections. Limiting terms would only produce totally inexperienced legislative bodies who would rely on lobbyists to be able to operate.

I'd be for strict campaign finance reform and abolishing lobbyists, but do you think the corporate elite (kleptocracy) would ever give up its power?

[20100927-03](#) 16:08 SteveB Re: Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear Dennis,

I think that if it happened just one time, all across the country, that the shock and awe would revolutionize America. Think about what a radical thing it truly would be—the electorate...actually in control, at least marginally.

You're right, nothing short of that is ever going to allow us to end the tyranny of the big bucks.

[20100927-04](#) 16:11 Dennis Re: Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear SteveB,

I think what you're describing is the aspiration of the Tea Party movement. Be careful what you wish for.

[20100927-05](#) 16:21 SteveB Re: Election Reform / Term Limits

Dear Dennis,

Haha.

Well...except that, whether they know it or not (maybe some do), as the article you sent 'round the other day pointed out, the Tea Party movement's goal is the opposite of mine. They seek to maintain and broaden the tyranny of the big bucks (and the small minds, by invading the privacy of our bedrooms, knickers, and wombs).

Isn't it funny that the radical right talks so much about freedom, liberty, the Constitution, and protecting it, yet look at the way the Bushies trashed their sacred document.

[20100927-06](#) 10:31 GaryC My Income Taxes

Dear SteveB,

If we are talking about the will of the people, then I think everyone needs to pay some taxes before they vote. If you don't have a dog in the fight (tax money) then I don't think you are qualified to vote and say how the money is spent. If

even poor people had to pay a very minimal tax, then I think they would think more about the process and the corruption created to buy their vote.

[These seem like very strange statements to me. Maybe just white male property owners should be able to vote, because they understand better "the corruption created to buy their vote"? —SteveB]

Poor people are just pawns of the system now and really don't understand that there is always a price to pay for the free lunch. I know that you feel Republicans are greedy and corrupt but consider what Democrats do to poor people to get their vote then bend them over and f*ck them.

[Democrats do what? What is your point? —SteveB]

40 years ago, I was in the lowest tax bracket and now I am in the top .001%. I pay more taxes than most small towns.

[You need to make about \$8 million/year to be in the top 1%. So you're making at least \$100 million per year? Funny you're not more famous. —SteveB]

And, I get very little from the government in return (defense, infrastructure, police protection). I could easily change my citizenship to many other locales but I prefer to try and make the U.S. better.

[You'd pay the same taxes on money you earn in the U.S., which is where you earn your money, right? —SteveB]

I hope that there are many in the lowest 1% that can make it like I did. However, the U.S. government has never ever given me anything.

[Not true! You enjoyed the benefits of the whole system! —SteveB]

I truly wish that all poor persons had the chance to make it like I have but I don't see it happening today with the Democrats making anyone that is poor a victim.

[Those damned Democrats should simply stop making the poor so poor! —SteveB]

Trust me; I am not a fan of the Republican Party either. I feel I have done more to help young poor people have a better life by employing them, training them and helping them find other jobs that any government program I am aware of. But, Democrats make successful business people like me out as greedy and callous.

Where in the hell do young undereducated people find jobs in the U.S. today? Not with big companies or the government but with small business. Who drives the engine of job creation in the U.S.? Small business. Where is most of the innovation in the U.S.? Small business.

[So who's against small business? Not the democrats. I'll tell you who the only people are who are against small business—BIG business! —SteveB]

The funny thing is that I don't give a sh*t about the amount of money I make. I truly enjoy creating new companies and new opportunities for people. But, I am the f*cking bad guy for the Democrats.

20100928-01	07:37	SteveB	Re: My Income Taxes
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Dear GaryC,

To me, this is a truly great email! It raises points that both parties never touch upon, not even the Republicans. I guess they both just take the heart and soul of America so much for granted that it is invisible to them. All we hear about is taxation, taxation, government, government, when the some solutions lie outside that sphere, I think. I love your email and hope you don't mind my forwarding it to my friends in an open way. By the way, I'm sure that, as always, my friends are your friends because we're friends. Does that make sense?

I kind of like your idea of having to pay a small tax to vote. I don't think it will ever happen. Maybe people could just prove that they have paid or filed their taxes to vote? Here in Bolivia every eligible person MUST vote! Even we

immigrants. It's the law. If you don't vote, you face a hefty fine. Every eligible voter must also be on a list, like a jury list in the States, to serve mandatory election duty. All, or almost all, of the election workers are the people themselves. The elections are always on Sunday (Tuesdays seem stupid to me) and almost no one works that day, so everyone can vote. If it is your turn to help-out, you get a voucher to have a day off from your regular work with pay. I have written previously about how campaign media commercials are not allowed here and campaigning is severely limited, so campaign expenses are low, so big money corruption of elections is controlled better. And this is supposed to be such a corrupt country, but unlike the U.S., not their elections. I think it's a good system and people take their elections here very seriously. Not that the results are always so great here either. Evo Morales is a great example of elected stupidity.

I feel our American system is so corrupt, though, that no meaningful reform of any kind can take place until the corruption is ended first.

As I have said before, at this time and maybe at all times, the most important thing for a country, after peace, is jobs! Unless you want to be stuck in time like the U.S.S.R., or Cuba, or China before capitalism, the engine of this job creation cannot and should not be the government. The government creates no wealth. The engine of a free country is private enterprise—capitalism. Some Democrats may think this is some kind of evil thought or word, but I haven't run into one in a long time.

The life blood of capitalism is capital. Capital exists only when there are disparities in capital accumulation in a society. And it is the accumulation of capital which creates industries and jobs, not necessarily rich people. Let me give an example. Imagine a country where everyone who works makes exactly the same pay and that pay is enough for a good life. Those who do not work make half that. Only corporate profits are taxed (with a flat tax). The people of this imaginary country are industrious and frugal, so they save a lot of money. No one is rich, but almost everyone who works has quite a lot of money saved. This money in the banks, which actually belongs to the people, becomes the accumulation of capital which drives the economy, with no rich people at all. The pension funds in America represent as much of a job-creating source of investment as rich people.

Government may not be the solution to our problems inherently, but the right government is essential to allow the system to operate fairly. Taxation and law must be applied to help all people by helping business, but not to the point of total surrender to big money the way many Republicans seem to want. But, come on Democrats, you can't get something for nothing. You can't pretend that government is the direct solution to our problems, the end all and be all of existence, or the creator of wealth. As our founding fathers knew, government is essentially inefficient and potentially evil. Unfortunately...it is necessary, my Republican friends! Let's make it work right. We need less disparity of wealth for the system to work right.

The Republicans need to understand the greed which feeds us can also destroy us. It must be controlled. We have surely learned this since the Industrial Revolution began, but we must not forget it. They Republicans also need to understand that in a free country we are free. Free from their tyranny of religion and imposed morality. Free from their entry to my bedroom and schools. They need to understand that the capitalist system and it's necessary disparities needs a little redistribution of wealth for the good of all. People thought Henry Ford was crazy when he started paying his workers an unheard of \$5 and hour, but, as he said, that's what people had to make to be able to buy his cars. The wealthy or not-so-wealthy consumer is an essential part of the system. Destroy people's ability to consume, leave them without jobs, and the system comes crashing down around our ears, as it is currently trying to do. I see unions, controlled equally to enterprise by law, to be an essential part of this system. Their destruction is hurting the middle class and all of us. We need more middle class, not less.

There is much more to be said. I hope the discussion will continue. We are in deep trouble as a nation, I fear. Both our great political parties have sold the country down the river. Big money rules, not the people. It is time for the people to take control back, before it is too late.

20100928-02	16:15	SteveB	"10 Signs the U.S. Is Losing Its Influence in the Western Hemisphere"
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Something seems to be going wrong, doesn't it? And the trend has been long and continuing. Do you really think you can blame it on the Republicans or the Democrats? The only thing that makes sense is to blame it on something larger. The decline and fall of America is larger than any one political party, and it's too bad that neither party seems to want stop it.

Let's stop the inter-party bickering and work together to change the course of the nation.

If you identify yourself as a Republican or a Democrat rather than simply an American, you're part of the problem!

"10 Signs the U.S. Is Losing Its Influence in the Western Hemisphere" by Gus Lubin, *Business Insider*

Sept. 27, 2010, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/tech-ticker/10-signs-the-us-is-losing-its-influence-in-the-western-hemisphere-535456.html?tickers=eem,ewz,fxi,eeb,jjm,%5Edji,xle>)

We won't be the alpha dog in the western hemisphere forever. Even if the U.S. hadn't crashed into a financial crisis, there are demographic, material, and political forces that have been spreading power around the Americas for decades.

Brazil is first among the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China)—four economies that are supposed to overtake the six largest Western economies by 2032. Mexico is first among the MAVINS (Mexico, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa)—six economies we expect to blow away expectations and become leading powers in their regions relatively soon. Canada and Venezuela are oil powers of the distant future. Peru and Chile are sitting on a fortune of metals and minerals. All these countries are cranking up, while America faces plenty of fiscal and demographic problems at home.

Here are Signs the U.S. Is Losing Its Influence In Its Own Backyard:

1. Our most powerful regional ally—Brazil—refuses to follow our orders on Iran. Hillary Clinton went to Brazil to beg support for sanctions against Iran and came away empty handed. Now the UN is counting on Brazil, which is friendly with America and Iran, to lead nuclear diplomacy.
2. The World's Richest Man is now a Mexican, not an American. For the first time in 16 years, the World's Richest Man is not an American. Carlos Slim, worth \$54 billion, is the first Latin American to hold that title and one of many emerging market billionaires to eclipse the U.S.
3. Three years after a U.S. financial crisis, Latin America is again growing rapidly. The U.S.? Not so much...

Compare this to what happened during the Great Depression. Latin America was devastated when U.S. investment dried up and the export market soured in the 30s. A League of Nations report said Chile, Peru, and Bolivia suffered the world's worst depression.

Today is quite different. Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico have led a buoyant recovery from the global recession, according to Reuters. The regional economy is expected by the UN to grow 4.3 percent in 2010. If the American consumer remains weak, Latin American exports will move elsewhere.

Chile produces 300% more copper than America. America used to lead the world in copper production. We produced 49% of the world's copper in 1929, according to this article from the archives. Today we produce 1.2 million tons yearly, compared to 5.4 million tons in Chile.

Brazil now produces over four times as much iron ore as the U.S. We used to lead that industry, too. In 1892 we discovered the world's largest mine at the Great Lakes Mesabi Range. It was a wellspring for America's industrial might and the foundation of the rust belt. Now we claim reserves at 2,100 mt. Seven countries claim higher reserves, including Brazil at 8,900 mt. We produce only 54 mt yearly, while Brazil produces 250 mt.

Canada and Venezuela will pass the U.S. in oil production in the next decade. America produces around 9 million barrels of oil a day. Venezuela and Canada each produce around 3 million. But America's reserves are 21 billion barrels and may last less than a decade. Our oil-rich neighbors claim 99 billion bbl and 178 billion bbl, respectively, and will keep producing oil into the distant future.

Now Brazil exports over twice as much beef as we do. America used to lead the world in beef production. Although we still do, America exports only 800,000 mt of beef per year. Brazil exports 2,200,000 mt. Here's some ironic excerpts from a 1911 *NYT* article: "American-Canadian syndicate to have world's largest beef plant in Brazil... The chilled beef industry has never been tried before in Brazil and has only recently gotten under way in Argentina."

Brazil is now a critical partner for Russia, India, and China. The acronym coined by Goldman Sachs to describe the four key emerging powers has taken on a life of its own. Brazil, Russia, India, and China have held several summits and even

discussed making a supranational currency—that would pull the rug out from the U.S. dollar. What's important here is that global emerging powers have good relations and are inclined to work together. For instance, China just signed major contracts to build factories and a high-speed rail in Brazil.

Brazil, Canada, and Mexico all invest a greater share of GDP in clean energy. A Pew survey found that Brazil invests 0.37% of its economy in clean energy. Canada invests 0.25% and Mexico invests 0.14%. America is eleventh in the world at 0.13%.

Hugo Chavez is still in power. The CIA has a notorious history of interventions in Latin America, supposedly targeting Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, Fidel Castro, Manuel Noriega, Rios Montt, Che Guevara, and many others. But they haven't stopped Hugo Chavez from railing against the United States for years. Clearly America has adopted a more passive regional strategy.

20100928-03 16:54 SteveB "Free" Trade

I read the other day that 71% of working people in Nigeria make less than \$1 per day.

Compared to the United States:

- Consumer Prices in China are 60.14% lower.
- Consumer Prices (including rent) in China are 57.84% lower.
- Rent Prices in China are 53.41% lower.
- Restaurant Prices in China are 60.71% lower.
- Groceries Prices in China are 30.57% lower.
- Local Purchasing Power in China is 69.34% lower.

- Consumer Prices in Bolivia are 61.39% lower.
- Consumer Prices (including rent) in Bolivia are 62.76% lower.
- Rent Prices in Bolivia are 65.39% lower.
- Restaurant Prices in Bolivia are 54.51% lower.
- Groceries Prices in Bolivia are 65.57% lower.

Do the proponents of "free" trade really believe that workers and factories in the U.S. can compete with this, considering the high cost of living in the U.S.?

Will the "big money" not be happy until they have driven the standard of living in America down to these levels?

How is real wealth created? Farming, mining, fishing, and manufacturing.

In the U.S., the first three have natural constraints. Only manufacturing can produce the jobs we need to maintain a middle class and the standard of living we currently enjoy. Even at that, the standard of living we enjoyed in the past is apparently permanently in the past, not the present or future. This is how unsuccessful our generation has been. We created the computer revolution, we went to the moon, we fought how many wars, and where has it gotten us? What a terrible, declining legacy and mountain of debt we're leaving our children and grandchildren. This is what our Democratic and Republican politicians have created for us. "Free" trade has wiped out any gains. We can't compete and live like our vision of how we want Americans to live. What a sad state of affairs.

20100928-04 19:02 SteveG Re: "Free" Trade

Dear SteveB,

Agree.

Recent articles I have read indicate manufacturing jobs are down and not likely to return to the levels that they were. The articles also indicate that the interest of individuals in performing manufacturing jobs have decreased. Part may be due to the downfall of corporations over the past several years and the other part maybe to the poor educational efforts our

schools have provided. We have done a poor job of preparing our society and our youth for the future. We will never catch back to where we were.

20100928-05 19:43 SteveBA Re: "Free" Trade

As long as China can peg its currency to a 20% discount to the dollar we cannot compete especially when we like the everyday low price of imported goods from Wal-Mart.

20100928-06 20:33 Charis Re: "Free" Trade

Dear SteveBA,

I don't think we can blame political parties for everything that is happening in the U.S. Most of the country's downfall is directly related to a population that insists on living beyond its means. Are there segments of the population that can't afford anything? Yes, of course, but MOST Americans could stand to live with less. One of the reasons prices are so much lower in countries like China and Bolivia is the lack of consumption. People don't typically buy almost anything on credit, at least not the 90% of the population that doesn't qualify for credit. People also don't enter into debt except for very important things like buying a house. So I think it's time Americans took a look at their own habits and what part they themselves play in their own demise.

20100928-07 21:36 Ben "Pakistan and the U.S. Exit from Afghanistan"

Stratfor is an amazing organization. They offer a much more encompassing paid service, but even the free stuff is magnificent.

"Pakistan and the U.S. Exit from Afghanistan" by George Friedman, *Geopolitical Weekly*

Sept. 27, 2010, (http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100927_pakistan_and_us_exit_afghanistan) or (<http://www.johnmauldin.com/outsidethebox/pakistan-and-the-u.s.-exit-from-afghanistan/>)

Bob Woodward has released another book, this one on the debate over Afghanistan strategy in the Obama administration. As all his books do, the book has riveted Washington. It reveals that intense debate occurred over what course to take, that the president sought alternative strategies and that compromises were reached. But while knowing the details of these things is interesting, what would have been shocking is if they hadn't taken place.

It is interesting to reflect on the institutional inevitability of these disagreements. The military is involved in a war. It is institutionally and emotionally committed to victory in the theater of combat. It will demand all available resources for executing the war under way. For a soldier who has bled in that war, questioning the importance of the war is obscene. A war must be fought relentlessly and with all available means.

But while the military's top generals and senior civilian leadership are responsible for providing the president with sound, clearheaded advice on all military matters including the highest levels of grand strategy, they are ultimately responsible for the pursuit of military objectives to which the commander-in-chief directs them. Generals must think about how to win the war they are fighting. Presidents must think about whether the war is worth fighting. The president is responsible for America's global posture. He must consider what an unlimited commitment to a particular conflict might mean in other regions of the world where forces would be unavailable.

A president must take a more dispassionate view than his generals. He must calculate not only whether victory is possible but also the value of the victory relative to the cost. Given the nature of the war in Afghanistan, U.S. President Barack Obama and Gen. David Petraeus—first the U.S. Central Command chief and now the top commander in Afghanistan—had to view it differently. This is unavoidable. This is natural. And only one of the two is ultimately in charge.

The Nature of Guerrilla Warfare

In thinking about Afghanistan, it is essential that we begin by thinking about the nature of guerrilla warfare against an occupying force. The guerrilla lives in the country. He isn't going anywhere else, as he has nowhere to go. By contrast, the foreigner has a place to which he can return. This is the core weakness of the occupier and the strength of the guerrilla. The former can leave and in all likelihood, his nation will survive. The guerrilla can't. And having alternatives undermines the foreigner's will to fight regardless of the importance of the war to him.

The strategy of the guerrilla is to make the option to withdraw more attractive. In order to do this, his strategic goal is simply to survive and fight on whatever level he can. His patience is built into who he is and what he is fighting for. The occupier's patience is calculated against the cost of the occupation and its opportunity costs, thus, while troops are committed in this country, what is happening elsewhere?

Tactically, the guerrilla survives by being elusive. He disperses in small groups. He operates in hostile terrain. He denies the enemy intelligence on his location and capabilities. He forms political alliances with civilians who provide him supplies and intelligence on the occupation forces and misleads the occupiers about his own location. The guerrilla uses this intelligence network to decline combat on the enemy's terms and to strike the enemy when he is least prepared. The guerrilla's goal is not to seize and hold ground but to survive, evade and strike, imposing casualties on the occupier. Above all, the guerrilla must never form a center of gravity that, if struck, would lead to his defeat. He thus actively avoids anything that could be construed as a decisive contact.

The occupation force is normally a more conventional army. Its strength is superior firepower, resources and organization. If it knows where the guerrilla is and can strike before the guerrilla can disperse, the occupying force will defeat the guerrilla. The occupier's problems are that his intelligence is normally inferior to that of the guerrillas; the guerrillas rarely mass in ways that permit decisive combat and normally can disperse faster than the occupier can pinpoint and deploy forces against them; and the guerrillas' superior tactical capabilities allow them to impose a constant low rate of casualties on the occupier. Indeed, the massive amount of resources the occupier requires and the inflexibility of a military institution not solely committed to the particular theater of operations can actually work against the occupier by creating logistical vulnerabilities susceptible to guerrilla attacks and difficulty adapting at a rate sufficient to keep pace with the guerrilla. The occupation force will always win engagements, but that is never the measure of victory. If the guerrillas operate by doctrine, defeats in unplanned engagements will not undermine their basic goal of survival. While the occupier is not winning decisively, even while suffering only some casualties, he is losing. While the guerrilla is not losing decisively, even if suffering significant casualties, he is winning. Since the guerrilla is not going anywhere, he can afford far higher casualties than the occupier, who ultimately has the alternative of withdrawal.

The asymmetry of this warfare favors the guerrilla. This is particularly true when the strategic value of the war to the occupier is ambiguous, where the occupier does not possess sufficient force and patience to systematically overwhelm the guerrillas, and where either political or military constraints prevent operations against sanctuaries. This is a truth as relevant to David's insurgency against the Philistines as it is to the U.S. experience in Vietnam or the Russian occupation of Afghanistan.

There has long been a myth about the unwillingness of Americans to absorb casualties for very long in guerrilla wars. In reality, the United States fought in Vietnam for at least seven years (depending on when you count the start and stop) and has now fought in Afghanistan for nine years. The idea that Americans can't endure the long war has no empirical basis. What the United States has difficulty with—along with imperial and colonial powers before it—is a war in which the ability to impose one's will on the enemy through force of arms is lacking and when it is not clear that the failure of previous years to win the war will be solved in the years ahead.

Far more relevant than casualties to whether Americans continue a war is the question of the conflict's strategic importance, for which the president is ultimately responsible. This divides into several parts. This first is whether the United States has the ability with available force to achieve its political goals through prosecuting the war (since all war is fought for some political goal, from regime change to policy shift) and whether the force the United States is willing to dedicate suffices to achieve these goals. To address this question in Afghanistan, we have to focus on the political goal.

The Evolution of the U.S. Political Goal in Afghanistan

Washington's primary goal at the initiation of the conflict was to destroy or disrupt al Qaeda in Afghanistan to protect the U.S. homeland from follow-on attacks to 9/11. But if Afghanistan were completely pacified, the threat of Islamist-fueled transnational terrorism would remain at issue because it is no longer just an issue of a single organization—al Qaeda—but a series of fragmented groups conducting operations in Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, North Africa, Somalia and elsewhere.

Today, al Qaeda is simply one manifestation of the threat of this transnational jihadist phenomenon. It is important to stop and consider al Qaeda—and the transnational jihadist phenomenon in general—in terms of guerrillas, and to think of the phenomenon as a guerrilla force in its own right operating by the very same rules on a global basis. Thus, where the Taliban apply guerrilla principles to Afghanistan, today's transnational jihadist applies them to the Islamic world and beyond. The transnational jihadists are not leaving and are not giving up. Like the Taliban in Afghanistan, they will decline combat against larger American forces and strike vulnerable targets when they can.

There are certainly more players and more complexity to the global phenomenon than in a localized insurgency. Many governments across North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have no interest in seeing these movements set up shop and stir up unrest in their territory. And al Qaeda's devolution has seen frustrations as well as successes as it spreads. But the underlying principles of guerrilla warfare remain at issue. Whenever the Americans concentrate force in one area, al Qaeda disengages, disperses and regroups elsewhere and, perhaps more important, the ideology that underpins the phenomenon continues to exist. The threat will undoubtedly continue to evolve and face challenges, but in the end, it will continue to exist along the lines of the guerrilla acting against the United States.

There is another important way in which the global guerrilla analogy is apt. STRATFOR has long held that Islamist-fueled transnational terrorism does not represent a strategic, existential threat to the United States. While acts of transnational terrorism target civilians, they are not attacks—have not been and are not evolving into attacks—that endanger the territorial integrity of the United States or the way of life of the American people. They are dangerous and must be defended against, but transnational terrorism is and remains a tactical problem that for nearly a decade has been treated as if it were the pre-eminent strategic threat to the United States.

Nietzsche wrote that, "The most fundamental form of human stupidity is forgetting what we were trying to do in the first place." The stated U.S. goal in Afghanistan was the destruction of al Qaeda. While al Qaeda as it existed in 2001 has certainly been disrupted and degraded, al Qaeda's evolution and migration means that disrupting and degrading it—to say nothing of destroying it—can no longer be achieved by waging a war in Afghanistan. The guerrilla does not rely on a single piece of real estate (in this case Afghanistan) but rather on his ability to move seamlessly across terrain to evade decisive combat in any specific location. Islamist-fueled transnational terrorism is not centered on Afghanistan and does not need Afghanistan, so no matter how successful that war might be, it would make little difference in the larger fight against transnational Jihadism.

Thus far, the United States has chosen to carry on fighting the war in Afghanistan. As al Qaeda has fled Afghanistan, the overall political goal for the United States in the country has evolved to include the creation of a democratic and uncorrupt Afghanistan. It is not clear that anyone knows how to do this, particularly given that most Afghans consider the ruling government of President Hamid Karzai—with which the United States is allied—as the heart of the corruption problem, and beyond Kabul most Afghans do not regard their way of making political and social arrangements to be corrupt.

Simply withdrawing from Afghanistan carries its own strategic and political costs, however. The strategic problem is that simply terminating the war after nine years would destabilize the Islamic world. The United States has managed to block al Qaeda's goal of triggering a series of uprisings against existing regimes and replacing them with jihadist regimes. It did this by displaying a willingness to intervene where necessary. Of course, the idea that U.S. intervention destabilized the region raises the question of what regional stability would look like had it not intervened. The danger of withdrawal is that the network of relationships the United States created and imposed at the regime level could unravel if it withdrew. America would be seen as having lost the war, the prestige of radical Islamists and thereby the foundation of the ideology that underpins their movement would surge, and this could destabilize regimes and undermine American interests.

The political problem is domestic. Obama's approval rating now stands at 42 percent. This is not unprecedented, but it means he is politically weak. One of the charges against him, fair or not, is that he is inherently anti-war by background and so not fully committed to the war effort. Where a Republican would face charges of being a warmonger, which would make withdrawal easier, Obama faces charges of being too soft. Since a president must maintain political support to be effective, withdrawal becomes even harder. Therefore, strategic analysis aside, the president is not going to order a complete withdrawal of all combat forces any time soon—the national (and international) political alignment won't support such a step. At the same time, remaining in Afghanistan is unlikely to achieve any goal and leaves potential rivals like China and Russia freer rein.

The American Solution

The American solution, one that we suspect is already under way, is the Pakistanization of the war. By this, we do not mean extending the war into Pakistan but rather extending Pakistan into Afghanistan. The Taliban phenomenon has extended into Pakistan in ways that seriously complicate Pakistani efforts to regain their bearing in Afghanistan. It has created a major security problem for Islamabad, which, coupled with the severe deterioration of the country's economy and now the floods, has weakened the Pakistanis' ability to manage Afghanistan. In other words, the moment that the Pakistanis have been waiting for—American agreement and support for the Pakistanization of the war—has come at a time when the Pakistanis are not in an ideal position to capitalize on it.

In the past, the United States has endeavored to keep the Taliban in Afghanistan and the regime in Pakistan separate. (The Taliban movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan are not one and the same.) Washington has not succeeded in this regard, with the Pakistanis continuing to hedge their bets and maintain a relationship across the border. Still, U.S. opposition has been the single greatest impediment to Pakistan's consolidation of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and abandoning this opposition leaves important avenues open for Islamabad.

The Pakistani relationship to the Taliban, which was a liability for the United States in the past, now becomes an advantage for Washington because it creates a trusted channel for meaningful communication with the Taliban. Logic suggests this channel is quite active now.

The Vietnam War ended with the Paris peace talks. Those formal talks were not where the real bargaining took place but rather where the results were ultimately confirmed. If talks are under way, a similar venue for the formal manifestation of the talks is needed—and Islamabad is as good a place as any.

Pakistan is an American ally which the United States needs, both to balance growing Chinese influence in and partnership with Pakistan, and to contain India. Pakistan needs the United States for the same reason. Meanwhile, the Taliban want to run Afghanistan. The United States has no strong national interest in how Afghanistan is run so long as it does not support and espouse transnational jihadism. But it needs its withdrawal to take place in a manner that strengthens its influence rather than weakens it, and Pakistan can provide the cover for turning a retreat into a negotiated settlement.

Pakistan has every reason to play this role. It needs the United States over the long term to balance against India. It must have a stable or relatively stable Afghanistan to secure its western frontier. It needs an end to U.S. forays into Pakistan that are destabilizing the regime. And playing this role would enhance Pakistan's status in the Islamic world, something the United States could benefit from, too. We suspect that all sides are moving toward this end.

The United States isn't going to defeat the Taliban. The original goal of the war is irrelevant, and the current goal is rather difficult to take seriously. Even a victory, whatever that would look like, would make little difference in the fight against transnational jihad, but a defeat could harm U.S. interests. Therefore, the United States needs a withdrawal that is not a defeat. Such a strategic shift is not without profound political complexity and difficulties. But the disparity between—and increasingly, the incompatibility of—the struggle with transnational terrorism and the war effort geographically rooted in Afghanistan is only becoming more apparent—even to the American public.

20100929-01 07:24 Pam Re: "Free" Trade
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Dear SteveB,

It seems that everyone has an explanation for our financial doldrums but very little to offer in the way of solutions. It would seem that someone has to lose for someone else to win. Cheap goods for us mean a lower standard of living in the third world. I think we should look back at LBJ's Great Society. There used to be terrible poverty in this country, especially in Appalachia. Johnson vowed to end hunger in America—and he did (his administration did with his arm-twisting). If not for the Viet Nam war, he might be remembered as our greatest President. Now the local news features stories about families that depend on food banks, "normal" families who never had to resort to such things before. I never thought I'd see such a thing again, but I was wrong. Politicians used to make promises to end poverty, now they promise to protect the rich. It's a real flip-flop. Johnson brought us Medicare. Today I heard someone on NPR talking about curtailing it. And Social Security has been under attack by the Republicans for a long time.

The first thing that has to happen is for the Bush tax cuts to be eliminated. Well, I've been through all this before with you. I'm preaching to the choir. It is nice to know though that others out there feel as I do. I like Obama, but maybe that's the problem. Maybe he's too nice. LBJ was a real son of a b*tch. All I know is I distrust the Republicans.

20100929-02 07:41 Pam Re: "Free" Trade

Dear SteveB,

Ah ha. Now I see where we differ. I don't want to sell out the American people, nor do I think we are responsible for the welfare of the whole world, but it wouldn't it be in our best interest to have a peaceful, stable world? That won't happen until people in other countries have at least a fighting chance. Let's not keep sending big bucks to foreign governments for them to spend on their elites and armies. Why not send pencils and shoes (like that guy who does that) and pots and pans. The things that really would improve lives in tangible ways.

In Afghanistan, years ago, they tried introducing tractors. The farmers wouldn't use them. They preferred their old methods of animal power. You have to build from the bottom up. First a simple iron plow, then on from there. The way it went in the West, actually. I've never really understood why Europe and Asia developed their resources and Africa didn't. I wonder if geography has something to do with it. If all races truly are the same beneath the skin, then what factors account for societies that remain "primitive." And not just in Africa. I guess I should have studied anthropology.

I don't think isolation is viable for America.

20100929-03 07:53 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade

Dear Charis,

Somehow you always have a different perspective and an interesting point. I really like that! Thank you.

I also don't understand the "deep in debt" syndrome. But I guess the economy would tank even sooner without all that consumption. I don't know any good alternatives to the capitalist system, but one of the things about it that bothers me is that human beings are reduced to mere consumers. And they must be somehow made to consume, consume, consume and make that consumption keep growing for the whole thing seemingly to work.

I guess I want us to be more than that, more than consuming robots, even in the aggregate. And growth, to me, at this point in time, is truly our great enemy (along with Wal-Mart!).

20100929-04 08:40 SteveB Re: "Pakistan and the U.S. Exit from Afghanistan"

I love this quote from this article from Ben's article:

A war must be fought relentlessly and with all available means.

If we are going to go to war (which I wish we didn't do or didn't have to do, that's for sure), isn't this the way it has to be? I don't recall allowing the Germans and Japanese in WWII (bless their hearts) go slinking off the battlefield to come back another day to defeat us in an endless guerilla war.

No, then we had the balls to simply kill the enemy relentlessly. Anything less leads to defeat, so why start?

Ben's right about STRATFOR having some great articles and information. You might want to take a look at it.

www.stratfor.com

20100929-05 09:04 Bill Re: "Free" Trade

Most economists look at it this way: The "theory of competitive advantage" suggests that those national economies that best produce bicycles should max out on production of those and like goods that their level of industrial sophistication allows. Then, those national economies that can produce computers, MRIs, sophisticated drugs, etc., should max out on those. Via this paradigm for international trade, wealth—as between two nations or among all those on the globe—is maximized. It seems that those countries with a bit of chutzpah, a reasonably educated populace, and organized

governments can do very well via this model, perhaps gaining relatively more than the sophisticated countries. The pace of dislocation in an economy like ours—loss of basic manufacturing jobs being a primary symptom—is very hard on those at the bottom of the scale. And the distribution of wealth, here and in one of those countries gaining those jobs, seems to become more lopsided.

I suppose we could return to a mercantilism, but there may be many problems associated with that. For example, we've become accustomed to having access to cheap goods from China and Southeast Asia, and, in fact, some people need those goods to survive. No wonder they call it the "dismal science."

[20100929-06](#) 09:25 GaryC Re: "Free" Trade

For those of you inclined to read history. You may remember that once upon a time, the U.S. was the "China" to Europe. Free Trade is how our U.S. economy began and what allowed it to expand. The textile mills in Manchester would not have been able to produce all of their "fine" cloth had it not been for cheap U.S. cotton.

When [Personal content removed. —SteveB], I was attending class, going to the library and studying economics. I even had the opportunity to teach Economics and had three fraternity brothers in my classes. One of the lessons I taught was the Law of Supply and Demand. My example was that as Panama Red became scarcer, the price went up. Likewise, with the Law of Diminishing Returns as your consumption of alcohol increased the affect diminished with each additional drink.

Interestingly, my students were able to understand these real world examples as the Economic laws applied to real life.

Free Trade is not FREE. There are consequences to the low prices at Wal Mart and Costco. Unfortunately, the U.S. has not made the transition to higher value added goods and services. When People magazine and American Idol are the top rated forms of entertainment in the U.S., it's easy to understand that our populace is fat, dumb and lazy. I have had a unique education in the last 20 years doing business all over the world. Free Trade has made this a better global community but the U.S. middle class has suffered because the ability to make a good middle class income without training or education left the barn 20 years ago.

BTW, two of my three declarations noted above are FALSE. I did study Economics though.

[20100929-07](#) 09:44 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade

Statistics on how many jobs we're losing to foreign countries are a little hard to come by. But here is the recent U.S. international trade balance of payments information from the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development). This is how much money (in U.S. dollars) we're losing to the rest of the world every three months:

Q4-2008—(minus!)\$172,383,000,000
Q1-2009—(minus!)\$147,644,000,000
Q2-2009—(minus!)\$95,577,000,000
Q3-2009—(minus!)\$84,447,000,000
Q4-2009—(minus!)\$100,907,000,000
Q1-2010—(minus!)\$109,158,000,000
Q2-2010—(minus!)\$123,283,000,000

Total for just 21 months—(minus!)\$833 billion! (for comparison, the U.S. GDP for 2009 was about \$14 trillion.)

And the plan of our Democratic and Republican politicians seems to be to do this forever! Wonderful plan! Gee! I wonder why there are no jobs? And for my liberal friends...doesn't it seem like we're doing our part to help the rest of the world? And remember, it's all this plus the allowed illegal immigration, which we're supposed to be sympathetic to. But this is what the "big money" wants and that's what our corrupt Democratic and Republican politicians give them, month after month, year after year, I guess, inevitably, until we're a Third World country! Our children and grandchildren be damned, right?

[20100929-08](#) 20:24 SteveG House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130225333>

Interesting House vote in regards to the manipulation of the currency in China.

from NPR.com (<http://www.liberalvsliberal.com/site/?p=5625>):

House OKs bill targeting China's currency manipulation. The 348-79 vote Wednesday sends the measure to the Senate, where its prospects are unclear. Senate supporters hope to get a vote on a similar proposal after Congress returns following the November congressional elections.

[20100929-09](#) 21:50 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade

Dear GaryC,

I thought I was the one attending classes while you did that other stuff? Anyway, that's my story and I'm sticking to it! :-
)

Good points, though, so maybe you did attend a few classes.

[20100930-01](#) 00:58 SteveBA Re: House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation

Dear SteveG,

I hope this bill goes thru, it will help eliminate an artificial advantage for them.

[20100930-02](#) 01:12 Pam Re: "Free" Trade, NAFTA

Dear SteveB,

I'm not an Economist, but doesn't the problem begin with the NAFTA treaty in the late '90's". In Anderson, that was when so many jobs went to Mexico. And, aren't the Bush Presidents' responsible for that and the war?

[20100930-03](#) 07:38 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade, NAFTA

Dear PamB,

Yes, Bush and the Republicans have led the way on free trade and war (shame on them!), but the tariffs, etc. that protected our jobs have been coming down before and after NAFTA, with Democrats and Republicans both responsible, because politicians in both parties are bribed via campaign contributions from the same big money interests.

Make no mistake, we've been sold down the river by both parties. The system is corrupt!

[20100930-04](#) 07:57 SteveB Re: House OKs Bill Targeting China's Currency Manipulation

Dear SteveBA & SteveG,

Yes, it seems like a necessary step. Interesting to me that only Republicans appear to oppose this bill. Just being contrarians because the Democrats led the way? Surely they don't mind if we preserve a few jobs here in the States?

[20100930-05](#) 08:57 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade

Dear Pam,

I'm not sure there's ever going to be a peaceful, stable world, but I sure like the idea of helping poor people instead of governments. I don't want anyone hungry or suffering, if possible (which it's not).

I have often wondered about Africa too.

I love black people (having spent so much time in the Caribbean), but I don't think we're "all the same beneath the skin." I just think we're all equal, all equally human, but can be very different, races can be very different, and that's a good thing. The broader the gene pool, the better. I also like it when that gene pool gets all mixed up. Trinidad, Brazil, and Bolivia have a lot of the world's most beautiful women for just that reason.

Man, that must have been a tough sell in Afghanistan!

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20100930-06 15:55 SteveB Re: "Free" Trade

Dear Pam,

No, I'm pretty sure cheap imported goods for us mean a higher standard of living in the Third World, but a lower standard of living for Americans. Seems sort of paradoxical, perhaps, but...that's economics.

I just wish we could get beyond partisanship! The left acts like it wants to destroy our capitalist system, which is the goose that laid the golden egg. They seem to want to open our borders, send most of our wealth abroad, and control all the rest themselves at home (though you're right about taxes!). You're right, too, that government has done a few things well (education, Social Security, Medicare being some of them; regulating the big corporations, war and immigration not), and people do need help sometimes, maybe not a lifetime free ride, but help. But, to me, in general, government is the enemy and not the direct solution to our problems.

The f*cking right seems to want to lock the rest of us up and beat us to death with the Constitution, which they don't even seem to be able to read. Plus, they're ready to sell us all out for a few bucks in a New York minute.

BOTH SIDES ARE WRONG! As Buddha said...the middle way!

20100930-07 21:21 SteveG "The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics" & Treaty of Tripoli

The top link is from today's NPR about the Tea Party and the religious right in politics. The second link is to the Treaty of Tripoli written in 1796 and signed in 1797. Number 11 of the treaty is particularly interesting in regards to the NPR article.

"The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics" by Barbara Bradley Hagerty, NPR

Sept. 30, 2010, (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=130238835>)

At the Mad Fox Brewery in Falls Church, Va., it's happy hour, which pretty much captures the mood of the two dozen middle-class conservatives who are reveling in their surprising political success.

These members of the Northern Virginia Tea Party fall silent as Jonathan Moseley takes the microphone.

"I bring you news from the front of the Tea Party revolution, from the battle of Delaware," he begins dramatically. For an hour, Moseley, who was Christine O'Donnell's campaign manager in 2008, describes O'Donnell's upset victory in Delaware's Senate primary.

O'Donnell is a conservative Christian. But no one mentions that at this meet-and-greet, in part because people here don't all agree about religion's role in politics.

The 'Sleeping Giant': Religious Conservatives

On the one end of the spectrum, Stacey Hagga says that religion and socially conservative issues are simply not a factor in the Tea Party movement.

"I personally don't know the last time I was at church," she says, shifting her toddler from one hip to the other. "I think people are just generally concerned about the economy and the direction of our country. I have my 2-year-old here and I'm just concerned about his future."

Nearby, Sandy Smith, a registered nurse, sees some religious undercurrents to the Tea Party movement.

"It's a movement about the Founding Fathers and what their faith was to this country, and how they brought faith over to this country," she says.

Smith is describing a "civil religion" that seems to appeal to many Tea Partiers: the idea that America was a divine experiment, that the Founding Fathers were Christian men who created a nation on biblical principles. She says America in 2010 has lost that.

"That's what started this whole downfall of America — taking God out of everything, and political correctness," Smith says. "We were founded on Judeo-Christian principles, and it's like 'What's happened? Why aren't we fighting to save that?' They fought hard for that so why aren't we? So we're out here trying to fight for those principles."

And then there's Michael Giere, a mortgage banker and evangelical Christian. "We are a Judeo-Christian country, and I don't care who says we're not, we obviously are," he says.

Giere says religious conservatives are the sleeping giant in the Tea Party.

"The discussion of the day is on economics, but when you start peeling back that onion, there is devout faith spread throughout the Tea Party and spread throughout the Tea Party leadership," he says.

Polls show that Tea Party members are far more likely to be weekly churchgoers and conservative Christians than the population as a whole.

That is what Wendy Wright, president of the evangelical Concerned Women for America, has found. And she says she believes the Tea Party is prompting Americans to look closely at their religious heritage — in particular, at the faith and early writings of the Founding Fathers.

"It's an opportunity for evangelicals to show how biblical principles are integral to America's foundation," she says. "And if we strip out those principles — if we ignore them or turn our back on them — that our foundation can't survive and therefore our country can't survive."

The most prominent proponent of this nostalgia for the early days of the Republic is Glenn Beck. At an August rally, more than 80,000 people gathered on Washington's Mall and listened with rapt attention as the Fox News commentator whipped up a religious revival.

"Something beyond imagination is happening," he boomed to the roars of the crowd. "Something that is beyond man is happening. America today begins to turn back to God!"

That moment marked a turning point in the relationship between religious conservatives and the Tea Party, says Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association. "There was a spiritual energy there that we haven't seen in typical Tea Party events," he says. "And my word to the Tea Party leadership is: Sit up and take notice. This is a winning issue for you, just from a purely strategic, pragmatic standpoint, to capture the spiritual energy of the American people."

For their part, religious conservatives have benefited hugely from the rise of the Tea Party. John Green, a political scientist at the University of Akron, says that evangelicals and conservative Catholics were dispirited after the 2008 election. They were disillusioned by what they saw as President Bush's unfulfilled promises and a disappointing Republican presidential candidate. At the same time, once-powerful organizations such as the Christian Coalition have petered out. Enter the Tea Party movement.

"There was an opening on the right for organizations and candidates and groups that could appeal to different elements of the religious coalition," he says. "In many ways the Tea Party has filled that niche."

Green says in this year's primary elections, religious conservatives have gotten exactly what they wanted.

"If you look at many of the candidates around the country that have won Republican primaries that are identified with the Tea Party, many of them hold very conservative views on social issues and therefore are likely to appeal to conservative Christians as well as other kinds of conservatives," he says.

Christine O'Donnell, for example, has spent much of her career as an evangelical activist. In fact, every Tea Party candidate who won his or her Senate primary opposes abortion.

The Glue That Holds The Tea Party Together: Fiscal Issues

And yet, there's still tension between these two groups. For example, Fischer recently interviewed Amy Kremer, chairman of the Tea Party Express, on his nationwide radio program. Fischer told her that evangelicals want some signal that the Tea Party movement supports their views on abortion and marriage.

"Can we hear that message from the Tea Party leadership?" he asked.

"You're not going to hear it from me," she responded. "I'm sorry, I'm going to disappoint you."

Tea Party Tug Of War; Is Focus Fiscal Or Social?

In an interview, Kremer explains that the Tea Party movement is a big tent, including not just religious people but atheists and libertarians.

"As long as we stay focused on the fiscal issues, that's the glue that holds us together," she says. "If we start delving into the religious aspect or social aspect, that's when we're going to become divided and when people are going to disagree."

But Fischer says this strategy could alienate Christian conservatives.

"And if they begin to discover that the leadership of the Tea Party movement isn't going to fight for them on those issues, then I think they're going to lose their enthusiasm for movement," he says. "And they'll go back to being disengaged or they'll invest in that energy in some other direction."

It appears that these groups are mostly patching over their differences. But the question is: After the election, could their diverging priorities lead to the breakup of this political marriage?

	Total U.S.	NET AGREE
<i>Protestant</i>		
White evangelical	20%	33%
White mainline	16%	18%
Black Protestant	9%	3%
Other Protestant	5%	5%
<i>Catholic</i>		
White non-Hispanic	15%	17%
Hispanic Catholic	7%	3%
Other Catholic	2%	2%
Mormon	2%	3%
Orthodox	1%	*
Jewish	2%	2%

Muslim	1%	0%
Buddhist	1%	*
Hindu	*	0%
Unitarian	*	0%
Other Faiths	1%	1%
Unaffiliated	17%	12%
Don't Know/Refuse	2%	1%

Source: Aug., 2010 Survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press

TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE BEY AND SUBJECTS OF TRIPOLI AND BARBARY

(http://www.stephenjaygould.org/ctrl/treaty_tripoli.html)

(Authored by American diplomat Joel Barlow in 1796, the following treaty was sent to the floor of the Senate, June 7, 1797, where it was read aloud in its entirety and unanimously approved. John Adams, having seen the treaty, signed it and proudly proclaimed it to the Nation.)

Annals of Congress, 5th Congress

Article 1. There is a firm and perpetual peace and friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and subjects of Tripoli, of Barbary, made by the free consent of both parties, and guarantied by the most potent Dey and Regency of Algiers.

Art. 2. If any goods belonging to any nation with which either of the parties is at war, shall be loaded on board of vessels belonging to the other party, they shall pass free, and no attempt shall be made to take or detain them.

Art. 3. If any citizens , subjects, or effects, belonging to either party, shall be found on board a prize vessel taken from an enemy by the other party, such citizens or subjects shall be set at liberty, and the effects restored to the owners.

Art. 4. Proper passports are to be given to all vessels of both parties, by which they are to be known. And considering the distance between the two countries, eighteen months from the date of this treaty, shall be allowed for procuring such passports. During this interval the other papers, belonging to such vessels, shall be sufficient for their protection.

Art. 5. A citizen or subject of either party having bought a prize vessel, condemned by the other party, or by any other nation, the certificates of condemnation and bill of sale shall be a sufficient passport for such vessel for one year; this being a reasonable time for her to procure a proper passport.

Art. 6. Vessels of either party, putting into the ports of the other, and having need of provisions or other supplies, they shall be furnished at the market price. And if any such vessel shall so put in, from a disaster at sea, and have occasion to repair, she shall be at liberty to land and re-embark her cargo without paying any duties. But in case shall she be compelled to the land her cargo.

Art. 7. Should a vessel of either party be cast on the shore of the other, all proper assistance shall be given to her and her people; no pillage shall be allowed; the property shall remain at the disposition of the owners; and the crew protected and succored till they can be sent to their country.

Art. 8. If a vessel of either party should be attacked by an enemy, within gun-shot of the forts of the other, she shall be defended as much as possible. If she be in port she shall not be seized on or attacked, when it is in the power of the other party to protect her. And when she proceeds to sea, no enemy shall be allowed to pursue her from the same port, within twenty-four hours after her departure.

Art. 9. The commerce between the United States and Tripoli; the protection to be given to merchants, masters of vessels, and seamen; the reciprocal right of the establishing Consuls in each country; and the privileges, immunities, and jurisdiction, to be on the same footing with those of the most favored nations respectively.

Art. 10. The money and presents demanded by the Bey of Tripoli, as a full and satisfactory consideration on his part, and on the part of his subjects, for this treaty of perpetual peace and friendship, are acknowledged to have been received by him previous to his signing the same, according to a receipt which is hereto annexed, except such as part as is promised, on the part of the United States, to be delivered and paid by them on the arrival of their Consul in Tripoli; of which part a note is likewise hereto annexed. And no pretense of any periodical tribute of further payments is ever to be made by either party.

Art. 11. As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of Mussulmen; and, as the said States never entered into any war, or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties, that no pretext arising from religious opinions, shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

Art. 12. In case of any dispute, arising from a violation of any of the articles of this treaty, no appeal shall be made to arms; nor shall war be declared on any pretext whatever. But if the Consul, residing at the place where the dispute shall happen, shall not be able to settle the same, an amicable reference shall be made to the mutual friend of the parties, the Dey of Algiers; the parties hereby engaging to abide by his decision. And he, by virtue of his signature to this treaty, engages for himself and successors to declare the justice of the case, according to the true interpretation of the treaty, and to use all the means in his power to enforce the observance of the same.

Signed and sealed at Tripoli of Barbary the 3d day of Junad in the year of the Hegira 1211— corresponding with the 4th day of Nov., 1796, by JUSSOF BASHAW MAHOMET, *Bey*; MAMET, *Treasurer*; AMET, *Minister of Marine*; SOLIMAN KAYA. GALIL, *General of the Troops*; MAHOMET, *Commander of the City*; AMET; *Chamberlain*; ALLY, *Chief of the Divan*; MAMET, *Secretary*.

Signed and sealed at Algiers, the 4th day of Argill, 1211—corresponding with the 3d day of January, 1797, by HASSAN BASHAW, *Dey*. And by the agent Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, JOEL BARLOW.

20101001-01 07:31 SteveB Re: "The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics" & Treaty of Tripoli

Dear SteveG,

This is great. Thank you. What a sad state of affairs. Just in case these kooks win, to see if I can comply, I've already started practicing non-masturbation, but I just don't seem to be able to get it right. Hell, here I come.

20101002-01 08:45 SteveB "How Obama Can Fix the U.S. Economy"

I like a lot of this, but I still don't see anything constructive being done until the corruption in Washington is under control.

"How Obama Can Fix the U.S. Economy" by Jim Jubak, MSN Money

Sept. 27, 2010, (<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/JubaksJournal/how-obama-can-fix-the-us-economy.aspx>)

(Some advice on filling that economic-adviser job at the White House: Think big, get tough in the global economy, and invest in America's future. Oh, and call Jim Jubak.)

I haven't been able to sleep ever since I read that Larry Summers is leaving his post as top economic adviser to President Barack Obama's top economic adviser. Why doesn't my phone ring? I'm eating with it at my elbow. I've changed the way I walk to work to avoid cell phone dead zones. I'm even sleeping with the phone. And still no one has called to offer me the post.

I know the phone's going to ring, though, and I want to be prepared for the Big Question: What would you do to turn around the U.S. economy? I've quickly worked up this draft of an answer. I don't know how much more time I have before the president calls.

Change the way we define the problem

No more baby steps. You don't fix a crisis this big by tinkering around the edges. I had this drummed into me in a business school class in 1984. My assignment was to come up with a budget to fix the New York City economy. The professor read my carefully prepared solution and laughed. Well, actually he guffawed. You think you can fix this budget, he asked, by closing firehouses?

Now I'm looking at a \$14 trillion U.S. economy with an unemployment rate pushing 10%. Tinkering with the tax code or offering a FICA tax holiday isn't going to fix this crisis.

Admit that as bad as things are now, they weren't exactly swell before the crisis. Incomes for the average family have been stagnant for the past 30 years—especially if you take out extra dollars that come from having more moms in the work force and having one or both parents work extra and/or temporary jobs. For some workers—blue-collar industrial workers and workers without high school degrees—the Great Recession began not in 2007, but in the 1980s and hasn't ever ended.

Even the great job-creation surge in the Clinton years doesn't look like the best of times when you consider the kinds of work created—lower-paying, predominantly service-industry jobs—to replace the higher-paying manufacturing jobs that had been lost.

Let's admit that the ideas now getting recycled in the midterm election campaigns from both parties haven't prevented or reversed that long income stagnation—and they aren't likely to. It's not because tax cuts, tax increases, education credits, No Child Left Behind, spending cuts, spending increases and the other patent medicines peddled by politicians don't have any effect but because they're too narrowly focused to end a 30-year problem.

As Larry Summers would say—if we transplanted James Carville's brain into the Harvard economist's body (and that would sure be fun)—"It's the global economy, stupid." Fixes that ignore the global economy are going to be too small or completely misguided. And those of us who live in the United States will have to give up some of our economic illusions. (Come on, you can do it. It's not nearly as painful as giving up "Mad Men.")

For example, it's time to concede that when it comes to exports, the U.S. has become essentially a commodity economy. We export corn, coal and scrap paper, and we import TVs, cars and solar cells. Export our way out of this mess with an extra paragraph here or there in our trade treaties? Oh, puleez! Play hardball (or insert your own sports cliché here)

Let me give you an example ripped from the headlines, as we say here in New York. China has slapped quotas on its exports of rare-earth minerals essential for building hybrid cars, wind turbines, amplifiers for optical cable communications networks and the newest fluorescent lights. If companies want to build these products and are worried about their sources of these raw materials, they can make sure they have plenty to work with quite simply—by moving production to China.

And we're going to fight back against this sort of globalism by creating a \$30 billion loan fund for small businesses or lowering mortgage rates (by having the Federal Reserve run up its balance sheet)?

It's war out there in the global economy, and the battle is to secure the world's scarcest commodity: good jobs. That's way better than real war, let me remind you. But to stand a chance in this war, the U.S. has got to at least match the firepower of the other countries.

In this competitive economic war, we can't afford to have all the battles fought on our turf, and we can't always be on the defensive. European and Chinese makers of high-speed trains are going to fight it out to see who gets billions in U.S. taxpayer money to build a high-speed line in California.

Where's General Electric (GE, news, msgs) in that competition? And if we don't have the team that can play in the big leagues in high-speed trains, how about we go after China's market for freight cars or freight locomotives?

It's not like our stuff can't compete with their stuff. In many cases, cheap financing is the only thing they've got that we don't. (And it's hard to believe that it isn't cheaper to provide low-interest taxpayer financing to U.S. companies than it is to spend taxpayer money saving an industrial shell from bankruptcy.)

If moving from a defensive crouch to offense means using government resources to create competitive industries from scratch, so be it. It's cheaper in the long run than paying for years of unemployment and the social havoc that would cause. It's insane that the U.S. doesn't have a domestic source of rare-earth minerals and that we're willing to give anybody in the world control of something essential to 21st-century technology.

Think big? No, bigger!

So the world's companies want our metallurgical coal? Fine. Have them build steel mills in Pennsylvania and West Virginia and more car plants in Alabama. The world's companies want our corn? Fine. Make their home countries tear down the trade barriers that keep U.S. chickens out of Russia and other nations. (Granted, it might help if we promised not to dip the birds in bleach.)

Countries such as France and China have official national champions—companies the governments back to drive their domestic economies and the countries' exports overseas. The U.S. has de facto national champions. They haven't been awarded that title by some bureaucrat but have earned it in the actual marketplace. Intel (INTC, news, msgs), for example, is one.

But our de facto national champions often don't get much actual support from Washington, although we do give hefty tax breaks to last-century industries such as oil. So Intel winds up building a chip plant in Vietnam because that country supplies cheap land and labor. With government incentives, the U.S. could match that. And don't say that isn't our system. Alabama, South Carolina and Tennessee are perfectly comfortable paying BMW (BAMXF, news, msgs) or Toyota Motor (TM, news, msgs) to build plants in their states.

Get over our bad case of 'not invented here'

Maybe once upon a time we were justified in looking down at other countries' technology or to make jokes about their claims to have invented the telephone. But if that superiority was ever justified (and I'll bet my Marie Curie fan club ring that it wasn't), it sure isn't now. We need to stop exporting technology and to start importing some, too.

I've got no problem with Boeing (BA, news, msgs) subcontracting work to Chinese companies and giving a boost to China's aircraft industry through legal or extralegal technology transfer. But how about some of it flowing the other way? How about a U.S. company getting its hands on the technology to build a high-speed train as part of any contract in California? How about getting ArcelorMittal (MT, news, msgs) to transfer its best practices to U.S. steel company partners when it builds a plant in the U.S.?

We need to recognize that you don't win in this global economy playing with out-of-date infrastructure. Our airports, highways, ports and railroads aren't up to the standards of the toughest of our competitors. And then there's electronic technology, where our wireless Internet network increasingly lags. Countries, especially countries such as Singapore that don't have huge natural advantages, spend to create infrastructure advantages. We let ours decay because it costs too much money.

In the short run, the expense is certainly considerable, although it could be spread over years or decades by a mechanism such as a government-seeded infrastructure bank. (One of the great ironies of the moment is that to find good infrastructure investments, I have to send my money overseas.) In the long term, it is again cheaper than running a country in permanent recession.

And let's upgrade our human capital, too. If many of the workers feeling the brunt of this 30-year stagnation are those without high school diplomas, let's make sure that the next generation has more education and the next generation even more. And let's make sure that it's education that's appropriate to the new global economy.

Raising standards so that every kid getting out of high school can do 12th-grade math and write good (or is it "gooder"?) is a decent goal, but it won't get the job done in the long run. We can't learn only English and expect the rest of the world will, too. We can't say we've got a shortage of engineers, then turn out kids who can't do trigonometry.

It will take a long, tough battle. But again **it's cheaper to fight the battle than to pay the long-term cost of losing it.**

We should recognize that there's a potentially nasty strain of xenophobia built into this idea of global economic competition, and we should fight it actively by expanding all existing programs that get Americans acquainted with—or, better yet, immersed in—other cultures. If you play any competitive sport, you know it's possible to play to defeat your opponent with all your strength and still go out for a beer afterward. And it's fun.

Let's fix Washington, too

Your response to this is likely to be, "We can never get anything like that through Washington." (And I do recognize that another possible response is, "Thank goodness, nothing like that would ever get through Washington.")

I refuse to accept that. If the current politicians won't act, dump 'em. It may take years to create a responsive government. But if it took 30 years to get the problem to this stage, what's another 30 years fixing it?

And as long as we're thinking big, doesn't it strike you as hopelessly antiquated that we elect representatives to vote our will (ha!) in the age of social networks and online collaboration? Why not do away with the current budget system entirely and let Americans vote online for the programs they want to fund? Maybe within a limit of no more than a 20% change from one year to the next, to ensure some kind of continuity? (So it would take five years to kill the kind of boondoggle that now lives on forever.) And I'd suggest a simple rule: Adjusted for the economic cycle, we couldn't spend more than we had. Of course, to do that we'd need to actually implement a capital budget in Washington.

Or how about something like "American Idol" in which Washington department heads competed on TV for our money? Or "Budget Survivor," in which the worst government programs could get voted off the island (or out of D.C.).

I'd watch, especially if they had tiki torches.

Looking at my plan, I can't understand why the White House hasn't called. Come on, phone, ring!

Comments:

"It's not like our stuff can't compete with their stuff. In many cases, cheap financing is the only thing they've got that we don't. (And it's hard to believe that it isn't cheaper to provide low-interest taxpayer financing to U.S. companies than it is to spend taxpayer money saving an industrial shell from bankruptcy.)"

Reply: What "stuff" would you be referring to? We've been running massive trade deficits with China for a number of years now (and a number of other countries for that matter). Everyone always blames China for our crumbling manufacturing industry. It is thought that the undervalued Yuan is the sole reason why U.S. manufacturing jobs are being shipped to China. That theory just doesn't hold ground. What is often not examined is the massive tax and regulatory burden placed on U.S. businesses. This is the main reason businesses leave this country. It simply becomes too costly to operate within our borders. Sure, on a relative basis, Chinese workers earn less than Americans. But what is not seen is that companies in China have much higher input prices as a result of the inflation caused by their previous dollar peg. Furthermore, ALL countries manipulate their currencies. In the last 18 months, the U.S. has created more currency than it had in the previous 200 years combined. Why lay the blame on the Chinese for our own terrible fiscal and monetary policies? Look at the ISM numbers released yesterday if you think a weaker dollar will help us (prices paid for goods surged, which killed margins).

And, as far as the U.S. tax payers providing low interest loans to businesses, could you tell me why interest rates are so low? If you answered because of investors' fear of deflation, you obviously haven't been paying attention to commodity

prices. Either that, or you haven't been to a grocery store in a while. Interest rates are low because the Federal Reserve has more than tripled the monetary base. They are about to surpass Japan and become the 2nd largest holder of U.S. Treasuries. Within the next year, they will surpass China as the largest holder. Either you didn't know this or you don't understand the difference between funding our debt and monetizing it. Look at their balance sheet (\$812 billion in Treasuries, up from \$805 billion last week). Every dollar that exists today was borrowed into existence. Stop blaming China. We have bigger concerns of our own.—Jim Jubak

"If moving from a defensive crouch to offense means using government resources to create competitive industries from scratch, so be it. It's cheaper in the long run than paying for years of unemployment and the social havoc that would cause."

Reply: First of all, the government cannot create jobs by passing legislation. It can certainly destroy jobs by passing legislation. We have to remember that the government doesn't have any resources. It only has resources that it takes from the private sector. And those resources that are taken from the private sector, be it from taxes, from borrowing, or from printing money, are resources that businesses no longer have access to. It's easy for politicians to point to jobs that the government's created. What is not seen are jobs that were destroyed as a result, or that never came into existence, because the government had to take this money from someone else, thus depriving businesses and individuals of the capital that is needed to create jobs. In addition, government jobs are not self-sustaining, and don't produce goods that act to increase our standard of living. We don't just need jobs in this country. We need productive jobs! Wake up people!—Jim Jubak

20101006-01	13:21	Dennis	"The Undeserving Rich: Did Warren Buffet Really Earn His \$50 Billion?"
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Do the rich really deserve all their wealth?

"The Undeserving Rich: Did Warren Buffet Really Earn His \$50 Billion?" by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly, Dollars and Sense

Oct. 4, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148417/>)

Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest men in the nation, is worth nearly \$50 billion. Does he "deserve" all this money? Why? Did he work so much harder than everyone else? Did he create something so extraordinary that no one else could have created it? Ask Buffett himself and he will tell you that he thinks "society is responsible for a very significant percentage of what I've earned." But if that's true, doesn't society deserve a very significant share of what he has earned?

When asked why he is so successful, Buffett commonly replies that this is the wrong question. The more important question, he stresses, is why he has so much to work with compared to other people in the world, or compared to previous generations of Americans. How much money would I have "if I were born in Bangladesh," or "if I was born here in 1700," he asks.

Buffett may or may not deserve something more than another person working with what a given historical or collective context provides. As he observes, however, it is simply not possible to argue in any serious way that he deserves all of the benefits that are clearly attributable to living in a highly developed society.

Buffett has put his finger on one of the most explosive issues developing just beneath the surface of public awareness. Over the last several decades, economic research has done a great deal of solid work pinpointing much more precisely than in the past what share of what we call "wealth" society creates versus what share any individual can be said to have earned and thus deserved. This research raises profound moral—and ultimately political—questions.

Recent estimates suggest that U.S. economic output per capita has increased more than twenty-fold since 1800. Output per hour worked has increased an estimated fifteen-fold since 1870 alone. Yet the average modern person likely works with no greater commitment, risk, or intelligence than his or her counterpart from the past. What is the primary cause of such vast gains if individuals do not really "improve"? Clearly, it is largely that the scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge available to us, and the efficiency of our means of storing and retrieving this knowledge, have grown at a scale and pace that far outstrip any other factor in the nation's economic development.

A half century ago, in 1957, economist Robert Solow calculated that nearly 90% of productivity growth in the first half of the 20th century (from 1909 to 1949) could only be attributed to “technical change in the broadest sense.” The supply of labor and capital—what workers and employers contribute—appeared almost incidental to this massive technological “residual.” Subsequent research inspired by Solow and others continued to point to “advances in knowledge” as the main source of growth. Economist William Baumol calculates that “nearly 90 percent of current GDP was contributed by innovation carried out since 1870.” Baumol judges that his estimate, in fact, understates the cumulative influence of past advances: Even “the steam engine, the railroad, and many other inventions of an earlier era, still add to today’s GDP.”

Related research on the sources of invention bolsters the new view, posing a powerful challenge to conventional, heroic views of technology that characterize progress as a sequence of extraordinary contributions by “Great Men” (occasionally “Great Women”) and their “Great Inventions.” In contrast to this popular view, historians of technology have carefully delineated the incremental and cumulative way most technologies actually develop. In general, a specific field of knowledge builds up slowly through diverse contributions over time until—at a particular moment when enough has been established—the next so-called “breakthrough” becomes all but inevitable.

Often many people reach the same point at virtually the same time, for the simple reason that they all are working from the same developing information and research base. The next step commonly becomes obvious (or if not obvious, very likely to be taken within a few months or years). We tend to give credit to the person who gets there first—or rather, who gets the first public attention, since often the real originator is not as good at public relations as the one who jumps to the front of the line and claims credit. Thus, we remember Alexander Graham Bell as the inventor of the telephone even though, among others, Elisha Gray and Antonio Meucci got there at the same time or even before him. Newton and Leibniz hit upon the calculus at roughly the same time in the 1670s; Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace produced essentially the same theory of evolution at roughly the same time in the late 1850s. Less important than who gets the credit is the simple fact that most breakthroughs occur not so much thanks to one “genius,” but because of the longer historical unfolding of knowledge. All of this knowledge—the overwhelming source of all modern wealth—comes to us today through no effort of our own. It is the generous and unearned gift of the past. In the words of Northwestern economist Joel Mokyr, it is a “free lunch.”

Collective knowledge is often created by formal public efforts as well, a point progressives often stress. Many of the advances which propelled our high-tech economy in the early 1990s grew directly out of research programs and technical systems financed and often collaboratively developed by the federal government. The Internet, to take the most obvious example, began as a government defense project, the ARPANET, in the early 1960s. Up through the 1980s there was little private investment or interest in developing computer networks. Today’s vast software industry also rests on a foundation of computer language and operating hardware developed in large part with public support. The Bill Gateses of the world—the heroes of the “New Economy”—might still be working with vacuum tubes and punch cards were it not for critical research and technology programs created or financed by the federal government after World War II. Other illustrations range from jet airplanes and radar to the basic life science research undergirding many pharmaceutical industry advances. Yet the truth is that the role of collectively inherited knowledge is far, far greater than just the contributions made by direct public support, important as they are.

A straightforward but rarely confronted question arises from these facts: If most of what we have today is attributable to advances we inherit in common, then why should this gift of our collective history not more generously benefit all members of society?

The top 1% of U.S. households now receives more income than the bottom 120 million Americans combined. The richest 1% of households owns nearly half of all investment assets (stocks and mutual funds, financial securities, business equity, trusts, non-home real estate). The bottom 90% of the population owns less than 15%; the bottom half—150 million Americans—owns less than 1%. If America’s vast wealth is mainly a gift of our common past, what justifies such disparities?

Robert Dahl, one of America’s leading political scientists—and one of the few to have confronted these facts—put it this way after reading economist Edward Denison’s pioneering work on growth accounting: “It is immediately obvious that little growth in the American economy can be attributed to the actions of particular individuals.” He concluded straightforwardly that, accordingly, “the control and ownership of the economy rightfully belongs to ‘society.’”

Contrast Dahl’s view with that of Joe the Plumber, who famously inserted himself into the 2008 presidential campaign with his repeated claim that he has “earned” everything he gets and so any attempt to tax his earnings is totally unjustified. Likewise, “we didn’t rely on somebody else to build what we built,” banking titan Sanford Weill tells us in a

New York Times front-page story on the "New Gilded Age." "I think there are people," another executive tells the Times, "who because of their uniqueness warrant whatever the market will bear."

A direct confrontation with the role of knowledge—and especially inherited knowledge—goes to the root of a profound challenge to such arguments. One way to think about all this is by focusing on the concept of "earned" versus "unearned" income. Today this distinction can be found in conservative attacks on welfare "cheats" who refuse to work to earn their keep, as well as in calls even by some Republican senators to tax the windfall oil-company profits occasioned by the Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina.

The concept of unearned income first came into clear focus during the era of rapidly rising land values caused by grain shortages in early 19th-century England. Wealth derived simply from owning land whose price was escalating appeared illegitimate because no individual truly "earned" such wealth. Land values—and especially explosively high values—were largely the product of factors such as fertility, location, and population pressures. The huge profits (unearned "rents," in the technical language of economics) landowners reaped when there were food shortages were viewed as particularly egregious. David Ricardo's influential theory of "differential rent"—i.e., that land values are determined by differences in fertility and location between different plots of land—along with religious perspectives reaching back to the Book of Genesis played a central role in sharpening this critical moral distinction.

John Stuart Mill, among others, developed the distinction between "earned" and "unearned" in the middle decades of the 19th century and applied it to other forms of "external wealth," or what he called "wealth created by circumstances." Mill's approach fed into a growing sense of the importance of societal inputs which produce economic gains beyond what can be ascribed to one person working alone in nature without benefit of civilization's many contributions. Here a second element of what appears, historically, as a slowly evolving understanding also becomes clear: If contribution is important in determining rewards, then, Mill and others urged, since society at large makes major contributions to economic achievement, it too has "earned" and deserves a share of what has been created. Mill believed strongly in personal contribution and individual reward, but he held that in principle wealth "created by circumstances" should be reclaimed for social purposes. Karl Marx, of course, tapped the distinction between earned and unearned in his much broader attack on capitalism and its exploitation of workers' labor.

The American republican writer Thomas Paine was among the first to articulate a societal theory of wealth based directly on the earned/unearned distinction. Paine argued that everything "beyond what a man's own hands produce" was a gift which came to him simply by living in society, and hence "he owes on every principle of justice, of gratitude, and of civilization, a part of that accumulation back again to society from whence the whole came." A later American reformer, Henry George, focused on urban land rather than the agricultural land at the heart of Ricardo's concern. George challenged what he called "the unearned increment" which is created when population growth and other societal factors increase land values. In Britain, J. A. Hobson argued that the unearned value created by the industrial system in general was much larger than just the part which accrued to landowners, and that it should be treated in a similar (if not more radical and comprehensive) fashion. In a similar vein, Hobson's early 20th-century contemporary Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse declared that the "prosperous business man" should consider "what single step he could have taken" without the "sum of intelligence which civilization has placed at his disposal." More recently, the famed American social scientist Herbert Simon judged that if "we are very generous with ourselves, I suppose we might claim that we 'earned' as much as one fifth of [our income]."

The distinction between earned and unearned gains is central to most of these thinkers, as is the notion that societal contributions—including everything an industrial economy requires, from the creation of laws, police, and courts to the development of schools, trade restrictions, and patents—must be recognized and rewarded. The understanding that such societal contributions are both contemporary and have made a huge and cumulative contribution over all of history is also widely accepted. Much of the income they permit and confer now appears broadly analogous to the unearned rent a landlord claims. What is new and significant here is the further clarification that by far the most important element in all this is the accumulated knowledge which society contributes over time.

All of this, as sociologist Daniel Bell has suggested, requires a new "knowledge theory of value"—especially as we move deeper into the high-tech era through computerization, the Internet, cybernetics, and cutting-edge fields such as gene therapy and nanotechnology. One way to grasp what is at stake is the following: A person today working the same number of hours as a similar person in 1870—working just as hard but no harder—will produce perhaps 15 times as much economic output. It is clear that the contemporary person can hardly be said to have "earned" his much greater productivity.

Consider further that if we project forward the past century's rate of growth, a person working a century from now would be able to produce—and potentially receive as "income"—up to seven times today's average income. By far the greatest part of this gain will also come to this person as a free gift of the past—the gift of the new knowledge created, passed on, and inherited from our own time forward.

She and her descendents, in fact, will inevitably contribute less, relative to the huge and now expanded contribution of the past, than we do today. The obvious question, again, is simply this: to what degree is it meaningful to say that this person will have "earned" all that may come her way? These and other realities suggest that the quiet revolution in our understanding of how wealth is created has ramifications for a much more profound and far reaching challenge to today's untenable distribution of income and wealth.

(Gar Alperovitz, Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland, and Lew Daly, a Senior Fellow of Demos, are the authors of *Unjust Deserts: How the Rich Are Taking Our Common Inheritance and Why We Should Take It Back* (New Press, 2009), upon which this article is based.)

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20101007-01	07:38	SteveB	Re: "The Undeserving Rich" & "The Rich Are Hogging Our Common Inheritance—We Must Take It Back"
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I know many of you will think this article is pretty radical, but Warren Buffet has been saying for years that the rich, including himself, should pay more taxes. The one thing I think should have been emphasized more here (maybe the authors did, in the book) and that should be emphasized more in Republican thinking is EDUCATION! If discoveries, knowledge, and information developed by society in the past contributes directly to increased productivity (and who could argue that it does not?), then education deserves a greater societal emphasis and share of resources because it plays such a crucial role in productivity.

Yet Republicans and Democrats both seem hell bent on destroying the educational system that helped make us the richest country on earth. The Republicans because teachers have unions and teach Evolution, I guess. The Democrats because they want to control everything from the top down and permit a flood of illegal immigrants to swamp the system and establish Spanish as a second national language (with subsequent loss of productivity). They should all be trying to improve our educational system, not destroy it.

If the Bush tax cuts go away, the rich will still be paying less taxes than they did during Ronald Reagan's term in office. I don't think that will kill them, even though they're acting like it would. But not Warren Buffett, maybe the smartest of them all. The rich all seem to want balanced governmental budgets. Maybe they, especially, and all of us need to make this possible. Though, first, the people have to take the reins of government away from the rich and powerful, so that spending can be made responsible.

"The Rich Are Hogging Our Common Inheritance—We Must Take It Back" by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly, The New Press

Dec. 8, 2008, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/109509/>)

(Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from *Unjust Deserts: How the Rich Are Taking Our Common Inheritance and Why We Should Take It Back* by Gar Alperovitz and Lew Daly, published by the New Press, 2008.)

"Technological progress ... has provided society with what economists call a "free lunch," that is, an increase in output that is not commensurate with the increase in effort and cost necessary to bring it about."—Joel Mokyr, *Lever of Riches: Technological Creativity and Economic Progress* (1990)

Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest men in the nation, is worth over \$60 billion. Does he "deserve" all this money? Why? Did he work so much harder than everyone else? Did he create something so extraordinary that no one else could have created? Ask Buffett himself and he will tell you that personally he thinks that "society is responsible for a very significant percentage of what I've earned."

But if this is true, doesn't society deserve a very significant share of what he has received?

Buffett may not know it, but he has put his finger on one of the most explosive issues developing just beneath the surface of public awareness. In recent decades researchers working in a broad range of economic, technological, and other fields have clarified much more precisely than in the past the many ways "society" contributes to the creation of "wealth"—and, accordingly, how relatively little any one individual can be said to have earned and "deserved." Their research, in turn, raises profound moral—and ultimately political—questions that are becoming increasingly difficult to avoid. At the heart of this revolution in understanding is a fundamental reconsideration of the extraordinary role of knowledge in economic growth—and of how ever-increasing knowledge, accumulating across the generations, is central to the creation of all wealth.

The distribution of income and wealth in the United States is more unequal today than at any time since the 1920s. The following study shares with Buffett a fundamental skepticism toward the belief that the nation's extraordinary inequalities are simply a natural outgrowth of differences in individual effort, skills, and intelligence. "We didn't rely on somebody else to build what we built," banking titan Sanford Weill tells us in a *New York Times* front-page story on the "New Gilded Age." "I think there are people," insists another executive, "who because of their uniqueness warrant whatever the market will bear."

The new research findings suggest that such views are profoundly wrong—but for reasons that go well beyond Buffett's general view and, indeed, beyond the understandings that until recently have been common among specialists concerned with these matters. Often in history something dramatic is brewing in the quiet work of scholars—something the public doesn't know about or understand until much, much later. Einstein's famous $E = mc^2$ equation meant absolutely nothing to most people when it was first published in 1905—but it hit the world literally as a bombshell when atomic weapons exploded in 1945. The sophisticated mathematics Claude Shannon worked out in the 1940s laid theoretical groundwork for the digital communication that today ramifies into every corner of domestic and global life. The structure of DNA was deciphered by scientists in 1953, but the public is only now beginning to realize just how radically genetic engineering may revolutionize medicine, food production, and many other important fields.

Unjust Deserts suggests that something at least as portentous as these extraordinary developments is silently emerging among scholars studying the sources of wealth, and that once the implications are fully grasped, it too is likely to have dramatic implications—in this case for the distribution of income, wealth, and power throughout society. It suggests, moreover, that this new understanding and the steady evolution of the knowledge economy, combined with growing social and economic pain and set against a backdrop of ever-worsening inequality, are likely to contribute to potentially massive political change as the twenty-first century unfolds. Consider the following truth: a person working today the same number of hours as a similar person in 1800—and working just as hard (and no harder)—can obviously produce many, many times the economic output. Recent estimates suggest that national output per capita has increased more than twenty fold since 1800. Output per hour worked has increased an estimated fifteen fold since 1870 alone.

Consider further that the modern person on average is likely to work with no greater commitment, risk, or intelligence than his counterpart from the past.

What is the primary cause of such vast gains if individuals do not really "improve"? The answer is obviously more productivity—more output from the same level of input. And self-evidently what this means is that we are more productive as a society. But how does a society become more productive if individual effort and intelligence remain relatively constant? Clearly, it is largely because on the whole the scientific, technical, and cultural knowledge available to us, and the efficiency of our means of storing and retrieving this knowledge, have grown at a scale and pace that far outstrip any other factor in the nation's economic achievement. "The central phenomenon of the modern age," economic historian Joel Mokyr observes, is quite simply "that as an aggregate we know more."

A half century ago, in 1957, the future Nobel Prize-winning economist Robert Solow calculated that nearly 90 percent of productivity growth in the first half of the twentieth century (from 1909 to 1949) could only be attributed to "technical change in the broadest sense."

The supply of labor and capital—what workers and employers contribute—appeared almost incidental to this massive technological "residual." Subsequent research inspired by Solow has continued to put a spotlight on "advances in knowledge" as the main source of growth. Another highly respected economist, William Baumol, argues that "nearly 90 percent ... of current GDP was contributed by innovation carried out since 1870." Baumol judges that his estimate, in fact, understates the cumulative influence of past advances: even "the steam engine, the railroad, and many other inventions of an earlier era still add to today's GDP."

Looked at another way, if today's high earners are typically highly educated, this is clearly not primarily because they are more intelligent or work harder, and it is not mainly because they were lucky in the "birth lottery," as some argue. Above all, they are highly educated because there is more knowledge for them to obtain and more opportunity to do so. "A college-educated engineer working today and one working 100 years ago have the same human capital," Stanford economist Paul Romer observes. But the engineer working today is far, far more productive. The reason, again, is self-evident: "He or she can take advantage of all the additional knowledge accumulated as design problems were solved during the last 100 years."

Today a society's "stock of knowledge" and its "technological state" are the subject of intense discussion by scholars and policy makers. An obvious truth that emerges from their work is also clear and lies at the foundation of the following study: All of this knowledge—the overwhelming source of all modern wealth—comes to us today through no effort of our own. It is the generous and unearned gift of the past. In the words of Mokyr, it is a "free lunch."

An obvious question arises from these facts: if most of what we have today is attributable to advances we inherit in common—what another economic historian, Nathan Rosenberg, has termed a "huge overhang of technological inheritance"—why, specifically, should this gift of our collective history not more generously and broadly benefit all members of society? Once the modern understandings are fully grasped, today's distributive realities become much harder to ignore: the top 1 percent of U.S. households now receives more income than the bottom 120 million Americans combined.

The richest 1 percent of households owns nearly half of all individually owned investment assets (stocks and mutual funds, financial securities, business equity, trusts, non-home real estate). The bottom 90 percent of the population owns less than 15 percent; the bottom half of the population—150 million Americans—own less than 1 percent.

If America's vast wealth is mainly a gift of our common past, how, specifically, can such disparities be justified? Although a great deal of research has been done on knowledge and economic growth—and although one can find related moral reflections scattered throughout the work of many writers—very few have dealt directly with the equity issues posed by our scientific and technological knowledge inheritance. We seek to remedy this large-order gap in public understanding. We hope thereby also to contribute to shaping new policies appropriate to the era of the knowledge economy.

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(Gar Alperovitz is the Lionel R. Bauman Professor of Political Economy at the University of Maryland. His previous books include *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* and *America Beyond Capitalism*. He lives in Washington, D.C. Lew Daly is a senior fellow at Demos and the author of *God and the Welfare State*. He lives in New York City. [God? —SteveB])

20101007-02	09:28	Pam	Re: "The Undeserving Rich"
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Dear Dennis & SteveB,

I don't think this article is radical at all. I think it makes tons of sense. It gives me a different perspective on something I believed intuitively, but this backs up the argument with facts and figures. It seems so obvious, but I never put it all together this way. I'm going to send it to my Republican friend, though she now claims to be a Libertarian. I'm beginning to think they're just about as bad. You are so right: the problem is the entire political system. There have been other periods in our history when things were really out of whack, as they are now, and somehow we found our way back. I hope we can do that this time.

My PhD work was on the Victorian period, and there are many parallels between the 19th c. and now. They had an industrial revolution, ours is technological. There were abuses and injustices early on that many of the leading thinkers of the day thought were inevitable—or the will of God. David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, etc. But the end of the century saw a whole slew of reforms that were essentially democratic and humane. The 1840s—the "Hungry Forties"—witnessed bankruptcies, workhouses for the poor, starvation for the Irish, and a huge proportion of the population without the franchise. Reform actually started in 1832 with the First Reform Bill, but that was also when Jeremy Bentham's philosophy of Utilitarianism was a huge influence. Your article talks about "earned" and "unearned" income; in the 19th it was the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor. Dickens, among others, exposed societal abuses and did a lot to shape things up. The only writer I can think of right now who is doing anything similar is Jonathan Franzen, especially in his latest novel. Philip Caputo is another writer who exposes the horrors of our presence in Africa. I bet no one I know has ever read any of his books.

It's too bad more people won't see this article, but I fault liberals and democrats for not explaining and articulating the realities more clearly. All we get is mushy platitudes. I get the AARP bulletin, and the latest issue explains the Health Care Reform Bill in about two pages. I don't see how ANYONE could object to its provisions. Why aren't the Democrats hammering that home? The media carries on night and day about how the Republicans are going to take back the House, making it a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Sarah Palin contingent is revving up and saying the most outlandish things, and Harry Reid is losing in the polls to a wack-job. I guess the lunatic fringe makes good copy.

I love the Victorians, partly because their greatest minds directly attacked the ills of their society, from Ruskin to Carlyle to Dickens et. al. And they were listened to and widely read! Television fills their spot today, and what's the most popular show on TV? "American Idol." Cable is probably doing more, but how many watch "The Wire" compared to the number that watches Fox News? H. L. Menken called the American middle class the "booboisie." Indeed.

Well, that was fun. Thanks for prompting me to write this. I feel slightly purged.

20101008-01 16:04 SteveB Re: "The Undeserving Rich"

Dear Pam,

I loved your writing here. Wish I could send it to everyone.

You are completely right that this sort of thing has happened before. I found myself thinking of the Standard Oil / *The Jungle* era the other day.

And, yes, I too completely fail to understand why the seemingly more intelligent left seems so totally unable to stand up for and articulate its own principles. Have the Democrats become so highly paid by big business that they don't even remember what they stand for, let alone form a coherent plan? The idiots in the Republican party seem better able to rally the troops, even without a hint of a coherent plan. I'm not getting much of a clear sense of leadership from the White House, and that's disappointing to me.

UN-ELECT YOUR POLITICIANS!

20101008-02 17:17 Dennis "White America Has Lost Its Mind"

Dementia Americana...

Okay, white people, get out your Thorazine, stop drooling, and read this article. And don't get distracted by the adjacent photos of the naked painting party.

[Maybe a little extreme, but surely no more crazy than Fox News. Thanks, Dennis! I particularly love the cover picture! — SteveB]

"White America Has Lost Its Mind" by Steven Thrasher, *The Village Voice*

Sept. 29, 2010 (<http://www.villagevoice.com/2010-09-29/news/white-america-has-lost-its-mind/>)

(The white brain, beset with worries, finally goes haywire in spectacular fashion.)



About 12:01 on the afternoon of Jan. 20, 2009, the white American mind began to unravel. It had been a pretty good run up to that point. The brains of white folks had been humming along cogently for near on 400 years on this continent, with little sign that any serious trouble was brewing.

White people, after all, had managed to invent a spiffy new form of self-government so that all white men (and, eventually, women) could have a say in how white people were taxed and governed. White minds had also nearly universally occupied just about every branch of that government and, for more than two centuries, had kept sole possession of the leadership of its executive branch (whose parsonage, after all, is called the White House).

But when that streak was broken—and, for the first time, a non-white president accepted the oath of office—white America rapidly began to lose its grip.

As with other forms of dementia, the signs weren't obvious at first. After the 2008 election, when former House majority leader Tom DeLay suggested that instead of a formal inauguration, Barack Obama should "have a nice little chicken dinner, and we'll save the \$125 million," black folks didn't miss the implication. References to chicken, particularly of the fried variety, have long served as a kind of code when white folks referred to black people and their gustatory preferences—and weren't many of us already accustomed to older white politicians making such gaffes? But who among us sensed that it was a harbinger that an entire nation was plunging into madness?

Who didn't chuckle, after all, the first time they heard that white people had doubts that Barack Obama had even been born in the United States and was therefore ineligible to be president? It sounded like one of those Internet stories in which some (usually white) writer does his best to prove something everyone knows to be true is actually the exact opposite. And you go along with it for a few paragraphs to see how long the writer can convince you that what you know is right is actually wrong.

Seemed like that, didn't it? After all, what was the beef? Obama's father was Kenyan, and the kid was born in Hawaii—which is barely a part of the United States to begin with (only a state in 1959!). His mother was white, and after the Kenyan guy left, she married an Indonesian guy, so little Barack lived in Jakarta for a while before coming back to Hawaii to be brought up largely by his white grandparents.

And that's it? Come on, this was after-school-special material, the kind of thing that brings a tear to your eye because little half-Kenyan/half-white Barry made good, not the stuff of conspiracy novels. But the more you shook your head at it,

the more it seemed to have taken root deep in the lizard part of the white nervous system. Obama is not an American. He says he's Christian, but he has a Muslim-sounding name. He's not black, he's not white. Is...is he even human?

Today, *Newsweek* has found, nearly a quarter of Americans believe that Obama is a Muslim, with barely 42 percent of the nation accepting his claim that he's a Christian. CNN finds that a quarter of Americans also believe that Obama was "probably or definitely" born in another country.

Harris found in an online poll that 14 percent of Americans believe in their hearts that President Barack Obama is the antichrist, with nearly a quarter of Republicans saying so.

At least in this form, however, Satan (sometimes) wears a flag pin.

What was going on? Had decades of sucking down so much high-fructose corn syrup not only made Americans incredibly obese, but also messed with white brain chemistry to the point that some sort of tipping point had occurred?

Not a bad theory, but no, there's a simpler explanation, with two parts: For the first time in their lives, baby boomers are hard up against it economically, and white boy is becoming outnumbered and it's got his bowels chilled with fear.

"In an age of diminished resources, the United States may be heading for an intensifying confrontation between the gray and the brown," writes Ronald Brownstein in his July *National Journal* article, "The Gray and the Brown: The Generational Mismatch." That's a polite and understated way of saying that older white folks are losing their sh*t as they're being replaced by young brown and black kids while the economy is in the cr*pper.

Brownstein notes that 40 percent of the nation's population under 18 is already non-white, with that number significantly higher in the Southwest (read: Mexicans!). By 2023, that number of young nonwhites will be an outright national majority.

At the same time, the baby boomers are getting older. At 80 percent white, boomers have gotten pretty used to dominating nearly every field of endeavor in this country since they came of age—politics, business, education, the arts—just about everything but MTV programming. Boomers set the national agenda in so many ways that we can forget how much the national economy and national media cater to them. Bewildered by the number of Cialis ads you see on television showing those flabby couples sitting in bathtubs? Or the way that older women are suddenly "cougars" and "MILFs" and . . . oh, yeah, you remember, boomers are getting old, but still want to think they can get the sheets sweaty. See? Boomers and their fixations and fears explain nearly everything.

Anyway, as boomers age, they get more politically active. That's just human nature, and their 40- million-strong AARP is the nation's biggest lobbyist. But as they try to wield that power, they're running into the growing, and less white, younger generations.

"Like tectonic plates, these slow-moving but irreversible forces may generate enormous turbulence as they grind against each other in the years ahead," writes Brownstein.

At some point, when tectonic plates build up enough tension, that destructive energy gets unleashed in a major earthquake, which is a pretty good metaphor for what happened on Nov. 4, 2008. A black man got elected president, and suddenly every aging white boomer in this country turned into Carole King—they sure as hell felt the earth moving under their feet.

Meanwhile, the brother moving into the White House inherited the kind of mortgage that even Wall Street executives might hesitate to call "subprime."

A devastated economy. Two wars, neither being fought with clear goals. Housing markets that resembled war zones. A health system crippled with costs. An auto industry cratering.

But surely, in a time of crisis, the country could pull together to fix this mess, right?

Can you help a brother on health care? No.

The economy? No.

Financial regulatory reform? No.

National security? No.

Now, some black folks can be forgiven for thinking, as they watched the political drama in Washington unfold over the past two years, that this was just another form of the same old thing they'd put up with in one way or another in this conflicted multiracial country.

But there is another explanation.

White people have simply gone sheer f*cking insane.

Let's look at some examples to nail down that theory.

The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now was a nonprofit that organized voter drives and worked for improved wages and housing for poor, mostly non-white Americans. And because of who they organized, they became public enemy No. 1 in the eyes of certain people not so thrilled with black folks registering to vote in large numbers.

Obama had once defended ACORN in a voting-rights case (as co-counsel alongside the Justice Department and the League of Women Voters). An ACORN offshoot was one of many Get-Out-the-Vote enterprises employed by his primary (but not general) campaign. The group's members did the same kind of community organizing that Obama had done as a young man. But throughout the 2008 election season, there was a concerted campaign to whip up hysteria about ACORN, and by Nov., 2009, Public Policy Polling found that more than a quarter of Americans (and an outright majority of Republican voters) believed that ACORN had stolen the election for Obama.

This was, of course, after the classic bit of Nixonian "rat-f*cking" pulled off by a prankster named James O'Keefe.

O'Keefe, a veteran at creating videos to make blacks look greedy and stupid (look for "Taxpayers Clearing House" on YouTube), spent the summer driving around the country with his accomplice, Hannah Giles, making videos in ACORN offices asking for advice about avoiding tax troubles with prostitution money. You've no doubt seen the images of O'Keefe dressed as a '70s pimp. But O'Keefe had carefully edited his tapes and left out, for example, that he was decked out in college preppie clothes, not pimp-wear. At least one ACORN office threw him out, and at least two knowingly played along with his ruse. (The San Diego office called the cops after he left, and the Philadelphia office filed a police report.) The upshot was that after his edited tapes became public, Congress quickly voted to strip ACORN of all federal funds. The organization effectively went out of business before the bill could take effect or be thrown out in court.

O'Keefe has maintained he was "absolutely independent" in his project. But in Sept., 2009, the Voice reported that he'd been funded by billionaire conservative Peter Thiel and the Leadership Institute, the same outfit that funded young Grover Norquist and Karl Rove. That revelation fell on deaf ears, however, and to this day, media outlets perpetuate O'Keefe's claim that he was operating without backing.

O'Keefe got further help when his tapes were pushed by BigGovernment.com, which is run by an underhanded blowhard named Andrew Breitbart.

Months later, O'Keefe was arrested by the FBI in a bizarre prank at Senator Mary Landrieu's office, in which he was either attempting to plant a wiretap or, in his explanation on Breitbart's website, just trying to find out whether her phone system worked to help her constituents reach her. (Yeah, that was a good one.)

This summer, Breitbart picked out another black target with another selectively edited video, this one of a U.S.D.A. employee named Shirley Sherrod. His editing so mischaracterized Sherrod's words and intent that the fallout, in the words of Frank Rich, "could not only smear an innocent woman but make every national institution that touched the story look bad. The White House, the NAACP and the news media were all soiled by this episode."

But, hey, politics is hardball, right? We've had rat-f*ckers like Breitbart and O'Keefe around forever (the founding fathers were certainly not immune to dirty tricks in their day). What's different this time, however, is just how easily the lies and distortions of the rat-f*ckers are being soaked up by the damaged crania of this country's drooling white masses. What sort of senility is softening up the frontal lobes of America's palefaces that they can't see through the black-hatred of a wanker like Breitbart?

Out West, meanwhile, as home prices dropped faster than a burst piñata, an easy scapegoat was found: Mexicans. Long the scourge of aging white folks, who don't seem to understand the economics behind their cheap groceries, immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and other sweltering southern destinations became enemies of the American Dream.

Suddenly, it was open season on brown-skinned fruit pickers and seamstresses. Arizona passed S.B.1070—a law that would force its residents to carry identity papers with them at all times. Jurisdictions around the nation are salivating to copy suit.

Back East, meanwhile, we have our own brown-skinned devil: the Muslim. When an imam who had done diplomatic work for the Bush administration put together plans to build the Muslim version of a Jewish Community Center a few blocks from Ground Zero (but farther away than an off-track betting joint, a strip club, and the very financial institutions that had detonated the economy), white people freaked out.

At Landmarks Preservation Commission meetings, white housewives from Staten Island suddenly took a great interest in preserving mid-19th-century cast-iron façades and the architecture of Daniel Badger—all to try to keep New Yorkers from taking swimming lessons in the same building where Muslims would have a place to pray. They argued that Muslims could never understand the impact of 9/11 (even though more than 20 Muslims were killed that day) and could never understand the concept of Ground Zero being holy ground (as if a building that would contain prayer services was somehow less holy than an outlet for betting on horses or stuffing dollar bills into G-strings).

But by now, those sorts of distinctions are nearly impossible to make for a white mind so cluttered by decay. Race was always a tough one for white people to deal with, but now the back flips some people are doing over it requires a scorecard.

There may be no better example than Laura Schlessinger and the great white outpouring of support following the bizarre flameout of her radio show.

It all started with the most incomprehensible of happenings: that a black woman would, out of all reason, call the Dr. Laura show seeking advice.

The sister called Schlessinger to ask how to handle her white husband's white friends, who sometimes say racist things that she's uncomfortable with, including using "the N-word."

Schlessinger almost immediately went to, "A lot of blacks voted for Obama simply 'cause he was half black." She told the caller not to "NAACP" her by taking her out of context.

She said "n*gger" is fine to say because "black guys use it all the time."

She then wrote the caller off as having a "chip on [her] shoulder" and declared, "We've got a black man as president, and we have more complaining about racism than ever."

She told the caller that if "you're that hypersensitive about color and don't have a sense of humor" (i.e., you even question that your husband's white friends say "n*gger" to you in your house), "don't marry out of your race."

The caller, Schlessinger thought, was suffering from "hypersensitivity—which is being bred by black activists." Her discomfort with the word "n*gger," Schlessinger said, was just another "attempt to demonize whites hating blacks."

The reaction from white America, who clearly had not remembered to take their thorazine that morning, was overwhelming: Who, if not Laura Schlessinger, should say "n*gger" with impunity?

Schlessinger announced on Larry King Live, however, that in order to "regain" her First Amendment rights of free speech, she would be canceling her show.

Constitutional experts are still trying to parse that one.

Sarah Palin then rushed to Schlessinger's side, Tweeting in her inimitable style, "Don't retreat...reload!" Palin, we can only assume, wanted Schlessinger to utter "n*gger" as often as she wanted. Perhaps the two of them, having both quit their jobs, can get together and put on a road show, opening with "Zip Coon" and finishing with a rousing rendition of "Carry Me Back to Ole Virginny"?

On Feb. 19, 2009, not a month into Obama's presidency, Rick Santelli—a former hedge-fund manager—had a meltdown on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange while broadcasting for CNBC. Santelli was incensed not that the government was bailing out the multimillionaires who had run giant financial institutions, but that assistance would also be going to help out ordinary people who found themselves defaulting on their home mortgages. Calling such folks "losers," he said, "How many of you want to pay for your neighbor's mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can't pay their bills?" He then added that he was not only mad as hell, but wanted to do something about it: "We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up to Lake Michigan, I'm gonna start organizing."

Suddenly, other angry (and obviously very confused) white people began organizing their own "tea parties" and, from the start, had to defend themselves from charges that there was more than a little racial component to their movement.

Few were really surprised, for example, when Tea Party Express President Mark Williams turned out to have penned a letter that could have been written in the worst decades of Jim Crow: "We Coloreds have taken a vote and decided that we don't cotton to that whole emancipation thing. Freedom means having to work for real, think for ourselves, and take consequences along with the rewards. That is just far too much to ask of us Colored People and we demand that it stop!"

And it turns out that the "grassroots" modern tea party effort has been largely funded by the Koch brothers, reactionaries whose combined oil wealth places them just behind Bill Gates and Warren Buffet as America's wealthiest men. The brothers have given some \$100 million toward the Tea Party's Astroturf call to arms.

"This right-wing, redneck stuff works for them," a former Koch associate told *The New Yorker*. "They see this as a way to get things done without getting dirty themselves." And in primaries across America this year, the Kochs have gotten one hell of a return on their investment. After decades of pouring money into think-tanks, the billionaire brothers now have an ally no institute fellow could ever match: a scared, angry white mob that votes.

And what a mob. White folks used to shy away from candidates who e-mailed pictures of a woman being f*cked by a horse, didn't they? Can you just see the scene down at the Republican Party headquarters: "Well, except for sending out those e-mails of horse-f*cking, other e-mails of n*gger jokes, and also fathering a love child, this guy Carl Paladino is just our kind of guy!"

Finding Rick Lazio not crazy enough, white New Yorkers nominated Paladino for governor by a margin of almost two to one.

Sure, Lazio had made an effort. He'd gone after the "Ground Zero Mosque" like a good race-baiter, but he just isn't in Paladino's mouth-frothing league. "Crazy Carl" is threatening to take a baseball bat to Albany (and our Tom Robbins explained last week how Carl's loony ravings are an empty act). Now, try, if your cortex is not too far gone, to reel things back a couple of years. Imagine, if you can, Barack Obama surging in polls in 2008 if it were known he'd sent out e-mails of a white woman getting it from a horse, revealed that he had a 10-year-old love child, and was threatening to take a baseball bat to federal employees. It's really impossible to conjure up, isn't it?

That—right there, more than anything—demonstrates just how much the white brain has become Swiss cheese in the last couple of trips around the sun.

A close second place: the really crazy white sh*t happening down in Delaware, a state that never really caused much trouble (except for unleashing Joe Biden on us) until it nominated one-time witch Christine O'Donnell, who is so batsh*t crazy she makes Sarah Palin sound perfectly reasonable.

By now, just about everyone has seen the precious moment in MTV's 1996 *Sex in the '90s* when O'Donnell made this monumental discovery about masturbation: "If he already knows what pleases him and he can please himself, then why am I in the picture?" Fourteen years later, it doesn't really seem to be dawning on the still-unmarried O'Donnell that she's not "in the picture" and might never be. But that, apparently, isn't going to stop her waging war against the sex lives of everyone else.

Again, only white lunacy explains it: Neither O'Donnell nor Paladino is a fringe candidate. O'Donnell has a difficult, but not impossible, chance to become a U.S. Senator. Paladino may yet become New York's next governor. (He's already polling ahead of Andrew Cuomo among likely male voters, who are generally white and clearly stark raving mad.)

Is there any hope? Can the white mind be cured? And what—other than a massive lobotomy—can salvage it? It's hard to imagine a cure when, at this point, the patient doesn't seem to realize that he's sick. Rush Limbaugh, for example, has declared that it's black Americans who have a problem. The "black frame of mind is terrible" because of unemployment, and, equally important, because of "Tiger Woods's choice of females," he has said. What was that about a pot and a kettle?

If there is a cure, it likely won't come from Barack Obama. There are those who say that this president invited our current derangement by not being commanding enough. They say he should have inveighed Franklin D. Roosevelt, who famously said before ever being re-elected, "I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it, the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master." But if Obama ever referred to being the "master" of anything, he'd scare white people more than he already does.

Glenn Beck is one of the downright terrified, and has said that Obama has "a deep-seated hatred of white people or the white culture." Which makes you wonder, has Beck really not seen Obama in his golf attire?

In the end, it goes beyond Obama, and the current economy, and is really about the inevitable demographic future of America, those coming browns and the grays. They will—one way or another—have to learn to get along.

It is true, as Brownstein says, that the graying boomers will hate to pay for the education, health, and welfare of the coming browns. They'll be stingy about it. They'll scream about it. But they'll have no choice but to do it.

After all, who but the hordes of young browns will be around to work when the grays retire? To pay taxes? To fund their Medicare and Social Security? And how will they earn enough money to finance boomers in their retirement if they're not well educated and healthy?

To do this dance effectively, the white American mind is going to have to focus and prioritize. Maybe, just maybe, it might be required to act with a little ever-loving sanity every now and again.

20101008-03 19:12 Patti Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia

Hello everyone! I'm Patti and I'm SteveB's niece by marriage.

I've just read this excellent debate about free trade and as a person with a degree in international business and living in a poor country such as Bolivia, I think that there is a lot of imperfections in the "free" trade economy, nothing is "free"..... and I also believe that countries like mine can't compete with an economy like China with their low prices, especially since we haven't developed much "higher value added goods and services" and our main income still comes from the international sale of raw materials.

In recent times, Bolivia is worse than ever before and we are going down the road with Venezuela (we are not just there yet, but we are in the fast lane for total economic disaster) and the whole world is watching how our rights are being violated and nobody takes an action, so why do you think this is? Don't you think the "free trade" economy has anything to do with it?

20101008-04 19:25 Charis Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia

Dear Patti,

I live in Bolivia too, and love it, but I think blaming other countries for our problems is the easy way out. Yes, free trade probably has something to do with Bolivia's economic disaster but *nuestra querida y amada* Bolivia has had many opportunities to better herself as a nation and we haven't known how to appreciate the opportunities that we've had and take advantage of them. Bolivia had a woman president 40 years ago, universities before the U.S. even existed, and many other opportunities to be a great nation before the U.S. was ever what it is today and before free trade ever existed as an economic system. As an international relations graduate I'd say it would be good for us to criticize ourselves in a responsible and positive way once in a while and think about what our own mistakes may have been that have resulted in what we are going through today in Bolivia. I think in response it would be nice if you'd take a look at this article and ask yourself whether or not Bolivia herself has anything to do with Bolivia's situation:

<http://www.boliviabella.com/we-did-something-wrong-speech-by-oscar-arias-president-of-costa-rica.html>

20101008-05 22:29 Patti Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia

Dear Charis,

Thanks for your answer, but I think you've got me wrong, I wasn't trying to take the blame away from the Bolivians about their own situation. I mean, it's our own fault and we have to work harder than everyone else to overcome our poverty and change things.

On the other hand, I was talking about the situation with our "dictatorial" governments (for lack of a better word to describe it) and I just think maybe the international community could do something about it too and I just wonder why they don't....

To illustrate my point, I just ask this question: Why is the U.S. is still buying oil from Venezuela? (And don't get me wrong I'm not blaming them for the world's problems.)

20101008-06 23:45 Charis Re: "Free" Trade, Bolivia

Dear Patti,

That was kind of exactly my point. I completely agree with you about that we are heading toward dictatorship and I really do wonder what the international community could do—probably not much because every country is sovereign. And that's my point. When it's convenient to it, Bolivia says "we are sovereign" and wants everyone else to butt out of its business. But when it needs help, it suddenly wonders why the international community doesn't do anything to help. So what can they do? If they do nothing they get criticized. If they do something they are "imperialistas".

To other countries, doing something to help Bolivia is a LOSE-LOSE situation. And to be honest, what most of the international community right now is asking is: why, if they do not want it, did Bolivians vote for the government they now have? And not once, but TWICE? What can they do? Bolivians have the government they have because Bolivians voted for it.

As to buying oil from Venezuela, I've asked myself exactly the same question. In my opinion, purchasing Venezuelan oil means the U.S. is funding that government and I am personally opposed to the U.S. purchasing Venezuelan oil—but what it all boils down to is, that the U.S. is still buying oil from Venezuela because the U.S. needs oil. By the way, the U.S. offered to purchase oil and gas from Bolivia, but Bolivians protested against that (as they did with Chile). Bolivia could not get its act together and, once again, lost the opportunity.

20101009-01 07:26 SteveB Fw: Heaven or Hell?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

While walking down the street one day, a corrupt [aren't they all?] Senator was tragically hit by a car and died.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the Senator.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from the higher ups. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really? I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the Senator.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the poor. They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and the finest champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy, having a good time dancing and telling jokes.

They are all having such a good time that before the Senator realizes it, it is time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises.

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens in heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him, "Now it's time to visit heaven."

So, 24 hours pass with the Senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The Senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell." So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell...

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage. He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above. The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulders.

"I don't understand," stammers the Senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?"

The devil smiles at him and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today, you voted."

Vote wisely!

20101009-02	08:25	SteveB	Re: "White America Has Lost Its Mind"
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Dear Dennis,

You knew I'd love it and I did. Thanks.

20101010-01	08:59	SteveB	"Note to Tea Partiers: They Lied—You Don't Live in a Rich Country"
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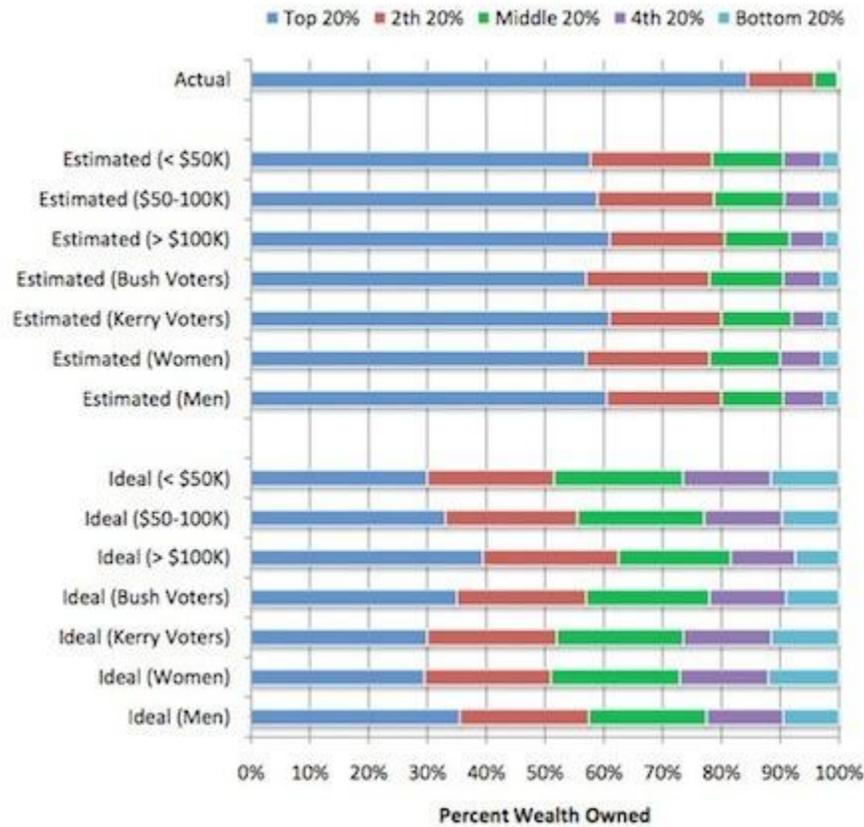
Read this and tell me if you still think America has a viable middle class. Or is it all—including all of us—owned by the rich?

"Note to Tea Partiers: They Lied—You Don't Live in a Rich Country" by Steven D. *Booman* *Tribune*

Oct. 7, 2010, (<http://blogs.alternet.org/speakeasy/2010/10/07/note-to-tea-partiers-they-lied-you-dont-live-in-a-rich-country/>)

We have the greatest income inequality in our nation's history, but for some strange reason people are incredibly misinformed about who has the most stuff. Take a look at this chart from "a paper called "Building a Better America One Wealth Quintile at a Time" by Dan Ariely and Michael I. Norton.

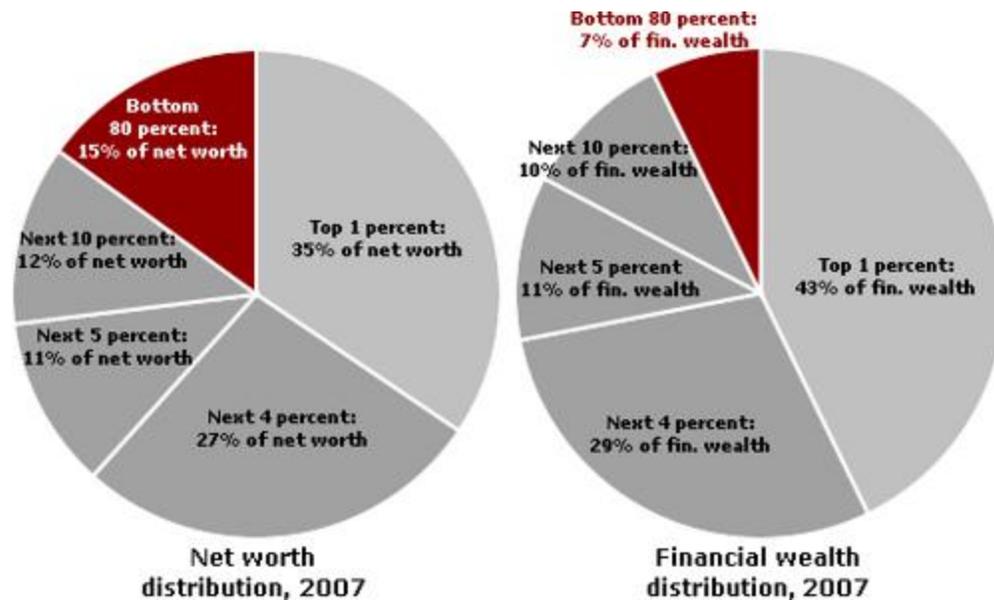
Real vs. Imagined Wealth Distribution in the U.S.



Source: Michael Norton and Dan Ariely. "Building A Better America—One Wealth Quintile At A Time."

As you can see, most people, regardless of political ideology or party affiliation or income level, are under the impression that there is a vast middle class (60% of the people) that owns roughly 40% or so of the wealth in America, with the wealthiest 20% owning slightly less than 60%. The truth? The richest 20 percent, represented by that blue line, has about 85 percent of the wealth. The next richest 20 percent, represented by that red line, has about 10 percent of the wealth. And the remaining three-fifths of America shares a tiny sliver of the country's wealth.

Yet even that doesn't tell the whole story. Because the highest 1% of income earners in America (income, not total assets) received 75% of the income gains from 2002 to 2006. Everybody else, 99% of Americans, received the remaining 25%. Now look at these pie charts on net wealth from *Wealth, Income, and Power* by G. William Domhoff, a professor of sociology at the University of California at Santa Cruz:



As you can see, as of 2007, the top 1% had 35% of the Net Worth and 43% of the Financial Wealth in America. The top 10% had 73% of the Net Worth, and a whopping 83% of the Financial Wealth. The bottom 90% had 27% of the net worth (most of it tied up in their home equity) and only 17% of the Financial Wealth.

Of course, those figures don't include the results of the Great Recession that began Dec., 2007, with the collapse of the housing market in which the lower 90% of Americans suffered the greatest loss of wealth and income and jobs.

So why the misconception by the majority of Americans that the people in the bottom 90% of income and wealth (however you measure that) have a much larger share of our "Ownership Society" than they actually do? I think one has to look squarely at the major news media, many of whom fit within the wealthiest 10% of Americans. They simply don't get out of their encapsulated havens to report on the real, in your face effects of the economic policies of the four presidents who preceded Obama, three of whom were Republicans.

It's telling that until very recently, major media figures simply didn't go out in the field and report on the devastation wrought by this economy on the lower 90% of individuals and families who don't share the same level of income, wealth, fame and status as our media mouthpieces:

In the green room before taping Real Time with Bill Maher on Friday, I [Arianna Huffington] had an unexpected conversation with my fellow panelist Joe Klein. He'd just finished a cross-country road trip, getting an up-close look at lives that "have been ripped up by the economic devastation of recent years." He embarked on the trip, he wrote, because "I really don't trust the things I've been seeing on TV and reading in the papers." The trip had been an eye-opener. "The people I met never talked about the things the Washington press does," he told me. The disconnect between the focus of his fellow reporters and the focus of the people he met on his travels was "transformational." "My sense of what's important has changed in a big way," he said. [...] In the final post of his trek, Klein came to this conclusion: "One thing I realized on this trip was how much time I spend immersed in the media back home—reading newspapers and blogs and books, watching TV—and how little time I spend immersed in other people."

In truth, this isn't particularly shocking to those of us who follow the mainstream media, whether the newspapers, television news or major blogs like Politico. We know they have been living in their own cloud cuckoo land for some time now.

And when you toss in Fox News, a news organization in name only, which every day literally creates its own false reality through propaganda, hate speech and lies of commission and omission in order to divide and polarize our nation and promote conservative and Republican policies that favor the Super Rich and Mega-Corporations at the expense of everyone else, it should come as no shock to anyone that most Americans have no clue how much they have lost in terms of wealth and income over the last three decades.

Which is one reason we as a nation have arrived at the sorry state of affairs we find ourselves in, both politically and economically. We have been misled by fools and propagandists posing as honest objective journalists and reporters for

too long. And the misinformation and outright lies in many cases to which they have been an active party, have allowed the Wealthy and Big Corporations to corrupt our politics and impose a regimes that is driven us to the brink of collapse, all while they lined their pockets from the public purse and from the inaction of government to oversee their activities and prevent their financial shenanigans (and in many cases outright fraud).

That the Democratic Party was for too long complicit in this exercise, trolling for the same lobbyist cash that has always fueled the Republicans, is a failure of epic proportions, for it took decades to set the table from which the rich now feast while the rest of us beg for scraps from their table.

Much of the failure of Obama to meet the progressive expectations is a result of a political climate and an institutional structure skewed to benefit those who can "pay to play." To a large extent, the fact that Obama has accomplished as much as he has is a minor miracle, but 2 years is not enough time to reverse the appallingly unjust and divisive course that Ronald Reagan first set this nation upon 30 years ago, aided and abetted by a "liberal media" too afraid to challenge his "Morning in America" fantasy, to expose his many lies about the role of government and to confront his use of race and class to achieve his ends.

What Reagan began, every other President, to some degree or another has continued. Yes, Clinton raised taxes and balanced the budget, but he also signed into law with the support of the Republicans NAFTA, the Telecommunications Act and the final dismantling of the critical financial reforms put into place by FDR. That these were the culmination of a dream longed for years by Wall Street and the other major industries was not the result of bad luck or random chance. It was accomplished by design.

In 1932, FDR took advantage of a new information technology, radio, to reach the broad masses of Americans and speak over the heads of the Wall Street Titans and Big Business interests who opposed him. It is our challenge today, to use the new information technologies of our time, to speak over the heads of all those who oppose economic fairness and justice in America today. Until we accomplish that goal and get politicians truly committed to a progressive program of economic and government reform, our fellow citizens will remain in their current condition of enforced ignorance, and their lives and ours will remain subject to the whims of those who have the money, or as FDR rightly labeled them "Economic Royalists" and "The Money Power."

20101010-02 10:06 SteveB "China Emerges as Scapegoat in Campaign Ads"

Politicians finally admit the jobs are gone, accept no responsibility...

"China Emerges as Scapegoat in Campaign Ads" by David W. Chen, *The New York Times*

Oct. 10, 2010, (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/us/politics/10outsource.html?pagewanted=all>)

(Candidates try to blame opponents for sending jobs overseas.)

With many Americans seized by anxiety about the country's economic decline, candidates from both political parties have suddenly found a new villain to run against: China.

From the marquee battle between Senator Barbara Boxer and Carly Fiorina in California to the House contests in rural New York, Democrats and Republicans are blaming one another for allowing the export of jobs to its economic rival. In the past week or so, at least 29 candidates have unveiled advertisements suggesting that their opponents have been too sympathetic to China and, as a result, Americans have suffered.

The ads are striking not only in their volume but also in their pointed language. One ad for an Ohio congressman, Zack Space, accuses his Republican opponent, Bob Gibbs, of supporting free-trade policies that sent Ohioans' jobs to China. As a giant dragon appears on the screen, the narrator sarcastically thanks the Republican: "As they say in China, xie xie Mr. Gibbs!"

In an ad featuring Chinese music and a photo of Chairman Mao, Spike Maynard, a Republican challenger in West Virginia, charges that Representative Nick Rahall supported a bill creating wind-turbine jobs in China.

And on Wednesday, Senator Harry Reid, the majority leader, began showing an ad that wove pictures of Chinese factory workers with criticism that Republican Sharron Angle was "a foreign worker's best friend" for supporting corporate tax breaks that led to outsourcing to China and India.

The barrage of ads, expected to total in the tens of millions of dollars, is occurring as politicians are struggling to address voters' most pressing and stubborn concern: the lack of jobs.

"China is a really easy scapegoat," said Erika Franklin Fowler, a political science professor at Wesleyan University who is director of the Wesleyan Media Project, which tracks political advertising.

Polls show that not only are Americans increasingly worried that the United States will have a lesser role in the years ahead; they are more and more convinced that China will dominate. In a Pew poll conducted in April, 41 percent of Americans said China was the world's leading economic power, slightly more than those who named the United States. [Note: the U.S. is still #1, temporarily.]

The attacks are occurring as trade tensions continue and the United States is pressuring the Chinese government to allow its currency to rise in value, a central topic under discussion at the International Monetary Fund meeting in Washington this weekend.

The ads are so vivid and pervasive that some worry they will increase hostility toward the Chinese and complicate the already fraught relationship between the two countries.

Robert A. Kapp, a former president of the U.S.-China Business Council, said that even though tensions had flared in the past, he had never seen China used as such an obvious punching bag for American politicians.

"To bring one country into the crosshairs in so many districts, at such a late stage of the campaign, represents something new and a calculated gamble," he said. "I find it deplorable. I find it demeaning."

Not all of the ads are solely about China; a few mention India or Mexico. A recent ad from Mrs. Boxer accuses Ms. Fiorina, a former chief executive at Hewlett-Packard, of outsourcing thousands of jobs to "Shanghai instead of San Jose, Bangalore instead of Burbank," and of "proudly stamping her products 'Made in China.'"

It is no accident that Democrats, in particular, have been eying China as a line of attack. This spring, national Democrats, including the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, began to encourage candidates to highlight the issue after reviewing internal polling that suggested voters strongly favored eliminating tax breaks for companies that do business in China. The party first began emphasizing the issue in a special election for a Pennsylvania House seat in May, said Representative Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Never mind that there is hardly any consensus as to what exactly constitutes outsourcing and how many of the new overseas jobs would have stayed in American hands. The Democrats cite studies this year from the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal research organization, that assert three million jobs have been outsourced to China since 2001 because of the growing trade imbalance.

But Republicans, backed by some academics, say the number is much smaller. Indeed, Scott Kennedy, director of the Research Center for Chinese Politics and Business at Indiana University, said that most of the jobs China had added in manufacturing through foreign investment had come from Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea, not from the United States.

Still, some Republicans clearly see the issue as potent, and they are counterattacking with ads stating that the Obama administration's stimulus package helped to create \$2 billion in wind-turbine technology jobs in China, a claim the Treasury Department and the American Wind Energy Association say is dubious. Representative John A. Boehner, the House minority leader, in a speech Friday in Ohio, blamed President Obama and Ms. Pelosi for a "stimulus that shipped jobs overseas to China instead of creating jobs here at home."

Evan B. Tracey, president of the Campaign Media Analysis Group, which tracks political advertising, said that "China has sort of become a straw-man villain in this election" in a way that elicits comparisons to the sentiments toward Japan in the 1980s over car manufacturing and Mexico in the 1990s over the North American Free Trade Agreement.

While China's growth has slowed a bit recently, its economy is still projected to surge by about 10 percent this year, continuing a remarkable three-decade streak of double-digit expansion.

"In a lot of ways it's a code word: 'Let's be mad at China, because then the voters will connect the dots and say our manufacturing plants have been shut down because of China, and all the unfair labor practices, and throw on the fact that we're basically selling all our debt to China,'" Mr. Tracey said.

Even as the ads play up Americans' unease with the threat posed by modern China, they often employ outdated and almost cliché depictions.

In a new spot for Representative Joe Sestak, who is running for the Senate in Pennsylvania, a gong clangs as a narrator says of his Republican rival, Pat Toomey: "He's fighting for jobs—in China."

An ad for Ryan Frazier, a Republican running for Congress in western Colorado, shows Forbidden City-style doors opening to reveal China on a world map, as the voiceover criticizes the Democratic incumbent, Ed Perlmutter, for supporting cap-and-trade legislation, which some Coloradans believe will drive more manufacturing jobs overseas.

Consultants from both parties are monitoring polling and voter reaction to gauge the effectiveness of the ads and to determine how long to continue showing them. Based on the back-and-forth between candidates on the campaign trail, the issue does not appear to be going away anytime soon.

At a Senate debate in Connecticut on Monday night between the Democrat Richard Blumenthal and the Republican Linda E. McMahon, Mr. Blumenthal repeatedly tried to raise concerns about the business practices of World Wrestling Entertainment, the company in which Ms. McMahon served as chief executive.

A tense moment occurred when Mr. Blumenthal asked: Why does Ms. McMahon's company manufacture its popular action figure toys in China, rather than here at home? She said it was not her decision, but that of the toy company, and moved on.

20101011-01	08:11	SteveB	"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences"
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"Animals Said to Have Spiritual Experiences" by Jennifer Viegas, Curiosity.com/Discovery Channel

Oct. 8, 2010, (<http://news.discovery.com/animals/animals-spiritual-brain.html>)

Animals (not just people) likely have spiritual experiences, according to a prominent neurologist who has analyzed the processes of spiritual sensation for over three decades.

Research suggests that spiritual experiences originate deep within primitive areas of the human brain — areas shared by other animals with brain structures like our own.

The trick, of course, lies in proving animals' experiences.

"Since only humans are capable of language that can communicate the richness of spiritual experience, it is unlikely we will ever know with certainty what an animal subjectively experiences," Kevin Nelson, a professor of neurology at the University of Kentucky, told Discovery News.

"Despite this limitation, it is still reasonable to conclude that since the most primitive areas of our brain happen to be the spiritual, then we can expect that animals are also capable of spiritual experiences," added Nelson, author of the book *The Spiritual Doorway in the Brain*, which will be published in January 2011.

The finding is an extension of his research on humans, which has been published in many peer-reviewed journals. A Neurology journal study, for example, determined that out-of-body experiences in humans are likely caused by the brain's arousal system, which regulates different states of consciousness.

"In humans, we know that if we disrupt the (brain) region where vision, sense of motion, orientation in the Earth's gravitational field, and knowing the position of our body all come together, then out-of-body experiences can be caused literally by the flip of a switch," he said. "There is absolutely no reason to believe it is any different for a dog, cat, or primate's brain."

Other mammals also probably have near-death experiences comparable to those reported by certain humans, he believes. Such people often say they saw a light and felt as though they were moving down a tunnel.

The tunnel phenomenon "is caused by the eye's susceptibility to the low blood flow that occurs with fainting or cardiac arrest," he said. "As blood flow diminishes, vision fails peripherally first. There is no reason to believe that other animals are any different from us."

Nelson added, "What they make of the tunnel is another matter."

The light aspect of near-death experiences can be explained by how the visual system defines REM (rapid eye movement) consciousness, he believes.

"In fact," he said, "the link between REM and the physiological crises causing near-death experience are most strongly linked in animals, like cats and rats, which we can study in the laboratory."

Mystical experiences — moments that inspire a sense of mystery and wonderment — arise within the limbic system, he said. When specific parts of this system are removed from animal brains, mind-altering drugs like LSD have no effect.

Since other animals, such as non-human primates, horses, cats and dogs, also possess similar brain structures, it is possible that they too experience mystical moments, and may even have a sense of spiritual oneness, according to Nelson.

Marc Bekoff, a professor emeritus of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, also believes animals have spiritual experiences, which he defines as experiences that are nonmaterial, intangible, introspective and comparable to what humans have.

Both he and primatologist Jane Goodall have observed chimpanzees dancing with total abandon at waterfalls that emerge after heavy rains. Some of the chimps even appear to dance themselves into a trance-like state, as some humans do during religious and cultural rituals.

Goodall wondered, "Is it not possible that these (chimpanzee) performances are stimulated by feelings akin to wonder and awe? After a waterfall display the performer may sit on a rock, his eyes following the falling water. What is it, this water?"

"Perhaps numerous animals engage in these rituals, but we haven't been lucky enough to see them," Bekoff wrote in a Psychology Today report.

"For now, let's keep the door open to the idea that animals can be spiritual beings and let's consider the evidence for such a claim," he added.

"Meager as it is, available evidence says, 'Yes, animals can have spiritual experiences,' and we need to conduct further research and engage in interdisciplinary discussions before we say that animals cannot and do not experience spirituality."

20101011-02 12:32 Pam Responses

Dear SteveB,

You have posted quite a few very interesting articles recently, and I keep thinking of things to say about all of them. I guess I'll start with the most recent first, the one about animals' spirituality. It is fascinating to think that animals have "supernatural" experiences, but not surprising when you think about it. If it's our primitive, limbic brain that generates "hallucinations", then it stands to reason that animals would have them too. One more reason to go vegetarian, perhaps.

My mother told me once about a near-death experience she had. It was classic. She felt she was floating up near the ceiling, watching as the doctors and nurses tried to pull her back from a heart attack. Obviously, they succeeded, but she said she felt no fear or sadness at all. I read an article once by Lewis Thomas where he says he believes (based on research) that when animals (including us) are about to die, they stop feeling pain. The body recognizes that there is no longer any use in struggling to survive, so it basically quits. He said you can see this when a cat has a live mouse in its

jaws. The mouse will be alive but just hanging limp. I've always wondered if nature hasn't figured out a way to ease our passing: by making the real seem unreal—and vice versa.

This helps explain religion too, as the limbic brain seems to be where religion originates. I was born without that piece of my brain, but I can see now why so many people swear that their beliefs are true: they actually have had "experiences" that have convinced them. I am currently reading two terrific books that actually sort of speak to each other, though I didn't plan it that way. One is a biography of Montaigne called *How to Live*. I've never read Montaigne, just know the name, so I am learning a ton of 16th c. history, as well as a lot about Montaigne, whom I like a lot. He had such a sensible, moderate philosophy of life. I find myself agreeing with so much of what he says about living the good life—except he didn't put much store in love or relationships. He had one true friend that he did love, but he died young. I don't think Montaigne ever really loved anyone else, not even his wife and mother, who were both rather bossy. He believed in a kind of Stoic detachment that I've never been able to cultivate, but I can see its appeal. He lived through a French civil war (Protestants vs. Catholics) where absolutely dreadful things happened, and he was able to put it all in perspective without becoming a fanatic himself. He says a lot that speaks to our own age.

The other book I've just started, but so far so good. It's *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values* by Sam Harris. Harris is a fervent atheist (as am I). I've read his other books: *Letter to a Christian Nation* and *The End of Religion*. (I think that's the name of it.) I look forward to his explanation of how morals are universal, like chemistry or physics, and how science can lead the way toward discovering empirically what they are (i.e., should be). It's like health. We know what health is, and we know disease. So too there is "well being" and its opposite. Moral behavior contributes to wellbeing for all. I can see how this could all get very complicated, but I'm eager to find out what Harris has to say. He was on "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart the other night. He's very smart. He's a neuroscientist and studies the brain, and his effort is to connect the matter of the brain to the mind that we have assumed is separate ever since Descartes, who incidentally despised Montaigne. I love thinking about all this stuff, and I love it when I discover new ideas and perspectives that fill out my own thinking. Like Montaigne, I want to keep an open mind so new stuff can get in, and I also want to have good judgment.

I was energized by the articles you sent on economic issues. It's good to see some actual facts and figures. More than ever, I am convinced that there must be some deep drive in our culture toward wealth and power. I would say "conspiracy" but I don't know that it's conscious. Maybe like religion, it comes from some primitive part of the brain. I heard George Soros on NPR the other day. Boy, did he make sense! He said we need to run a deficit until we get a handle on unemployment, then we can work on lowering the deficit. We can't do both at once. If the private sector won't generate jobs, which it's not, then the govt. must do it, at least in the near term. Asked if he thought there was a chance this would be put into practice, he said "no." The politics of the day mean we'll keep muddling along, prolonging the recovery—and the misery. I am astounded by people's selfishness. (That said, I don't give much to charity at all. But then, if we had a sensible govt., charity would be unnecessary.) If we all paid just a bit more tax, we could do so much, but people are so determined to hold onto their measly 2% or whatever. And why do the rich squawk so much? It's not like they'd even notice a few million less. Even David Stockman has recanted on "trickle-down economics." We have seen people brainwashed by communist ideology cling to their political beliefs, despite ample evidence that their system is pernicious. We are no different with our hysterical belief in "free market" capitalism. Another term for "free market" is "laissez faire", and that was proved unsavory in the 19th c.

You are fortunate to have your group that discusses these matters. I still don't want to be part of it though. I feel I know you (sort of), and I'm much more interested in "talking" with an individual than blogging to a bunch of strangers. I have such mixed feelings. The other day I discovered a blog by a young woman who I helped get a Fulbright a number of years ago. We are FB friends, and there was a link to her blog in one of her postings, so I went to it. She is a fascinating person, an artist, a poet, and a marvelous prose writer. She is highly intelligent and also EXTREMELY religious. She has been all over the world, teaching and living in religious communes and I don't know what all. Currently she is attending the Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry in Calif. She and her "peeps" go out into the community and do hands-on "healing" with winos and street people. I simply cannot put the two together—her intelligence/talent and her religiosity. Her parents were missionaries, but still... I don't want to get into a "conversation" with her because we have nothing to say to each other, really. But I did enjoy her blog. She has written a bunch of lovely little essays about this and that. It made me want to write too—just not to strangers.

Also, I saw something about your Bolivian president playing a soccer game recently. There was a video of him, and at one point he gratuitously kicked an opposing player, who was just standing there, and knocked him down. They weren't even in play at the time. He just up and kicked him. Jon Stewart had him on a while back, and he showed a tape of that interview. I was reminded of all this when I read the postings by your niece about Bolivian politics. It is a mystery why

societies persist in behaviors that cause such pain and suffering or inefficiency—and they all do to some degree. Maybe Sam Harris's book will help explain that.

20101012-01 07:26 SteveB "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"

Hey, I've got a great idea (thanks to your Republican candidates)!

It has been proven that lower taxes for the rich produces a thriving economy and more jobs than you can shake a stick at, Right? Surely, it is the incredibly low tax rates on the rich (since Reagan, even lower since Bush) which have produced the current economic miracle—low unemployment, balanced budget, etc. Though I'll admit that free trade, deregulation, and unbridled illegal immigration might have helped a little. This philosophy has produced this "Golden Age of America" in which we now enjoy peace, tranquility, and prosperity for all.

So...instead of slightly increasing the tax paid by the rich and super rich, let's cut Social Security paid to the poorest Americans, by freezing the COLA despite inflation! Surely that will permit the big moneyed rich suckers to keep this incredible economic boom going well into the future. Let's also use this money to fight wars and reduce the deficit! Let's ignore the lessons we should have learned from the past 50 years or so. Our children and grandchildren are so lucky!

"Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze" by Matt Sedensky, AP

Oct 11, 2010, (http://www.cnn.com/id/39626572/Senior_Citizens_Brace_for_Social_Security_Freeze)

(BOCA RATON Fla.) Seniors prepared to cut back on everything from food to charitable donations to whiskey as word spread Monday that they will have to wait until at least 2012 to see their Social Security checks increase.

The government is expected to announce this week that more than 58 million Social Security recipients will go through a second straight year without an increase in monthly benefits. This year was the first without an increase since automatic adjustments for inflation started in 1975.

"I think it's disgusting," said Paul McNeil, 69, a retired state worker from Warwick, R.I., who said his food and utility costs have gone up, but his income has not. He lamented decisions by lawmakers that he said do not favor seniors.

"They've got this idea that they've got to save money and basically they want to take it out of the people that will give them the least resistance," he said.

Cost-of-living adjustments are automatically set by a measure adopted by Congress in the 1970s that orders raises based on the Consumer Price Index, which measures inflation. If inflation is negative, as in 2009 and 2010, payments remain unchanged.

Still, seniors like McNeil said they'll be thinking about the issue when they go to vote, and experts said the news comes at a bad time for Democrats already facing potentially big losses in November. Seniors are the most loyal of voters, and their support is especially important during midterm elections, when turnout is generally lower.

"If you're the ruling party, this is not the sort of thing you want to have happening two weeks before an election," said Andrew Biggs, a former deputy commissioner at the Social Security Administration and now a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

At St. Andrews Estates North, a Boca Raton retirement community, seniors largely took the news in stride, saying they don't blame Washington for the lack of an increase. Most are also collecting pensions or other income, but even so, they prepared to tighten their belts.

Bette Baldwin won't be able to travel or help her children as much. Dorcas Eppright will give less to charity. Jack Dawson will buy cheap whiskey instead of his beloved Canadian Club.

"For people who have worked their whole life and tried to scrimp and save and try to provide for themselves," said Baldwin, a 63-year-old retired teacher, "it's difficult to see that support system might not sustain you."

Baldwin and her husband mapped out their retirements, carefully calculating their income based on their pensions and Social Security checks. Trouble is, they expected an annual cost-of-living increase. "When we cut back, we're cutting back on niceties," Baldwin said. "But there are other people that don't have anything to cut back on. They're cutting back on food and shelter."

Many at St. Andrews said the cost-of-living decision won't affect who they vote for next month. But seniors tied the Social Security issue to what they see as a larger societal problem with debt, entitlements and hopefulness for the future.

"I'm kind of glad in a way," Stella Wehrly, an 86-year-old retired secretary, said of the freeze. "One thing depends on the other and when people aren't working there's not enough people feeding into the Social Security system."

Wehrly and her husband, Hank, said curtailing government spending is necessary to maintain the Social Security system.

"We have a generation now that we're not going to leave a very good legacy for," she said. Jack Dawson, 77, said the freeze is the right move considering the state of the government and the American economy.

"Who would be surprised what's happened?" he asked. "I feel this is the right decision in light of the malaise."

More than 58.7 million people rely on Social Security checks that average \$1,072 monthly. It was the primary source of income for 64 percent of retirees who got benefits in 2008; one-third relied on Social Security for at least 90 percent of their income.

At the Phoenix Knits yarn shop in Phoenix, 73-year-old owner Pat McCartney said she already worries about paying for utilities, groceries and gas. Not having the increase makes her worry even more.

"If I have any major expense, I don't know what I'll do," McCartney said while helping customers with their knitting. "I live on Social Security."

In Kansas City, Mo., Georgia Hollman, 80, said Social Security is her sole source of income. She would have liked a bigger check, but said she's grateful for what she gets.

"There isn't nothing I can do about it but live with it," she said. "Whatever they give us is what we have to take. I'm thankful we get that little bit."

Advocates for seniors argue the Consumer Price Index doesn't adequately weigh the costs that most affect older adults, particularly medical care and housing.

"The existing COLA formula does not account for the economic reality of the true costs that most seniors faced," said Fernando Torres-Gil, director of UCLA's Center for Policy Research on Aging and the first person appointed to the governmental post of assistant secretary for aging, during the Clinton administration.

Still, Torres-Gil said the political reality is different, and many feel seniors are lucky to have their checks determined by the CPI, instead of some new formula that might make it even harder to secure a raise. "We may just be lucky to keep the current index," he said.

20101012-02 07:40 GaryC Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
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Dear SteveB,

Did you actually read this article before you sent it out? [Sorry, I don't understand why the question is being asked. — SteveB]

I am well aware of what is happening since we take care of two seniors. However, you can't be serious in blaming Republicans. And, did you see what seniors had to say about the lack of increase—cheaper booze, won't be able to help kids, less trips. Not exactly forcing them to eat trash etc. [Did you actually read the article? —SteveB] And, do you know what the increase was in 2009? I am sure no one was complaining then when the increase was in the double digits. [Totally false. —SteveB] And, I am sure most people forget the reason for Social Security in the first place was not to maintain a high standard of living but to provide minimum necessities for the elderly. [How could anyone forget that on

the amount paid? Could you live on, say, \$1000/month? It's insurance! Paid for by the people! —SteveB] If you would look at what most of these retirees have received in SS versus what they paid in they are way ahead of the game. [Totally unproven and false. —SteveB] This is a classic Ponzi scheme adopted by the Congress to get votes and now the pigeons are coming home to roost. Too many retirees, benefits too high and not enough workers to feed the machine. But neither party has the balls to fix the problem even though the signs have been around for years. COLA is the smallest of concerns about this issue.

[Did you actually read this article before you replied? —SteveB]

[See: <http://livingstingy.blogspot.com/2011/07/do-you-pay-more-into-social-security.html> and <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/256212/medicare-and-social-security-what-you-pay-vs-what-you-will-get-maybe-veronique-de-rugy>. —SteveB]

20101012-03	09:55	SteveB	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze" & "Top 10 Facts About Social Security"
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Dear GaryC,

Why would you ask if I read the article? Why would I not? What's the reason for your accusation? My point is simply about the injustice of the zero COLA despite inflation.

1. Social Security is a program that needs to be fixed. But it works. It should get a little credit for that. It's not going away any time soon.
2. In 2010 [Corrected from "2009." —SteveB], ditto, there was no COLA increase either—2 years in a row. Not so for Wall Street.
3. It's not that I, or maybe even the article, mind the Social Security "decrease" that much. It's that there is no balance between the rich and a middle class...to America's detriment.
4. Social security does redistribute some wealth and help maintain a middle class among people who need it most:

from "Top 10 Facts About Social Security" by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Aug. 13, 2010, (<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3261>)

Fact #6: Almost half of the elderly would be poor without Social Security. Social Security lifts 13 million elderly Americans out of poverty.

Without Social Security benefits, almost half of Americans aged 65 and older would have incomes below the poverty line, all else being equal. With Social Security benefits, only one-tenth of the elderly do. (See figure.) The program lifts 13 million elderly Americans out of poverty.

Almost 90 percent of people aged 65 or older receive some of their family income from Social Security. Those not receiving Social Security mostly comprise recent immigrants, state and local government retirees (and federal retirees hired before 1984) who are covered by separate retirement systems, people under age 66 with significant earnings, and people who are so seriously disabled that they never worked and also have never married.

20101012-04	10:04	GaryC	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
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Dear SteveB,

I think you are wrong on this one. I believe 2011 will be the second year in a row without a cola but I think 2009 was about 19%.

[19%. Maybe for the uber-rich. The actual facts: I meant 2010. 2009 COLA was 5.8% (thanks to Bush), 2010 = 0%, 2011 = 0%. 2012 will be 3.6%. Where's the 19%? —SteveB]

You always seem to beat on the rich. Don't the poor have some responsibility for their plight? When I was poor, I did something about it. I worked multiple sh*t jobs and got an education. No scholarships, no food stamps, no unemployment checks, no free lunch.

I really feel for the poor but part of what makes America great is that a poor person like me can make it big in the U.S.

You seem to pick on big corporations as being evil. In my opinion, corporations have no feelings or intent. The PEOPLE who run them can be greedy and mean spirited. The same is true for big government, big unions and big education.

I choose to believe that I can redistribute my wealth better and more effectively than some bureaucrat can. History has shown that you cannot soak the rich to create equality. You must lift up the poor.

20101012-05	11:03	GaryC	"Revolt of the Accountants"
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Dear SteveB,

Interesting article. This is what I fear might be happening in the U.S. Envy! If the U.S. loses its natural and national character, then we will dissolve into a 3rd world country very rapidly.

"Revolt of the Accountants" by Peggy Noonan, WSJ.com

Oct. 8, 2010, (<http://www.politicalnewsnow.com/2010/10/08/peggy-noonan-revolt-of-the-accountants-wsj-com-3/>)

(Washington is turning America into Paperwork Nation.)

If you write a column, you get a lot of email. Sometimes, especially in a political season, it's possible to discern from it certain emerging themes—the comeback of old convictions, for instance, or the rise of new concerns. Let me tell you something I'm hearing, in different ways and different words. The coming rebellion in the voting booth is not only about the economic impact of spending, debt and deficits on America's future. It's also to some degree about the feared impact of all those things on the character of the American people. There is a real fear that government, with all its layers, its growth, its size, its imperviousness, is changing, or has changed, who we are. And that if we lose who we are, as Americans, we lose everything.

This is part of what's driving the sense of political urgency this year, especially within precincts of the tea party.

The most vivid illustration of the fear comes, actually, from another country, Greece, and is brilliantly limned by Michael Lewis in October's *Vanity Fair*. In "Beware of Greeks Bearing Bonds," he outlines Greece's economic catastrophe. It is a bankrupt nation, its debt, or rather the amount of debt that has so far been unearthed and revealed, coming to "more than a quarter-million dollars for every working Greek." Over decades the Greeks turned their government "into a piñata stuffed with fantastic sums" and gave "as many citizens as possible a whack at it." The average government job pays almost three times as much as the average private-sector job. The retirement age for "arduous" jobs, including hairdressers, radio announcers and musicians, is 55 for men and 50 for women. After that, a generous pension. The tax system has disintegrated. It is a welfare state with a cash economy.

Much of this is well known, though it is beautifully stated. But all of it, Mr. Lewis asserts, has badly damaged the Greek character. "It is simply assumed that anyone who is working for the government is meant to be bribed. Government officials are assumed to steal." Tax fraud is rampant. Everyone cheats. "It's become a cultural trait," a tax collector tells him.

Mr. Lewis: "The Greek state was not just corrupt but also corrupting. Once you saw how it worked you could understand a phenomenon which otherwise made no sense at all: the difficulty Greek people have saying a kind word about one another. Everyone is pretty sure everyone is cheating on his taxes, or bribing politicians, or taking bribes, or lying about

the value of his real estate. And this total absence of faith in one another is self-reinforcing. The epidemic of lying and cheating and stealing makes any sort of civic life impossible.”

Thus can great nations, great cultures, disintegrate, break into little pieces that no longer cohere into a whole.

And what I get from my mail is a kind of soft echo of this. America is not Greece and knows it's not Greece, but there is a growing sense—I should say fear—that the weighty, mighty, imposing American government itself, whether it meant to or not, has for years been contributing to American behaviors that are neither culturally helpful nor, as we now all say, sustainable: a growing sense of entitlement, of dependency, of resentment and distrust, and an increasing suspicion that everyone else is gaming the system. “I got mine, you get yours.”

People, as we know, are imperfect. Governments, composed top to bottom of imperfect people wielding power, are very imperfect. There are of course a million examples, big and small, of how governments can damage the actual nature and character of the citizenry, and only because there was just a commercial on TV telling me to gamble will I mention the famous case of the state lotteries. Give government the right to reap revenues from the public desire to gamble, and you'll soon have government doing something your humble local bookie never had the temerity to try: convince the people that gambling is a moral good. They promote it insistently on local television, undermining any remaining reserve among our citizens not to play the numbers, not to develop what can become an addiction. Our state government daily promotes what for 2,000 years was understood to be a vice. No bookie ever committed a crime that big.

Government not only can change the national character, it can bizarrely channel national energy. And this is another theme in my mailbox, the rebellion against what government increasingly forces us to become: a nation of accountants.

No matter what level of life in which you operate, you are likely overwhelmed by forms, by a blizzard of regulations, rules, new laws. This is not new, it's just always getting worse. Priests are forced to be accountants now, and army officers, and dentists. The single most onerous part of Obamacare is the tax change whereby spending \$600 on goods or services will require a 1099 form. Economists will tell you of the financial cost of this, but I would argue that Paperwork Nation is utterly at odds with the American character.

Because Americans weren't born to be accountants. It's not in our DNA! We're supposed to be building the Empire State Building. We were meant, to be romantic about it, and why not, to be a pioneer people, to push on, invent electricity, shoot the bear, bootleg the beer, write the novel, create, reform and modernize great industries. We weren't meant to be neat and tidy record keepers. We weren't meant to wear green eyeshades. We looked better in a coonskin cap!

There is I think a powerful rebellion against all this. It isn't a new rebellion—it was part of Goldwaterism, and Reaganism—but it's rising again.

For those who wonder why so many people have come to hate, or let me change it to profoundly dislike, “the elites,” especially the political elite, here is one reason: It is because they have armies of accountants to do this work for them. Those in power institute the regulations and rules, and then hire people to protect them from the burdens and demands of their legislation. There is no congressman passing tax law who doesn't have staffers in his office taking care of his own financial life and who will not, when he moves down the street into the lobbying firm, have an army of accountants to protect him there.

Washington is now to some degree the focus of the same sort of profound resentment that Hollywood liberals inspired when they really mattered, or seemed really powerful. For decades they made films that were not helpful to our culture or society, that were full of violence and sick imagery. But they often brought their own children up more or less protected from the effects of the culture they created. Private schools, nannies, therapists, tutors. They bought their way out of the cultural mayhem to which they'd contributed. Their children were fine. Yours were on their own.

This is part of why people dislike “the elites” and why “the elites,” especially in Washington, must in turn be responsive, come awake, start to notice. People don't like it when they fear you are subtly, day by day, year by year, changing the personality and character of their nation. They think, “You are ruining our country and insulating yourselves from the ruin. We hate you.” And this is understandable, yes?

20101012-06	15:26	Dennis	“Poor People”
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Delusions of the Right repudiated...

"Poor People" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Oct. 10, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148454/>)

(AlterNet is proud to present this excerpt from senior writer Joshua Holland's new book, *The Fifteen Biggest Lies about the Economy (And Everything Else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know about Taxes, Jobs, and Corporate America)*.)

Perhaps the most pernicious right-wing lie of late is that the Wall Street hustlers who came close to bringing the global economy to its knees in 2008 were just innocent victims of government-sponsored programs that forced them to lower lending standards in a misguided effort to increase home ownership among the poor (read: dark-skinned).

It's an alluring story line for those who are ideologically predisposed to blame "inner city" people instead of MBAs in suits roaming the executive suite. It's also patent nonsense—a Big Lie that has nonetheless become an object of almost religious belief for some on the Right.

Jeb Hensarling, a notably obtuse Republican back-bencher from Texas, wrote that "the conservative case is simple":

The [Community Reinvestment Act] compelled banks to relax their traditional underwriting practices in favor of more "flexible" criteria. These subjective standards were then applied to all borrowers, not just low-income individuals, leading to a surge in lower-quality loans. Blame should [also be] directed at Fannie [Mae] and Freddie [Mac], and their thirst for weaker underwriting to help meet their federally mandated "affordable housing" goals. This distortion has had seismic consequences as market participants, wrongly believing GSE-touched loans were sanctioned by the government and therefore safe, began to rely on a government mandate as a substitute for their own due diligence.

This tale has everything a conservative could want—Big Government overreach, well-intentioned but out-of-touch liberals causing devastating unanticipated consequences with their social tinkering, and even their favorite bogeyman, ACORN, and other low income housing advocates that have pushed for increased home-ownership among the poor.

The narrative gained steam with an influential op-ed in the Wall Street Journal by Peter Wallison, a fellow with the American Enterprise Institute (who, according to his bio, "had a significant role in the development of the Reagan administration's proposals for the deregulation of the financial services industry"). Wallison found that "Almost two-thirds of all the bad mortgages in our financial system, many of which are now defaulting at unprecedented rates, were bought by government agencies or required by government regulations."

The data shows that the principal buyers were insured banks, government sponsored enterprises (GSEs) such as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and the FHA—all government agencies or private companies forced to comply with government mandates about mortgage lending.

The sleight-of-hand here is pretty straightforward. The U.S. government regulates lenders and provides deposit insurance to banks, which means that a large chunk of all home loans—good, bad, and in between—have some connection to a government program. It's like saying that the government is responsible for pollution because the EPA regulates industrial emissions.

Yet no bank has ever been "forced to comply with government mandates about mortgage lending." There are no "government mandates," and there never were. In order to qualify for government-backed deposit insurance—a benefit that banks aren't forced to accept but enjoy having—the Community Reinvestment Act and similar measures designed to prevent discrimination in lending (to qualified individuals) only encourage banks to lend in all of the areas where they do business. And Section 802 (b) of the Act stresses that all loans must be "consistent with safe and sound operations"—it's the opposite of requiring that lenders write risky mortgages. There are no penalties for noncompliance with CRA guidelines. The only "stick" hanging over banks that fail to meet those standards is that their refusal might be taken into account by regulators when they want to open new branches or merge with other financial institutions. What's more, there are no defined standards for CRA compliance, and within the banking community, the loose guidelines are considered to be somewhat of a joke.

As Sheila Blair, the chairwoman of the FDIC, asked in a Dec., 2008 speech, "Where in the CRA does it say: make loans to people who can't afford to repay? Nowhere! And the fact is, the lending practices that are causing problems today were driven by a desire for market share and revenue growth, pure and simple."

Fannie and Freddie: Tempted by Easy Profits

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were created by an act of Congress, but they are (or were, until being taken over in the wake of the housing crash) private, for-profit entities whose dual mandate was to increase the availability of mortgages to moderate- and low-income families, and at the same time turn a profit for their shareholders. Fannie and Freddie did end up with a very large portfolio of subprime loans, with a high rate of default, but they didn't get into the market because the government mandated it. They dived in deep because there were profits to be made as the housing bubble expanded. As Mary Kane, a finance reporter for the Washington Independent, put it:

Neither the Community Reinvestment Act—the law most cited as the culprit—nor other affordable housing goals set by the government forced Fannie, Freddie or any other lender to make loans they didn't want to. The lure of the subprime market was high yields and healthy profit margins—it's as simple as that.

Contrary to the conservative spin, University of Michigan law professor Michael Barr told a congressional committee that although there was in fact quite a bit of irresponsible lending in low-income communities in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, "More than half of subprime loans were made by independent mortgage companies not subject to comprehensive federal supervision; another 30 percent of such originations were made by affiliates of banks or thrifts, which are not subject to routine examination or supervision, and the remaining 20 percent were made by banks and thrifts [subject to CRA standards]." Barr concluded, "The worst and most widespread abuses occurred in the institutions with the least federal oversight [*italics added*]."

That's not to say that millions of Americans didn't bite off more than they would eventually be able to chew in the housing market. A lot of people looking to turn a quick buck by capturing the booming value of real estate in the mid- to late 2000s bought property with "teaser" loans that offered very low rates for the first few years; the investors assumed that they'd be able to turn a tidy profit before higher interest rates kicked in. Many of those individuals have since found themselves "under water"—owing more on their homes (and investment properties) than they're worth. Yet it's worth noting that most of the experts also didn't identify the real estate bubble as a problem, even as home prices far surpassed values that could be reasonably explained by the laws of supply and demand. Irrational exuberance was the theme of the day. In 2006, David Learah, the former head of the National Association of Realtors, wrote a book titled *Why the Real Estate Boom Will Not Bust—And How You Can Profit from It: How to Build Wealth in Today's Expanding Real Estate Market*. The book made quite a splash at the time.

In 2010, former Fed chairman Alan Greenspan offered a bit of historical revisionism to a House committee investigating the causes of the financial crisis, telling lawmakers, "In 2002, I expressed concern that our extraordinary housing boom, financed by very large increases in mortgage debt, cannot continue indefinitely. I warned of the consequences of this situation in testimony before the Senate Banking Committee in 2004."

Writing in the *Washington Post*, Dana Milbank offered a corrective with some of the highlights of Greenspan's congressional testimony at the peak of the housing bubble. In 2005, Greenspan told lawmakers, "A bubble in home prices for the nation as a whole does not appear likely." He added, "Home price declines were they to occur, likely would not have substantial macroeconomic implications," and explained that "nationwide banking and widespread securitization of mortgages make it less likely that financial intermediation would be impaired."

In English, that last bit meant "Banks won't get into serious trouble even if things do go to hell," and we know how well that prediction turned out. If Greenspan could be so wrong and the smart people at the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* couldn't see this huge, dangerously inflated housing bubble, how was your average couple trying to get a place to live or the small investor looking for a few bucks in rental income supposed to make a rational decision about how much debt to take on? That's not a defense of individuals who got in over their heads; it's simply an important bit of context.

The narrative that the real estate crash and the subsequent recession were the fault of borrowers, especially poor and middle-income borrowers—while members of the financial community were innocent victims—is not only revisionism of the worst kind, but it's an especially egregious lie.

The obvious sin of this claim is that it shifts responsibility for the mess away from those who created it, but what makes it even more disgraceful is that conservatives have long argued that efforts to increase home ownership among low-income families and communities of color was the "free market" thing to do (and have, to some degree, negated the need for a decent social safety net). It was George W. Bush, not Vladimir Lenin, who said in a 2002 speech, "We have a problem here in America, a homeownership gap," and said, "we've got to work together to close [the gap] for the good of our country." This was standard American Enterprise Institute—quality conservative fare.

Blaming individuals is easy—it's not hard to understand how people could borrow a bunch of cash they were later unable to pay back. The real cause of the housing crash is, of course, a far more complicated tale. And it's a story that ultimately represents the abject failure of conservative economic mythology.

(Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of *The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy (and Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America)*).

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[20101012-07](#) 16:24 SteveB Re: "Revolt of the Accountants"

Dear GaryC,

This is good, but just the tip of the iceberg, I fear. Tax law needs reform and simplification. Many things need to be done. Without a government of honest, non-debt-owing politicians, none of it will get done in such a way as to benefit the country as a whole.

[20101012-08](#) 16:37 GaryC My Experience with Taxes

Dear SteveB,

You are so right about tax reform. You probably don't know this but after getting my law degree from Indiana, I moved to DC and worked for Coopers & Lybrand, one of the big 5 accounting firms in their national tax office. My responsibilities included attending House and Senate hearings on tax policy and advising Congressmen on tax legislation. Pretty scary and heady stuff for a 25 year old. While in DC, I attended Georgetown and got a Master of Laws in Taxation, a real specialized Doctorate in Law. I am proud to say I actually studied at Georgetown and was 1st in my class.

Let me tell you it is so ridiculous the way tax policy in the U.S. is determined. For the Republicans and Democrats it's all about special interest groups and buying votes. 90% of the congressional representatives were not interested one bit in the consequences of their actions other than how it would generate campaign dollars or votes. Most of the time when I explained provisions in the law, regulations or proposed legislation to them, they had the old "deer in the headlight" look. Tax policy should not be a province of congress but a separate independent body to look at fair taxation, easy accountability and elimination of fraud and cheats.

[20101012-09](#) 16:40 SteveB Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze" & "Wall Street to Break Pay Record in This Economy"

Dear GaryC,

I meant 2010. 2009 COLA was 5.8%, 2010 = 0%, 2011 = 0%. 2012 will be 3.6%.

I don't think rich Americans are carrying a proportional share of the load. All the numbers seem to bear this out.

["Wall Street to Break Pay Record in This Economy" posted by Heracles, VisaJourney](#)

Oct. 12, 2010, (<http://www.visajourney.com/forums/topic/278185-wall-street-to-break-pay-record-in-this-economy/>)

I kind of agree with you about private enterprise...to a point. Big corporations should have making money as their #1 objective. That's what they are designed to do.

That's what they do well. They can deliver jobs and even things like healthcare and welfare well, or at least as well as the government can. But, human nature being what it is, the public (to whom the corporations owe their very existence) must curtail the baser instincts, and structure the costs and benefits of the system to benefit the greater good, which includes the businesses themselves. Otherwise, history has shown us that the corporations actually enrich very few.

One of the most important obligations of all citizens and corporate citizens is to support and fund a superior educational system. Most of this money goes to education very efficiently, because it is local. Yet we, as a society, don't seem to be willing to fully fund what was really the secret of your success (other than your hard work)—education! Yet this is the minimum that must be handed to the future in order to secure that future.

When an American corporation makes a good business decision to, say, ship all its jobs to China, this is not really helping America. It is not the businessman's fault. He is just doing what the system dictates, but it hurts the country. It hurts all of us. Therefore, costs and controls must be imposed to guide the business to a decision that is best, both for the company and the country. Many business taxes and incentives achieve these ends. They all need a little (at least) tweaking and simplifying, but it's the same general idea.

But rather than submit to paying their fair share, big business and rich people are able to buy politicians under the current campaign finance and laws. Pressure is exerted through unrestrained lobbyists. Then the bought-and-sold politicians manipulate the tax, incentive, and regulatory systems in favor of the rich who got them elected, but unfairly for the country as a whole. Trade with China could have kept more tariffs in place and moved more slowly. Maybe Chinese companies could have been forced to build factories in America, if they were going to force American companies to build factories in China, as I have seen first-hand.

At this same time the rich and powerful have been buying politicians, so have all the organized special interests. First the unions, but no longer, the rich have managed to curtail their power greatly. Now it's foreign countries like China, the medical profession, the bankers, the old people, the military, the illegal immigrants, the gays, anybody who can gather enough money to buy a politician and help him get elected. Debts must be paid, so laws are passed which benefit these groups, whether the money to spend actually exists or not. Therefore, under the present system, there can never be enough money.

We, the people, should be whom our politicians care about. All of us. As a nation. Rich or poor. Powerful or powerless. Not just the powerful, rich, and organized. The result of all this corruption: endless federal deficits, endless trade deficits, endless job deficits, endless decline. For the last 50 years, that's about all we've seen. Meanwhile, we, as a country, keep getting sold down the river by our elected officials. America's place in the world erodes. Influence erodes because of massive debt and obligation. Power loses its potency. The nation becomes poorer.

Yet you are also right, and the left is wrong, in thinking that the government can solve all our problems. Removing the corruption from government only gives us a level, democratic playing field. Then, maybe a clear-headed government can see that it must balance protecting and nourishing business with trying to make it serve the greater public good. If we must have growth, private enterprise should and must be the engine of wealth and job creation, but all that power must be controlled by law, just as surely as a man with a gun or a bomb.

Surely, as a society, we have paid attention to all of history since the Industrial Revolution began and learned these lessons? I hope and pray we have, but the Tea Party, the Republicans, the Democrats, and the news media are making me think we have not.

20101012-10	16:40	SteveB	More Lies: 'Housing Bubble Caused by the Poor'
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More big lies...

HOUSING BUBBLE CAUSED BY THE POOR, NOT THE RICH! LOL!

20101012-11	16:57	GaryC	Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"
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Dear SteveB,

There are lies, damn lies and statistics. In most cases you can find statistical data to support both sides of an argument.? Do you look at raw numbers or percentages?? What percentage of the U.S. income tax burden falls on those in the top 10% of income?? What percentages of people in the U.S. pay no income tax?? What percentage of people pay no income tax yet make lots of money in the underground economy?? What is fair?? What is the legal justification for wealth transfer??

If I make a \$1,000,000 and pay 50% in taxes and spend the rest on cars, food, energy, entertainment and housing, don't those not fortunate enough to make this amount of money all benefit from my profligate spending and charitable giving?? If I want to give \$10,000 to a local charity educating minority children shouldn't I get to make that choice with my ill gotten gains instead of the government making those decisions for me??

[No. If it is a necessity that people pay taxes. And it is. It is necessary that they be equal. For almost 100 years the standard has been not equal dollars, not an equal percentage, but that the last dollar paid to the government should result in an equal amount of pain. I know of no better standard or way of putting it. —SteveB]

Historically, when real tax rates on the rich approach 40%, the gross tax collections of a country actually diminish.? When the percentage of persons in a society not paying tax approaches 50%, the society starts to disintegrate because those not contributing want more of what those that are contributing have.? In the late 60's or early 70's England had a tax rate approaching 90+%.? The consequence of this soak the rich scheme is that the rich vamoosed.? The Beatles, soccer players, actors etc. all left England for better tax pastures.? Net collections in England went down.

[This is laughable. LOL. —SteveB]

Instead of taxing the rich, isn't the answer educating the poor and middle class to be able to compete better in our society and improve their lot in life?? Most Americans start their working life in the bottom 10—20% of the income range.? Over time, with more education and better experience, these low earning Americans move to higher and higher income brackets.? With socialism, do you really think most Americans are going to try to better themselves or earn more money?? What's the incentive?

20101012-12	17:18	Dennis	"Axelrod Is Wrong: Obama Must Protect American Families from Wall Street Fraud"
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Rich not always amoral...

"Axelrod Is Wrong: Obama Must Protect American Families from Wall Street Fraud" by Zach Carter, Huffington Post

Oct. 11,2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zach-carter/axelrod-is-wrong-obama-mu_b_758265.html)

If senior White House adviser David Axelrod's comments this weekend are any indication, the Obama administration is woefully misreading the foreclosure fraud crisis currently gripping the U.S. economy. Axelrod refused to commit the administration to a national moratorium on foreclosures, and mischaracterized a massive, systematic fraud perpetrated by Wall Street banks as a set of unfortunate "mistakes." This is not a minor scandal and it will not simply go away. President Barack Obama needs to stand up for the middle class and protect our economy from Wall Street theft. If he doesn't, the economic and political price will be devastating. The full transcript of Axelrod's appearance on CBS' Face the Nation with Bob Shieffer is here, but here are his key comments, emphasis mine:

It's bad for the housing market and it's bad for these institutions which is why they're scrambling now to— to go back through and— and— and through their documentation for all of this as they should. The President was concerned enough to veto a bill that came to him last Thursday, that would have unintentionally made it perhaps **easier to make mistakes....I'm not sure about a national moratorium because there are, in fact, valid foreclosures that— that— that probably should go forward.** And where the documentation and paperwork is— is proper, but we are working closely with these institutions to make sure that they expedite the process of going back and reconstructing these and throwing out those that don't work....**Our hope is that this moves rapidly and that this gets unwound very, very quickly.**

Let's straighten some facts out first. Lenders aren't just making "mistakes"—they're fabricating documents, forging signatures and lying to judges in order to illegally throw people out of their homes and slap them with thousands of dollars in illegal fees.

Consumer advocates were not worried that the bill Obama vetoed on Friday would make it easier for lenders to make "mistakes"—they were worried it would make it harder to expose rampant, systematic fraud committed by Wall Street banks against American families.

Nor is this a problem that can be resolved quickly. Banks are resorting to fraud for a reason—they don't have the documents that prove they have the right to foreclose. It's not like JPMorgan Chase or GMAC need to dig through a filing cabinet to find the right form—the form doesn't exist. Banks willfully, knowingly destroyed key documentation in order to cut costs and boost bonuses. Other banks that bundled these mortgages into complex securities didn't ask for this documentation for the same reasons.

This creates legal liabilities for the banks that can push them into failure. A lot of these securities were packed with fraudulent mortgages—loans where banks falsified borrower information in order to push them into predatory loans. Investors who bought these mortgages have been trying to force banks to repurchase the fraudulent loans. But now that banks cannot even document which loans they own, the entire fraudulent mortgage securitization framework may land on the banks' doorstep. If that happens, we're going to see some very big banks go under.

What does all this mean for borrowers? We've already seen plenty of cases in which banks are foreclosing on the wrong homes—kicking out borrowers who haven't missed any payments, or borrowers who are working with the bank on receiving a loan modification to keep them in their homes. But even for borrowers who have stopped paying their mortgages, the fraud process creates serious dangers. Banks charge all kinds of fees on borrowers when they foreclose—fees that often amount to thousands of dollars. The current wave of fraud is enabling an onslaught of grotesque, illegal fees. When you create new documents and forge signatures, you can claim people agreed to ridiculous things they never agreed to, tell ridiculous lies about the house being foreclosed on, and generate thousands of dollars in improper fees.

In other words, banks and their lawyers are breaking the law to steal from borrowers facing financial hardship. This impropriety may create losses so big that megabanks are going to fail. Smart political leaders need to get out there right now and prove that they are backing American families, not Wall Street elites. A foreclosure moratorium is the first step, the second is a major new initiative to reduce mortgage debt to a level that borrowers can afford—that prevents foreclosures and keeps this mess from spiraling into a financial calamity. The mortgage market needs to reflect economic reality, not inflated banker dreams. Other leaders have figured this out. If Obama refuses to stand up for the middle class, he'll be hanging many embattled Democratic members of Congress out to dry, politically undercutting them on an issue of household financial security in the middle of a brutal recession. Swing-state Democrats like Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, D-Fla., and Rep. Alan Grayson, D-Fla., Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Carolyn Kirkpatrick, D-Mich., have already endorsed foreclosure moratoriums. Attorneys general in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Illinois, California, Iowa, Texas, and Ohio have either imposed state-wide moratoriums or investigations into foreclosure fraud, and Ohio is already suing GMAC. Why does the president want to kneecap members of his own party?

What's more, Axelrod's comments put the White House on the same side as Republican Whip Eric Cantor, R-Va., a Wall Street crony who voted to bailout the big banks with no strings attached, but refused to support Wall Street reform. For his services, Wall Street rewarded Cantor with \$2.1 million in campaign contributions for the 2010 elections. Here's what Cantor said on Fox News Sunday:

If you impose a moratorium on foreclosures, what you're telling people and institutions that lend money is they do not have the protection to take the risk they need to, to extend credit so people can get a mortgage....You're going to shut down the housing industry if that's the case....People have to take responsibility for themselves.

Cantor's reasoning is, of course, complete nonsense. People do need to take responsibility for themselves, which is why the government has a responsibility to stop banks from systematically defrauding borrowers on an epic scale. But note Cantor's positioning on the issue. He claims that if the government does anything to help troubled borrowers, *that assistance* will cause a financial catastrophe. It's a phony story that completely ignores the financial catastrophe already brewing, one created by massive Wall Street fraud, not the government's big, bleeding heart. Cantor is peddling a monstrous lie, but if Obama doesn't push-back against it, he will politically hamstring any opportunity to fend off the economic fallout from this mess, and leave troubled borrowers at the mercy of Wall Street predators.

(Zach Carter is AlterNet's economics editor. He is a fellow at Campaign for America's Future, which he represents on the steering committee of Americans for Financial Reform. He is a frequent contributor to *The Nation* magazine.)

20101014-01	17:25	Dennis	"Why Germany Has It So Good & Why America Is Going Down the Drain"
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Un-American activities: Can socialists do capitalism better?

"Why Germany Has It So Good—and Why America Is Going Down the Drain" by Terence McNally, AlterNet

Oct. 14, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/148501>)

While the bad news of the Euro crisis makes headlines in the U.S., we hear next to nothing about a quiet revolution in Europe. The European Union, 27 member nations with a half billion people, has become the largest, wealthiest trading bloc in the world, producing nearly a third of the world's economy—nearly as large as the U.S. and China combined. Europe has more Fortune 500 companies than either the U.S., China, or Japan.

European nations spend far less than the United States for universal healthcare rated by the World Health Organization as the best in the world, even as U.S. health care is ranked 37th. Europe leads in confronting global climate change with renewable energy technologies, creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs in the process.

Europe is twice as energy efficient as the U.S. and their ecological "footprint" (the amount of the earth's capacity that a population consumes) is about half that of the United States for the same standard of living.

Unemployment in the U.S. is widespread and becoming chronic, but when Americans have jobs, we work much longer hours than our peers in Europe. Before the recession, Americans were working 1,804 hours per year versus 1,436 hours for Germans—the equivalent of nine extra 40-hour weeks per year.

In his new book, *Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?*, Thomas Geoghegan makes a strong case that European social democracies—particularly Germany—have some lessons and models that might make life a lot more livable. Germans have six weeks of federally mandated vacation, free university tuition, and nursing care.

But you've heard the arguments for years about how those wussy Europeans can't compete in a global economy. You've heard that so many times, you might believe it. But like so many things, the media repeats endlessly, it's just not true.

According to Geoghegan, "Since 2003, it's not China but Germany, that colossus of European socialism, that has either led the world in export sales or at least been tied for first. Even as we in the United States fall more deeply into the clutches of our foreign creditors—China foremost among them—Germany has somehow managed to create a high-wage, unionized economy without shipping all its jobs abroad or creating a massive trade deficit, or any trade deficit at all. And even as the Germans outsell the United States, they manage to take six weeks of vacation every year.

They're beating us with one hand tied behind their back."

Thomas Geoghegan, a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School, is a labor lawyer with Despres, Schwartz and Geoghegan in Chicago. He has been a staff writer and contributing writer to *The New Republic*, and his work has appeared in many other journals. Geoghegan ran unsuccessfully in the Democratic Congressional primary to succeed Rahm Emanuel, and is the author of six books including *Whose Side Are You On*, *The Secret Lives of Citizens*, and, most recently, *Were You Born on the Wrong Continent?*

Terence McNally: You start your book, *Were you Born on the Wrong Continent?*, with a personal experience, a stopover in Zurich. Could you talk about that?

Thomas Geoghegan: In 1993 I got it in my head, for reasons too long to tell, to go see a woman I'd met who happened to be in Moscow. Because of the coup in Oct., 1993, all the flights to Moscow were canceled, and I ended up in Zurich. I had not been in Western Europe for years, and, while I was waiting for clearance, I happened to walk around the streets and I was just thunderstruck by how nice it was. Every bookstore seemed like a boutique and even the train station was like a perfumery.

And I thought, how did this part of the world get so wealthy without my knowing it? That was the epiphany that led me to take a bigger and bigger interest in how Europeans live, and to ask ultimately, were you born in the wrong continent?

McNally: In talking about that walk, you point out that if you don't have much poverty, life is better for everybody. Not just better for the poor, but for everybody.

Geoghegan: You have more of the city available to you. [My hometown] Chicago's fantastic, but there's a huge swath of it that you don't particularly want to go to—not because of any criminal danger, but just because it's run down. Largely white ethnic neighborhoods on the northwest side are unattractive and dilapidated. Plus there are huge parts of the city that are downright dangerous. Europe isn't like that. It's the argument for social democracy: more equality and less poverty and disorder.

McNally: In their book, *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett point out that on average everything is worse for everybody in the countries with the most unequal distribution of wealth.

Geoghegan: As a labor lawyer, I can see that janitors and truck drivers I represent would be better off in a social democracy. I make the argument in the book that even people who are doing relatively well would be literally, materially better off in a more egalitarian social democracy. Some of the public goods that are available there for free—university education, for example, are skewed towards the people who are relatively at the top.

McNally: Someone who doesn't go to university doesn't get that benefit, but a family who sends two or three kids gets an enormous benefit.

Geoghegan: Of course, low income sectors do better too. Nonetheless, it could be said, there's a growing amount of poverty in Germany. Especially during the 1990's and the early part of the last decade, there was a scaling back of social democracy. For a while the bubble of casino capitalism in the U.S. and the U.K. led to an allocation of capital into the U.S. and U.K. looking for hot returns. Since the collapse of casino type capitalism in 2008, money has shifted back where it should have been in the first place, to the virtuous economies of the world like Germany, based in manufacturing.

McNally: I recall Kevin Phillips pointing out in his book *Bad Money* that year after year the U.S. shifted more and more of our money and our best and brightest young people into finance. When the casino seemed to be paying off, other countries also shifted in our direction, but when it broke, we didn't have the manufacturing and export base a country like Germany has to fall back on.

Geoghegan: The Germans had a certain amount of *schadenfreude* about the whole thing. They're basically a very pessimistic people by temperament, and when they saw a world debacle that they weren't responsible for, they actually became a little more upbeat.

They had what they call a good recession. The German government was very quick off the mark, and immediately put in place what they called *kurzzeit*. Through this short work-week program, the government paid people to stay on the job when they otherwise might have been let go.

"We got ahead of the curve," one German labor minister said, "employment didn't drop here the way it did in the U.S." When the economy recovered, there was no incentive to hold off hiring because the people were already on the job. Their unemployment is now significantly lower than ours and the economy is booming.

McNally: When asked why Obama didn't pursue a similar policy to stem the economic bleeding, Larry Summers dismissed the idea, saying the White House wanted to create new jobs not preserve old ones.

Geoghegan: A pretty lame answer.

McNally: And an arrogant one. Good for you, Larry. What about the guy who lost his job? And his family and his kids?

Geoghegan: Larry Summers is the villain of my book. He was an architect of deregulation, and was doing a war dance back in the late 1990's about how the U.S. model was triumphant over all. Now, the shoe's on the other foot.

McNally: What's the status of the crisis in Europe right now? The EU includes not only virtuous, productive economies like Germany, but also others not nearly so.

Geoghegan: Those less virtuous economies were the so-called "new Europe" that Donald Rumsfeld was touting. People in the countries that are in trouble now economically were the ones willing to go to Iraq—and there is a connection. These are the countries that were much more inclined to go the American route, going into debt heavily, using housing speculation as the engine of the economy, and opening their economies big time to global bank debt and finance.

Goldman Sachs poured tons of money into Greece, and other New York, London and German banks poured money into Spain. None of the bubbles occurred in Germany and in the "old Europe" that Donald Rumsfeld wrote off. Part of Europe is in trouble to the extent—and only to the extent—that it's involved in the American model. Those countries most resistant to the American model are doing fine.

By the way, why was Goldman Sachs willing to lend money to weak economies like Greece? Because Greece was in the EU. Because Spain was in the EU. These countries would never have gotten all this money from U.S. banks. And what is so important about the EU? At the end of the day the Germans with their trade surplus are able to pay—and in fact that's what has happened.

McNally: How is the relationship unfolding between Germany and the economies it is bailing out?

Geoghegan: It's working out pretty well. The Germans are doing even better because the Euro fell—it was overvalued to begin with—and that made German goods more competitive. After the great debt crisis, the Euro became relatively cheaper, and that made Germany more profitable as an export country. Greece didn't collapse, partly because the Germans bailed it out and partly because there was belt tightening in Greece and plenty of tourists still coming in.

McNally: By the way, Greece represents only 2% of the EU's total GDP, whereas California represents 14% of the U.S. Yet when California reached out to the federal government for similar help, it didn't get it.

Geoghegan: You see a story in the New York Times every six weeks—ever since I graduated from college in 1971—about how Europe is going to collapse. They come out like clockwork.

McNally: I pulled one of those Times articles in May when the Greek crisis was hot. The headline: "Europeans Fear Crisis Threatens Liberal Benefits." But you point out that when a country like Germany takes something away from the safety net, they usually balance it with a benefit.

Geoghegan: They cut back on holiday and they add a nursing home benefit. But the U.S. press always focuses on the cutback. One of the reasons I wrote this book was to show that there's a leadership class over there that is very clever about these things. I don't mean in a spurious, tricky way, but actually thinking, "What do we have to cut back now so that we can go forward in the future?"

To quote a wonderful line from the Lampedusa novel, *The Leopard*: as the old order is collapsing, the Sicilian aristocrat says to his young prince, "We have to change so that everything remains the same." How do you change social democracy so that you preserve it, and maybe even create an opportunity to expand it in a year or two when the wheel of fortune turns again?

McNally: Let's talk about some of the contrasts in the book between our culture and theirs. People here work nine more weeks per year.

Geoghegan: In the U.S., the most driven work 2300 hours a year, and people a notch or two below the most driven are working 1800 hours a year. That doesn't count hours that are off the clock.

McNally: Why do we work so hard? You say one of the reasons is because we don't have unions or job security. People are afraid that if they don't work weekends and overtime, if they don't skip their kid's soccer game, they'll get laid off.

Geoghegan: Nobody knows who's going to be laid off next. It's all arbitrary, Chainsaw AI could knock down your cubicle door at any time. So everyone has an incentive to stay five minutes longer than everyone else, and that creates anarchy. According to labor economists Richard Freeman at Harvard and Linda Bell at Haverford, in the U.S. there's nobody to tell you to go home.

McNally: Given the fact that we work more, are we more productive?

Geoghegan: If you consider productivity as output per hour, working longer probably decreases it. My friend Isabelle came to the U.S. to attend grad school at Northwestern, and was upset when she discovered there were no holidays here. In the middle of the year, I found her very stressed, and I figured out what was happening: she was working American hours with German efficiency. When you look at the fact that Germans rank at the top of the world in terms of export sales—on a par with the Chinese who work till they drop—you realize they must be doing something that makes them more efficient.

Leisure time also has material value. The fact that Americans work longer and longer hours increases GDP per capita, but it doesn't necessarily raise our standard of living.

McNally: Americans don't know how things actually work in European countries. For many people the fact that Germany is neck and neck with China as the number one exporting country—give or take the rise and fall of currency—must be mind blowing. Even progressives in America don't look overseas for models that work. I find it almost pathological that our exceptionalism infects even those who assume they don't believe in it.

Geoghegan: I have a friend who's just come back from being a journalist for a long time in France and now works as a political reporter in Washington DC. She recently told me, "It's become impossible for me to stay in a carpool with other women journalists because all I do is say to them, 'Oh, it's so much better in France This is so much better If this happened we wouldn't' She said, "They're just so sick of me, they don't want to hear anything more about France."

In some ways it's understandable and in some ways it's tragic. Another journalist friend of mine told me, "The three most deadly words in American journalism are 'in Sweden they' People just won't keep going from there, and why is that? These are economies that have developed a level of sophistication and look like the U.S. in so many ways. People say, "Europe's becoming just like America," but it's not.

McNally: Let's make a quick comparison of GDP. The problem with GDP is that it has only an addition side, it doesn't have a subtraction side. So an auto accident increases GDP; crime increases GDP.

Geoghegan: Waste and fraud and gambling; Katrina increases GDP; urban sprawl especially increases GDP. Hours stuck in traffic increase GDP.

McNally: plus the fact that we've monetized so many things that we used to do for ourselves or for our families.

Geoghegan: You're shelling out \$50,000 in tuition for NYU law school and your counterpart in Europe is getting it for free. How pathetic for the poor European adding nothing to GDP. In America we're increasing GDP, but dragging down people's standard of living.

It's a very perverse system of accounting. You say it's all addition and no subtraction, but it's not even all addition. Nothing increases your well-being or your material standard of living as much as leisure time. Among the untouchables in India, of course, that's absolutely not the case; leisure is a nightmare, unemployment is a nightmare. But for many, a loss of leisure is a loss of material value.

For example, leisure to go to a free concert at Millennium Park in Chicago. It's a glorious experience. People in Europe are gaga about it, because it's the one thing in America that seems to them the most European—wonderful orchestras, pop bands, jazz bands, playing right in the middle of the city; gorgeous lawns; people picnicking, etc.—and it's all free. It's so un-American, there's no money going out the door. It makes a mark on your life but you can't turn it into a sum of dollars, so it doesn't mean anything—even though of course it means everything.

McNally: You say the three building blocks of German social democracy are the works councils, the election of boards of directors by workers as well as by hedge fund managers, and the regional wage setting institutions.

Geoghegan: First: work councils. The analogy I used in the book is fictitious: Imagine you elect a works council from among the employees at the Barnes & Noble bookstore where you work. They don't bargain for wages, that's done by the unions; but they have all sorts of rights that relate to working time, who gets laid off, even whether the store is going to close or not. They can go in and look at the books. The management has to enter into agreements. The works council can't dictate, but they have enormous influence over what working hours will be, who's going to work when and how.

Co-determined boards are mandated at German companies with 2000 employees or more, the global companies that are beating us, although you can have them in other situations. These are maybe more like super boards that don't do as much day-to-day managing as our boards of directors do. It consists one half of people elected by and from the workers, and one half elected by the shareholders.

The chairman of the board is selected by the shareholders and has a double vote so that, if there's a tie between the shareholders and the employees, the shareholders win. But it creates a lot of potential influence over how the debate goes.

McNally: But you also say that the shoe is on the other foot when it comes to choosing the CEO, correct?

Geoghegan: If the shareholders are divided on who should be the next CEO, the clerks get to pick the king.

McNally: In contract negotiations over the last 10, 15, 20 years, American workers have been giving back things, agreeing to two tiers, lowering their pension guarantees. I've never heard of any of them trading a concession for the right to elect members to the board.

Geoghegan: The UAW had somebody on the board once.

McNally: Management can't even say it won't work because Germany's beating our pants in manufacturing, and the codetermined board is also spreading elsewhere, right?

Geoghegan: The German model has made inroads on the U.S. model in other European countries.

McNally: You quote the German labor minister saying, "Our biggest export now is codetermination". Now, third: regional or sector wage settling.

Geoghegan: It's much reduced these days, but they still have some version of regional wage bargaining setting standards that everybody has to comply with. That used to be true here—to a lesser extent than in Germany—but it's disappeared.

McNally: Are you talking about a situation where you would negotiate with one of the big three automakers and the others would basically get the same deal?

Geoghegan: I was thinking more of the United Mineworkers negotiating a contract with multiple employer associations to produce a national agreement that covered every employer. That was true in the coal industry and with the Teamsters in the trucking industry.

McNally: Agreements across a whole industry create a sense of transparency, right?

Geoghegan: People know what their wages are. East Germany was a factor in the breakdown. You couldn't really have the same labor costs and labor standards that you had in West Germany because the economy wasn't at the same stage of development.

McNally: If you compare your quality of life and the prospective quality of life for your children with the German quality of life, things are only getting worse. To cite just one example, economist Robert Frank talks about the fact that American families end up moving into neighborhoods they can't afford because that's where the good schools are, and I'm sure this played some role in the mortgage collapse.

Geoghegan: We'd be much more competitive globally if Americans had six weeks off, and had a chance to go and see what people are doing in other countries. We'd come back much more sophisticated about them and probably have better ideas about how to sell things to them.

McNally: You point out that as globalization grew, the U.S. chose to compete on the basis of cheap labor by outsourcing. We kept the marketing and executives here and moved the manufacturing elsewhere. We've been playing that game for 20-30 years now. Germany chose to play the opposite game.

Geoghegan: 30 years later the Germans are making money off of China, and China is making big time money off of us. One thing I really try to get across in the book: Many Americans think that we've got a trade deficit because we can't

compete with China. We've got a trade deficit because we can't compete with Germany in selling things to China. Until people wake up and look at the kinds of things that the Germans are doing to keep their manufacturing base, we're going to continue to run deficits which leave us in the clutches of foreign creditors and compromise our autonomy as a country.

McNally: This is something that the right wing should be up in arms about. Geoghegan: Absolutely. And they're clueless. They are mortgaging this country's future and they're too stupid to realize it.

McNally: This seems like a good point to turn to "10 Things the Dems Could Do To Win," a cover story I wrote for a recent issue of The Nation.

Geoghegan: The Democrats have to do something for their base, keep it simple and make it universal. Unlike the healthcare bill which was perceived as a handout for "them", the uninsured, many of them in red states. Democrats should focus on things that either give a direct benefit to people or give them a sense of power.

For example, increase Social Security so that it's a real public pension—push Social Security benefits up to 50% of people's income. Of course we can't do this overnight, but we can set it as a serious goal.

McNally: Social security in the U.S. is 39% at this point. In Germany it was 67%, but it's dropped?

Geoghegan: To the low fifties. But people have tons of money in the bank over there, there's a high savings rate and, at least in the unions, they also have private pensions that work much better than in the U.S.

McNally: They also don't graduate college with thousands of dollars of debt that many will carry for the rest of their lives.

Geoghegan: They do have a demographic crisis that they're going to have to get through, but they've protected the system.

McNally: Raising social security to 50% of working income means that when you go on to social security you'll get half of what you were getting when you were working. Currently you get less than two-fifths.

Geoghegan: The top 20 developed countries have an average rate of something like 60%, so we can do this.

My second proposal is simply the most effective way to move ultimately to a single payer healthcare system, which I think we have to do. I would say that even if I didn't think single payer were a better system. You have to have one consistent system of payment to get control of healthcare costs. All the European countries do. It doesn't have to be single payer, but it has to be a consistent system. You can't have a mix of private market and single payer.

Let's lower Medicare's eligibility to 55. What brought back GM and Chrysler? The government came in and took away their retiree healthcare costs. We've got to lower labor costs not by bringing down wages—that would be a disaster, but by having the government assume wage labor costs that are making us less competitive. People of 55-65 will all vote for you because it will change their lives.

McNally: Folks like Alan Simpson and Pete Peterson are going to say, "Wait a minute, you're going in exactly the wrong direction."

Geoghegan: Social security basically is solvent now even at its current level. And I have ways of paying for it.

First, if you brought back the estate tax and dedicated the proceeds to the Social Security trust—as Robert Ball, former Social Security commissioner, once proposed. Second, lift the cap on the Social Security tax—it's at \$90,000 now—so it applies to all incomes. After all, Social Security is for everyone. Third, if you did things like eliminate the corporate debt protection for debt that is used in leverage buyouts and non-productive uses right now, you could generate the financial reserve that could pay for this. Finally, I do think people should pay a little more for their Social Security because they're going to get a better deal.

All of these things have two purposes, to do something directly beneficial to the base now, and to do something that reduces the size and influence of the financial sector and increases the viability of manufacturing.

Lowering the age for Medicare, for example, allows employers to substantially lower their labor costs for their most expensive workers. It's not just to make them competitive, but it's also to induce investment into manufacturing which is right now inhibited by the uncertainty of healthcare costs. Ultimately the goal of all of this is to get the U.S. out of debt.

The debt issue ought to be the Democrat's issue not the Republicans. The real debt issue is our external trade deficit. We either have consumers go into debt to make the books balance at the end of the day as we did during the Bush era, or we have the federal government do it when consumers cut back. We don't earn out way in the world, and until we do, we're going to be running either large consumer debts which lead to private financial panics, or federal debt which could lead to a sovereign default. We've got to get out of that box, and the only way to do it is to put in measures that make our economy more competitive globally.

McNally: You're saying that Obama and the Democratic party could transform the issue of debts and deficits by offering solutions that are not just about paying today's bill, but about restructuring our ability to pay the bill in the future.

Geoghegan: We will never get out of debt until we confront our inability to pay our way in the world. Somebody is going to be in debt, whether it's me the taxpayer paying off the federal deficit or me the consumer paying off my Visa card. It doesn't make a whole lot of difference at the end of the day. The Democrats ought to present themselves as the party that has a plan to get the country out of debt.

McNally: You also recommend a usury cap on credit cards.

Geoghegan: You've got to get returns down in the financial sectors and returns up in manufacturing sectors. That's the key. And proposing that will split the business community in this country in a very healthy way. The Democrats can be the party of the manufacturers, even if it's at the expense of Wall Street. For years, the Democrats have slipped the other way. People perceive that and they're frustrated by it.

McNally: The financial sector currently funds both parties. Republicans get to be true to their convictions, while Democrats end up negotiating with themselves. Though they may have some progressive leanings, their funders pull them in the other direction.

Geoghegan: Even progressive Democrats don't have the sophistication of their counterparts on the left in France and Germany in terms of understanding how important it is not to run up a national debt. Here we march against Mexico and put up tariff walls. They don't do that in Europe, they're not that unsophisticated.

McNally: Let me finish with a quote of yours that really struck me: Without an industrial base a democracy dies.

Geoghegan: My own favorite ending line would be: Countries like Germany do both capitalism and socialism better than we do.

20101015-01 07:27 Pam Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
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Dear Dennis,

Great article. Thanks—again—for adding fuel to my fire. I just read an article in the *New Yorker* about the history and background of the Tea Party, going back to Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson (Glenn Beck's bete noire). It was illuminating and disquieting. In short, the "lunatic fringe" (Teddy R.'s phrase) has effectively taken over the Republican party, pushing the moderates into the ditch. Even someone like Karl Rove is taken to be moderate and mainstream compared to the likes of Christine O'Donnell. The article focuses on Glenn Beck and his influences. He is scary!! Confused, ignorant Americans have adopted him and his misrepresentations of history. The troubling thing is that there are so many of them. If Tea Party candidates get elected in substantial numbers, the problems we have today are going to look like a birthday party. [You predicted that right, Pam. —SteveB] I am so deeply at odds with American exceptionalism and libertarian disregard for the public welfare I feel helpless and disgusted when I see what is going on. Your calls to un-elect our politicians sound good, but dis-electing ANY politician and replacing him with a Tea Partier would be disastrous, and that's what might happen. You have to choose either a Republican or a Democrat, and the Democrat still remains the lesser of two evils (if you consider ALL politicians evil). I'd rather have Nancy Pelosi than Sarah Palin.

I read articles like this one and they seem so sensible and realistic. Why is it so hard for people to be this rational? Why is it so hard for people to be open-minded and subject to reason? Why do so many people want things that will actually

hurt them? I heard a sixty something woman on NPR the other day, saying she was all for the Tea Party. This woman is on Medicare and Social Security is her only income. What can she be thinking?! I don't trust "the people", I don't trust politicians, I don't trust corporations. Where does that leave me? I really don't know.

20101015-02 09:11 SteveB Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"

The article, above, should be mandatory reading for all Americans.

Oooooo! SOCIALISM! Shudder, shudder. Don't believe the Republican boogeyman lies about Europe. There's a very good reason why so much of the rest of the world is doing so much better than we are in the U.S. (though the Euro ain't that strong either, and Greece, etc. are definitely problems, but, hey, look at our dollar and our debt).

That reason they're doing better is that, in many other countries, the political system is not corrupted by huge campaign contributions from the rich and big corporations. Therefore, laws have been passed which benefit the people as a whole. In the U.S., laws have been passed by corrupted politicians who sell-out the people to the rich, big corporations, military, and even foreign governments.

It's really, simply all a matter of a country's politicians knowing who they work for. They can be made to work for the good of the country, or they can be allowed to have other bosses whose ruthless self-interest and greed corrupt everything they touch.

Why would we, the people, choose to allow the latter?

DIS-ELECT YOUR POLITICIANS.

YOU'RE THE BOSS. IT'S TIME TO FIRE!

20101015-03 12:01 SteveB "Show Me the Donors"

Exactly how your Democrat and Republican politicians are bought and sold...

The whole system, not just one party or the other, is corrupted by Big Money—to the detriment of the middle class, jobs, and America.

"Show Me the Donors" by Richard L. Hasen, Slate

Oct. 14, 2010 (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2010/10/show_me_the_donors.html)

(What's the point of disclosing campaign donations? Let's review.)

What's the point of disclosing campaign donations? With all the controversy still swirling around whether the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is using foreign money to fund its \$75 million effort to support Republican Congressional candidates, the secrecy of Karl Rove's new political groups, and the emergence of new groups with anodyne-sounding names like the "Coalition to Protect Seniors," it's worth stepping back and asking why federal law requires campaign finance disclosure in the first place. Do we still need these laws? Do they work the way they're supposed to?

For years, federal campaigns took place without effective disclosure laws. After Watergate, with its revelations of secret illegal corporate cash being funneled to candidates and with paper bags full of campaign money, Congress finally passed a law in 1974 requiring disclosure of contributions to candidates and political committees and the spending these groups engaged in. At this point, most political players were candidates, political parties or political action committees, and they all were subject to the disclosure rules.

For a long time following, there was a virtual consensus in Congress that disclosure was the way to keep campaigns clean. But, in recent years, as the Supreme Court has struck down more limits on election spending, the consensus has unraveled. Emboldened, opponents of campaign finance regulation have gone after disclosure, too.

Their arguments are not new. As soon as Congress passed its 1974 disclosure laws, a coalition of plaintiffs, including the ACLU, challenged the requirements as overly broad. They argued that at least some disclosure is unconstitutional under the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and association, because compelling someone to reveal who is funding political speech will chill vigorous participation in politics.

The Supreme Court rejected that constitutional challenge in the 1976 campaign finance case, *Buckley v. Valeo*. Confronted with a law that required disclosure of even very small contributions, the court held that the disclosure laws were justified by three important government interests. First, disclosure laws can prevent corruption and the appearance of corruption. Having no more paper bags of cash makes it harder to bribe a member of Congress. Second, disclosure laws provide valuable information to voters. A busy public relies on disclosure information more than ever. This was apparent when California voters recently turned down a ballot proposition which would have benefitted Pacific Gas and Electric. PG&E provided almost all of the \$46 million to the "Yes on 16" campaign, compared with very little spent opposing the measure. Thanks to California's disclosure laws, PG&E's name appeared on every "Yes on 16" ad and the measure narrowly went down to defeat. Third, disclosure laws help enforce other campaign finance laws. Worried about foreign money in elections? Disclosure tells you how much is coming in.

Still, after *Buckley*, the Supreme Court recognized that groups that face threats of harassment from either the government or private sources should have a constitutional right to be exempt from the disclosure laws. In 1982, the Court held that the Socialist Workers Party, which had faced FBI and other harassment, did not have to disclose their contributors to the FEC. This is a narrow exemption for very unpopular groups. But opponents of disclosure have continued to argue that chilling is a problem that affects not just these marginal groups but everyone who might contribute to a political cause.

This argument seemed to gain some traction in the Internet era. No longer is it necessary to trudge down to a government office to wade through disclosure reports. With a Web site like Fundrace, you can plug in your home address (or any address) and see to whom (and how much) your neighbors have donated in federal races. Same-sex marriage advocates created Eightmaps to find Californians who donated to "Yes on 8," as in Proposition 8, the ballot measure outlawing gay unions. There's an ongoing lawsuit over whether these Proposition 8 contributors should have been exempt from disclosing their names because of allegations that they have suffered economic boycotts, lost their jobs, and even faced the threat of violence.

The Supreme Court will eventually have to grapple with whether the Internet changes the constitutional calculus—in other words, whether the ease with which we can now discover who has contributed to what means that people won't feel free to give and whether that outweighs the societal benefit of disclosure in preventing corruption, informing voters, and helping to enforce other campaign finance laws. In two cases last term, however, the court reaffirmed its strong support for disclosure rules. In *Citizens United*, the court struck down limits on corporate spending in campaigns; and at the same time, in an 8-1 vote, it endorsed disclosure as the better solution to preventing corruption from large spending. By the same 8-1 count, the court also, last term in *Doe v. Reed*, rejected an argument in a case similar to the Proposition 8 suit. The court ruled that Washington state residents who signed a petition for a voter referendum that would reverse an "everything but marriage" same-sex union law could not shield their identities.

In these cases, only Justice Clarence Thomas argued for a complete deregulated campaign finance system: no limits and no disclosure. But that doesn't mean that the question of disclosure in the Internet era is really settled. The *Reed* majority was fractured, with six of the eight justices writing opinions—plus Thomas in dissent. At the end of the spectrum close to Thomas, Justice Alito suggested that disclosure in the Internet era can chill political activity and argued that exemptions like the one the court allowed for the Socialist Workers Party should be easy to get. On the other end, Justice Scalia strongly supported disclosure laws, writing that "[r]equiring people to stand up in public for their political acts fosters civic courage, without which democracy is doomed."

The truth is probably somewhere in the middle. As law professors Bill McGeveran and Richard Briffault have persuasively argued, the Internet does have the potential to make individual small contributors skittish about political activity. So we should raise the threshold for disclosure, requiring it for larger contributors and spenders and leaving out the small timers.

That is a far cry from the way disclosure is actually working. Since they haven't made real headway in court, groups that don't want to reveal the identities of their donors look for ways to avoid the mess of regulations that requires it. The Chamber of Commerce says it won't disclose the names of donors funding its multimillion-dollar political advertising blitz because it fears its members will be harassed. But the real reason is probably that the businesses that belong to the

chamber don't want to lose customers for taking controversial positions, as Target recently experienced when it backed an anti-gay candidate in Minnesota.

The disclosure chase has become a kind of Whac-A-Mole whereby groups that want to avoid disclosure choose different organizational forms in the tax code to hide donors. Before Congress passed the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reforms in 2002, groups avoided disclosure by refraining from expressly advocating for the election or defeat of a candidate. For example, in the 2000 election, a group called "Republicans for Clean Air" spent money in the New York presidential primary knocking John McCain's environmental record to support the candidacy of George W. Bush. It turned out (and we know this thanks to some enterprising journalists) that Republicans for Clean Air was none other than Sam and Charles Wyly, two Texas supporters of Bush. Since their ads didn't say "don't vote for McCain," they didn't disclose their identities.

McCain-Feingold and other changes Congress made to the tax code at first put an end to this disclosure dodging. But the fixes only worked for a while. With the help of three Republican Commissioners at the Federal Election Commission, opponents of disclosure have found new ways around the law. This campaign season, the action has moved to 501(c)(4)s. This type of nonprofit generally must report contributions above \$5,000 to the IRS—but that information is not made public. This really does open the spigot: For example, as I predicted, funding to the Rove political group American Crossroads skyrocketed when he opened up a 501(c)(4) affiliate, Crossroads GPS, to take anonymous donations. The Chamber, meanwhile, is a 501(c)(6) trade association, and it, too, does not have to disclose its members or their contributions publicly.

All of these groups, and anyone else spending least \$10,000 in TV or radio ads mentioning a candidate in the period close to an election, has to file a public reports with the Federal Election Commission detailing their spending. But thanks to the FEC, no one needs to disclose who has contributed to pay for these ads, unless the donor is dumb enough specifically to direct the organization to use the money for a particular ad. This system just begs political operatives to set up innocuous-sounding front groups to launder contributions for ads.

This is what pro-disclosure reformers are up-in-arms about. They are filing complaints alleging that the 501(c)(4)s with the bland names are violating tax law because their primary purpose is politics rather than whatever they've declared it to be in the IRS paperwork that got them nonprofit status. But there are two problems with these complaints. We don't know what a group's primary purpose is until it's had a chance to spend money over a year and we can see what share went for political activities. Also, the IRS rules are far from clear as to how to measure "primary purpose."

The bottom line is that the 2010 election will be over long before the IRS decides whether the Coalition to Protect Seniors and its ilk are breaking the law. The same thing happened in the 2004 cycle, when Republicans complained that certain Democratic-leaning organizations were really political committees that the FEC should have regulated. By the time the complaints went anywhere and the groups were ordered to pay fines, they had stopped being politically active.

Democrats in Congress have proposed tightening up these rules yet again in the DISCLOSE Act, but they larded up the bill with new limits on corporate political activities and no Republicans were willing to back even a straight disclosure bill. Even if the bill passed, it it's not clear it would solve the problem. It doesn't bar secret contributions to nonprofit veterans organizations, leading to speculation that they could be the new front groups.

This election season, enterprising journalists, especially at the New York Times, have been digging into the shell game of contributions and spending, including activities by the American Future Fund, Crossroads GPS, and Americans for Job Security. The most important piece the Times has run, by Mike McIntire, demonstrated in vivid detail just how hard it is to follow the money without disclosure rules strongly enforced by the government.* As McIntire explains, after his extensive investigation into the backers of the "Coalition to Protect Seniors" led him to P.O. boxes and unanswered e-mails, it looked as if the health care industry might be behind an ad the group ran attacking the president's health care plan. But in all likelihood, we'll never know for sure. That's how porous our disclosure rules have become.

20101015-04	12:25	SteveB	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
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Dear Pam,

Thanks. I hope you're having a good fall. Those lovely fall days always remind me of college...

I'm happy you're getting fired up! Glenn Beck is a truly evil man. And so transparent. He's out to use people to make money. For a while, I tracked his predictions against reality...but there is no reality to this man. He is a blatant liar!

I have decided that, to shake up the system as much as needs to be done, I don't mind if a few bad eggs get in and a few good eggs get tossed. The result would be that the politicians would all be so scared that something good might happen. The Tea Party wouldn't be able to elect enough people to do anything. A third party scares me. Were this whole batch of scoundrels to be dis-elected (unelected?) again, two years later, you would detect a definite smell from the pants of the government(s), and real, constructive change might be able to happen.

No one I know or have read has come up with any better way to fix things. I don't believe another way exists at this time, except violence, which I totally shun. Haha. You don't trust anybody! Well...I don't blame you. I guess I only trust the ideas that got us here, that have stood the test of time. Finding these, creating agreement on them and acting for the good of the nation is the true calling of the politician and what we should be electing them to do.

Now, we elect them to pay back their campaign donors or to serve some agenda totally their own. Generally, there is one item on the agenda of our present politicians—power. That's OK. That's human nature. But this impulse needs to be controlled by the State, not by the rich and organized, as we now allow to happen.

Our government has been stolen from us by money and no longer acts in our best interest. That much seems pretty obvious.

On the home front, life is difficult here. I'm hoping Marci can get over what has happened and we can get back to normal, but it seems not yet.

20101015-05	13:27	Pam	Re: "Why Germany Has It So Good"
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Dear SteveB,

Fall is here at last, I do believe. After an incredibly hot summer, things have finally cooled down and there is a fall feeling in the air—and in my mood. I love fall. I must be a wintry sort of person, because I consider fall the real start of the year, not spring. The school calendar must have something to do with it. For a long time I existed on one-year contracts, so fall meant I had a year's secure employment and could relax a bit.

Mark and I are getting ready to go out to California for his 40th Stanford reunion. I can't remember if I mentioned that before or not. We haven't been on a "big" trip in quite a while, so we're due. At least Mark is. He's the one with the travel bug. I'm the homebody. Sometimes I feel a little guilty that I have clipped his wings. I know he'd go more places if he thought I wanted to go as much as he does. We do go to the mountains from time to time, stay in a B & B, eat some good food, drink some good wine, and generally chill out. That's always fun. We're going to stay at a B & B for a night in Calif. wine country with Mark's brother and his girlfriend. We're going to visit wineries a la "Sideways."

I wish I had your optimism about the possibility of change in our politics. I agree with you that big money rules the roost, and I don't see how there's anything to stop that. If I were an honest politician with good ideals, I believe I'd go crazy watching all the bs that goes on. I admire Evan Bayh for leaving the Senate, though that just shows how bad things have become. There's something deeper than differences of opinion going on, I think. The anger and hatred that are generated over political issues that ought to be amenable to rational discussion smacks of a strange sort of religious fervor to me. It's like there is a boiling cauldron of anger in human beings that simply seeks a place to run over into. (odd sentence) People are literally out of their minds, rather like Viking berserkers. How can rationality deal with that?

There was a choice moment on "The Colbert Report" last night. (Do you get American TV?) Christine O'Donnell was in a televised debate with her opponent, and she was asked to name a Supreme Court decision that she disagreed with. She couldn't come up with a single thing and just floundered around. It was wonderful to watch! Then they showed a piece of Katy Couric's interview with Sarah Palin where she was asked the same thing. She didn't have an answer either.

This time of year always reminds me of our time in Canada. I loved it there. My kids were little, we had a nice big house (if no money to speak of), and I had some good friends. I loved my days and was very aware of how happy I was (despite having an alcoholic for a husband). When I think back on that time, it seems that I was in a bubble of contentment. I worried about things, but the larger world did not seem especially threatening. I get echoes of that feeling now and I do enjoy my life, but it's like I've lost a protective layer. The world seems more precarious, dangerous,

irrational, and unjust than ever. But perhaps it's not the world that has changed, but me. ("I" is correct, but it doesn't sound right, does it?)

20101017-01	07:49	GaryF	Fw: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

"What If ...?" by John Yates, Washington, MA, Oct. 15, 2010

As we approach the midterm elections, and consider turning control of our Congress over to the Republican party, it is a good time to reflect on policies past, present, and future, and ask the question "What if ...?"

Looking back, what if the majority of conservative Republicans had their way?

Government would be much smaller, and taxes would be much less. But at what cost? Social Security and Medicare wouldn't exist, and many of our elderly would still be dying of abject poverty and lack of health care. The EPA, CAFE standards, the FDA, Labor Laws, and financial regulations would be minimal, and our food, air and water would be polluted with carcinogens and other contaminants. Our cars would be burning leaded gasoline with poor economy, and without pollution control systems. Our food and drugs would be loaded with untested and potentially dangerous chemicals. The National Parks system and the Peace Corps would be unheard of. All of these progressive programs were paid for with tax dollars, and passed only with the overwhelming support of Democrats sufficient to overcome the negative votes cast by the majority of Republicans. Without these legislations, our work days would be long and children would be laboring in factories and fields.

Our economy would be one of boom and bust, and our society would be two class, with a small number in a ridiculously wealthy class and the masses living in or near poverty. Our natural resources would be squandered and our infrastructure would be decrepit.

[And our educational system would be a complete shambles and masturbation (+ + + +) would be illegal.—SteveB]

If this were not true, would any of these policies have been invented? All of these conditions existed prior to passage of these progressive and liberal regulations. Why would one think that business is any different now than it has been throughout history? By charter, Corporations must put shareholder profits at the top of their priorities, and without regulation many would pay little heed to environmental, worker, and social protections where they infringe on profits. Recently, many have moved their operations to foreign countries to avoid these liberal policies, and are polluting the environments and abusing the workers' rights there to maximize profit. Given the chance, would they not operate the same way here?

Recently, under Bush, our country was led from a Democrat controlled decade of peace, prosperity, and budget surplus to a Republican controlled condition of deficit, economic ruin, and embroilment in two unwinnable and unnecessary wars. A simple, cost effective, transparent, and controllable Single Payer National Healthcare plan proposed by Obama was forced by an opposing Congressional Republican party, which was marching in lock step, to become 1,500 pages of legalese designed to preserve the massive profits enjoyed by insurance companies. Obama's Economic Stimulus Program, designed to create jobs by rebuilding our infrastructure and promoting green business, was compromised to the point of making it inadequate and to some degree ineffective, causing our recovery to be sluggish and delayed. Even as a slight minority, Republican policies continue to damage our ability to prosper.

Looking forward, if the Conservatives have their way, the Bush era tax cuts will be extended for the wealthiest class, costing the Federal Budget \$700B, money our government can ill afford. Social Security will be privatized and subject to the whims of the market (much to the delight of Wall Street!). Reductions in the size of government and reductions in taxes will bring massive cuts in school, police, and fire department budgets, necessary services that are already going under water as the Federal government withdraws support to the States in a desperate effort to regain control over an expanding deficit. Reduction of government means allowing our infrastructure to decay further, our parks to close, our social welfare programs to fail and our poor to rely on charity which is already grossly insufficient to meet demand. Millions of publicly funded jobs will be cut, creating another crisis within our economy as demand for goods and services goes with the jobs, and private businesses fail for lack of demand.

After a disastrous decade of Republican control followed by two short years of Democratic control, our economy and society are just beginning to recover. As we enter the midterm elections, now is a good time to ask the question "What if ...?", and decide if we really want to return to the short-sighted policies promoted by the vast majority in the Republican Party.

[20101022-01](#) 17:23 Dennis Tea Party Training Video

Take a course in Teabagger Ethics 101: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGB8Uuffi4M>.

[20101025-01](#) 07:38 SteveB Re: My Experience with Taxes

Dear GaryC,

That must have been really interesting work in Washington!

You know, my wife attended Georgetown too. She studied law there on a Fulbright Scholarship for a year after she got her Bolivian law degree. I think she was there in 1989. (She's a little younger than we are.)

Your last paragraph is a beautiful, pithy description of how politics works in the U.S. If the Tea Party candidates get elected, I'm moving to Bolivia. Wait a minute! I've already moved to Bolivia...

The South American economies seem to be booming, even though they are mainly leftist. Growth rates aren't equal to China or India (except maybe for Brazil) but they sure trounce the U.S.

Hope you're having a great fall! Not much time left to get a coney at the Lafayette Dog 'n Suds before they close for the winter. They're the best!

[20101025-02](#) 07:55 SteveB Re: "Senior Citizens Brace for Social Security Freeze"

Dear GaryC,

Well, the Republicans love to throw around the "S" word this year, don't they? But affordable healthcare for all citizens is a prerequisite of a decent society to live in. Why can't we solve this one in the U.S.? Our system sucks and the Democrats have been bought-out of fixing it, apparently. The tax code does keep a lot of people employed. haha. And taxing everyone, especially the rich, to improve education for the good of the whole country is a pretty socialistic idea too, when you think about it. But, as you say, it is essential if we are to ever be competitive again.

I also think the social idea of doing something for the very poor and mentally incapacitated people who live homeless on our streets is something we need to attend to. And how can government not have a role in solving the energy problem? Especially through taxes and incentives? These can't all be called socialist ideas. F*ck the Republicans! I could say that wanting to come into my bedroom to tell me what I can and can't do, monitoring my telephone and internet usage, trying to tell women what they can and cannot do with their own bodies, and fighting unnecessary wars are fascist ideas!

But other than that and national security, I think the role of government should be as small and efficient as possible. I'm no bleeding-heart liberal. I think illegal immigration and the balance of payments deficit must be stopped. Benefits for illegals must be stopped. Work for illegals must be stopped. I don't care what the cost is, I know the rewards for the country would outweigh any cost. F*ck the Mexicans!

Let's see...anything else? Oh, how about the energy problem! Lots and lots of money possible in that arena...

[20101025-03](#) 08:39 SteveB Re: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?

If anyone finds any part of this email to be lies or incorrect, please let me know. Personally, I don't see how any of this can be disputed. Facts are facts, no matter which party you might erroneously "believe in".

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Food for thought...

Once upon a time the government had a vast scrap yard in the middle of a desert. Congress said, "Someone may steal from it at night." So they created a night watchman position and hired a person for the job.

Then Congress said, "How does the watchman do his job without instruction?" So they created a planning department and hired two people, one person to write the instructions, and one person to do time studies.

Then Congress said, "How will we know the night watchman is doing the tasks correctly?" So they created a Quality Control department and hired two people, one to do the studies and one to write the reports.

Then Congress said, "How are these people going to get paid?" So they created two positions: a time keeper and a payroll officer, then hired two people.

Then Congress said, "Who will be accountable for all of these people?" So they created an administrative section and hired three people, an Administrative Officer, Assistant Administrative Officer, and a Legal Secretary.

Then Congress said, "We have had this command in operation for one Year and we are \$918,000 over budget, we must cut back." So they laid off the night watchman. NOW slowly, let it sink in. Quietly, we go like sheep to slaughter.

Does anybody remember the reason given for the establishment of the DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY during the Carter Administration? Anybody? Anything? No? Didn't think so!

Bottom line: We've spent several hundred billion dollars in support of an agency....the reason for which not one person who reads this can remember! Ready?

It was very simple...and at the time, everybody thought it very appropriate. The Department of Energy was instituted on 8/04/1977. Its purpose: TO LESSEN OUR DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL.

Hey, pretty efficient, huh?

AND NOW IT'S 2010—33 YEARS LATER—AND THE BUDGET FOR THIS "NECESSARY" DEPARTMENT IS AT \$24.2 BILLION A YEAR. IT HAS 16,000 FEDERAL EMPLOYEES AND APPROXIMATELY 100,000 CONTRACT EMPLOYEES; AND LOOK AT THE JOB IT HAS DONE! (THIS IS WHERE YOU SLAP YOUR FOREHEAD AND SAY, "WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?")

33 years ago 30% of our oil consumption was foreign imports. Today 70% of our oil consumption is foreign imports. Ah, yes—good old Federal bureaucracy.

NOW, WE HAVE TURNED THE BANKING SYSTEM, HEALTH CARE, AND THE AUTO INDUSTRY OVER TO THE SAME GOVERNMENT? [Not exactly! —SteveB]

Hello!! Anybody Home?

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred. You cannot build character and courage by taking away people's initiative and independence.

"You cannot help people permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves."
—Abraham Lincoln

Dear SteveB

Could be. But things are no better with Demos in control so what's the solution? I find people spending 95% of their time trying to find something to blame and very few spending any time wondering about solutions.

What if ... the U.S. wasn't stuck in the rut of a two-party system?

20101025-06 10:18 SteveB Re: What If Conservative Republicans Had Their Way?

Dear Charis,

Well, believe me, things are much better than they would be otherwise had Democrats never been in control in the past (as this email illustrates).

To my mind, we must avoid more than a two-party system like the plague. It would allow more power for the lunatic fringe, which has already become so huge and powerful. I think it would be an experiment fraught with danger. But you're right, it may have to come to that.

I always talk about solutions when I talk about the problems. We must reform campaign financing! The only way I know to accomplish that is to kick-out all the corrupt politicians who are against such reform. Oh, you say that would be all of the politicians? I agree! Kick the bums out! All of them! Let's get a fresh start.

We must remember that we are all Americans. We were born or naturalized that way. None of us were born Democrat or Republican. We must examine closely our loyalties to one or the other totally corrupt party. (Though I can't help but believe that the Democrats, though partly misguided, are still the less corrupt of the two parties. But I don't let this thought make me into any kind of party loyalist!)

20101025-07 10:31 Clark Re: How Government Works

Just FYI, Abraham Lincoln did not say the quote at the bottom.

<http://www.snopes.com/quotes/lincoln/prosperity.asp>

20101025-08 10:42 SteveB Re: How Government Works

Dear Clark,

Yep, you are exactly right. Thank you. Hope you're having a great fall.

20101025-09 16:16 Dennis "Tea Party Inc.: The Big Money & Powerful Elites Behind the Right Wing's Latest Uprising"

Countdown to a putsch...

It takes mega bucks to subvert a democracy and make it look like a Tea Party. Does anyone else see a parallel here with developments in Europe eight decades ago? Will the new brown shirts be red, white & blue?

"Tea Party Inc.: The Big Money and Powerful Elites Behind the Right Wing's Latest Uprising" by Adele M. Stan, AlterNet

Oct. 24, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148598/>)

Win or lose, the Tea Party movement will come away from next week's elections triumphant, having injected into the Republican Party a group of candidates pledged to the dismantling of government and wed to the religious right. Of the movement's dozen favored candidates for U.S. Senate, all are anti-abortion, and five oppose it even in cases of rape and

incest. Among their number are Colorado's Ken Buck, who has compared homosexuality to alcoholism, and Nevada's Sharron Angle, who wants to demolish both the Department of Education and the Environmental Protection Agency. Major GOP players, from political strategist Karl Rove to former Bush speechwriter David Frum, have fretted publicly over Tea Party extremism, with Frum complaining of the movement's "paranoid delusions."

But it has now become clear that these Tea Party "outsiders" are all part of an inside game, a battle for control of the Republican party.

Though billed as a people's movement, the Tea Party wouldn't exist without a gusher of cash from oil billionaire David H. Koch and the vast media empire of Rupert Murdoch. Many of the small donations to Tea Party candidates have been cultivated by either Fox News Channel, a property of Murdoch's News Corporation, or the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, chaired by Koch. The movement's major organizations are all run, not by first-time, mad-as-hell activists, but by former GOP officials or operatives.

Taken together, Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks (another far-right political group seeded by the Kochs) and Murdoch's News Corp, owner of Fox News and the Wall Street Journal, form the corporate headquarters of a conglomerate one might call Tea Party, Inc. This is the syndicate that funds the organizing, crafts the messages, and channels the rage of conservative Americans at their falling fortunes into an oppositional force to President Obama and to any government solution to the current economic calamity. Groups such as Tea Party Express, Tea Party Nation, and the FreedomWorks-affiliated Tea Party Patriots; the bevy of political consultants for hire; and various allied elected officials can be understood as Tea Party, Inc.'s loosely affiliated subsidiaries. The Web sites of FreedomWorks, Americans for Prosperity and the Tea Party side projects of Fox News Channel's Glenn Beck are linked with those of Tea Party Express and Tea Party Patriots, all of which in turn solicit support for Tea Party candidates.

The armies of angry white people with their "Don't Tread on Me" flags, the actual grassroots activists, are not the agents of the Tea Party revolt, but its end users, enriching the Tea Party's corporate owners just as you and I enrich Google through our clicks.

Coming Out Party

Tea Party, Inc. was on full display in our nation's capital in late August, when Glenn Beck gathered his angry white multitudes at the Lincoln Memorial on the anniversary of Martin Luther King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech. The tens of thousands of Tea Partiers who showed up for this political revival were mobilized by untold hours of free promotion on Murdoch's network, while a related "Take America Back" convention, held the day before at Constitution Hall, was convened by FreedomWorks.

At that event, the crowd was treated to a trailer for a forthcoming film called *Runaway Slave*, narrated by Rev. C.L. Bryant, an African-American pastor from Louisiana identified as "a former NAACP radical," who made the case that liberalism is yet another means of enslaving black people.

"[I]n the black community," Bryant says in the film, "there's always somebody who's gotta keep them n*ggers in control." A photo of Jesse Jackson flashed on the screen. Then one of Al Sharpton. Some images flashed by so quickly that they were barely discernible. One was of a wriggling maggot.

Before the night was out, Glenn Beck himself graced the stage, asking the crowd to "expect miracles" at the next day's rally.

A few miles away, a more sedate crowd was jammed into a Marriott ballroom for a gala dinner that wrapped up yet another activist conference, the Defending the American Dream Summit, this one convened by the Americans for Prosperity Foundation. Striding toward the podium to the opening strains of "New York, New York" was chairman Koch. Tall and dapper in a precisely tailored dark suit, the 70-year-old stood in sharp contrast to the 2,500 middle-class women in pastel frocks and men in department-store sport coats who populated the ballroom tables. Koch prefers to be known for the hundreds of millions he lavishes on his adopted city's cultural institutions—the New York City Ballet, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Metropolitan Opera, to name a few. But the quieter largess behind events like these, dispensed by David Koch and his brother Charles, has reshaped Washington, D.C., and our national politics. Though Americans for Prosperity, which he founded, and its foundation, whose board he chairs, have been instrumental in organizing the Tea Party movement, Koch still publicly claims to have no Tea Party ties, making tonight's appearance notable.

"Six years ago, when we launched this organization," he said in his uneasy and halting style, "we envisioned a grassroots organization of Americans from all walks of life banded together to advance economic freedom and prosperity by limiting government's reach, and curbing government's growth, reining in government spending. ...We envisioned an organization that would boldly and unapologetically defend the free-market economy. The Tea Party is Koch's dream come true; the Washington summit, he told attendees, was designed to train grassroots activists in the defense of the "free-market economy" and "to send a message to the political class that these activists [are] energized and watching" its members.

The Capitol Hill Franchise

The self-appointed head of Tea Party, Inc.'s Capitol Hill division is the junior senator from South Carolina, Jim DeMint. DeMint is the top Senate recipient of donations from the Koch Industries' PAC, reeling in \$22,000 in the current election cycle for a race he stands virtually no chance of losing. The Kochs' PAC is also the number three donor to DeMint's PAC, the Senate Conservatives Fund, which he spends on other races.

In DeMint, the Kochs found a politician who will make no compromises on their far right agenda, favoring tax cuts and opposing health-care reform, green energy, labor unions and regulation of any kind. Last year, DeMint received the Americans for Prosperity Foundation's George Washington Award, bestowed upon the senator by Koch himself. Speaking at the organization's summit in August, Koch said DeMint "has consistently stood for freedom against this big-government agenda." In backing DeMint's power play against leaders of the Republican establishment, particularly his challenge to the power of Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, the Kochs stand poised to push those establishment leaders into the same uncompromising positions. Echoing DeMint's agenda are Rep. Michele Bachmann, a Minnesota Republican who, in July, founded a Tea Party Caucus in the House of Representatives, and Rep. Mike Pence, a Republican from Indiana, who is House GOP conference chairman and a charter member of the new caucus. Both are Tea Party favorites, and Bachmann is a regular speaker at Americans for Prosperity events. At the Americans for Prosperity Foundation's RightOnline conference, held in Las Vegas in July, Pence used a luncheon address to make the case for melding the free-market Tea Party agenda with the values of the religious right, while Bachmann entertained a banquet crowd with her plan to phase out Social Security.

FreedomWorks has its eye on a political transformation in the Senate, and is closely allied with DeMint, whose PAC is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on behalf of many of the same Tea Party-backed Senate candidates endorsed by the FreedomWorks PAC, including Sharron Angle (currently in a tight race against Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid), Rand Paul in Kentucky, Marco Rubio in Florida, and Utah's Mike Lee. (Bachmann's Tea Party Caucus was announced the day after Paul, addressing FreedomWorks activists on a July 13 conference call, suggested a Tea Party caucus for the Senate.) Each of these candidacies began as primary challenges to establishment Republicans endorsed by McConnell.

In September, Huffington Post political columnist Sam Stein cited a Democratic strategist who said that by the midterms' close, Americans for Prosperity will have spent \$45 million on organizing "voter education" and get-out-the-vote activities that test the limits of legal nonprofit expenditures. Actually, Americans for Prosperity president Tim Phillips told me his plan was to raise and spend even more, though he wouldn't name a figure. Even the lesser amount, according to tax filings, would represent a tripling of its funds since 2008.

FreedomWorks also hopes to triple its revenue, from \$3 million in 2008, according to tax filings, to an anticipated \$10 million this election cycle, according to Adam Brandon, the group's communications director. In a fundraising video sent by FreedomWorks to new members, leaders announce that every dollar raised will be matched by an unnamed donor. Both Brandon and Koch Industries spokesperson Melissa Cohlmiya say that FreedomWorks has received no funding from the Kochs or their foundations since 2004, so there is likely another high-roller involved. But neither FreedomWorks nor Americans for Prosperity, nor its foundation, is required by law to disclose its donors and—like advocacy organizations across the political spectrum—they don't.

At any rate, the vast expenditures on organizing have worked in at least one way: FreedomWorks' membership had reached nearly 1.1 million by mid-October, according to the group's Web site ticker. Americans for Prosperity claims 1.5 million members and chapters in 31 states.

Both groups excel at training activists and spreading the word for Tea Party candidates, who have raked in a significant portion of their campaign donations from small donors, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. When Angle's campaign announced earlier this month that it had raised a whopping \$14 million since June, spokesperson Jarrod Agen told the Washington Post that 96 percent of those donations were \$200 or less. (At press time, neither Angle nor the FEC had released official filings.)

One "voter education" exercise I witnessed was the dispatch of participants in July's RightOnline conference to canvass the Las Vegas suburbs, armed with a script about Harry Reid. "Reid voted for the failed \$800 billion stimulus plan that has wasted our tax dollars on more government," it read. "Reid's policies will make government bigger, waste more money, drive up budget deficits and kill jobs."

The canvassers had just heard Angle, Reid's opponent, deliver the conference's closing speech. But as they boarded vans for their deployments, they were reminded this was, of course, a nonpartisan exercise—since the Americans for Prosperity Foundation, a nonprofit, is forbidden from endorsing candidates.

The Money Men

The Tea Party's two major patrons are fabulously wealthy. David Koch is heir to the fortunes of Koch Industries, described in 2008 by Fortune as the largest privately held corporation in the United States, and was ranked by Forbes as one of the world's richest people, with an estimated personal wealth of \$17.5 billion. Rupert Murdoch, founder and CEO of News Corp—ranked by Fortune as world's second-largest entertainment company—was also rated by Forbes among the world's wealthiest, with personal wealth of \$6.3 billion.

Koch Industries, with David as executive vice-president and his brother Charles as CEO, presides over a vast conglomerate of oil and gas interests, as well as holdings in timber and chemicals. Since the 1970s, the two men have funded and controlled a large network of right-wing institutions, launching the libertarian Cato Institute in 1977 and the Mercatus Institute in 1985, all of which advocate business deregulation under the rubric of "free markets."

Both cornerstones of Tea Party Inc.—FreedomWorks and the two entities comprising Americans for Prosperity—sprang from Koch's riches. FreedomWorks rose from the ashes of Citizens for a Sound Economy, an early Astroturf group and think tank he founded during the Reagan years to advocate for lower taxes, less regulation, and smaller government. CSE was rebranded as FreedomWorks in 2004, after a corporate-style merger with Empower America, founded by the late Republican Congressman Jack Kemp to limit government and privatize government services.

That same year, Koch rebranded CSE's foundation as the Americans for Prosperity Foundation and founded its sibling organization, Americans for Prosperity. Koch hired the politically connected Tim Phillips to serve as president of both organizations. (Phillips is a business partner of former Christian Coalition director Ralph Reed in a political consulting firm, Century Strategies, which was implicated, but never charged, in the bribery scandal that sent Jack Abramoff to prison.)

Koch and his allies built the underpinnings for a movement not quite ready to be born. The absent ingredient was rage. But by 2009, with the collapse of the economy and the election of the nation's first African-American president, the supply chain of rage was complete, and the Tea Party came roaring to life. Rupert Murdoch gave the new movement legitimacy by means of sympathetic columns in the Wall Street Journal, boosterism from Sean Hannity and Glenn Beck and a regular media platform on Fox News Channel for Tea Party personalities and candidates. As Jane Mayer remarked in her New Yorker profile of the Kochs, the Tea Party had at last turned their private agenda into a mass movement.

The role of these groups in launching the movement is indisputable. In concert with Glenn Beck's 912 Project, FreedomWorks did the logistical organizing for the first Tea Party march on Washington, in Sept., 2009. Beck launched the 912 Project on his Fox News Channel show, promoted the march on his show and mobilized for it through a social networking Web site built by his production company.

Since then, the groups have been tearing through the Murdoch-Koch agenda. Americans for Prosperity says it convened, through an offshoot, some 300 rallies against health-care reform, and once the healthcare bill was passed in March, the organization quickly moved to block cap-and-trade as a means of regulating carbon emissions. In fact, at an Americans for Prosperity Foundation conference I attended in Pittsburgh in August 2009, cap-and-trade was already being introduced as the next Tea Party battle. This is a longstanding priority for Koch Industries, a major polluter heavily invested in old energy technologies. In a Mar., 2010 report, Greenpeace said that, over the years, the Koch brothers have "quietly funneled" nearly \$50 million to "climate-denial front groups that are working to delay policies and regulations aimed at stopping global warming."

Wall Street Journal columnist Stephen Moore—a member of the newspaper's editorial board and a former fellow at the Koch-funded Cato Institute—told the gathering of Tea Party activists he thought global warming was "the greatest hoax of the last 100 years." He called the climate change agenda "not just evil, but...contrary to the free-market system that made this country great."

The Media Storm

It is not unusual for op-ed pages to reflect the bias of an outlet's owners. It is highly unusual, however, for news operations to engage in outright political organizing on behalf of a CEO's agenda. Yet that's just what certain Fox News hosts and *Wall Street Journal* columnists seem to be doing on behalf of Rupert Murdoch, who is opposed to regulation of any kind, hates taxes, and despises labor unions—having famously broken unions at his U.K. newspapers.

News Corp's best-known personalities accomplish this by working hand in glove with the like-minded ideologues at Americans for Prosperity. Fox News hosts, along with Stephen Moore and fellow *Wall Street Journal* columnist John Fund, are regular speakers at conferences sponsored by the Americans for Prosperity Foundation. At the group's 2009 RightOnline conference, a third of the plenary speakers were News Corp writers and pundits, including Moore and Fund, as well as Jim Pinkerton and Michelle Malkin, who were paid Fox commentators at the time. Fox News personality John Stossel spoke against health-care reform at three rallies sponsored by Americans for Prosperity, while Sean Hannity, host of a prime-time Fox News show, live-broadcast Americans for Prosperity's 2009 Tax Day protest in Atlanta—and the network preempted regular programming to present it. Moore and Fund also shill for the foundation's anti-regulatory "worker education" project, known as Prosperity101. The door swings the other way as well. By means of his regular presence on Fox's airwaves and column at the FoxNation Web site, Americans for Prosperity vice president Phil Kerpen was instrumental in building the case against Obama green jobs adviser Van Jones, who was ultimately forced to resign his White House post. At last year's RightOnline conference, I asked Americans for Prosperity president Tim Phillips if his group worked in partnership with News Corp, given the presence of so many of its personalities on the roster.

"Not at all, not at all," he replied with a laugh. "The fact is, the *Wall Street Journal's* my favorite newspaper; I love those guys. I like what they write. I look at Steve Moore and John Fund, and those are two of the smartest guys. But there's no partnership—financially, understood, or anything else."

News Corp enjoys a similarly friendly—if similarly informal—relationship with FreedomWorks. In early October, FreedomWorks was promoting its Take America Back campaign—a get-out-the-vote effort—with a photo of Glenn Beck standing before his iconic blackboard. The FreedomWorks' Web site also featured an audio message from Beck: "I've been sayin' it for weeks. If you care about freedom, you must get involved. If you really want to end tyranny in Washington, you must get involved. And the group you need to find out about is FreedomWorks. ... Take America back—FreedomWorks.org." Just days ago, Beck's image was used in a splash screen to solicit contributions for FreedomWorks' PAC.

To Rupert Murdoch, Glenn Beck is much more than a broadcaster; he's Murdoch's lead community organizer. His show has leached revenue since the civil rights group Color of Change launched a boycott of his advertisers, reportedly chasing away at least 100. But his act is far more profitable to News Corp in another way—by creating the conditions for a stripping away of federal regulations that limit the growth of News Corp and its bottom line. And so Beck's rants become more shrill and his claims more preposterous, whether he is stoking racial fears or recalling that old bogeyman threat of looming socialism—a theme straight out of the John Birch Society, of which the Kochs' father, Fred, was a founding member.

The Campaigns

In Washington, D.C., Adam Brandon, FreedomWorks' communications director, is bubbling over with excitement at the end of a long, hot July day. "I'm racking up the frequent flyer miles," he says of his relentless weekend trips to train Tea Party activists in how to chalk up wins for candidates FreedomWorks' PAC has endorsed. FreedomWorks doesn't aim to elect just any Tea Party candidate to office: as with DeMint's Senate Conservatives Fund, its endorsements seem designed to undermine the current GOP establishment, push the party rightward and further an antiregulatory agenda. Well before others joined in, FreedomWorks embraced far-right insurgencies, notably those of Marco Rubio and Rand Paul. Both endorsements put FreedomWorks at loggerheads with Sen. McConnell, whose candidates—including his hand-picked protégé in his home state of Kentucky—were vanquished.

DeMint's PAC spends hefty amounts on behalf of its endorsed candidates, including \$447,000 for Rubio and \$95,000 for Paul (\$95,000). FreedomWorks matches DeMint's cash with ground forces. The PAC runs an online "service center," where, according to FreedomWorks president Matt Kibbe, Tea Partiers "get the tools they need to turn a protest into a sophisticated, turn-out-the-vote effort." Those tools include walking maps, door-hangers, talking points, and "a sophisticated phone banking system that is going to allow you to make calls in all of our targeted races." If you're an activist in Wisconsin, FreedomWorks can set you up to turn out voters for Rand Paul in Kentucky. Combined, these Tea Party outfits have proven that they have the potential to decide elections.

When I asked whether FreedomWorks' endorsements were chosen in part to undermine McConnell, Brandon declined to answer directly, but his response revealed the intimate ties between his outfit and DeMint's. DeMint has been stalwart on behalf of FreedomWorks' positions, Brandon explained. These include opposition to healthcare and energy reform and labor unions. But DeMint needs more people like him in the Senate in order to create something of a caucus—"a new power center," Brandon called it.

Their combined might was recently on display in Utah, where DeMint and FreedomWorks joined forces to replace incumbent Republican Senator Bob Bennett. DeMint's PAC and FreedomWorks' PAC each rank among the top twelve donors to Bennett's challenger, Tea Partier Mike Lee.

In Utah, candidates must win delegates at their state party convention; primaries take place only if a run-off is needed. So FreedomWorks helped pack the convention with Tea Party-allied delegates, and Lee showed convention-goers a video endorsement by DeMint. Bennett lost his seat that day, coming in third with 26 percent of the vote. (The remainder was split between Lee and another Tea Party candidate.) Lee prevailed in the subsequent two-way primary, with more help from DeMint's PAC, which has spent \$315,000 on his behalf, including \$184,000 in so-called "independent expenditures," according to FEC filings.

Suppliers and Subsidiaries

While Americans for Prosperity, FreedomWorks and News Corp run the boardroom of Tea Party, Inc., a growing number of national organizations have sprung up to provide a range of services; call them the suppliers. Some have similar names—Tea Party Patriots, Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Express—though they compete ferociously. Reed's Faith & Freedom Coalition provides a unique service to Tea Party Inc.: the promise of delivering religious-right voters to its candidates. Like the big players, these groups, too, are run by former Republican officials or political consultants.

Tea Party Patriots, perhaps the most substantial of these groups, was born of FreedomWorks, as co-founder Jenny Beth Martin points out in a FreedomWorks video, and its state chapters do the on-the-ground organizing for FreedomWorks' agenda. Martin, a former Republican political consultant in Georgia, coordinates the group with Mark Meckler, a Northern California attorney who previously ran an online political consultancy with GOP ties.

More flamboyant is Tea Party Express, another name for Our Country Deserves Better, an anti-Obama PAC founded by Howard Kaloogian, the California attorney who orchestrated the recall of Gov. Gray Davis. The group has already weathered controversy—its spokesperson, radio talk-show host Mark Williams, was forced to exit the organization in July after authoring a demeaning satire of NAACP president Ben Jealous. But Tea Party Express has nevertheless raised \$6.6 million this election, according to recent FEC data, making it, in the estimation of the *New York Times*, "the single biggest independent supporter of Tea Party candidates." And the group has racked up primary victories for Tea Party insurgents such as Christine O'Donnell in Delaware, who benefitted from \$250,000 in Tea Party Express ad buys; Joe Miller in Alaska, who beat incumbent Lisa Murkowski with the aid of \$550,000 from the group; and Angle, who has enjoyed nearly \$1 million in "independent expenditure" advertising by the group, according to FEC filings.

"Sharron Angle, in my opinion, wouldn't have won [the Republican primary] without the Tea Party Express," California Republican consultant and Tea Party organizer Eric Odom told participants in this year's RightOnline conference.

Reed's Faith & Freedom Coalition, which seeks to unite the Tea Party and the religious right, is provides a unique service to Tea Party Inc.: delivery of religious right voters to its candidates. On Sept. 11, Reed brought together a few hundred activists for a strategy briefing at Washington, D.C.'s Mayflower Hotel. The event featured speakers from the GOP's glory days, from Karl Rove to Newt Gingrich. There, Reed instructed activists on how to "move the needle" when the polls are against you.

"We're building databases of faith-based and fiscal conservatives in every key congressional race, U.S. Senate race or governor's race, and a lot of targeted state legislative races," Reed explained. "Those voters are going to be contacted an average of seven times. We're gonna mail 'em, we're gonna phone 'em, if we have an e-mail, we're gonna e-mail 'em, if we have a cell phone number, we're gonna text message them. And at the end, we're gonna knock on their door."

Reed's big announcement of his new Faith & Freedom Coalition took place in Aug., 2009, at an Atlanta rally against health-care reform convened by Americans for Prosperity, the organization fronted by his old business partner, Tim Phillips. FreedomWorks chairman Dick Arney delivered the keynote address, and Fox News contributor Herman Cain

made the business case against health-care reform. Phillips couldn't make it to Atlanta that day. He was stuck in Pittsburgh, at his RightOnline conference, rubbing elbows with the stars of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

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Dennis

"The Supreme Court Sold Out Our Democracy—How to Fight the Corporate Takeover of Our Elections"

Was the judicial activism of the Roberts Court in *Citizens United* the result of the majority's ignorance of the law because they never actually read the case history? Or is it more sinister than that?

"The Supreme Court Sold Out Our Democracy—How to Fight the Corporate Takeover of Our Elections" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Oct. 25, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148608/>)

Election 2010 is being fought on a wave of campaign dollars unleashed on the American people by the Supreme Court in its *Citizens United v. FEC* decision. The court, led by a majority of staunch right-wingers, struck down limits on third-party "electioneering" ads based on a tortured interpretation of the First Amendment guarantee of free speech.

Thomas Mann, a Brookings Institution scholar, wrote that the decision "will likely go down in history as one of the Supreme Court's most egregious exercises of judicial activism." Rep. Peter Fazio, D-Oregon, told the Huffington Post last week that "the Supreme Court has done a tremendous disservice to the United States of America... They have done more to undermine our democracy with their Citizens United decision than all of the Republican operatives in the world in this campaign." DeFazio said he is "investigating articles of impeachment" against Chief Justice John Roberts for committing perjury when he promised he wouldn't be a judicial activist during his Senate confirmation hearings.

The floodgates are open, and American democracy is at risk. But the decision didn't emerge out of thin air. Rather, it was the culmination of the development, over more than a century, of a bizarre theory of jurisprudence that holds that corporations enjoy the same Constitutional rights as human beings.

For years, it was believed the concept was enshrined in the law by the Supreme Court in 1886, but in his groundbreaking book, *Unequal Protection: How Corporations Became People—And How You Can Fight Back*, historian and radio host Thom Hartmann revealed that the principle was in fact the result of what may be the greatest corporate fraud ever perpetrated on the American people.

With the first post-Citizens United election looming—and the release of *Unequal Protection* in paperback—AlterNet caught up with Hartmann to discuss how corporations bought themselves a perverse regiment of civil rights.

Joshua Holland: I'd like to start with a very brief kind of bumper sticker explanation of 'corporate personhood.'

Thom Hartmann: Sure. From the sixth-century English law until today there have been two types of persons under the eyes of the law. The first are natural persons, human beings, and the second are artificial persons—corporations, churches, unions and governments. The reason why there has to be artificial persons is because you have to have some sort of status as a person to be able to own property, pay taxes, enter into contracts, and sue or be sued.

The concept goes back to the sixth century, but it's only in the last 100 years of the United States that anybody has had the weird idea that those artificial persons should be entitled to human rights under the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution.

JH: So BP and Goldman Sachs have the same constitutional rights that you and I enjoy?

TH: Somewhat. They have not yet claimed their Second Amendment rights.

JH: That's a good thing.

TH: But we're waiting. You got Blackwater, actually.

JH: Yes. I would think they'd be the first on that boat.

TH: The point is that through various claims and cases before the Supreme Court, corporations have explicitly claimed First Amendment free speech rights, Fourth Amendment rights of privacy, Fifth Amendment rights against taking and against self-incrimination, and 14th Amendment rights against discrimination.

JH: Now, although it's been with us for a very long time, it wasn't until the 1980s that corporate starting breaking it out with increasing frequency. Can you give us just a couple of examples of where corporations asserted these constitutional rights?

TH: Sure. In short form, in 1874 I believe it was, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution were passed to free the slaves. The 14th Amendment says that everybody has equal rights under the law.

I think it was clear to the authors, and pretty much to everybody, that they were talking about human beings—natural persons. But in the 1880s, a decade later, the railroad corporations, which, as a result of the Civil War were the largest corporations in America, started bringing a series of cases before the Supreme Court ... they all started in the 9th Circuit Court in California under Judge Steven J. Field, asserting that because the word "natural" does not exist in the 14th Amendment, that corporations should be considered persons.

JH: Now let me just interrupt you here. If I were to go down to a law school and get out the kind of textbook that maybe a first-year law student would read, it would say that the courts had in fact decided that in the case *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*. Is that right?

TH: When I first wrote *Unequal Protection*—the first edition came out I think in 2000 or thereabouts—I was invited to the Vermont Law School to give a talk on it, and I spoke to about 300 law students, professors and history teachers. And I said raise your hand if you know that in 1886, in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, corporations were given the rights of persons under the reconstruction-era amendments to the Constitution? And pretty much everybody in the room raised their hand and I think the few who didn't just hadn't gotten to that point in their studies. And then I proceeded over the course of the next hour to demolish it basically by reading from the case.

There was a case before the Supreme Court in the 1980s, called *First National Bank of Boston v. Belotti*, which was one of the first cases in the modern era that really gave corporations the right to participate in political elections. Massachusetts had this law that said corporations could only give money to ballot initiatives that affected their businesses. But the case involved a ballot initiative to regulate gay marriage, and the banks had no rights to spend money on that—the stockholders' money. And the First National Bank of Boston had broken that law. The Attorney General sued them and won in Massachusetts, and it was taken to the Supreme Court. And in that case, Justice Rehnquist—who, regardless of what you think of him, was one of the most brilliant jurists of our time—wrote a dissent in *Boston v. Belotti*. And in that dissent—what I'm giving you is my bad paraphrasing of it—Renquist said, "Back in 1886, in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, this Court, without the benefit of public debate or discourse, decided that corporations have equal rights under the 14th Amendment." Then he went on to say how he thought that it was a wrongly decided case.

Well, it turns out, it wasn't wrongly decided. And even Renquist didn't know it! Forget the law students in Vermont Law School!

JH: Now let's recap the story. You went down to a dusty Vermont courthouse—I don't actually know if it was dusty, I'm just making that up ...

TH: The book was dusty! I don't think anybody had pulled it off the shelf in 100 years.

JH: And you found that what the real deal was. Tell me about that, and also tell me who JC Bancroft Davis is.

TH: Yes. Jack Chandler Bancroft Davis is his name. I started out writing a book about Thomas Jefferson's view of America and how we went off track. How we got off the rails. And I wanted to primary source everything in the book, like a good historian would do. And when I came to the 1800s—when corporations became a major force in America, and led right to the massive accumulations of wealth that were marked the 'Robber Baron Era'—there was a lot of material about how this case had been decided in 1886. And so I thought I ought to read the case so I could quote the exact language. Because nobody was quoting the exact language. Everybody was saying it was decided, but even Renquist in his *Belotti* dissent didn't quote the exact language.

So I went into Montpelier, Vermont's, old law library and spoke to Paul Donovan, the librarian there. And I said I'm looking for that 1886 case of Santa Clara County v. Southern District Railroad. And he said, 'Oh, the one where corporations became people?' And I said 'Yeah, that one.' And so he finds the book of Supreme Court proceedings from the term of 1886. He pulls it out, blows the dust off the top, and opens it on the table. This was before they started putting acid in paper in the 1930s, so the pages were still in pretty good shape. And he flipped through it, and he found the case, and he said, 'Here's the head note. You can ignore that—that has no legal status.'

And so I sat down and I just read it, all the way through, looking for those magic words that I could put in my book. And they weren't there. In fact, what the case was about was Santa Clara County was charging property tax to the Southern Pacific Railroad. And the way that they calculated property taxes for right of way was by fence posts along the railway. So X number of dollars for every 100 fence posts. And because Santa Ana County was charging a lower rate than Santa Clara County, the railroad was screaming foul, and in fact refused to pay the tax. And this ended up before the Supreme Court. And the railroad made a whole bunch of different arguments. And one of those was that this was illegal discrimination under the 14th Amendment, that they weren't being treated equally under the law by two different counties in the same state.

But the argument that I just described to you was not even referenced in the decision. Because there was a clear and explicit part of California law that gave each county the right to determine their own property taxes. The California law and the California Constitution backed it up.

And at the very end of the case, it basically said that the Court did not feel the need to address those federal Constitutional claims because they were able to find remedies within the California law and in the state Constitution.

JH: So they didn't even consider those arguments, they didn't need to, because they were able to decide the case based on other issues.

TH: Right. One of the core concepts of jurisprudence is minimalism. You always try to—it's called "judicial restraint"—you always try to decide a case as narrowly as possible, and if within that narrow band, you can find the remedy, then you don't go beyond that.

And so I read that, and I went back to Paul, the librarian, and I said "I'm not finding in this case what I thought I'd find. I'm baffled." And he said, "Well, did you read the head note? Maybe that will give you a clue where to find it." You know, as if I'd overlooked something. So I said, "What's a head note?" And he said, "Well, a head note is basically Cliff notes—you know, cheat sheets for lawyers to understand what a case is about without having to read the whole case." They're written by the Clerk of the Court. And so we went back and he found the head note in the book, and I read the head note. And there, a couple of paragraphs into the head note, was this language where the author of the head note, the Clerk of the Court, said he was quoting the Chief Justice of the Court, saying that corporations are persons and entitled to rights under the 14th Amendment.

So I take my 75 cents, or whatever it was, and my copies of the book, and we very carefully copied it on the copy machine there and Paul put it back on the shelf. Then I went around the corner to an old friend who was a lawyer in Montpelier, Jim Deville, and I laid out my copies on his table. And I showed him the language toward the end of the decision. I said, "Okay, here's the argument, here's the argument, here's the argument, here's the language at the end of the decision." And he goes, "Wow! That's not what we learned in law school!"

And so I went back to the head note, and I highlighted that sentence in the head note, and I said, "Well, this is probably what you learned in law school, right?" And he goes, "Holy sh*t!" And I said, "What do you think?" And he said, "Well, this is why they tell you in law school: don't cut corners and just read the head notes."

Because occasionally the head notes are wrong! He said in this case, not only was the head note wrong, it actually contradicted the decision! And I asked him whether it had any legal status. And he said, "No, there was a 1909 Supreme Court decision that explicitly ruled that head notes have no legal status."

JH: Now the Clerk ... let's get back to the Clerk just briefly.

TH: Sure.

JH: So this is JC Bancroft Davis.

TH: That's correct.

JH: Tell me a little bit about what you found out about him when you dug into his story?

TH: Well, that was pretty hard to find. Because to the best of my knowledge nobody had ever done anything about him, or looked into him, other than Davis himself—he had published a number of books. He was quite the dandy. And he was the son of a very wealthy family. His father was the governor of Massachusetts. He had been one of the original incorporators of the New York and Newburgh Railroad, and so he was a railroad guy.

JH: Okay, so basically we're seeing that a lot of what we have taken for granted as legal corporate power, is in a sense a result of what may be the greatest fraud in history.

TH: That's right. And so when I started digging into this, not only did I find out that Davis was questionable—kind of a dicey character—but that this was one of a series of cases, tax cases, that all originated in the 9th Circuit in California, with Steven J. Field, and got kicked up to the Supreme Court, in which every single one of them argued that the 14th Amendment gave corporations personhood.

And in the first few, the Court just rejected out of hand. And that was until 1886. And so we started digging into it, and wondered, who the hell was this Steven J. Field guy?'

Field had basically two allies on the Supreme Court, plus Davis, who had no vote. And so we started digging into the Steven J. Field collection at the National Archives, and we found correspondence between him and the railroads that I don't think anybody had looked at in 100 years, if ever. In some of them, the railroad barons were in some cases implicitly, and in one case rather explicitly saying that if he could get them this corporate personhood, they would sponsor him to run for President of the United States in the election of 1888, I think it was, or maybe 1892. And he didn't actually succeed. In fact, Steven J. Field actually wrote a dissent in Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad, in which he loudly complained about the fact that they hadn't established corporate personhood. And you'd think somebody would read the damned thing!! You know?

JH: So we have this ...

TH: What you had was a corrupted Supreme Court, and it had been corrupted by these very, very wealthy and powerful guys who ran the railroads and who were the richest men in America. And you know, that led to what we have now, which is this kind of corporate aristocracy. And there's a direct line between the two.

JH: So let's bring it from the 19th century into the late 20th and 21st. I just want to kind of get a brief sense, if you can give me a couple of examples of how modern multinationals have used this principle in recent years to push back on regulation, etc.

TH: Sure. Nike argued that they had the right to lie in advertising, because they had a 1st Amendment right of speech. That was ultimately, I guess, arguably decided in Citizens United. There was a chemical company that argued that the EPA invaded their 4th Amendment right of privacy by photographing them—from the air—making illegal chemical discharges. There had been a number of cases where giant agricultural operations, toxic waste operations, and large chain stores have argued that keeping them out of a neighborhood or community is the same thing as telling a black person he can't sit at a lunch counter. In other words they claimed their 14th Amendment rights. There have been a number of cases over the years where corporations have claimed that they have the right against self-incrimination.

You know, the original corporate laws, when corporations were created in the early 19th century, their books had to be totally public for the mid part of the 19th century, they had to be totally available to the Secretary of State in each state in which they were incorporated. But since the early 20th century they have been able to claim 4th Amendment privacy rights.

JH: Now, a quick aside. Did you catch a story about the town of Monroe, Maine, rejecting corporate personhood? They passed a local ordinance?

TH: Yes. There have been over 100 communities in the United States that have done this. So yes, there have been a lot of communities that have done this. There has not been a case where a community has made this law and it has been challenged and it has been taken to the Supreme Court. What happens more often is that the communities pass the laws,

the corporation comes in and says "Okay, we're going to fight you in court." The community looks at what the legal costs are going to be, and the community then repeals the law. And it's happened numerous times.

JH: Now in your book, you have a chapter on restoring government of, by and for the people. And I think you take a fairly optimistic tone.

TH: I do.

JH: Tell me, what is the basis for that optimism? What are you hoping to see happen? How might we restore government of, by and for natural people?

TH: Right. For natural persons. Well, we had a time in this country when African Americans were not fully people. In fact what's so ironic is that in the Dred Scott decision, the Supreme Court ruled the persons were property. And that was the mirror image of the 2010 Citizens United decision, which ruled that properties can be persons. But over time the idea that African Americans should not have full rights has become unthinkable.

In the early 20th century, if a woman's husband died, she could not dispose of his assets or her assets ... in fact she didn't even have the legal right in most states to decide what religion to raise her child in, or even necessarily to keep her child. A male executor had to be appointed who made all those decisions for her.

And then on top of that there have been times like the late 19th century when the vast mass of working people in the United States have been victims of oppression—we had kind of descended into a Victorian era kind of serfdom, and the response to that was the rise of the Progressive Movement in the 1880s and 1890s. And the labor movements, and the Wobblies, and all this stuff. Which led to the Progressive Era of Teddy Roosevelt, and then to, again, after the Crash in 1929, the Progressive Era of Franklin Roosevelt.

So what I see when I look at the arc of history in the United States is that we're continuously moving upward towards a more egalitarian, healthier, more (small d) democratic republic. And also that there have been a lot of hiccups along the way—lot of setbacks. For example, early in the 20th century, there were a number of cases where the Supreme Court actually struck down minimum wage laws, child labor laws, maximum hour laws—struck all that stuff down, and said that it was a violation of the Commerce Clause.

And I think it was in '36 or '37, when finally enough people on the Supreme Court changed, and Roosevelt was able to start getting into law the things that the Supreme Court, just a generation earlier, had declared unconstitutional. So we've had some major setbacks as a result of the Supreme Court, and as a result of just general public sentiments.

But I think that (small d) democracy ... freedom ... these words are in our DNA as Americans. They're just burnt in there. They're not going to go away. And this oppression of working people by trans-national monopolies—I'm not even going to use the word "corporation"—is I don't believe something that will stand. I think eventually the pain is going to get so bad that the average American is going to say "Now I understand!" We have a long history in this country of people figuring out that something's wrong, and then figuring out how to fix it. So I'm very optimistic actually. There are a lot of people who are trying to solve this problem today. And one of the solutions has been legislative, for example trying to just deal with the First Amendment right of free speech stuff, that was addressed in Citizens United. But I think that that's very dangerous, because it doesn't address the real issue of corporate power. It doesn't address the corporations using the Fourth Amendment, the Fifth Amendment, the 14th Amendment. Similarly, there's a movement by some very well intentioned progressives to amend the Constitution, to specifically say corporations don't have First Amendment free speech rights. And I think that that's dangerous also. Because it not only leaves intact the Fourth, Fifth and 14 Amendment rights that corporations are claiming ... and arguably Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Amendment rights ... but it implicitly recognizes them.

And so I believe that the only way to address this is to amend the Constitution clearly and explicitly to say that the 14th Amendment was intended to free slaves who are natural persons ... and that only natural persons, human beings, have rights under the Bill of Rights, and that corporations are merely the creation of governments. Because they are. They are legal fictions, and they have only those rights and privileges that the individual states decide to give them.

I think if we don't do the whole thing, if we only do it part way, we might end up, at least over a short period of time, worse off than we were, even though we'll think that we had a victory.

(Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of *The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy* (and *Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America*.)

[20101027-01](#) 15:14 Dennis

Excerpt: *The Great American Stick-Up: How Reagan Republicans & Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street While Mugging Main Street*

A bipartisan wrecking of American capitalism...

from *The Great American Stick-Up: How Reagan Republicans and Clinton Democrats Enriched Wall Street While Mugging Main Street*, by Robert Scheer, Nation Books

Oct. 27, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148609/>)

Ronald Reagan called her his favorite economist, and Wendy Lee Gramm seemed to deserve the praise. Both while she was an academic economist and after Reagan appointed her to various regulatory positions in his administration, she excelled in articulating antiregulatory rhetoric that marked her as a true believer in what would later be labeled the "Reagan Revolution."

Reagan himself had risen in politics after six years of tutelage as a spokesman for the General Electric Company, from 1954 to 1962. It was a time of conversion, as he described it, from being a "hemophiliac liberal" Hollywood actor to a cold-blooded Big Business conservative. Carrying the company's banner, Reagan came to absorb the message that government regulation developed during the New Deal had become a chokehold on economic growth. Although as governor of California and later in the White House Reagan would preside over massive government budgets and even expand them, he found in Gramm an ideological "small government" soul mate. The Mercatus Center, an anti-regulation think tank based at George Mason University from which Gramm has proselytized mightily, proudly boasts in her website biography that the Wall Street Journal "called her 'The Margaret Thatcher of financial regulation.'"

However, unlike the former British prime minister, neither Gramm nor President Reagan was able to bring about much change in the balance between government and the private sector. While his administration did funnel hundreds of billions of dollars in new Cold War military spending to corporate contractors—hugely expanding the national debt in the process—Reagan was not able to deliver to Wall Street a parallel windfall.

For Wall Street, the holy grail was not cash handouts but a deconstruction of the complex public-private partnership ushered in by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to restrain capitalism's most self-destructive patterns. For these so-called FIRE firms—Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate—this half-century-old regulatory system, modest as it was, was an irritant that limited their ability to gamble and leverage their dominant positions.

While the companies just wanted to be free of restraint to profit at will, Reagan and Gramm were true believers, arguing that the regulatory status quo was outmoded and onerous—even socialist—hobbling business growth. The top target in their sights was the New Deal-enacted Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, signed into law by President Roosevelt, which regulated the financial services industry. Key to its effectiveness was the seemingly simple wall it erected between the commercial banks entrusted with depositors' funds—and insured by the government's Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the agency created by Glass-Steagall—and the wilder antics of basically unregulated Wall Street investment banks like Goldman Sachs.

In 1982, Reagan signed the Garn-St. Germain Depository Institutional Act, easing regulation of savings and loans and, in the eyes of critics such as Paul Krugman, paving the way for the S&L collapse in the 1980s as well as the subprime housing crisis decades later. Nevertheless, Reagan made clear even then that this was not the biggest target on his list.

Unfortunately, this legislation does not deal with the important question of delivery of other services, including securities activities by banks and other depository institutions. But I'm advised that many in the Congress want to put this question at the top of the banking deregulatory agendas next year, and I would strongly endorse such an initiative and hope that at the same time, the Congress will consider other proposals for more comprehensive deregulation which the administration advanced during the 97th Congress.

Reagan's timeline, however, was overly optimistic; economic problems, particularly the savings and loan meltdown and the spiraling national debt, made politicians of both parties cautious. Yet, in one of the grand twists of American politics,

the proposals he sought would eventually be signed into law more than a decade later by a Democratic president with a reputation of being a liberal child of the 1960s. In fact, at the end of Reagan's presidency, Congress passed legislation that toughened rather than weakened financial industry regulation. As *Time* magazine reported on Aug. 17, 1987:

Ronald Reagan's dream of carrying out a sweeping deregulation of the U.S. economy has stirred a powerful backlash on Capitol Hill. Never has that been more apparent than last week, when Congress passed its first comprehensive piece of banking legislation since 1982. The White House had hoped the bill would remove many of the governmental shackles that inhibit competition between banks, securities firms and other institutions in the burgeoning field of financial services. In fact, it does just the opposite.

Reagan signed the bill, the Competitive Equality Banking Act of 1987, only after criticizing it for not only failing to tear down the Glass-Steagall walls but, worse, temporarily extending "the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act restrictions on securities activities to state-chartered, non-member banks for the first time." He made it clear he was signing the bill despite his quite vociferous objections because it contained provisions for funding for local banks in trouble. It was at once a statement of the enormous importance he attached to decimating Glass-Steagall and an admission that he would come to the end of his last term without accomplishing that goal.

So legislatively his administration was a bust when it came to reversing the New Deal. Yet rhetorically it was an enormous success in propagandizing a view that so-called big government was the cause of America's late-twentieth-century crisis of economic confidence. He managed to popularize and make palatable the heretofore fringe belief that government regulation of the financial sector, rather than saving capitalism from itself, was an irrational hindrance to individual profit and even a threat to our national power. Speaking at the signing of the 1987 bill, Reagan noted, "These new anti-consumer and anti-competitive provisions could hold back a vital service industry at a time when competition in the international capital markets increasingly challenges United States financial institutions, and they should be repealed."

With great political irony, this speech would be repeated almost word for word a dozen years later, when Democrat Bill Clinton reversed a half century of his party's core economic principles to argue for the repeal of Glass-Steagall. Clinton's public rationale for this watershed shift was that if regulation of Wall Street were not "modernized"—political code for weakened or eliminated—the United States would lose out to foreign competition in capital markets.

Much of the groundwork for Clinton's break was laid by the diligent Republican Wendy Lee Gramm and her husband, Senator Phil Gramm, also a Texas Republican. The high priestess and priest of financial deregulation met at a conference in New York, where Wendy Lee, a PhD student in economics, was interviewing with Phil Gramm for a position at Texas A&M University, where he was a senior professor. Wendy Gramm would later tell interviewers that as Professor Gramm was helping her on with her coat at the interview's conclusion, he expressed interest in dating her if she came to Texas. She told the *New York Times* her response to him was "Oh, yuck," but Gramm persisted, and six weeks after she arrived on campus, they wed.

His bold self-confidence might have helped carry the duo as apostles of an unabashedly Big Business creed then increasingly gaining currency in academic economic circles and within both political parties. Back in 1976, in fact, Jimmy Carter, now known mostly for his postpresidency activism on behalf of Third World democracy, Middle East peace, and ending poverty in America, was a strong advocate of business deregulation. As Georgia's governor, Carter had been a fiscal conservative who, in the tradition of conservative Southern Democrats, shunned Northern liberalism.

Phil Gramm, too, came out of that tradition. After obtaining his doctorate in economics from the University of Georgia in 1967, the year after Carter lost his first bid to be that state's governor, Gramm moved on to Texas A&M and taught economics for twelve years before jumping into politics. Gramm was elected to Congress as a Democrat in 1978; just three years later, he would become the epitome of a "Reagan Democrat" by cosponsoring the Gramm-Latta budget that implemented Reagan's economic program. Proudly, at his retirement from the Senate, Gramm cooed, "in 1981, I wrote the first Reagan budget." Gramm then abruptly resigned from the U.S. House of Representatives on Feb. 12, 1983, forcing a special election for his seat, and the next month was elected to that seat as a Republican. After serving a third term, he completed his meteoric rise by being elected to the Senate in 1984. Until he retired, he would prove to be arguably the most influential Republican on financial issues.

As chair of the Senate's Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee from 1995 to 2000, he was in a position, with Clinton's support, to finally make Reagan's commitment to radical deregulation of the financial markets a reality. This was accomplished with two signature pieces of legislation that he—surely more than anyone else—was responsible for putting into the law books: the Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999 and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000.

Certainly there were many other legislators and bureaucrats pushing for what was euphemistically called "banking reform." By now the FIRE industries were pumping hundreds of millions of dollars into each major election cycle to lobby both parties to support the reversal of Glass-Steagall's regulatory provisions and similar regulations, and so they had plenty of eager helpers. With union membership on the decline in America, Democrats decided they no longer could let Wall Street money flow in such unequal measure to Republicans; under Clinton's lead, the floodgates of campaign payola were now fully bipartisan.

Senator Gramm's committee status and long-term persistence on the matter, however, gave him alpha status: The legislation that finally would reverse the venerable Glass-Steagall laws would carry his name first: the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, which would be signed into law as the Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999. However, some years before Glass-Steagall was dismantled, Phil's wife played a key role, as a member of both the Reagan and the Bush I administrations, in shaping the rapid changes in the financial markets brought about by internationalization, computer-driven trading, and the introduction of a whole new discipline of "risk management," whereby Wall Street wizards deployed complex mathematical models to create a vast array of new financial products, such as the now infamous credit default swaps and collateralized debt obligations.

As was seen throughout the Reagan and later the Bush I and Bush II administrations, the Republicans had realized they could impose de facto deregulation of Big Business by appointing to influential federal commissions and agencies "watchdogs" who were sympathetic to the corporations they were supposed to be monitoring. Of course, this end run around congressional authority was probably not as satisfying or foolproof as wiping out the regulation altogether, yet it proved quite effective in pleasing CEOs, who had spent the 1970s complaining about red tape and overzealous government investigators.

Thus it was that professional deregulation activist Wendy Gramm came to be appointed by Reagan as chair of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission in 1988, which was the governmental arm most likely to regulate those newfangled investment devices that seemed so much like futures. Gramm, who would never think of questioning any of these clever "modern" gimmicks, saw them as an unmitigated blessing.

Rather than destabilizing the world economy, as they would prove to do two decades later, these products were supposed to be a win-win that would increase market efficiency by bringing order to pricing and the management of risk. Greater productivity, lower prices, and enormous new sources of wealth would inevitably follow. Of course, the top echelon of Wall Street insiders would skim the cream off, but, the argument went, the rest of the country would benefit as well. Not only would the economy be stronger, but American individuals, pension plans, and charities could all ride this dragon skyward, through investments and through donations from the mega-rich looking for tax shelters. It is no accident, then, that in each of the recent economic collapses, from Enron to Bernie Madoff, arose the ever-present laments from charities that were suddenly defunded.

The derivatives and swaps involved buying and packaging financial risk and selling it based on a system of corresponding grades. So a bank might buy up a collection of mortgages or credit card debts from lenders, who could then take this capital to bankroll even more loans. The buyers of this securitized debt would sort and slice it into levels of predicted risk; the more risk, the higher the return, of course. A buyer in this still small but expanding market could then "insure" this risk—for a price.

The end result by the turn of the century was a massive casino in which bettors poured money into huge gambles on expected gain or to hedge against a loss if conditions changed. Think Las Vegas—only this market was unregulated instead of being supervised by government agencies, the same way we regulate bets made on gambling tables or the future price of products such as wheat, pork bellies, or oil on regulated commodity exchanges. Such regulations increase transparency and accuracy in the description of the commodity, the terms of trade in their future, and the accountability of the parties involved.

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SteveB

"The Perils of Privatizing Government" & "The Glenn Beck School of Investing" & "Don't Blame Obama for This Mess"

PLEASE, MY FRIENDS, VOTE! BUT PLEASE VOTE AFTER YOU THINK, NOT BEFORE!

["The Perils of Privatizing Government" by Karen Aho, MSN Money](#)

Oct. 27, 2010, (<http://money.msn.com/investing/the-perils-of-privatizing-government.aspx>)

By now, you've probably heard the story about the Tennessee man whose house was allowed to burn down because he hadn't paid a \$75 fire-protection fee. The heart-rending image—firefighters standing by as a family's home is reduced to ashes and four pets die—became instant fodder for a fierce election-year debate over what the government should and shouldn't be doing with public dollars.

With the midterm elections looming and Tea Party candidates stumping for drastic cuts in government spending, their foes held out the Tennessee fire as a glaring example of the perils of privatization. "This is essentially the same as denying someone essential medical care because he doesn't have insurance," economist Paul Krugman blogged for The New York Times. "So the question is, do you want to live in the kind of society in which this happens?" On the other side, most of the logic went this way: If the firefighters had saved the home anyway, who'd ever pay the fee again? "I know that if I opted out of the program before, I would be more likely to opt-in now," Jonah Goldberg wrote on *National Review Online*. It's not as if people aren't aware of the potential problems of privatization. After 9/11, the nation decided airport security couldn't be left in the hands of poorly paid private screeners. The high cost—in dollars and human life—of outsourcing operations to contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan has been painfully clear for years.

But as the recession drags on and governments sink deeper into the red, it's easy to be swept up in the call for government to do less. That's until a picture of what that might look like emerges: public firefighters, in uniform and with hoses in hand, doing nothing.

The public-private debate

Privatization, broadly defined as any transfer of a government service to a private company, is used at every level of government and often with positive results. It can involve work contracted out but paid with city dollars, or fees paid by the users of, say, a service or a roadway.

In the Tennessee fire, a city department responded to the call. But the home was outside the city, where residents were required to pay a fee for service—akin to a privatized model.

Privatization is almost as old as cities themselves. The ancient Greeks and Romans raised funds by auctioning off the right to serve the public for a profit. Privatization in the U.S. is nothing new either, but it had been largely abandoned by the mid-20th century in favor of a growing public sector.

"In the 19th century, New York City used to experiment with privatizing street cleanup. It was always cheaper to privatize, but the streets didn't get clean," says Elliott D. Sclar, a professor of urban planning at Columbia University and the author of "You Don't Always Get What You Pay For: The Economics of Privatization." "Finally, by the 1890s, they had thrown up their hands."

The history of fire protection is similar. "In the 19th century, cities used to burn down with private fire companies," Sclar says, so they went public.

The basic concept—protecting the common good by protecting each individual—has been applied to schools, libraries, fire and police service, trash collection, transportation, infrastructure, health care, social services and more. The success of these services is credited with laying the foundation for a prosperous American middle class with an innovative industrial base.

But as the backlash against "big government" grew in the 1970s and '80s, privatization re-emerged. By 2007, half of all local governments said they had considered privatizing some services, with nearly 90% citing cost-cutting as the reason, according to the International City/County Management Association. Name a public service today, and somewhere a private CEO is running it: prisons, schools, parks, trash collection, welfare centers, mass transit.

Proponents say the profit motive inspires companies to innovate, streamline and cut costs. The Reason Foundation, a libertarian think tank, says privatization typically reduces costs between 5% and 20%. A good chunk of those savings comes in the form of reduced labor costs. Today, 30% of public-sector workers are unionized, typically receiving pensions, good health benefits and better-than-average pay. Just 7% of the private sector is unionized. (Public-sector unions also tend to support Democrats—another reason privatization is a big issue for the largely Republican Tea Party movement.)

"Oftentimes it's about breaking unions," says Dean Baker, a co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, a progressive Washington, D.C., think tank. "Insofar as you can get a lower-cost work force, you can get savings."

Cutting costs by driving down wages

Like many public agencies, Jackson County, Ore., considered the bottom line when it tried to reopen its 15 library branches, shuttered after a loss of federal funds in 2007. While negotiating with the county workers union, it put management of the libraries out for bid.

Library Systems & Services, the only private company to bid, won the contract with a bid that cut costs by about 40% over what the union had proposed. With library hours reduced, the company rehired 70 of the 110 laid-off library members, at their same salaries but with reduced benefits, says Amy Blossom, the manager of the Ashland branch.

An analysis by the Oregon State Library found that while overall library staffing in Jackson was reduced by 36%, the number of librarians was reduced by 52% and the number of those with advanced degrees—common for the position—by 57%.

This net result—lowered compensation overall and fewer benefits—is typical with privatization, according to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, a union. "It's certainly been one of the factors in the growing inequality" between rich and poor that led to the recession, Baker says. "You get rid of those jobs, you put more downward pressure on the wages of other jobs."

Critics also say there's no guarantee that work will be done less expensively, or better, with privatization. In fact, the accounting books at private companies often remain closed. Jackson County, while happy with Library Systems & Services, has no idea exactly how the company is spending tax dollars. (The company declined to comment for this story.)

That veil of secrecy can be costly. Consider the case of New York City's hiring of computer consultant Science Applications International for a project called CityTime. After more than a decade, there's no end in sight, and the New York Daily News reported recently that more than 400 consultants on the project have billed the city an average of \$400,000 a year. The city's controller is looking into why a project that was supposed to cost \$68 million has cost more than \$700 million, the newspaper reports.

Asked to comment for this story, Science Applications provided written statement saying: "CityTime is working now for 73,000 employees with a 99.9 percent accuracy rate and SAIC is eager to have the system up and running in the remaining agencies once those agencies give us the green light. We believe CityTime brings a great value and savings to New York City taxpayers and we are pleased to help ensure its completion."

Ironically, the project was for equipment to prevent time-clock abuses by city employees.

Privatization "is a very mixed bag. Just because something is done in the private sector doesn't mean it's done more cheaply," says Baker, particularly once you factor in "highly paid executives."

"A government that's incompetent to deliver a service is not going to be any more competent to monitor a contractor," Sclar adds.

Get rid of government?

Even when privatizing services does save money, the question remains: How far do we want to go? Privatization purists say taxpayer dollars should never help pay for programs that would not turn a profit in the private sector or where there's a private alternative. Some Tea Party candidates have gone as far as calling for privatization of Social Security and Medicare, the nation's biggest social programs.

Take Amtrak. Experts think half of its routes would be profitable if run by private companies, says Chris Edwards, an economist and the editor of Downsizing the Federal Government, an online guide of the libertarian Cato Institute. The routes that wouldn't be profitable—largely in rural areas and outside the Northeast—"don't make any sense and shouldn't be run," he says.

"I don't think anything should be off limits," he says. He'd like to see the Federal Aviation Administration—essentially the police of the skies—privatized, along with airports. The media and federal accounting office could monitor operations, but ultimately customers would drive performance. If Dulles International Airport in the Washington, D.C., area hired a lousy security company, passengers would be more likely to use nearby Reagan National Airport instead, Edwards says.

Another area ripe for privatization: highways and toll lanes, something that's already being done in some areas. Let private companies raise capital and charge fees, and if you can't pay, slum it on the public pavement. [Often this does not work as well. —SteveB]

Life in second class

But how much of this would the public stand for?

Sure, we'll accept first class in the skies. In fact, bizarre pricing gaps among travelers make flying affordable for the average Joes in the sardine cabin (see "The secrets behind crazy air-travel prices"). But should there be two classes of airport security, two classes of fire protection, two classes of public safety? And what happens when those paying to drive on private roads get tired of paying a gas tax to support public roads? It can be annoying to pay both, Edwards concedes.

When Sclar, whose work takes him around the globe, lectures on privatization, he shows slides of what he calls "the transportation of the rich in São Paulo, Brazil, and the United States." The first slide shows a helicopter, the safe mode of transport in Brazil, where public services have been heavily privatized and public areas are often unsafe. The second shows a New York City taxi—a very democratic mode of transportation. "When you don't have good municipal services, societies break down," Sclar says. "The social costs of that can be enormous over time."

So when do you let it burn?

The Tennessee fire has helped put the high-level debate into perspective. When city officials ordered the firefighters of South Fulton, Tenn., not to put out Gene Cranick's fire, their reasons made good business sense: If you provide a service for free, no one will pay. But was it the right decision for a community?

As Cranick mourned his losses, strangers across the country called him a freeloader, an ingrate and a jerk. Firefighters from other departments said that the South Fulton officers should be ashamed of themselves. After the fire, one of Cranick's relatives went to the fire station and reportedly assaulted the chief.

Even privatization proponents hedged. "The Obion County fire seems a clear example of government failure, not market failure," wrote Thomas Firey for the Cato Institute. "It's not difficult to imagine what a private fire service would do in an event like the Obion fire: It likely would extinguish the blaze and then send the homeowner a bill."

On the National Review Online, writer David Foster suggested this right business decision may not have been the moral one. Others said the fire was not a good example of privatization anyway: When the subsidized city department entered the market, it unfairly blocked out competitors.

But even in an entirely free market, the question would remain: When your neighbor's home is burning, do you have a responsibility to help, or do you let it burn for a lack of a fee?

Or perhaps, if you're not paid up, we just assume you're not really a neighbor. That's what one poster at The Agonist seems to suggest, blaming Cranick for not having just paid the fee and adding, "Jeebus people, step up and be part of the community already."

[GLENN BECK SAYS HE'S "NOT A JOURNALIST". HE SAYS HE'S "NOT A FINANCIAL ADVISER". WHAT IS HE THEN? JUST A MAN WITH A GOOD MONEY-MAKING SCHEME!—SteveB]

"The Glenn Beck School of Investing" by Karen Aho, MSN Money

Aug. 26, 2010, (http://groups.google.com/group/alt.politics/browse_thread/thread/46f4ad3e479634e2)

(Conservative talk-show host Glenn Beck doesn't claim to be a money expert, but he does dispense a lot of financial advice. Are gold and seeds good places to put your cash?)

Glenn Beck likes to worry, and one of the things he's worried about is your money.

As the conservative talk-show host sees it, progressives are wrapping up a decades-long plot to supplant the capitalist system with a godless, Marxist state, one where entrepreneurship, stock prices—in fact, your entire financial future—may as well be in a coma.

If that's not enough, there's rising debt and inflation to worry about, along with natural disasters, social programs and terrorist attacks. Sometimes, Beck worries himself to tears.

Although there's a lot of fun to be had mocking the radio and television personality's on-air theatrics (Beck gets into the act, touting himself as the "crying conservative") and apocalyptic advice (stock the fruit cellar), there's no laughing at the very real anxiety he taps into.

His predictions, after all, are just a few steps beyond those of such respected economists as Nouriel Roubini—the one they call Dr. Doom.

In Beck's case—and no, he doesn't call himself a financial adviser—it's not a stretch to envision an avid listener ending up with a cupboard of seeds, a pantry of dehydrated food and a stack of gold coins bought in part by cashing in a 401k (something Beck has said he's done).

It's that last idea that financial experts find worrisome. Here's Beck during a Fox News broadcast last year: "How much did you lose if you had any money in your 401k? Did you lose, let's say, I don't know, 40% of it? So, that's gone. Now, did you know that the dollar has lost nearly 29% of its value in the last seven years? 29%. OK, that's gone. Just gone."

Beck is right that 401k's took a beating in the 2008-09 market meltdown, but since the rally that began in Mar., 2009, stocks have regained about 60% of their value. Inflation, however, averaged just 2.51% a year from 2002 to 2009, for a 19% loss in the dollar's value.

But no mind. Although the facts may be off, the underlying sense of peril remains. And for those fears, Beck offers his vast audience—now about 30 million strong across his media platforms—plenty of prescriptions.

They range from the specific ("Buy this book today") to the vague ("Be prepared"), with seemingly contradictory switchbacks along the way ("Now may be the perfect time to buy gold," but on another day, "You don't listen to me for financial advice, don't").

Despite the twists, plenty of people do follow. When the Beck effect can be measured, it is profound. His recommendations can yank even a dry economic tome up to No. 1 in sales, sending publishers into frenzied reprints and Beck into that lofty sphere of media influence previously occupied only by Oprah Winfrey.

When Goldline International, a California gold coin seller, began advertising with Beck in 2008, the private company was generating \$275 million in annual revenue. Two years later, revenue had nearly doubled, to \$523 million, says the company.

So Beck is clearly good for his sponsors. (Or those that remain. More than 100 have left since Beck called President Barack Obama a racist; religious leaders called for a boycott after Beck equated social justice with Nazism.)

But is following his advice good for your money? Do his suggestions and product endorsements—they can be hard to separate—make good financial sense?

Advice for a 'crazy world'

Beck broadcasts for four hours every weekday, three on a syndicated radio show that reaches 9 million listeners in a week and one on Fox News, where 2.06 million TV viewers tune in daily. He posts an additional one-hour recap on his website, appears on colleagues' shows and speaks at his own "American Revival" rallies and comedy shows. It's a lot of talking.

Most of the talk is anti-administration political commentary—often with Beck playing teacher at a blackboard—that leans heavily on conspiracy theory and religion. Although he's seen on a television channel with "news" in its title—and at the

prime news hour of 5 p.m.—Fox News classifies Beck's show as opinion, not news. Beck himself says he aims to "enlighten and entertain."

Though he doesn't claim to be a financial expert, Beck uses some of his ample airtime to give money advice.

Of course, other conservative hosts draw equally wide multimedia audiences. But Beck is the most fervent among them when it comes to suggesting that some kind of "economic apocalypse"—a phrase he's written on his chalkboard—is near and in admonishing his guests to take specific actions to "prepare for the worst," a powerful one-two punch for a listener assessing his own financial portfolio.

At the Glenn Beck Program Web site, Beck's face adorns most ads, all of which appear plucked from the Doomsday Times. Recently those included an encrypted computer backup system (\$55 a year), a survivalist newsletter (free), an emergency solar generator (\$1,697), non-hybrid seeds to plant a "full acre crisis garden" (\$149) and "food insurance," a two-week supply of freeze-dried food in a backpack (\$200) that Beck says is "great stuff."

"We live in a crazy world. I live in a nuts town," Beck says in a promotional video on the Food Insurance website, gesturing toward ground zero from his midtown Manhattan office.

"You just want to be able to have some peace of mind," he continues, in a soft, reassuring tone. "Do the easy stuff now. Prepare yourself for what we all hope won't happen but probably will if you're not prepared."

The survivalist bent sounds more like Mormon teaching than financial advice. (Beck joined the church, which encourages food storage in preparation for disasters, during his drug and alcohol recovery in 1999.)

The ads dovetail nicely with Beck's commentary, in which he forebodes an "economic apocalypse" and prescribes a "3-G system" for protection: "God, gold and guns."

Combined, this all helps fuel sales of another product Beck endorses as "insurance," one that offers listeners an opportunity to drop some serious cash: gold.

All that glitters

On his TV show on May 19, Beck held two gold coins in his hands, scribbled figures on a chalkboard and said of gold's value: "It doesn't change with inflation. It never has."

Gold comes in many forms for investors, and plenty of experts have recently been touting the metal, an age-old hedge against market uncertainty. But what's in Beck's hand is telling: His programming leads listeners toward coins, particularly so-called collector coins with high markups that limit any investment value. (Read "Should you buy gold coins?")

In an ad for Rosland Capital, one of several sponsors of Beck's Fox News show, fellow talk-show host and former Watergate operative G. Gordon Liddy tells viewers to invest in gold. He then clinks several coins in his hand and says, in booming staccato: "That's the sound of security. That's the sound—of gold."

In a report issued in May, Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y., called the pairing of such ads with hosts who habitually predict a plummeting dollar and economic collapse an "unholy alliance" that preys on public fears to sell overpriced coins.

Beck cried victim in behalf of all gold bugs, as fans of the precious metal are called.

Without addressing the consumer-protection issues—allegations of misleading sales techniques and false representations as investment advisers—Beck got out his chalkboard and outlined the government's underlying conspiracy: "They've got to have your money."

If people buy gold, they're less likely to invest in government bonds and Treasuries—money the government can spend, Beck said. The government's creation of Treasury inflation-protected securities, or TIPS, in the 1980s, he said, was an effort to steer individuals away from gold.

"They realized that if we have problems, people take their money out of bonds and put it into gold or silver or precious metals. When you do that, you then are in control of your wealth, and they lose money," Beck said.

"This is not about me or anybody else," he said, also on May 19. "This is about shutting down another way for you to protect yourself."

Advertising or advocacy?

Beck, through his production company, and Fox News declined interviews for this story. Goldline's vice president, Scott Carter, who agreed to one, says Beck is simply delivering its radio advertisements. "We're buying an advertising spot. Some are taped; some are live reads," Carter says. "It's a pretty standard advertising agreement."

Those blurred lines are standard radio technique, and the difference can be tough for listeners to parse. Beck is careful to tell listeners to do their own homework, to "study it out," even "to pray on it," before deciding whether gold or another product is right for them.

But he also might go on for three minutes, a long time for an ad, mentioning how his own family cashed out some 401k's to buy gold. "It's not right for everybody," he'll say. "Find out if it's right for you and your family."

(Goldline also advertises with Beck in other media, but it's on the radio where the distinctions fade.) But listening to Beck's homey, fireside voice, it can be easy to forget that his family's financial portfolio is probably not at all like yours.

"He's very, very good at connecting to his audience," says Alexander Zaitchik, an investigative journalist who spent a year researching Beck's life for the biography "Common Nonsense: Glenn Beck and the Triumph of Ignorance." "He's very sort of vulnerable and effeminate in ways that (his peers) aren't."

Beck's production company, Mercury Radio Arts (named in honor of Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre on the Air), pulled in \$32 million in the year ending Mar. 1, 2010, according to Forbes. He uses bodyguards, flies in a private jet and has multimillion-dollar homes in Connecticut and New York City.

Beck also has a "bottomless audacity" to "make bold claims about things that he knows nothing about," Zaitchik says. "Facts don't matter."

A financial adviser's advice

In the past two years, financial adviser Eric Tyson has been hearing from more and more people who begin their question with "Glenn Beck said."

So Tyson, the author of "Personal Finance for Dummies" and "Investing for Dummies," started looking at the financial advice Beck was proffering beyond the advertisements. He even landed the near impossible for anyone outside the conservative media circuit: an interview with Beck.

Beck's investing score, says Tyson: 0 for 3. "He was basically telling people, 'Sell your stocks, get out of municipal bonds and Treasury bills, and put all your money in gold,'" Tyson says. "He gave all this advice, and toward the end of his interview, he says, 'People shouldn't listen to me.' OK, then why are you doing this?"

In fact, says Tyson: Municipal bonds have excellent advantages for people in high tax brackets, and they're extremely unlikely to fail. Gold is not nearly the long-term performer that either stocks or Treasuries are. And, well, when stocks are down, you buy, not sell.

"From my analysis from a year ago, that was horrible advice," Tyson says, adding that in the year after the Mar., 2009 interview, stocks rose 70% and gold 20%. "That's no contest."

"I had no crystal ball to know that stocks were going to rise 70%," he adds. "But I did know, as a student of the market, that they'd come back, even if you think the world's going to end."

To be sure, gold has outperformed stocks since the end of 1999, gaining 329% while the S&P 500 Index (\$INX) lost 28%. But longer term, stocks have held the edge. Since Jan. 2, 1980, when trading in gold futures began, gold is up 115% while the S&P 500 has soared 890%.

As for Beck's theory that TIPS are a government effort to steer people away from gold: "Ridiculous," Tyson says. "It's just another investment option."

Beck has no apparent training in finance, say experts, and claims none. He began in radio as a precocious 13-year-old, bypassing formal higher education (apart from one unfinished theology class at Yale University) in favor of on-the-job training at suburban radio studios. Adding a political voice later boosted his talk-show ratings.

Beck has said that his own financial advisers rein him in when it comes to buying gold, limiting it to "15, maybe 20%" of his portfolio.

"People get into trouble when they start taking advice from people who don't know what they're talking about," Tyson warns. "You've got to separate politics from personal investing and finances."

"Don't Blame Obama for This Mess" by Anthony Mirhaydari, MSN Money

Oct. 27, 2010, (<http://www.bundle.com/article/dont-blame-obama-for-mess/>)

(For all the heat the president has taken for the economy, he has gotten some things right. And regardless of Tuesday's vote, history says we're in for an upswing.)

To be sure, President Barack Obama is receiving the lion's share of the anger about the state of the U.S. economy. His approval rating is near its all-time low; his handling of the economy is rated even lower.

That's understandable: Unemployment stands near 10%, home prices continue to founder, job growth has stalled, and consumer confidence is falling again. Just 22% of those polled by CBS News recently believed the economy would improve anytime soon. And with the midterm elections less than a week away, there's a flock of opposition candidates to help the electorate focus on Obama's shortcomings. But how much of the blame he deserves for this economic malaise is debatable.

Though Obama inherited a mess, there are certainly things he could have done differently. More of his \$787 billion stimulus package might have focused on fast-acting personal and business tax cuts. Obama himself conceded recently that "there's no such thing as shovel-ready projects," in reference to the infrastructure spending he proposed to stir the economy. And yes, he could have toned down the anti-Wall Street rhetoric.

But Obama, and Congress, have been positive forces. And other presidents, including Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, had lower economic approval ratings heading into midterm elections. Reagan's approval rating stood at 35% in Sept., 1982, while Bush's stood at 36% in summer 1990. Gallup most recently put Obama's rating at 38%. Bill Clinton managed a 39% approval rating in Oct., 1994, according to CBS News.

So while the electorate appears determined to punish Obama and the Democrats, it's not so clear how much punishment they deserve.

The Obama upside

In fact, some facets of Obama's economic strategy deserve credit.

The recession officially ended more than a year ago. Nearly 1.6 million jobs have been created over the past year—more than in the previous decade. The effects of the financial crisis of 2007-09 are fading as credit starts to flow again. Despite long odds, the economy was pulled back from the precipice, dusted off and put back on an upward path thanks to the bank bailout (which turned a profit for taxpayers, by the way) and Obama's stimulus package.

Between summer 2009 and spring 2010, in fact, the situation was almost rosy. Consumers were reducing debt burdens. Banks were working through loan losses. Businesses were rebuilding inventories. The stock market was roaring.

Then the global debt crisis struck. And the BP (BP, news, msgs) oil spill. And the government's lawsuit against Goldman Sachs (GS, news, msgs). The U.S. dollar moved higher as the euro plunged. This took the wind out of the U.S. economy's sails, sent stocks reeling and damaged exporters. Businesses hoarded cash instead of hiring and investing. The Obama administration's "summer of recovery" looked more like a winter of discontent.

This punch in the collective stomach came at a vulnerable time: The economy was going through a typical mid-cycle slowdown as the rapid rebound from the recession's low transitioned into slower, more normal growth. But before business investment and consumer spending could kick in, confidence was shattered. There was little a politically weakened Obama could do besides scramble.

Along with all this short-term trouble, the truth set in that some of the biggest issues the economy faces, such as long-term unemployment, are due to structural problems—something I discussed in a recent column. These issues will be much harder and take much longer to fix.

Included are things such as skill mismatches, the loss of productivity for idled workers and the difficulties involved with relocating the nation's work force when so many homeowners are "underwater" on their mortgages and can't afford to sell and move. A recent International Monetary Fund paper finds that up to 1.3% of the increase in the unemployment rate is attributable to this last factor alone. All that means the "natural rate" of unemployment could now be as high as 6.5%. That's the bad news.

Fortunately, it's becoming increasingly clear that after drifting through the economic doldrums, America is ready to grow again thanks to the export-boosting power of its weakened currency. The dollar has plunged more than 25% against the euro since June. That should provide a boost to third-quarter gross domestic product numbers (due to be released Friday) and job creation in the months to come, just as a weakened euro helped Europe bounce back earlier this year.

Moreover, as far as the stock market is concerned, elections during a president's second year in office tend to mark the start of a rip-roaring bull market run. That should provide a boost throughout 2011.

The Obama downside

None of this will come fast enough to keep Democrats from being punished at the polls next week. Obama owns the current economy in the minds of voters. It didn't help that his advisers had sworn his stimulus plan would keep the jobless rate below 8% but were painfully wrong.

There are certainly areas where Obama has damaged the recovery, mainly because of uncertain policies on taxes and regulation. For example, his predecessor's tax cuts will expire at the year's end, and we don't know what will replace them. That's a terrible environment in which to do business and make big spending decisions.

These are same concerns that sapped confidence in the depths of the Great Depression in the 1930s. And that's what has Allan Meltzer so worried.

Meltzer, a Carnegie Mellon University professor of political economy and the author of "A History of the Federal Reserve," told me over the phone that he believes the current obsession with more economic stimulus from the Fed (something he views as dangerously foolish) is the result of policy errors by the White House. Indeed, he boils it down to a simple equation: Obama's missteps are causing Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke's missteps.

Meltzer believes more fiscal stimulus is the answer. He suggests a moratorium on tax increases and new regulation. That would let businesses and households stop worrying about increased costs for energy, health care or financing and instead focus on growth. It would also take a lot of uncertainty off the table.

He also sees parallels to Franklin D. Roosevelt's anti-business rhetoric of the late 1930s in Obama's railing against the excesses of Wall Street "fat cats." Some of this has been pure politics; the bailed-out bankers at the center of the financial meltdown aren't a popular group. But Obama's broadsides have turned off a much broader segment of the business community.

The big question for Meltzer is whether Obama can move to the political center with both his rhetoric and his policies. And for that, the composition of the next Congress will play a big role.

Why this isn't 1994

Currently, the Intrade prediction market puts the odds of a Republican takeover of the House at a solid 88%. The odds of a GOP Senate victory stand at 58% but have been slipping since August.

With the Democrats poised to lose at least one house of Congress, it will become effectively impossible for Obama to pass sweeping legislation on energy or labor practices, or a new stimulus package that focuses on spending. This would greatly reduce the uncertainty about new regulatory burdens on businesses and households. That's good news from an uncertainty perspective—frequently cited as a reason for lackluster hiring by the private sector.

This outcome would also increase the likelihood that the George W. Bush tax cuts would be extended for everybody, including the rich. Many would disagree with that policy, but it's a plus at least in terms of eliminating another uncertainty.

But there's also a risk that Republicans will damage the recovery with an overzealous focus on the budget and the national debt. As discussed in my column last week—"Could the Tea Party save the economy?"—the rise of that movement may force the Republican Party to prematurely focus on fiscal consolidation. Already, the slow withdrawal of stimulus-package spending will subtract 0.5% worth of GDP growth in 2011.

Economist Aneta Markowska at Société Générale warns of parallels to the big Republican victory in the 1994 midterms. Although the election forced Clinton toward the center and focused the government on trimming the deficit, the economy was much more robust then and was able to handle the strong medicine of tax increases and spending limits. We were in the early days of the debt-fueled growth story that helped inflate the tech and housing bubbles. We don't have that tailwind now. In Markowska's words, the "private sector is suffering from an acute demand shortage." If the government cuts spending now and consolidates its finances prematurely, the economy could tip back into a recession.

There are solutions. For one, the fact the U.S. Treasury sold \$10 billion worth of inflation-protected bonds for a negative interest rate of—0.55% on Monday is a sign that plenty of borrowing capacity remains. Thanks to ultralow interest rates, the government is spending the least on interest payments since the mid-1970s.

This leaves room for additional short-term fiscal stimuli, most likely in the form of full extension of the Bush tax cuts—which, if removed altogether, would shave 2% off 2011 GDP growth, or 0.5% if they expired for just the rich, according to Markowska's estimate. By keeping them in place, taking into account the steady withdrawal of the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the economy would receive a boost of 1.5% next year.

Other possibilities, with bipartisan support, include restoring and making permanent a research-and-development tax credit that expired last December—something that was proposed by Obama in September. Extension of emergency unemployment benefits is another likely candidate.

But all this presumes the two parties can put aside the past two years of bad blood, which is an exercise in optimistic thinking.

The presidential cycle

And what does Election Day portend for investors and the stock market?

Whatever happens to Obama, the Tea Party and Congress, history suggests stocks should post impressive gains in the third year of a presidency. This makes sense, since the president is motivated to get a flagging economy going again before standing for re-election in less than two years.

In fact, according to Jeffery Hirsch and the team behind the Stock Trader's Almanac, there hasn't been a down year in the third year of a presidential term since 1939, when Hitler was marching into Poland. Most bear markets occur during the first or second years after a presidential election. Then prices typically turn higher.

Here's the exciting part: The fourth quarter of the midterm year and the first quarter of the pre-election year are the "sweet spot" in the four-year presidential cycle. Since 1949, the average gain in this period has been 14.4% for the Dow Jones Industrial Average (\$INDU). For the Nasdaq Composite Index (\$COMPX), it's been a whopping 24% since the exchange was founded in 1971.

Hirsch believes these trends will be particularly strong this time because Obama will be fighting an uphill battle into the 2012 election. That will help grease the wheels of the legislative process. Democrats will need to work more effectively with their Republican colleagues on new stimulus ideas. And Republicans, no longer entirely a minority power, will want

to engage and show progress on their new mandate. Expect common ground to be found on infrastructure investments and tax cuts.

Either way, and assuming there isn't another Greek-style financial tragedy looming, these efforts should go a long way toward restoring both the economy and Obama's approval numbers.

20101028-02 13:34 SteveB Re: *The Great American Stick-Up*

A true partial history of how and why America failed to grow (except in debt and poverty) and take her rightful place among the first echelon of nations in the 21st Century, as well as why the middle-class was decimated and Wall Street failed, necessitating that famous, foul "bail-out".

But, of course, all our current, deep and maybe deepening problems are Obama's fault or the fault of what Republicans like to call "socialism". What a crock!

20101101-01 14:19 Dennis "The Scary Actual U.S. Government Debt"

Contemplate the following when you consider the proposal for a new tax on the 1%:

from "The Scary Actual U.S. Government Debt", by Laurence Kotlikoff, *Globe and Mail*

Oct. 28, 2010, (<http://www.montrealanalyst.com/node/38>)

Boston University economist Laurence Kotlikoff says U.S. government debt is not \$13.5-trillion (U.S.), which is 60 per cent of current gross domestic product, as global investors and American taxpayers think, but rather 14-fold higher: \$200-trillion—840 per cent of current GDP. "Let's get real," Prof. Kotlikoff says. "The U.S. is bankrupt."

Writing in the September issue of *Finance and Development*, a journal of the International Monetary Fund, Prof. Kotlikoff says the IMF itself has quietly confirmed that the U.S. is in terrible fiscal trouble—far worse than the Washington-based lender of last resort has previously acknowledged. "The U.S. fiscal gap is huge," the IMF asserted in a June report. "Closing the fiscal gap requires a permanent annual fiscal adjustment equal to about 14 per cent of U.S. GDP."

This sum is equal to all current U.S. federal taxes combined. The consequences of the IMF's fiscal fix, a doubling of federal taxes in perpetuity, would be appalling—and possibly worse than appalling.

Prof. Kotlikoff says: "The IMF is saying that, to close this fiscal gap [by taxation], would require an immediate and permanent doubling of our personal income taxes, our corporate taxes and all other federal taxes.

"America's fiscal gap is enormous—so massive that closing it appears impossible without immediate and radical reforms to its health care, tax and Social Security systems—as well as military and other discretionary spending cuts."

He cites earlier calculations by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) that concluded that the United States would need to increase tax revenue by 12 percentage points of GDP to bring revenue into line with spending commitments. But the CBO calculations assumed that the growth of government programs (including Medicare) would be cut by one-third in the short term and by two-thirds in the long term. This assumption, Prof. Kotlikoff notes, is politically implausible—if not politically impossible.

One way or another, the fiscal gap must be closed. If not, the country's spending will forever exceed its revenue growth, and no one's real debt can increase faster than his real income forever.

Prof. Kotlikoff uses "fiscal gap," not the accumulation of deficits, to define public debt. The fiscal gap is the difference between a government's projected revenue (expressed in today's dollar value) and its projected spending (also expressed in today's dollar value). By this measure, the United States is in worse shape than Greece.

(Prof. Kotlikoff is a noted economist. He is a research associate at the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research. He is a former senior economist with then-president Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers.)

20101101-02 16:15 Pam Trip to Stanford Reunion

Dear SteveB,

I feel like a lot has happened since I last wrote to you. We went to California for Mark's 40th Stanford reunion, which I was not really looking forward to. Boy, was I surprised! I had a fabulous time. Stanford is absolutely beautiful, a world unto itself. Everyone I met was so smart and nice. I got into great conversations with the women next to me in line for the rest room, to say nothing of longer conversations with Mark's classmates. I never experienced anything like it. The whole weekend was filled with intellectually stimulating talks, classes, and social gatherings. Plus, the food was great and there was a full bar everywhere we went.

We also went to Napa and Sonoma, where we toured wineries, stayed in a great B&B, and had a great dinner with Mark's brother and girlfriend. Kirk lives in El Cerito, a "suburb" of San Francisco. He lent us his red Mitsubishi sports car to tootle around in, which was wonderful until a sparkler broke. (I swear that's what it was called.) We had to call AAA for a tow. Not great, but the only real glitch we encountered.

Now I am home (and happy to be so) and thinking about the election tomorrow. I fear a Republican sweep. If that happens, I dread the catastrophe that will ensue. I HATE the Tea Party. I HATE the Republican party, yadda, yadda, yadda. You've heard me on this before. Is it because I'm older and more aware, or are things really in a desperate state? Most people are stupid, even if we pretend otherwise. Big money controls everything, though we claim to be a democracy. We are living through an intense time of paradigm shift, which is never easy. Progress is stymied by the entrenched past, and ignorance is abroad in the land. I am bitterly disillusioned. The media, which I used to trust, whips up fear and anger (their words, not mine). Jon Stewart is the only sane person in America, but he's spitting into the wind. I hope I am proved wrong, but, sadly, I doubt it.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20101103-01 07:16 SteveB Our Highest Nature

Dear India,

Good website: <http://www.ourhighestnature.org/index.html>

"The true nature of anything is the highest it can become." —Aristotle, 356 B.C.

20101108-01 08:44 Dennis "Obama's Biggest Mistake: Selling Out to the Bankers"

It's been pretty clear to me for some time that Obama was bamboozled by Wall Street from the day he took office and the following confirms that for me. By the way, he was also bamboozled by the military which has been nearly as disastrous for the country, but that's another depressing story. If he doesn't change course quickly by cleaning out his staff, the country could have an even bigger disaster...Sarah Palin in the White House.

"Obama's Biggest Mistake: Selling Out to the Bankers" by James K. Galbraith, New Deal 2.0

Nov. 7, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/148770/>)

Bruce Bartlett says it was a failure to focus. Paul Krugman says it was a failure of nerve. Nancy Pelosi says it was the economy's failure. Barack Obama says it was his own failure—to explain that he was, in fact, focused on the economy.

As Krugman rightly stipulates, Monday-morning quarterbacks should say exactly what different play they would have called. Paul's answer is that the stimulus package should have been bigger. No disagreement: I was one voice calling for a much larger program back when. Yet this answer is not sufficient.

The original sin of Obama's presidency was to assign economic policy to a closed circle of bank-friendly economists and Bush carryovers. Larry Summers. Timothy Geithner. Ben Bernanke. These men had no personal commitment to the goal of an early recovery, no stake in the Democratic Party, no interest in the larger success of Barack Obama. Their primary goal, instead, was and remains to protect their own past decisions and their own professional futures.

Up to a point, one can defend the decisions taken in Sept.-Oct., 2008 under the stress of a rapidly collapsing financial system. The Bush administration was, by that time, nearly defunct. Panic was in the air, as was political blackmail—with the threat that the October through January months might be irreparably brutal. Stopgaps were needed, they were concocted, and they held the line.

But one cannot defend the actions of Team Obama on taking office. Law, policy and politics all pointed in one direction: turn the systemically dangerous banks over to Sheila Bair and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. Insure the depositors, replace the management, fire the lobbyists, audit the books, prosecute the frauds, and restructure and downsize the institutions. The financial system would have been cleaned up. And the big bankers would have been beaten as a political force. Team Obama did none of these things. Instead they announced "stress tests," plainly designed so as to obscure the banks' true condition. They pressured the Federal Accounting Standards Board to permit the banks to ignore the market value of their toxic assets. Management stayed in place. They prosecuted no one. The Fed cut the cost of funds to zero. The President justified all this by repeating, many times, that the goal of policy was "to get credit flowing again."

The banks threw a party. Reported profits soared, as did bonuses. With free funds, the banks could make money with no risk, by lending back to the Treasury. They could boom the stock market. They could make a mint on proprietary trading. Their losses on mortgages were concealed—until the fact came out that they'd so neglected basic mortgage paperwork, as to be unable to foreclose in many cases, without the help of forged documents and perjured affidavits.

But new loans? The big banks had given up on that. They no longer did real underwriting. And anyway, who could qualify? Businesses mostly had no investment plans. And homeowners were, to an increasing degree, upside-down on their mortgages and therefore unqualified to refinance. These facts were obvious to everybody, fueling rage at "bailouts." They also underlie the economy's failure to create jobs. What usually happens (and did, for example, in 1994-2000) is that credit growth takes over from Keynesian fiscal expansion. Armed with credit, businesses expand, and with higher incomes, public deficits decline. This cannot happen if the financial sector isn't working.

Geithner, Summers and Bernanke should have known this. One can be fairly sure that they did know it. But Geithner and Bernanke had cast their lots, with continuity and cover-up. And Summers, with his own record of deregulation, could hardly have complained.

To counter calls for more action, Team Obama produced sunny forecasts. Their program was right-sized, because anyway unemployment would peak at 8 percent in 2009. So Larry Summers said. In making that forecast, the Obama White House took responsibility for the entire excess of joblessness above eight percent. They made it impossible to blame the ongoing disaster on George W. Bush. If this wasn't rank incompetence, it was sabotage.

This is why, in a crisis, you need new people. You must be able to attack past administrations, and override old decisions, without directly crossing those who made them.

President Obama didn't see this. Or perhaps, he didn't want to see it. His presidential campaign was, after all, from the beginning financed from Wall Street. He chose his team, knowing exactly who they were. And this tells us what we need to know, about who he really is.

James K. Galbraith is the author of *The Predator State: How Conservatives Abandoned the Free Market and Why Liberals Should Too*, and of a new preface to *The Great Crash, 1929*, by John Kenneth Galbraith. He teaches at The University of Texas at Austin.

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20101108-02	13:05	SteveG	Re: "Obama's Biggest Mistake: Selling Out to the Bankers"
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Dear Dennis,

Some banks sold their buildings and leased them back—decreasing their debt and taking the equity to profits. They also outsourced, in one bank's case 10,000 jobs, in order to decrease their employee expenses. No policy changes and none of the biggies got fired. The bosses got raises because they were able to increase the profits.

20101110-01	21:07	SteveB	"Please Allow Me to Correct a Few Things"
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"Please Allow Me to Correct a Few Things" by Bill Wyman, Slate

Nov. 5, 2010, (<http://www.slate.com/id/2273611>)

(Imagine if Mick Jagger responded to Keith Richards about his new autobiography.)

(Editor's note: On a recent morning, the journalist Bill Wyman received a UPS package containing a typed manuscript. On reading it, he saw that it seemed to be the thoughts, at some length, of singer Mick Jagger on the recently published autobiography of his longtime songwriting partner in the Rolling Stones, Keith Richards. A handwritten note on an old piece of Munro Sounds stationery read: "Bill: For the vault. M.")

From this, Wyman surmised that the package was intended for Jagger and Richards' former band mate, the bassist Bill Wyman, who has assiduously overseen the band's archives over the past five decades and with whom Wyman the journalist coincidentally shares the same name. Wyman the journalist, a longtime rock critic, was once threatened with a cease-and-desist letter from Wyman the bassist's Park Avenue attorneys and felt no compunction about perusing the contents of the package. The manuscript he received is reprinted below.)

I am, I see here, marginally endowed, if I read Keith's sniggering aright. I do not sing well, either. I am not polite to employees; indeed, I have even been known to say, "Oh, shut up, Keith," in band meetings. I do not appreciate the authenticity of the music or the importance of what we do. I want to "lord it over" the band, like James Brown. I am "insufferable." I slept with Anita.

Most of that is in just the first quarter of this overlong book, but a tattoo of my failings sounds all through it and culminates in almost 20 full pages of rambling invective near the end.

I don't mind this, really, for reasons I hope are understandable and will get into later. This is all from a guy pushing 70 for whom gays are still "poofters" and women "b*tches." I think so many things about Keith. We were close, the two of us, for many years. We had known each other in grade school, if you can believe it, in the same undistinguished eastern suburb. Then we bumped into each other in a train station at 18 or so and started talking about the blues. We were different; I'd already been on TV with my father, who was a fairly notable expert on physical education at the time. Keith was ... rougher, let's say. For the next nearly 10 years, we were rarely apart. Even after we were famous, we lived at each others' flats or houses. We were still very young, and, like puppies, we'd cluster together.

We were barely a band before our lives changed, but I think still of the time we spent, squalidly, before we were a group, in a very cold and small flat, more filthy than you can imagine. Our flat mate Jimmy Phelge was a veritable comic virtuoso with a pair of soiled underwear. Certainly we—I—wanted to be famous, but can I point out our road to it was not absurd, exactly, but unthinkable, in the sense that we couldn't even imagine a way to do it? The London music scene was entirely insignificant, and we didn't even play the trad jazz (Charlie's *métier*), which dominated.

Still, we practiced day and night out of some unspoken impetus, innocent suburban boys abruptly living quite near the edge of a dark milieu. This brings me to Brian, who played guitar very well and was a brittle devil. We knew that because of many things, not least that he spent an inappropriate amount of time beating up his girls in the next room. I'm not proud of that. Keith gives himself (too much, I think) credit for rescuing Anita, eventually, from Brian; but that of course was years later. Earlier, we both listened to or watched his cruelty, in the bedroom and elsewhere; we paid no attention to the half dozen kids he'd fathered and ignored the savagery he accomplished on tour. We didn't know better; we were priapic jackals ourselves, f*cking even one another's girlfriends if they got left, as it were, unattended. But it was wrong to have let Brian do that, and Keith should have owned up to this in the book.

I supposed it is a karmic justice for Brian that we continued to watch as he descended from there to hell, harried by the police and increasingly incapacitated artistically, which further estranged him from us. Oh, that's not true; we didn't just watch. We ushered him along, ridiculing him, you might say, to death as he began to lose his ability to contribute. Again, we were young. What were you doing at 25? We didn't know about depression, insanity, addiction, or what acid might

have done to him. It's unclear to me whether the drugs diminished his ability to contribute or whether the drugs were in effect a way to cover up something that wasn't there. The first song Keith and I wrote was a hit single; Brian couldn't write a song to save his life, literally. And let's remember that he was a total a*s-hole. I'm digressing but I'm trying to explain where we came from. We didn't have a template. Nothing against Steven Tyler, but there's a difference. We felt around in the dark; we were famous within weeks; and, in the end, we left a body or two behind us. We did these things, good and bad, together; we were friends.

The second important thing is Keith's talent. We took it for granted, in a way, as he says. We felt it was our duty to get together and write a song, one good song each day we worked. He is kind to say I could take what he gave me and run with it. But he is the one who gave me the actual song to write the lyrics to. He wrote a dozen Top 10 hits in five years, and, after the band added Mick Taylor and essentially grew up, he wrote most of *Beggars Banquet* and *Let It Bleed*. Again: What were you doing at 25? It's interesting to me how no previous song we'd recorded would have a respectable place on those albums; and any song on them would have seemed out of place even on *Aftermath* or *Between the Buttons*. Keith's lurch forward was amazing. As a pure rock (not folk or pop) songwriter, I think he is not just without peer. I think he is unrivaled in depth and growth, from "As Tears Go By" to "Satisfaction" to "Jumping Jack Flash" to, I don't know, "Gimme Shelter", "Monkey Man", "Street Fighting Man."

The primal feel of the chording. The musicality of the intros and breaks. The innovation of the recording—cruder, no doubt, but I will argue far more emotionally powerful than the Beatles'. The winding, intermixed guitars he almost desperately loved. Without him, what would I have been? Peter Noone? It is hard to use a word like integrity about a band as compromised, as self bloodied, as we were. But for some years, unlike any other group, the Beatles included, we declared war on that silly, hypocritical, repressive, and arbitrary society in which we lived. The only ammunition we had were Keith's songs. The lyrics, I confess now, may have been in their defiance just épater la bourgeoisie and in their poesy derivatively Zimmerman-esque. Even when they weren't, no one would have paid attention if the chords weren't arresting, irrefutable. The songs spoke primarily through their music, not their words. Keith's dotting fans nattering on about the ultimate avatar of rock 'n' roll authenticity irritate me, it's true; but he may to this day be underappreciated.

So those two things I think, are important. Our bond; his talent. We blink at that point, and go 40 years forward, and he has written a book that says, essentially, that I have a small dick. That I am a bad friend. That I am unknowable.

The reviewers, who idolize Keith, don't ask why this is all in here. We have rarely spoken of such things publicly, and tangentially even then. We don't talk about it in private, either, and, no, he hasn't been in my dressing room in 20 years. I thought we both learned that there is no point in sharing anything at all with the press, save a few tidbits for the upbeat *The Stones are back in top rocking form!* article that accompanies each of our tours. I think Keith never appreciated the tedious hours I had to spend with Jann Wenner to accomplish that.

But I know why it is all here. In the book we get the stories. Oh, the stories. The rock, the girls. The car wrecks, the arrests. You read them on the printed page, delivered in what, I must admit, is a pretty fair written representation of Keith's slightly tangential, drawing, effeminate delivery, resting charmingly just this side of the incomprehensible.

I was generally made familiar with the stories in a different context. They were generally related by an assistant or a lawyer, tour manager or a publicist, poking their head into a room. Keith's disappeared. Keith's asleep backstage and can't be roused for the show. No one will wake him because he keeps a loaded gun under his pillow and grabs it and points when riled. Keith fell asleep in the studio again. No, Keith isn't mixing the album. He flew off to Jamaica, and, no, we don't know when he will be back. Keith's asleep. Keith's asleep. Keith's asleep.

The scamp. Those are but one tier, and a fairly innocuous one, of the many times I was vouchsafed news of my partner. The next tier is more colorful. Keith (or his favorite sax player/drug runner/drug buddy/hanger-on) has slugged a photographer/destroyed a hotel room/gotten into a fistfight with the locals/fallen into a coma. Oh, yes, and the police are here. (Because police are whom you want backstage at a rock concert or at a recording studio.)

Or: The band mate Keith personally vouched for is freebasing again. This last was of some interest to me, because it meant that I got to sing at a stadium backed by not one but two guitarists falling over onstage. Keith likes to talk a lot about his getting clean from heroin. It is not correspondingly apprehended that he replaced the heroin comprehensively with liquor. Given a choice I select the slurring alcoholic over the comatose junkie as a lifelong professional partner, and I say this with some knowledge of the two alternatives. But neither is strictly desirable.

And, yes, they do fall over onstage. (Or asleep on a chair in the studio.) I laugh at it now and blame no one but myself. Why, Keith gave me his "personal guarantee" Woody would not be freebasing on tour. And yet I was surprised when it

happened. I take the point that professionalism, one's word, rock 'n' roll merriment ... these are fungible things in our world. It is a fair charge that I have become less tolerant in these matters over the decades. In our organization, inside this rather unusual floating circus we call home, I am forced into the role of martinet, the one who gets blamed for silly arbitrary rules. (Like, for a show in front of 60,000 people for which we are being paid some \$6 or \$7 million for a few hours' work, I like to suggest to everyone that we start on time, and that we each have in place a personal plan, in whatever way suits us best, to stay conscious for the duration of the show.)

So I will take that point. All of the forgoing was just ... a little outré behavior on tour. Let's go to the next tier—again, of matters one is informed of with some regularity, this not over months, not years, but entire decades. Keith's been arrested with a mason jar full of heroin and a shopping bag full of other drugs and drug paraphernalia and is charged with drug trafficking. That was his baggage for a weekend in Toronto. It is hard to play a show with a catatonic guitarist, harder still when he is in jail for 10 years. I won't even get into the fact that this came right when I had every record label in the world fighting to sign us, and in an instant my negotiating power was vaporized. Here's a baroque bulletin from the archives: Anita's 17-year-old boyfriend has accidentally shot himself, in Keith's house—Keith's bedroom—with a gun Keith left lying around. Young Marlon, then perhaps 10, saw Anita, covered in blood, coming down the stairs distraught, and God knows it could have been Marlon playing with the gun. Or: Keith's driven his car off the road (again) with Marlon inside (again). In his book Keith stands back, amazed at the things that just ... happen to him.

He is frequently the victim of faulty wiring in the hotels in which we bivouac; a surprising number of times this phenomenon has caused fires. Ritz-Carltons are not built the way they use to be, I guess. Redlands burned down a couple of times as well, as did a house he was renting in Laurel Canyon. It's a wonder Marlon survived his childhood. A third child Keith disposed of by sending her off to his mum back in Dartford I to raise. The second? That was another son, who was left with his paranoid, unstable, heroin-addict mother and didn't make it past infancy. Keith says he blames himself, and on that at least I think we can agree.

It is said of me that I act above the rest of the band and prefer the company of society swells. Would you rather have had a conversation with Warren Beatty, Andy Warhol, and Ahmet Ertegun ... or Keith, his drug mule Tony, and the other surly nonverbal members of his merry junkie entourage? Keith actually seems not to understand why I would want my dressing room as far away as possible from that of someone who travels with a loaded gun. And for heaven's sake. No sooner did Keith kick heroin than Charlie took it up. In the book Keith blames me for not touring during the 1980s. I was quoted, unfortunately, saying words to the effect of "the Rolling Stones are a millstone around my neck." This hurt Keith's feelings. He thinks it was a canard flung from a fleeting position of advantage in my solo career, the failing of which he delights in. He's not appreciating the cause and effect. Can you imagine going on tour with an alcoholic, a junkie, and a crack head? Millstone wasn't even the word. I spent much of the 1980s looking for a new career, and it didn't work. If I had it to do over again I would only try harder.

When I came back I resolved to do at least something well. Which brings us to money. We did not entirely mismanage our career in the 1960s, save for the calamity of signing with Allen Klein, who, with fatal strokes of our pens, obtained the rights and total control of our work throughout the 1960s. It was my responsibility. Keith downplays this, but the fact is we signed the thief's papers. It was all done legally. Klein was a Moriarity, truly; he didn't wait to sign us to steal. The signing was the theft, a product of a scheme so encompassing that in the end, he paid us a pittance and walked off with our songs. This is by far the single most important nonmusical event in our history, and yet it is rarely remarked on. I was not 30 and had lost us a historic treasure.

In the 1970s, we worked very hard, and with *Some Girls* we eventually sold a lot of records, but in reality you couldn't make much money back then, even touring. In the early 1970s we might play for a period of, say, two months, 10,000- and 20,000-seat halls at \$6 or \$10 a ticket. Back then, we were lucky to take half the gross home. You do the math. Then take out expenses and manager and lawyer fees ... and split the remainder five ways. Nor did we live frugally. It got better over the decade, and Keith and I had the songwriting, of course, but compare us with Paul or Elton during the 1970s (who outsold us by many times, for starters, and among other things did not split their income with anyone) and our fame was entirely inconsistent with our back accounts.

In 1981, I put us in stadiums and charged a more reasonable tariff and might have made us more money that summer than we'd earned in our entire career up to that point. And I've done it several times since—each time, I mean, to be precise, literally earning close to as much as we had the previous 30 or 40 years in total, including those previous tours. The "Bigger Bang" outing grossed more than \$588 million—more than a million dollars a day for 18 months—and we pocketed the lion's share of it. If the promoters didn't like it they could raise price of the nachos, or the parking. And I'm not even mentioning the sponsorships, the ticket fees, the merchandise ...

I sound, now, like the accountant who earns my band mates' jeers. But I don't remember Keith complaining about these sums, or, incidentally, that it took me 20 years to remember to give Ronnie a full share, just as we both pretended not to hear when Mick Taylor, or Ronnie, asked for credit for songs they'd written.

Does Keith really sigh for the good old days on tour? Shabby theaters, sh*tty sound? Wound-up kids standing for hours in the hot summer sun in dreadful mid-American cities waiting for a chance to race recklessly for general-admission seats? Us enduring a day of hassle and travel to take home perhaps \$3,500 each? I remember Keith asleep or not showing up until hours after the scheduled start time. Our feral fans running, fighting, throwing rocks at police. Today, the shows start promptly, there are video screens for the folks in the back, and we offer \$1,000-a-seat ducats for the fat cats.

Here's the thing: I'm a rock star. What is the measure of my success if not the biggest rock and roll tour of all time?

I know what you're thinking. It's what Keith thinks, too. What about the music. Isn't it all, in the end, about the music? I must note that the Stones rarely get a bad review, no matter how poor our albums. (Jann again, and so many wannabe Janns; how is it that we somehow manage, again and again, to record our "best album since *Some Girls*"?)

But let me ask you to imagine yourself, as I was, unimaginably, partnered with the writer of "Satisfaction," "Paint It Black," "19th Nervous Breakdown," "Honky Tonk Woman," etc. And then imagine that your partner, seemingly overnight, lost some essential part of his talents. Not, as is commonly supposed, sometime perhaps in the 1980s, when the Rolling Stones' decline in creativity was on obvious display, but earlier. A lot earlier. Like, say, 1972 at the latest.

Those who like *Exile on Main St.* like its denseness, its mystery, its swampy commitment. Accidentally and amid no little chaos, we conjured up something dirty, impenetrable, and, in parts, compelling. But I think its murk promises depths that aren't there. There are decent but no major songs on *Exile*. Let's go back an album, to *Sticky Fingers*. I wrote "Brown Sugar." Mick Taylor wrote "Sway" and most of "Moonlight Mile," and made "Can't You Hear Me Knocking" his own. Keith and I together did most of the rest, like "Wild Horses," but, in the end, he didn't write most of the thing's best songs.

From there, there's *Exile*. Some nice tracks—"Rocks Off," "Happy"—but there is no "Gimme Shelter" or "Let It Bleed." Chords that once threatened society in some significant way now rarely radiated outward.

The next few years were difficult. I don't want to say Keith wrote no songs. He did. But successively, in each album, the process became more difficult, as both his capacity for the job declined along with the quality of what he did write. He mocks the disco songs—"Hot Stuff," "Miss You," "Emotional Rescue."

But what would the commercial impact of those albums have been without those immediate hits? We were being outsold by everyone from Supertramp to the Doobie Brothers as it was. At the same time I had to come up with tracks and weasel promising material out of our cohort and not give up songwriting credit, which I accomplished in all but one or two cases.

The resulting albums are, with perhaps the exception of *Some Girls*, flaccid and unconvincing. The aforementioned disco hits. A little lyrical naughtiness ("Starf*cker," "Some Girls"). The earnest ballad in which the incorrigible Stones display some unexpected touches of maturity ("Memory Motel," "Waiting on a Friend"). Lots and lots of undistinguished filler, clavinet playing by Billy Preston, Motown covers ... And for some of the good stuff Keith wasn't even there. For *It's Only Rock and Roll* I did the title single with Woody and Bowie. Taylor and I constructed the splendid "Time Waits for No One," a fantasia, alluring to this day, for percussion, piano, and guitar. (I don't think Keith has ever let us play it live.) ("Sway," either.)

I will testify that Keith was intermittently sentient during some part of the recording of *Some Girls*. Yes we were fully Manhattanized at this point, because I live here and that's what I found interesting. The geographic location of Keith's talent, being nowhere, wasn't available for evocation.

By the time of *Tattoo You* I was exhausted. Entirely drained of ideas. I told Chris Kimsey to ransack the archives. "Start Me Up" was a very old song, with some 20, 30, 40 takes as a reggae ... and one with a real rock guitar. It turned out to be our last real hit, and the arc of our career would look a lot different if we hadn't found it. With it, we could plausibly least claim to be hit makers in the 1980s. "Waiting on a Friend," that symbol of our new-found maturity, was, if memory serves, from a centuries-old session with me and Mick Taylor. About our work from the rest of the 1980s and 1990s, the less said the better. Can you sing a single chorus from *Dirty Work*? Name a single track? We certainly don't play songs from those records in concert if we can help it.

I go into such detail to describe the arc of our decline accurately but also note this sad corollary: Keith brought something out of me, way back when. Through *Exile*, I felt I had to rise to his songs. When he checked out creatively, I lost something important. While there is some spark, I guess, in "Some Girls" or "Shattered" or whatever, however contrived, I know most of the other songs sucked. In the 1980s and '90s it got worse. I could conjure up only the most banal cliché or the most pretentious polysyllabic nonsense. Compare "Sympathy for the Devil" with "Heartbreaker." One Godard made a film about. The other is a TV movie. I literally wrote a song called "She's So Cold" and then, a few years later, one called "She Was Hot."

Now, Keith went through the same thing. I think this is why Keith lost himself with heroin and now drinks: to stave off the pressure to match himself and dull the knowledge that he can't any more (and, back then, couldn't). It's trite, maybe, but there's a reason a guy spends a decade in a haze, and the three decades since in a stupor. Keith's rancor is almost entirely based on the fact that it was not, in the end, easy to keep the appearances of what in the public mind is the Rolling Stones, and the process wasn't always pretty. But I did it, and, among other things, to this day it is hardly in the public mind that Keith Richards hasn't written a significant rock 'n' roll song in nearly 35 years. For that I get Keith's book.

Why did he write it? Or, rather, having decided to write it all down, why did he devote so much of it to carping about me?

Well, he's not talking about me, really. He's just trying to get my attention, I think, in the end. The remaining part of the rancor comes from the fact that he knows he lost me, many years ago. It's funny—Keith doesn't write good rock songs much anymore, but what he does do, every four or five years, is craft a beautiful little ballad. Since *Tattoo You* Keith's written and sung a couple of tracks per album. (We had a huge fight about his putting three on *Bridges to Babylon*; I didn't like it, but didn't have anything else to offer, even with three years since the previous album. Why one of the songs I did write is now co-credited to k.d. lang is a matter to be discussed on some other day.) Generally, one of these is a throwaway, and the other ... is something gorgeous. Put them all together along with songs he wrote solo and sang from the early years—"You Got the Silver," "Happy," and so forth, all the way up to "Thru & Thru" and "All About You"—and you have a CD of no little power and emotion. (I've done it.)

These songs are more honest than his book. In "The Worst," he says something about "I'm the worst kind of guy/ For you to be around." That's a song that might ring true for many people. It makes me think about how Keith lost me only after I lost him. In an older song, he explains a worldview I find a bit disturbing, and I would like to point out that since from most peoples' perspective I have flirted the edge of total decadence my entire life I can make that observation with some authority:

Slipped my tongue in someone else's pie
Tasted better every time
She turned green and tried to make me cry
Being hungry
Ain't no crime.

Again, the honesty is bracing. I think Keith puts just about any of his manifold urges on a par with hunger, and I think we can agree the world would be a dangerous place if that was the norm. It explains many, many of his actions over the years. In the book he tells the story of going to meet Patti Hansen's parents for the first time—drunk, holding an open bottle of Jack, and with one of his f*cktard friends in tow. You can imagine how the evening ended. I'm sure Keith thinks it's OK. ("Being nervous ain't no crime.") ("Oh, shut up, Keith," I think.) With that perspective—and the added benefit of being rich and famous and having most of his deplorable actions do nothing but burnish his image—Keith's way in the world has been, in a certain way and ignoring, for the moment, the people who died, a blessed one.

I certainly bless it. I stood by him and propped him up and didn't fire his a*s for many, many years. It would have ended the Stones, of course, so maybe I was being selfish. In a way, even comatose he had a marquee name; as my meal ticket, you might say, it suited me to let him doze. I took the reins until, when he finally woke up, he found that he had no place in the management. He's angry about that, too. Yes, let's let Keith Richards have a hand in overseeing an operation that generates \$1 million a day in revenue. I don't know what else I could have done. Later, one grows older and becomes more informed about such things, and I saw I was supposed to have held an elaborate ceremony called an "intervention." Society could have effectively halted the upheavals of the 1960s simply by requiring all of us to "intervene" with one another. In any event, considering half our circle was on heroin and the rest were coke fiends, I think it wouldn't have been efficacious in our circumstances.

He talks about me, too, in his solo songs, less subtly: "I'm so sick and tired/ Of hanging around/ Jerks like you." People ask me why I let him put these on the album. I think: Oh, why not? It's a great song, and he can sing it, and he can write

the book, too. He's trying to get my attention. To connect. To have it be how it once was. At our age, I think there's no basis for it. Keith celebrates his own unchanging character, and I have had quite enough of that.

But, still, when I think of Keith, I think sometimes of how someone different from the book comes out through these songs. Once in a great while he detaches and looks down at his corporeal self. "I think I lost my touch," he sings on one of them; "It's just another song and it's slippin' away." Rock and roll is strange. When a song is beautiful—those spare guitars rumbling and chiming, by turns—the words mean so much more, and there, for a moment, I believe him, and feel for him.

Or I think about "How Can I Stop" which may end up being Keith's last great song.

"How can I stop ... once I start?" he murmurs, over and over again. "How can I stop once I start?" It's about rock 'n' roll, of course, and playing guitar, and his tenure, and mine, in our unusual coalition. It's also about heroin and everything else he can't stop ingesting. But again it's about Keith himself, who once started never did stop—through the fame, the songs, the concerts and the women and the drugs; and the violence and senselessness, the addictions and the deaths, the ruined lives, the petty and large-scale cruelties. At the end Keith got Wayne Shorter to do a sax solo that is itself almost an out-of-body experience, perhaps the loveliest moment on one of our records. It goes on and on over the last two minutes of a very long track, and the end is almost a ... an exaltation, perhaps? I am lost there. It's something I'm not sure I ever saw evidenced in real life, and something that isn't in his book.

It's the sound—or at least the closest thing Keith Richards will ever admit to it—of a conscience.

(Bill Wyman is the former arts editor of NPR and Salon.com.)

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20101110-02	21:27	SteveB	"Pelosi's Triumph"
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"Pelosi's Triumph" by William Saletan, Slate

Nov. 5, 2010, (<http://www.slate.com/id/2273708>)

(Democrats didn't lose the battle of 2010. They won it.)

Democrats have lost the House, and health care is getting the blame. Sen. Evan Bayh of Indiana, a retiring Democrat, says his party "overreached by focusing on health care rather than job creation" and by spending \$1 trillion on "a major entitlement expansion." Sen. John McCain's economic adviser agrees.

Pundits say the health care bill killed President Obama's approval ratings, cost congressional Democrats their jobs, and snuffed out the legacy of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "Virtually every House Democrat from a swing district who took a gamble by voting for the health law made a bad political bet," says the *New York Times*. The *Los Angeles Times* laments that "the measure of a leader in Washington isn't how much gets done, it's who holds power in the end. On that scale, Pelosi failed."

I'm not buying the autopsy or the obituary. In the national exit poll, voters were split on health care. Unemployment is at nearly 10 percent. Democrats lost a lot of seats that were never really theirs, and those who voted against the bill lost at a higher rate than did those who voted for it. But if health care did cost the party its majority, so what? The bill was more important than the election.

I realize that sounds crazy. We've become so obsessed with who wins or loses in politics that we've forgotten what the winning and losing are about. Partisans fixate on punishing their enemies in the next campaign. Reporters, in the name of objectivity, refuse to judge anything but the Election Day score card. Politicians rationalize their self-preservation by imagining themselves as dynasty builders. They think this is the big picture.

They're wrong. The big picture isn't about winning or keeping power. It's about using it. I've made this argument before, but David Frum, the former speechwriter to President Bush, has made it better. In March, when Democrats secured enough votes to pass the bill, he castigated fellow conservatives who looked forward to punishing Pelosi and President Obama "with a big win in the Nov., 2010 elections." Frum observed:

Legislative majorities come and go. This healthcare bill is forever. A win in November is very poor compensation for this debacle now. ... No illusions please: This bill will not be repealed. Even if Republicans scored a 1994 style landslide in November, how many votes could we muster to re-open the "doughnut hole" and charge seniors more for prescription drugs? How many votes to re-allow insurers to rescind policies when they discover a pre-existing condition? How many votes to banish 25 year olds from their parents' insurance coverage?

Exactly. A party that loses a House seat can win it back two years later, as Republicans just proved. But a party that loses a legislative fight against a middle-class health care entitlement never restores the old order. Pretty soon, Republicans will be claiming the program as their own. Indeed, one of their favorite arguments against this year's health care bill was that it would cut funding for Medicare. Now they're pledging to rescind those cuts. In 30 years, they'll be accusing Democrats of defunding Obamacare.

Most bills aren't more important than elections. This one was. Take it from Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader. Yesterday, in his election victory speech at the Heritage Foundation, he declared, "Health care was the worst piece of legislation that's passed during my time in the Senate." McConnell has been in the Senate for 26 years. He understands the bill's significance: It's a huge structural change in the relationship between the public, the economy, and the government.

Politicians have tried and failed for decades to enact universal health care. This time, they succeeded. In 2008, Democrats won the Presidency and both houses of Congress, and by the thinnest of margins, they rammed a bill through. They weren't going to get another opportunity for a very long time. It cost them their majority, and it was worth it.

And that's not counting financial regulation, economic stimulus, college lending reform, and all the other bills that became law under Pelosi. So spare me the tears and gloating about her so-called failure. If John Boehner is speaker of the House for the next 20 years, he'll be lucky to match her achievements.

Will Republicans revisit healthcare? Sure. Will they enact some changes to the program? Yes, and Democrats will help them. Every program needs revisions. Republicans will get other things, too: business tax breaks, education reform, more nuclear power, and a crackdown on earmarks. These are issues on which both parties can agree. Which is why, if you're a Democrat, you deal with them after you've lost your majority—not before.

It's funny, in a twisted way, to read all the post-election complaints that Democrats lost because they thought only of themselves. Even the chief operating officer of the party's leading think tank, the Center for American Progress, says Obama failed to convince Americans "that he knows their jobs are as important as his." That's too bad, because Obama, Pelosi, and their congressional allies proved just the opposite. They risked their jobs—and in many cases lost them—to pass the health care bill. The elections were a painful defeat, and you can argue that the bill was misguided. But Democrats didn't lose the most important battle of 2010. They won it.

(William Saletan is Slate's national correspondent and author of *Bearing Right: How Conservatives Won the Abortion War*.)

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20101119-01 16:42 SteveB Re: Trip to Stanford Reunion

Dear Pam,

Jeez, I have been a terrible correspondent and I am sorry for that. You said you feel like a lot has happened since you wrote the time before your email below, and I feel the same way now. Yet, it really hasn't been that much happening, but I have been thinking about you, so here goes...

Your trip to California sounds wonderful! I am surprised by your surprise over the Stanford stuff being a good time. What a great school! What intelligent, interesting people must gather in memory of times spent there! I envy you guys.

I have always loved California. I lived there for just three months when I was a student at Purdue. I had a great girl friend from LA and we traveled all over the state. I was loathe to leave, but duty called, yet I have wondered ever since

what would have happened had I chosen the other path. I've been back for short stays many times and always manage to find interesting people and places. Too bad it's so expensive to live in most of the best places there.

And now it's nearly Thanksgiving. Incredible!

Bad and good how the election turned-out. At least Sarah Palin's Alaskan buddy lost. Some good people won. The country's still in big trouble. Pussy Obama is still in big trouble. But, hey, look at denuded, deluged, demonic, diseased Haiti. Maybe one day the world will wake up.

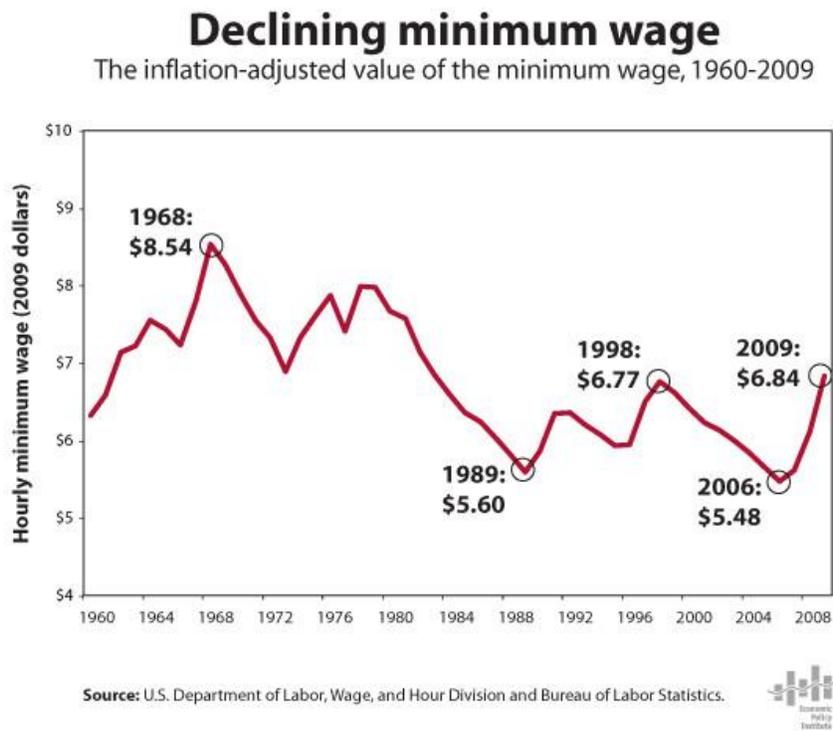
20101120-01 08:58 SteveB "The Poor Is Getting Poorer"

The decline and fall of America.

I don't think you'll see this same pattern for corporate CEO's over this span of time. How strange! Do you still believe there's a level playing field? Do you know what it costs to live in America? I hope you do. It's a bad sign if you don't. How much longer do you think the middle class will exist at this rate? How much longer will consumers be able to consume in order to make the rich richer?

Maybe not much longer. Maybe the rich should consider these questions...

I hate to say it, but it's beginning to look a lot like "us against them"! Did I say, "Beginning?" It's been more like my entire lifetime. When is our great land going to smarten up? It's not just that this situation is not good for the poor. It's not good for any of us!



"See, as the rich is getting richer,
The poor is getting poorer."
—Carlos Santana, "Maria Maria"

20101120-02 12:55 Bill Re: "The Poor Is Getting Poorer"

Dear SteveB,

I share your concern and have empathy for those trying to make on such a wage. I would guess that the statistic takes into account what I'm guessing is a larger number of low wage jobs and a smaller number of the good jobs—e. g. auto industry—that seem in short supply. The worst fix (aside from having no job) to be in is having lost one of those good wage jobs and fallen into the low wage sector. At the same time many of the low wage jobs seem to be filled by those who have come here recently in droves from Mexico and other points south (Bolivia?). There are at least 100,00 Mexicans living in Indianapolis. I feel for their struggle; at the same time they took on risk coming here.

The other, and severe, problem lies in the severe loss of manufacturing jobs to other countries. The loss poses the conundrum for people here: Do they want to do without the cheap goods from China and other Asian countries, or do they want to subsidize money-losing manufacturing industries in this country? It's the dismal science after all.

20101120-03 13:47 SteveB Re: "The Poor Is Getting Poorer"

Dear Bill,

Before "free" trade and waves of illegal aliens willing to live in multi-family garages f*cked us (because it costs so much more to live decently in America than, for instance, China or Mexico), prices were deemed reasonable and no one had to "subsidize money-losing manufacturing industries in this country." American corporations made plenty of money, even the ones paying fair wages.

We were the richest country the world had ever seen (or maybe will ever see). We were even rich enough to help the rest of the world (WWII might be one good, rather costly example). Now, we are the ones needing help in the form of constant loans from a China seeking to dominate (or bankrupt) us. Think disaster can't happen here? Look at Greece and Ireland.

The chart, I believe, only details the average, legal "minimum wage" adjusted for inflation and changes in the law. Other numbers paint equally dismal pictures of exactly what Carlos is referring to in his song. Believe me, the rich ain't gettin' poorer!

Our politicians have sold us down the river, bribed by campaign contributions into doing the will of the few, to the detriment of us all.

"Cheap goods from China and other Asian countries" are not as cheap as they seem. It's not that you can't have one without the other. We had both in our "Golden Age" (before the sell-out)—sufficiently low prices to maintain and nurture a large, consuming middle class AND profitable industries providing good jobs.

What do we have now? Wal-Mart junk and Wal-Mart part-time jobs paying less than the chart shows. Not enough to live on. Wonderful progress, America! Yes, quite dismal, huh?

I always appreciate your thoughts.

20101120-04 14:00 SteveB "China's Surprise Rate Hike: What It Means"

Why would the U.S. have taken measures in the past which prevent us from doing what China does, i.e., encouraging "exports and the consumption of domestically produced goods"?

Why would doing so make America somehow immoral or wrong? Aren't these proper goals for any country to pursue, for the good of its people? I don't hear even any of you liberals saying China is bad because it strives to serve its own self-interest. Maybe it's time America did what all the rest of the world does: put the interests of its own people first.

"China's Surprise Rate Hike: What It Means" by Daniel Gross, Yahoo! Finance

Oct. 19, 2010, (<http://www.best-of-cyprus-property.com/news/china-s-surprise-rate-hike-what-it-means>)

On Tuesday global stock markets got up on the wrong side of the bed thanks to news from an unexpected source: the People's Bank of China. The nation's central bank, analogous to the Federal Reserve in the U.S., announced it would raise rates on one-year loans and deposits by .25 percent, or 25 basis points.

Why is the People's Bank of China raising interest rates?

Central banks raise interest rates when they are concerned about inflation, or if they are worried that credit or the economy at large is expanding at an unsustainable pace. Higher interest rates make money more expensive, and thus should cut down on borrowing activity. China's economy is growing very rapidly, at a 10.3 percent annual rate in the most recent quarter, and inflation is running above the official target of three percent. For a country that has to make up as much ground as China does, no rate can be too fast. But housing markets, especially in coastal cities, have been raging. With observers fretting about bubbles, China's central bank has taken efforts to discourage real estate lending and choke off inflation. Raising interest rates is one way to do that.

Why would global stock markets react negatively to this news?

Two reasons. First, think about the changing shape of the world's economic geography. The U.S. (the world's largest economy), Japan (until recently the world's second-largest economy), and the European bloc (which rivals the U.S. in size) are all growing very slowly. China, now the second-largest economy in the world, accounts for a huge amount of growth and demand. While it exports a great deal, it also imports massive quantities of everything from nuts grown in California to copper mined in Chile. The Chinese domestic market has also finally emerged as an important source of sales; General Motors sells more cars in China than it does in the U.S. So any hint that the Chinese juggernaut might be showing signs of slowing is bound to be seen in a negative light by investors who are concerned about growth.

Second, it was a surprise. Markets hate surprises. As a general rule, monetary policy in the U.S. and Europe is conducted with a certain amount of transparency. Officials use speeches and statements to telegraph their intentions, so as not to surprise investors and markets. In China, government bodies keep information very close to their vest and don't face the same type of pressures that western central banks do to give notice about their actions. Since the markets for Chinese currency are very tightly controlled, the People's Bank of China doesn't feel the need to communicate openly about its intentions.

What are the effects of such an increase on China's economy?

The impact of this rate increase lies as much in its symbolism as in its practical effect. Boosting the rates by 25 basis points is like tapping the brakes gently on a freight train running at 90 miles per hour — it can only slow it down a bit. But it does signal that China's central bank is sufficiently concerned about some issues in its economy to take action.

The exchange rate of China's currency, the Yuan (the Renminbi is the official name of the currency, while the Yuan is the main unit of currency), against the dollar, has been a contentious issue between the U.S. and China. How does this move affect the exchange rate?

In theory, raising interest rates in China should make the Yuan stronger against the dollar. All things being equal, money flows toward countries with higher interest rates (like China) and away from countries with very low interest rates (like the U.S.). But despite intense pressure from the U.S. government, China has remained committed to keeping the Yuan trading in a stable range against the greenback. China prefers a weak currency because it makes Chinese goods cheap for American consumers and makes American-made goods expensive for Chinese consumers — which encourages exports and the consumption of domestically produced goods.

(Daniel Gross is economics editor and columnist at Yahoo! Finance.)

20101120-05	14:03	SteveB	"Olbermann, O'Reilly & the Death of Real News"
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"Olbermann, O'Reilly and the Death of Real News" by Ted Koppel, *The Washington Post*

Nov. 14, 2010, (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/12/AR2010111202857.html>)

To witness Keith Olbermann—the most opinionated among MSNBC's left-leaning, Fox-baiting, money generating hosts—suspended even briefly last week for making financial contributions to Democratic political candidates seemed like a whimsical, arcane holdover from a long-gone era of television journalism, when the networks considered the collection and dissemination of substantive and unbiased news to be a public trust.

Back then, a policy against political contributions would have aimed to avoid even the appearance of partisanship. But today, when Olbermann draws more than 1 million like-minded viewers to his program every night precisely because he is avowedly, unabashedly and monotonously partisan, it is not clear what misdemeanor his donations constituted. Consistency?

We live now in a cable news universe that celebrates the opinions of Olbermann, Rachel Maddow, Chris Matthews, Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly—individuals who hold up the twin pillars of political partisanship and who are encouraged to do so by their parent organizations because their brand of analysis and commentary is highly profitable.

The commercial success of both Fox News and MSNBC is a source of nonpartisan sadness for me. While I can appreciate the financial logic of drowning television viewers in a flood of opinions designed to confirm their own biases, the trend is not good for the republic. It is, though, the natural outcome of a growing sense of national entitlement. Daniel Patrick Moynihan's oft-quoted observation that "everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts," seems almost quaint in an environment that flaunts opinions as though they were facts.

And so, among the many benefits we have come to believe the founding fathers intended for us, the latest is news we can choose. Beginning, perhaps, from the reasonable perspective that absolute objectivity is unattainable, Fox News and MSNBC no longer even attempt it. They show us the world not as it is, but as partisans (and loyal viewers) at either end of the political spectrum would like it to be. This is to journalism what Bernie Madoff was to investment: He told his customers what they wanted to hear, and by the time they learned the truth, their money was gone.

It is also part of a pervasive ethos that eschews facts in favor of an idealized reality. The fashion industry has apparently known this for years: Esquire magazine recently found that men's jeans from a variety of name-brand manufacturers are cut large but labeled small. The actual waist sizes are anywhere from three to six inches roomier than their labels insist.

Perhaps it doesn't matter that we are being flattered into believing what any full-length mirror can tell us is untrue. But when our accountants, bankers and lawyers, our doctors and our politicians tell us only what we want to hear, despite hard evidence to the contrary, we are headed for disaster. We need only look at our housing industry, our credit card debt, the cost of two wars subsidized by borrowed money, and the rising deficit to understand the dangers of entitlement run rampant. We celebrate truth as a virtue, but only in the abstract. What we really need in our search for truth is a commodity that used to be at the heart of good journalism: facts—along with a willingness to present those facts without fear or favor.

To the degree that broadcast news was a more virtuous operation 40 years ago, it was a function of both fear and innocence. Network executives were afraid that a failure to work in the "public interest, convenience and necessity," as set forth in the Radio Act of 1927, might cause the Federal Communications Commission to suspend or even revoke their licenses. The three major broadcast networks pointed to their news divisions (which operated at a loss or barely broke even) as evidence that they were fulfilling the FCC's mandate. News was, in a manner of speaking, the loss leader that permitted NBC, CBS and ABC to justify the enormous profits made by their entertainment divisions. On the innocence side of the ledger, meanwhile, it never occurred to the network brass that news programming could be profitable.

Until, that is, CBS News unveiled its "60 Minutes" news magazine in 1968. When, after three years or so, "60 Minutes" turned a profit (something no television news program had previously achieved), a light went on, and the news divisions of all three networks came to be seen as profit centers, with all the expectations that entailed.

I recall a Washington meeting many years later at which Michael Eisner, then the chief executive of Disney, ABC's parent company, took questions from a group of ABC News correspondents and compared our status in the corporate structure to that of the Disney artists who create the company's world famous cartoons. (He clearly and sincerely intended the analogy to flatter us.) Even they, Eisner pointed out, were expected to make budget cuts; we would have to do the same.

I mentioned several names to Eisner and asked if he recognized any. He did not. They were, I said, ABC correspondents and cameramen who had been killed or wounded while on assignment. While appreciating the enormous talent of the corporation's cartoonists, I pointed out that working on a television crew, covering wars, revolutions and natural disasters, was different. The suggestion was not well received.

The parent companies of all three networks would ultimately find a common way of dealing with the risk and expense inherent in operating news bureaus around the world: They would eliminate them. Peter Jennings and I, who joined ABC News within a year of each other in the early 1960s, were profoundly influenced by our years as foreign correspondents. When we became the anchors and managing editors of our respective programs, we tried to make sure foreign news remained a major ingredient. It was a struggle.

Peter called me one afternoon in the mid-'90s to ask whether we at "Nightline" had been receiving the same inquiries that he and his producers were getting at "World News Tonight." We had, indeed, been getting calls from company bean-counters wanting to know how many times our program had used a given overseas bureau in the preceding year. This data in hand, the accountants constructed the simplest of equations: Divide the cost of running a bureau by the number of television segments it produced. The cost, inevitably, was deemed too high to justify leaving the bureau as it was. Trims led to cuts and, in most cases, to elimination.

The networks say they still maintain bureaus around the world, but whereas in the 1960s I was one of 20 to 30 correspondents working out of fully staffed offices in more than a dozen major capitals, for the most part, a "bureau" now is just a local fixer who speaks English and can facilitate the work of a visiting producer or a correspondent in from London.

Much of the American public used to gather before the electronic hearth every evening, separate but together, while Walter Cronkite, Chet Huntley, David Brinkley, Frank Reynolds and Howard K. Smith offered relatively unbiased accounts of information that their respective news organizations believed the public needed to know. The ritual permitted, and perhaps encouraged, shared perceptions and even the possibility of compromise among those who disagreed.

It was an imperfect, untidy little Eden of journalism where reporters were motivated to gather facts about important issues. We didn't know that we could become profit centers. No one had bitten into that apple yet.

The transition of news from a public service to a profitable commodity is irreversible. Legions of new media present a vista of unrelenting competition. Advertisers crave young viewers, and these young viewers are deemed to be uninterested in hard news, especially hard news from abroad. This is felicitous, since covering overseas news is very expensive. On the other hand, the appetite for strongly held, if unsubstantiated, opinion is demonstrably high. And such talk, as they say, is cheap.

Broadcast news has been outflanked and will soon be overtaken by scores of other media options. The need for clear, objective reporting in a world of rising religious fundamentalism, economic interdependence and global ecological problems is probably greater than it has ever been. But we are no longer a national audience receiving news from a handful of trusted gatekeepers; we're now a million or more clusters of consumers, harvesting information from like-minded providers.

As you may know, Olbermann returned to his MSNBC program after just two days of enforced absence. (Given cable television's short attention span, two days may well have seemed like an "indefinite suspension.") He was gracious about the whole thing, acknowledging at least the historical merit of the rule he had broken: "It's not a stupid rule," he said. "It needs to be adapted to the realities of 21st-century journalism."

There is, after all, not much of a chance that 21st-century journalism will be adapted to conform with the old rules. Technology and the market are offering a tantalizing array of channels, each designed to fill a particular niche—sports, weather, cooking, religion—and an infinite variety of news, prepared and seasoned to reflect our taste, just the way we like it. As someone used to say in a bygone era, "That's the way it is."

(Ted Koppel, who was managing editor of ABC's "Nightline" from 1980 to 2005, is a contributing analyst for "BBC World News America.")

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Dear SteveB,

After so much grumbling about this and that, I think I've found something to be optimistic about. I just read an article in *The Atlantic* by James Fallows [below] on the cooperation between China and the U.S. regarding clean energy.

Apparently the Chinese are miles ahead of us and are leading the way toward getting a handle on climate change. Perhaps if the Chinese become our economic allies we'll be able to salvage the 21st century. The downside is that Congress moves so slowly that we lag decades behind in being able to implement change. Businesses are making their own deals without waiting for governments to get off the dime. It might just be that corporations are the governments of the future. I'm not too comfortable with that, but what do I know?

"Dirty Coal, Clean Future" by James Fallows, *The Atlantic*

Dec. 2010, (<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/12/dirty-coal-clean-future/8307/>)

(To environmentalists, "clean coal" is an insulting oxymoron. But for now, the only way to meet the world's energy needs, and to arrest climate change before it produces irreversible cataclysm, is to use coal—dirty, sooty, toxic coal—in more-sustainable ways. The good news is that new technologies are making this possible. China is now the leader in this area, the Google and Intel of the energy world. If we are serious about global warming, America needs to work with China to build a greener future on a foundation of coal. Otherwise, the clean-energy revolution will leave us behind, with grave costs for the world's climate and our economy.)

THROUGH THE PAST four years I've often suggested that China's vaunted achievements are less impressive, or at least more complicated, seen up close. Yes, Chinese factories make nearly all of the world's consumer electronic equipment. But the brand names, designs, and most of the profits usually belong to companies and people outside China. Yes, China's accumulated trade surpluses have made it the creditor for America and much of the world. But the huge share of its own wealth that China has sunk into foreign economies ties its fate to theirs. Yes, more and more Chinese people are very rich. But hundreds of millions of Chinese people are still very poor. Yes, Chinese factories lead the world in output of windmills and solar-power panels. But China's environmental situation is still so dire as to pose the main threat not just to the country's public health and political stability but also to its own economic expansion.

This report will have a different tone. I have been learning about an area of Chinese achievement that is objectively good for the world as a whole, including the United States. Surprising enough! And China's achievement dramatically highlights a structural advantage of its approach and a weakness of America's. It involves the shared global effort to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, of which China and the United States are respectively the No. 1 and No. 2 producers, together creating more than 40 percent of the world's total output. That shared effort is real, and important. The significant Chinese developments involve more than the "clean tech" boom that Americans have already heard so much about. Instead a different, less publicized, and much less appealing-sounding effort may matter even more in determining whether the United States and China can cooperate to reduce emissions. This involves not clean tech but the dirtiest of today's main energy sources—coal.

Mining coal is notoriously dangerous, the remnants of those mines disfigure the Earth, and the by-products of coal's combustion fill the air not simply with soot, smoke, and carbon dioxide but also with toxic heavy metals like mercury and lead, plus corrosive oxides of nitrogen and sulfur, among other pollutants. When I visited coal towns in China's Shandong and Shanxi provinces, my face, arms, and hands would be rimed in black by the end of each day—even when I hadn't gone near a mine. People in those towns, like their predecessors in industrial-age Europe and America, have the same black coating on their throats and lungs, of course. When I have traveled at low altitude in small airplanes above America's active coal-mining regions—West Virginia and Kentucky in the East, Wyoming and its neighbors in the Great Basin region of the West—I've seen the huge scars left by "mountain top removal" and open-pit mining for coal, which are usually invisible from the road and harder to identify from six miles up in an airliner. Compared with most other fossil-fuel sources of energy, coal is inherently worse from a carbon-footprint perspective, since its hydrogen atoms come bound with more carbon atoms, meaning that coal starts with a higher carbon-to-hydrogen ratio than oil, natural gas, or other hydrocarbons.

The proposition that coal could constitute any kind of "hope" or solution, or that a major environmentalist action plan could be called "Coal Without Carbon," as one I will describe is indeed named—this goes beyond seeming interestingly contrarian to seeming simply wrong. For the coal industry, the term "clean coal" is an advertising slogan; for many in the environmental movement, it is an insulting oxymoron. But two ideas that underlie the term are taken with complete seriousness by businesses, scientists, and government officials in China and America, and are the basis of the most extensive cooperation now under way between the countries on climate issues. One is that coal can be used in less damaging, more sustainable ways than it is now. The other is that it must be used in those ways, because there is no plausible other way to meet what will be, absent an economic or social cataclysm, the world's unavoidable energy demands.

This is not an argument against all-out effort on all other fronts, from conservation and efficiency to improved battery technology to wind- and solar-power systems to improved nuclear facilities. Amory Lovins, of the Rocky Mountain Institute, has argued for years that designing buildings and transportation systems to waste less energy from the start is by far the cheapest way to reduce damaging emissions (a position reinforced by influential studies from McKinsey & Company). "Good ideas about climate change are not in competition with one another," Roger Aines, a climate scientist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, told me when I visited this summer. "We need every possible solution, and then we need more."

This is an argument for recognizing that China has faced reality, in launching an all-out effort to "de-carbonize" coal—and for recognizing America's difficulty in doing the same.

37 Billion Tons

Let's review the basics. This material will be elementary for some readers and controversial for a few others, but laying it out helps clarify the problem to be solved and the real options from which to choose. Also, the quantities and numbers involved here are so vast—the standard unit in discussing carbon-dioxide emissions is the gigaton, or 1 billion metric tons—that it helps to have some indicators of scale.

All human activity together puts roughly 37 billion tons (37 gigatons) of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. That number has been rising, as the world's population grows and the number of cars, factories, and power plants increases. Twenty years ago, it was less than 25 billion tons. Twenty years from now, it could well be 50 billion tons. Carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas—that is, a substance that affects the atmosphere's ability to absorb and emit heat, so that a growing portion of the sun's energy is trapped to warm the planet rather than radiating back into space. Methane, nitrous oxide, aerosols, and other emissions play a major role, and ton per ton can be more powerful in greenhouse effect. But the focus is on carbon dioxide because we produce so much of it, and because its effects are so long-lasting.

Carbon dioxide added to the atmosphere persists for many decades, even centuries—unlike methane, which can disperse within a single decade. This means that when more carbon dioxide is emitted than natural systems absorb, the concentration in the atmosphere continually goes up. Before James Watt invented the steam engine in the late 1700s—that is, before human societies had much incentive to burn coal and later oil in large quantities—the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was around 280 parts per million, or ppm (meaning 280 carbon-dioxide molecules per million molecules of "dried air," or air with the water removed). It is thought to have fluctuated between about 180 and 280 ppm through the previous 800,000 years. By 1900, as Europe and North America were industrializing, it had reached about 300 ppm.

Now the carbon-dioxide concentration is at or above 390 ppm, which is probably the highest level in many millions of years. "We know that the last time CO₂ was sustained at this level, much of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets were not there," Michael Mann, a climate scientist at Penn State, told me. Because of the 37 billion annual tons of carbon-dioxide emissions, the atmospheric carbon-dioxide level continues to go up by about two ppm a year. For perspective: by the time today's sixth-graders finish high school, the world carbon-dioxide level will probably have passed 400 ppm, and by the time most of them are starting families, it will have entered the 420s.

Have we so far come across anything that is "controversial"? No: such political controversy as exists mainly concerns the exact connection between rising carbon-dioxide levels and future climate change, and how harmful (and to whom) that change would be. That the atmospheric carbon-dioxide level is rapidly going up, and that recent years have been on average the warmest in recorded history, no one bothers to dispute. And in any case, all parties to the negotiations I'm describing, including the heads of the major coal-mining and electric-power utilities in the United States and China, accept as settled fact that greenhouse-gas emissions are an emergency they must confront, because of the likely disruptive effects on the world's climate. At a U.S.-China environmental conference this summer in San Francisco, I heard one utility-company official after another testify, confession-meeting style, about the vast extent of their current emissions and their need to reform.

The main uncertainties involve what might happen as carbon-dioxide levels reach 450 ppm and above. In particular, the question is how and when "positive feedback" loops would kick in, so that the hotter things get, the faster they will get even hotter. The main way this would happen would be through melting of the polar ice sheets, which would mean less white ice surface to reflect the sun's heat, and more blue water surface to absorb it. Similarly, the vast Arctic permafrost areas could have a positive-feedback effect as they thaw. They are essentially frozen peat bogs, which contain huge

amounts of methane. As they began to melt, they would release their methane, which in turn could trigger even faster melting and more methane release.

"The reality of it is that in many cases, there may not be any fixed threshold for 'irreversible' change," Michael Mann told me. "What we have with rising CO2 levels in general is a dramatically increasing probability of serious and deleterious change in our climate." He went down the list: more frequent, severe, and sustained heat waves, like those that affected Russia and the United States this summer; more frequent and destructive hurricanes and floods; more frequent droughts, like the "thousand-year drought" that has devastated Australian agriculture; and altered patterns of the El Niño phenomenon, which will change rainfall patterns in the Americas. In other cases, he said, there could be important thresholds. For example, the possibility of dramatic rises in ocean levels, which could affect the habitability of New York, London, Shanghai, Miami, the entire Netherlands, and many other modern conurbations, along with coastal areas in India, Bangladesh, and elsewhere. "It would be nice to know where such thresholds are so we can avoid crossing them," Mann said. "We can't know that. What we do know for certain is that with each fraction of a degree of warming, the probability of such potentially catastrophic outcomes goes up."

The Inevitability of Coal

That's the big picture. Now come the parts of the background that are somewhat less familiar but bear on the argument that the only real salvation must involve coal.

Recall the 37 billion tons of worldwide annual carbon-dioxide emissions. On a per capita basis, that would mean about six tons for each of the planet's 6-billion-plus people. But of course it doesn't work that way. For the United States, emissions are about 25 tons per person. For Europe as a whole, they're about 11 tons. (The difference is smaller houses, smaller cars, fewer sprawling suburbs, and in the case of France, much heavier reliance on nuclear power to generate electricity. Nuclear plants are expensive and obviously create waste-disposal problems, but they emit practically no greenhouse gases.) Japan's level is slightly below Europe's. For China, the emission level is about eight tons per person. Overall, China's economy is more energy-intensive than America's or Europe's—its bias toward construction and heavy manufacturing, plus its on-average shoddy standard of building insulation, mean that it takes more fuel, electricity, and raw energy to produce a dollar's worth of output in China than in the U.S. But overall living standards are still so much lower in China that per capita emissions there are barely one-third the U.S. level. India's per capita emission level is about three tons per year, less than half of China's (because India has so many fewer factories). For Kenya and other barely industrialized countries, it's about one ton per person per year.

The range of these figures suggests the technical challenges ahead. As one climate scientist put it to me, "To stabilize the CO2 concentration in the atmosphere, the whole world on average would need to get down to the Kenya level"—a 96 percent reduction for the United States. The figures also suggest the diplomatic challenges for American negotiators in recommending that other countries, including those with hundreds of millions in poverty, forgo the energy-intensive path toward wealth that the United States has traveled for so many years.

Indeed, in comparisons between the United States and China, the emissions figures probably understate the real gap in per capita energy use. David Mohler is the chief technology officer for Duke Energy Company, which is based in Charlotte and is a leading electricity and natural-gas provider in the Carolinas and parts of the Midwest. He travels frequently to China, and he took me through a comparison of electricity use in the two countries, as a proxy for overall energy use and emissions. At face value, he said, there was about a 5-to-1 difference between U.S. and Chinese per capita electricity-use levels. Each American is on average responsible for about 13.6 megawatt-hours of electricity use per year, counting residential heating and lighting, a pro-rated share of industrial and commercial demand, and so on. For each Chinese, the average is about 2.6. "But around half of that Chinese electricity consumption was for manufactured products for export," Mohler said. That is, China's surge in electric capacity has disproportionately gone toward its factory-export boom, rather than toward home air-conditioning and lighting, elevators, TVs and computers, electric cars, or any other in-China use by Chinese people (though to see a blazingly lit Chinese city at night is to recognize that plenty of power is already being used). "So in a sense, their 'real' per capita use is only about 1.5 megawatt-hours," Mohler said, "and ours, counting what went into the products we import, could be 10 times that much."

Mohler's point was less about abstract equity than practical reality. People in rural China, in my experience, don't really care that people somewhere else—Los Angeles or Houston, even Shanghai or Tianjin—are using more electricity and gasoline than they are. They just want to use more themselves! I assume the same to be true of their counterparts from Nigeria to India to North Korea. "You go in the countryside in China, and people don't have any power to pump their water," Mohler said. "Of course they're going to want those powered pumps. Anyone would." And hot water for their baths, and refrigerators for their kitchens, and air-conditioners for their bedrooms—and cars.

Thus the bind. The atmosphere needs to absorb dramatically less carbon dioxide, while people around the world are certain to want dramatically more of the products and comforts whose creation and operation send carbon dioxide and other gases into the sky.

Isn't "clean energy" the answer? Of course—because everything is the answer. The people I spoke with and reports I read differed in emphasis, sometimes significantly. Some urged greater stress on efficiency and conservation; some, a faster move toward nuclear power or natural gas; some, an all-out push for solar power and other renewable sources; others, immediate preparation for "geo-engineering" or "abatement" projects to offset the effects of climate disruption once they occur. But in a sense they were all in harmony, because everything on all the lists works toward the same end.

The best-known illustration of the need for an all-fronts approach is the "carbon wedge" analysis from the Carbon Mitigation Initiative at Princeton. Its premise is that to keep the carbon-dioxide level from going into the 500s, or twice its pre-industrial-age level, over the next 50 years, the world collectively will need to reduce its carbon-dioxide emissions by a total of about 26 billion tons per year. (Technically, CMI measures its goals in billions of tons of carbon contained within the carbon dioxide. For clarity, I've converted the figures.) To reach that total, CMI proposes seven "stabilization wedges" of a little less than 4 billion tons of carbon dioxide each. A 4-billion-ton "wedge" through efficiency efforts of all kinds; another wedge of that size through renewable power; another through avoiding deforestation and changing agricultural practices. Eventually it adds up. "There are many good options," Julio Friedmann, a geologist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, told me soon after I first met him in Beijing two years ago. "But there are no unlimited options. Each is limited by cost, limited by scale, limited by physics and chemistry, limited by thermodynamics. For example, there's nothing wrong with switchgrass as a biofuel"—one of George W. Bush's novel proposals—"but there's not a lot of energy in it."

We'll hear from Friedmann again. This emphasis on limits is what begins pointing us back to coal.

"Emotionally, we would all like to think that wind, solar, and conservation will solve the problem for us," David Mohler of Duke Energy told me. "Nothing will change, our comfort and convenience will be the same, and we can avoid that nasty coal. Unfortunately, the math doesn't work that way."

The math he has in mind starts with the role that coal now plays around the world, and especially for the two biggest energy consumers, America and China. Overall, coal-burning power plants provide nearly half (about 46 percent this year) of the electricity consumed in the United States. For the record: natural gas supplies another 23 percent, nuclear power about 20 percent, hydroelectric power about 7 percent, and everything else the remaining 4 or 5 percent. The small size of the "everything else" total is worth noting; even if it doubles or triples, the solutions we often hear the most about won't come close to meeting total demand. In China, coal-fired plants supply an even larger share of much faster-growing total electric demand: at least 70 percent, with the Three Gorges Dam and similar hydroelectric projects providing about 20 percent, and (in order) natural gas, nuclear power, wind, and solar energy making up the small remainder. For the world as a whole, coal-fired plants provide about half the total electric supply. On average, every American uses the electricity produced by 7,500 pounds of coal each year.

Precisely because coal already plays such a major role in world power supplies, basic math means that it will inescapably do so for a very long time. For instance: through the past decade, the United States has talked about, passed regulations in favor of, and made technological breakthroughs in all fields of renewable energy. Between 1995 and 2008, the amount of electricity coming from solar power rose by two-thirds in the United States, and wind-generated electricity went up more than 15-fold. Yet over those same years, the amount of electricity generated by coal went up much faster, in absolute terms, than electricity generated from any other source. The journalist Robert Bryce has drawn on U.S. government figures to show that between 1995 and 2008, "the absolute increase in total electricity produced by coal was about 5.8 times as great as the increase from wind and 823 times as great as the increase from solar"—and this during the dawn of the green-energy era in America. Power generated by the wind and sun increased significantly in America last year; but power generated by coal increased more than seven times as much. As Americans have read many times, Chinese companies are the world's leaders in manufacturing solar panels, often using technology originally developed in the United States. Many of the panels are used inside China for its own rapidly growing solar-power system; still, solar energy accounts for about 1 percent of its total power supply. In his book *Power Hungry*, Bryce describes a visit to a single coal mine, the Cardinal Mine in western Kentucky, whose daily output supports three-quarters as much electricity generation as all the solar and wind facilities in the United States combined. David MacKay, of the physics department at Cambridge University in England, has compiled an encyclopedia of such energy-related comparisons, which is available for free download (under the misleadingly lowbrow title *Sustainable Energy—Without the Hot Air*). For instance: he

calculates that if the windiest 10 percent of the entire British landmass were completely covered with wind turbines, they would produce power roughly equivalent to half of what Britons expend merely by driving each day.

Similar patterns apply even more starkly in China. Other sources of power are growing faster in relative terms, but year by year the most dramatic increase is in China's use of coal. "Coal simply is going to be with us for decades," a technical adviser to China's energy ministry told me this summer in Beijing. "We hope someday to have 15 percent of our power from renewable sources. Even so, the percentage of power generated by coal will not drop by more than a few points, and the absolute amount will quickly grow." Another government energy expert in Beijing said that the only serious limit on how fast Chinese power companies can increase their use of coal is the capacity of the country's transportation system. "It's kind of an existential question, whether they can handle the physical volumes they are planning to consume," he said. "Right now railroads are at capacity, you have entire highways being blocked with coal trucks, and the problems cascade." Part of the reason China has committed some \$80 billion over the next decade to build light-rail networks across the country is to get human passengers off the main rail lines, opening up more capacity to move coal.

"People without a technical background think, 'Coal is dirty! It's bad,'" I was told in Beijing by Ming Sung, a geologist and energy expert who was born in Shanghai, worked for decades in America and became a citizen, and has now returned to China. "But will you turn off your refrigerator for 30 years while we work on renewables? Turn off the computer? Or ask people in China to do that? Unless you will, you can't get rid of coal for decades. As [U.S. Energy Secretary] Steven Chu has said, we have to face the nightmare of coal for a while."

Coal will be with us because it is abundant: any projected "peak coal" stage would come many decades after the world reaches "peak oil." It will be with us because of where it's located: the top four coal-reserve countries are the United States, Russia, China, and India, which together have about 40 percent of the world's population and more than 60 percent of its coal. It will be with us because its direct costs are in most circumstances far lower than those of the alternatives—that's why so much is used. (Prices vary widely from place to place and company to company, but one utility executive said that the lowest-price coal plant might generate electricity for 2 cents per kilowatt-hour, while the same amount of power from a new wind farm in the same area might cost 20 cents.) It will be with us because its indirect costs, in miner deaths, environmental destruction, and carbon burden on the atmosphere are unregulated and "externalized." Power companies that answer to shareholders or ratepayers have a hard time justifying a more expensive choice. "Coal is so cheap because its dirtiness still doesn't count against it," an air-pollution expert with the Natural Resources Defense Council told *The Wall Street Journal* 10 years ago. In the absence of climate legislation in the United States and international agreements to reduce emissions, the dirtiness still doesn't count. Coal will be with us because changing a power infrastructure—like building a new transportation system or extending cable or fiber-optic connections through an entire country—is the very opposite of a "virtual" process, and takes many years to complete.

And it will be with us because of a surprising constraint: after a century in which medical diagnosis and treatment, computer and communications systems, aerospace and nanotech industries, and nearly every other form of technology have routinely achieved the magical, energy production is essentially what it was in the time of James Watt. With the main exception of nuclear-power plants and the hoped-for future exception of practical nuclear-fusion systems, we mostly create electricity by burning something that was once underground—coal, oil, natural gas—to boil water and turn turbines with the steam. (Windmills use the wind's force, and hydropower systems use falling water, to turn turbines directly.) The computer of 10 years from now will be unrecognizably more powerful than today's, and its predictably increased capability will make medical, navigation, and other systems better, too. If the power plant of 10 years from now is even slightly more efficient than today's, that will be a major achievement. The most advanced of today's "ultra-supercritical" coal-fired plants, which operate at very high temperatures and pressures to maximize the efficiency of combustion, convert up to 48 percent of the coal's potential energy to electric power; the rest is lost as heat. "Subcritical" plants typically have efficiencies in the mid-30s. The costliest and most advanced technology is an improvement—but not a breakthrough. A breakthrough is what it would take to move beyond reliance on coal.

"I know this is a theological issue for some people," Julio Friedmann of Lawrence Livermore said. "Solar and wind power are going to be important, but it is really hard to get them beyond 10 percent of total power supply." He pointed out the huge engineering achievement it has taken to raise the efficiency of solar photovoltaic cells from about 25 percent to about 30 percent; whereas "to make them useful, you would need improvements of two- or threefold in cost," say from about 18 cents per kilowatt-hour to 6 cents. He recited a skeptic's line used about the Carter administration's clean-energy programs—"You're not going to run a steel plant with solar panels"—and then made a point that summarized the outlook of those who have decided they can best wage the climate fight by working on dirty, destructive coal.

"It is very hard to go around the world and think you can make any difference in carbon-loading the atmosphere without some plan for how people can continue to use coal," Friedmann said. "It is by far the most prevalent and efficient way to

generate electricity. People are going to use it. There is no story of climate progress without a story for coal. In particular, U.S.-China progress on coal.”

The Technical Challenge

What would progress on coal entail? The proposals are variations on two approaches: ways to capture carbon dioxide before it can escape into the air and ways to reduce the carbon dioxide that coal produces when burned. In “post-combustion” systems, the coal is burned normally, but then chemical or physical processes separate carbon dioxide from the plume of hot flue gas that comes out of the smokestack. Once “captured” as a relatively pure stream of carbon dioxide, this part of the exhaust is pressurized into liquid form and then sold or stored. Refitting an existing coal plant can be very costly. “It’s like trying to remodel your home into a mansion,” a coal-plant manager told me in Beijing. “It’s more expensive, and it’s never quite right.” Apart from research projects, only two relatively small coal-fired power plants now operate in America with post-combustion capture.

Designing a capture system into a plant from the start is cheaper than doing refits. But even then the “parasitic load” of energy required to treat, compress, and otherwise handle the separated stream of carbon dioxide can come to 30 percent or more of the total output of a coal-fired power plant—so even more coal must be burned (and mined and shipped) to produce the same supply of electricity. Without mandatory emission limits or carbon prices, burning coal more cleanly is inevitably more expensive than simply burning coal the old way. “When people like me look for funding for carbon capture, the financial community asks, ‘Why should we do that now?’” an executive of a major American electric utility told me. “If there were a price on carbon”—a tax on carbon-dioxide emissions—“you could plug in, say, a loss of \$30 to \$50 per ton, and build a business case.”

“Pre-combustion” systems are fundamentally more efficient. In them, the coal is treated chemically to produce a flammable gas with lower carbon content than untreated coal. This means less carbon dioxide going up the smokestack to be separated and stored.

Either way, pre- or post-, the final step in dealing with carbon is “sequestration”—doing something with the carbon dioxide that has been isolated at such cost and effort, so it doesn’t just escape into the air. Carbon dioxide has a surprisingly large number of small-scale commercial uses, starting with adding the sparkle to carbonated soft drinks. (This is not a big help on the climate front, since the carbon dioxide is “sequestered” only until you pop open the bottle’s top.) All larger-scale, longer-term proposals for storing carbon involve injecting it deep underground, into porous rock that will trap it indefinitely. In the right geological circumstances, the captured carbon dioxide can even be used for “enhanced oil recovery,” forcing oil out of the porous rock into which it is introduced and up into wells.

These efforts are in one way completely different from “advanced research and development” as we often conceive of it, and in another way very much the same. They are different in that the scientists and entrepreneurs involved do not seem to count on, or even hope for, the large breakthroughs we have come to assume in biological sciences and info-tech. Consistent with two centuries of incremental improvement in power systems since the time of James Watt, practical refinements and ever-improving efficiency are the goal. They are similar in the operational advantage conferred by *doing*. Because Google indexes more data and handles more queries than any competitor, it can more quickly determine which innovations are succeeding (News, Translate, Earth, Maps) and which are failing (Wave), and exactly how the promising products still need to be improved. The first million copies of each new chip that Intel produces help it debug the production process, so that subsequent millions are cheaper and increasingly defect-free. “Whenever you scale something up, there are always differences from what you planned,” an engineer from a major American technology company told me. “It’s never quite the same. China is *building* plants like mad, so they can afford to experiment. We are not.”

In the search for “progress on coal,” like other forms of energy research and development, China is now the Google, the Intel, the General Motors and Ford of their heyday—the place where the doing occurs, and thus the learning by doing as well. “They are doing so much so fast that their learning curve is at an inflection that simply could not be matched in the United States,” David Mohler of Duke Energy told me.

“In America, it takes a decade to get a permit for a plant,” a U.S. government official who works in China said. “Here, they build the whole thing in 21 months. To me, it’s all about accelerating our way to the right technologies, which will be much slower without the Chinese.

“You can think of China as a huge laboratory for deploying technology,” the official added. “The energy demand is going like this”—his hand mimicked an airplane taking off—“and they need to build new capacity all the time. They can go from

concept to deployment in half the time we can, sometimes a third. We have some advanced ideas. They have the capability to deploy it very quickly. That is where the partnership works.”

The good aspects of this partnership have unfolded at a quickening pace over the past decade, through a surprisingly subtle and complex web of connections among private, governmental, and academic institutions in both countries. Perhaps I should say unsurprisingly, since the relationships among American and Chinese organizations in the energy field in some ways resemble the manufacturing supply chains that connect factories in China with designers, inventors, and customers in the United States and elsewhere. The difference in this case is how much faster the strategic advantage seems to be shifting to the Chinese side.

In the normal manufacturing supply chain—Apple creating computers, Walmart outsourcing clothes and toys—the United States provides branding, design, and a major market for products, while China supplies labor, machines, and the ability to turn concepts into products at very high speed. In the quest for cleaner coal, America’s contribution is mainly “soft power”—advice, coordination, prodding, and expertise—in hopes of influencing what Chinese organizations do.

Ten years ago, at the end of the Clinton administration, the Chinese and American governments signed a “Fossil Energy Protocol,” to coordinate research on better use of coal and oil. Political leaders have come and gone since then, but the cast of technicians, civil servants, and business officials on each side has been relatively stable and has gotten used to working together. After taking office as secretary of energy last year, Steven Chu—a celebrity in China because of his Chinese heritage and his Nobel Prize—gave a new push to these efforts, hiring additional staff members for the U.S.-China office and committing \$75 million to a joint Clean Energy Research Center.

The efforts of two scientists we’ve already met, Julio Friedmann and Ming Sung, illustrate what Americans can and cannot do to shape what happens in China—and the mounting advantages on China’s side relative to America’s.

Friedmann, who is in his mid-40s, has become one of the world’s experts on sequestration: how and where carbon dioxide can safely be stored underground. He was trained in geology at MIT and the University of Southern California and initially went to work for ExxonMobil. But by the early 2000s he had become fascinated with the emerging science of underground carbon-dioxide storage. “At that point, it was clear that nearly all of the really cool work was being done in the national labs,” he told me. In 2004 he and his family moved from Maryland to California, where he joined Lawrence Livermore. He is now the head of the Carbon Management Program there and the technical leader of a government-university-business consortium that this summer won a Department of Energy competition to help develop carbon-sequestration projects in China. To give an idea of the consortium’s range, it includes three universities, three national laboratories, two scientific nongovernmental organizations, and six large corporations, among them General Electric, Duke Energy, and AEP.

After talking with Friedmann many times in China, I finally asked about the ethnic derivation of his name. His grandparents were Ashkenazim from Poland and Hungary who left for Latin America in the 1930s; his parents, raised in Colombia and Venezuela, met on an arranged date at Grossinger’s in the Catskills. Although Friedmann bikes to work through the bucolic Northern California setting of the Lawrence Livermore lab—a setting punctuated by the watchtowers and electrified fencing that surround the plutonium stockpile for the lab’s weapons-research center—he comes across as a fast-talking, high-pressure East Coast urban type.

In many meetings in America and China in the past two years, I have seen him turn that intensity to one great question: how quickly geologists from America and elsewhere can work with their counterparts in China to improve systems for pumping carbon dioxide underground, and to identify the right rock formations where it can safely be stored. On a typical trip to China, he will spend half his time in Beijing or Shanghai, meeting with government and corporate officials—and the other half in Xi’an or the Inner Mongolian wilderness, where many of the most promising storage locations are found. What he and his team have to offer, from the American part of the supply chain, is expertise on geological formations, on computer models for how the “plume” of liquefied carbon dioxide will settle into porous rock, and on other benefits of America’s decades of experience in petroleum geology. He can also put Chinese plant managers, scientists, and bureaucrats in touch with overseas counterparts they would otherwise never meet. “Projects like these are sort of like the school dance,” he told me. “You’re not getting married, but you’re figuring out how to interact. We need to start the process in a way that gives people the confidence to do it again, and again, and again. The confidence is the product.” The more often Chinese and foreign officials work together, the more easily they continue to work together. This might sound trivial, but I’ve become convinced that the steady expansion of these contacts will make a major difference in how an ever more powerful China deals with the rest of the world. What does Friedmann, or the United States, get from the process? “More tons sequestered, rather than emitted, in China,” he told me. But also something unavailable in America: a chance to see new technology in new plants and learn how it works. “In the U.S. today, there is not a single

demonstration of capturing CO₂ from a coal-fired plant at large scale," he said. "The technologies have been a little too expensive to actually implement. That's why we started looking at China." They can afford to build, and Americans can hope to watch and learn.

Ming Sung's role illustrates a similar balance of influence and knowledge between the United States and China. Sung, who is in his early 60s, was born in Shanghai and raised there and in Hong Kong, where his family fled in 1958. Ten years later he came to the United States for college and graduate studies in geology. He became a U.S. citizen, worked in the newly formed Department of Energy during the Carter administration, and then left for a 25-year career around the world as an executive with Shell Oil. After he retired from Shell and founded a software company, he and his wife decided to move back to China. He now works in Beijing for a Boston-based nonprofit environmental group called the Clean Air Task Force. (Disclosure: my sister is on the board.)

In the early 2000s the task force, originally a conventional anti-air-pollution group, embraced the necessity of cleaning up coal. In Beijing, Sung gave me a copy of its latest working paper, in both Chinese and English, called "Coal Without Carbon."

The group has sponsored research on sequestration, on post-combustion capture, and on the "cleanest" of the emerging pre-combustion coal technologies—"underground coal gasification." In this process, jets of air (or pure oxygen), sometimes with steam or various chemicals, are blasted into coal seams deep underground. They interact chemically with the coal to produce a gas that flows back up a pipe and can be burned. It leaves in the ground much of the carbon, sulfur, nitrogen, and other elements that create greenhouse gases and other pollutants when coal is burned.

"And this can be very cheap," Sung told me. "You don't have to mine the coal. You don't have to send men underground or haul coal around or dispose of ash. All the dirty stuff stays buried." Because of these and other savings, he said, coal used this way could match or beat the price of today's standard dirty power plant.

But in advocating the whole range of "clean coal" technologies, Sung and his team have the same problem Julio Friedmann has with carbon sequestration: it's not happening in the United States. There's one significant exception: the Texas Clean Energy Project, a plant being built outside Odessa, which will apply underground-gasification technology to capture 90 percent of its carbon, more than any other commercial plant in the world. It received a \$450 million federal award, just over half from the Department of Energy's Clean Coal Power Initiative and the rest from the American Recovery and Reinvestment stimulus program (toward the \$2.1 billion total capital cost). If it works as promised, this facility will be an advance over any coal-fired plant operating anywhere: it will gasify coal underground, eliminating the cost and damage of mining; it will sell urea (for fertilizer) and other chemical by-products of the underground gasification; and it will use the captured carbon dioxide for enhanced oil recovery in the nearby Permian Basin oil fields—all in addition to generating power. [Correction: The de-carbonization and other cleanup steps that make this plant distinctive are done above rather than underground. For full details, see <http://www.texascleanenergyproject.com/about-tcep>.] But otherwise, to see new technology in action and to influence the next dozen coal plants being built in the world, Ming Sung had to go back to China.

"For the last 30 years, we have not been able to build a coal-to-gas conversion plant in this country," a U.S. coal-company official told me. "China has done many. That is what we need to learn from them, all that production and operating experience." And in exchange? "We do have safety and environmental information that we can definitely provide."

Ten years ago, the United States and many other countries set joint targets of building a series of experimental low-emissions, high-efficiency coal-fired power plants: FutureGen in America, ZeroGen in Australia, various European efforts without a "Gen" name, and GreenGen in China. America's FutureGen was proposed early, and China's GreenGen was proposed late. Now—surprise!—GreenGen is closest to being completed, with its scheduled opening moved up from 2015 to 2013, and FutureGen has only recently begun to move beyond the congressional-wrangling stage.

What Sung takes from the interaction is both operational knowledge and the chance to influence China's decisions in some way. What he has provided is another sort of connection, between Chinese organizations and the private businesses that mine coal and generate electricity in the United States. "That is the reason we are here—to get companies together," Sung said. "It is taking too long for governments to agree on policies, so we believe in B-to-B connections." At a crucial point, he arranged a meeting in Beijing between the CEO of Duke Energy, Jim Rogers, and Zhang Guobao, vice chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, essentially China's director of industrial policy. "After the meeting, Zhang said, 'I fully support this collaboration,'" Sung told me. "With that sentence, what more could you ask for?"

Duke got serious about China only two and a half years ago, after Rogers, the CEO, took his grandson on a trip there in the summer of 2008 as a high-school graduation present. The elder Rogers, like so many first-time visitors, was stunned by the scale and dynamism of what he saw. He immediately urged his senior management team to learn about and visit China. "There is something you can't sense from your office in America," the director of Duke's China operations, a 30-year-old woman named River Lu, told me. She grew up in Shenzhen, just north of Hong Kong. "Here you feel the pollution, you feel the growth, you feel the energy." (Her Chinese name is Lu Yun; she chose the English name "River" in her teens. The creativity and often beauty of these chosen names is a dependable pleasure of meeting young English-speaking Chinese.) Although she did not leave China until her mid-20s, for graduate work at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, she has a native-American accent, which she says comes from watching Friends and Ally McBeal on Hong Kong TV.

David Mohler, Duke's chief technology officer, was one of the first visitors and most frequent return travelers. "We learned that China is preparing, by 2025, for 350 million people to live in cities that don't exist now," he told me. "They have to build the equivalent of the U.S. electrical system"—that is, almost as much added capacity as the entire U.S. grid—"by 2025. It took us 120 years." Rogers, Mohler, and the company as a whole moved quickly from being impressed or frightened by Chinese growth to determining how they could work with it.

"We realized there was no way we could duplicate their speed, the scale, or the constancy of energy policy within the United States," Mohler said. "So we wondered if we could find Chinese partners to work with in applying these clean technologies, so we could bring the benefits of their speed and scale back to the United States." In his speeches and interviews, Rogers frequently emphasizes that by 2050, Duke will need to replace or rebuild every one of its existing power plants in the United States, except for its hydroelectric facilities. Some, because of age; the rest, to meet what Duke considers to be inevitably tightening clean-energy standards. "We will have a huge need for capital," Mohler said. Duke's capital budget for the next three years is \$18 billion, and only in China can the company find that plus the operational experience of seeing cleaner-coal technologies as they are deployed. Duke Energy supported the Obama administration's now-abandoned climate bill, because it would have added predictability to the future standards the company will have to meet. With or without a bill, it is looking to China for future financing.

Within months of Rogers's first visit, Duke had opened an office in China, headed by River Lu. Within a year of the visit, in the summer of 2009, Duke signed an agreement for joint research with China's largest energy company, Huaneng, and with the government's Thermal Power Research Institute. Within the clean-energy world, the institute's director of technology, Xu Shisen, is a celebrity known for his advocacy of clean-coal projects. Huaneng has bought a share in a new low-emissions Duke plant in Edwardsport, Indiana. [Correction: The Memorandum of Understanding between Duke and Huaneng, which involves employees of each company visiting the other's plants and sharing information and research, does not include direct investment by Huaneng. Duke has a joint-venture understanding with another Chinese company, the ENN group, toward developing merchant solar panel plants in the United States.]

"As China meets its capacity, it is likely that the best technologies will be commercialized and applied here faster than anywhere else," River Lu said. "We want to be involved in that process."

CHINA'S COOPERATION WITH the United States on coal is good news for the world. If the two countries had decided to make this another arena for demonstrating their respective toughness—if, as at the failed Copenhagen talks last winter, they had mainly exchanged accusations about who was more to blame for emissions problems—they would have guaranteed that the problems could not be solved. If that cooperation breaks down, Julio Friedmann said, "we'll end up paying twice as much to get the same learnings—and delaying the technology on both sides by another decade." Both sides seem to have looked for ways to keep the cooperation going. They have not been in the newspapers, but they deserve recognition for attempting to do the world's work.

But China's very effectiveness and dynamism, beneficial as they may be in this case, highlight an American failure—a failure that seems not transient or incidental but deep and hard to correct.

The manifestation of the failure is that China is where the world's "doing" now goes on, in this industry and many others. If you want to learn how the power plants of the future will work, you must go to Tianjin—or Shanghai, or Chengdu—to find out. Power companies from America, Europe, and Japan are fortunate to have a place to learn. Young engineers and managers and entrepreneurs in China are fortunate that the companies teaching the rest of the world will be Chinese.

The deeper problem is the revealed difference in national capacity, in seriousness and ability to deliver. The Chinese government can decide to transform the country's energy system in 10 years, and no one doubts that it will. An incoming U.S. administration can promise to create a clean-energy revolution, but only naïfs believe that it will.

"The most impressive aspect of the Chinese performance is their determination to do what is needed," Julio Friedmann told me. "To be the first, to be the biggest, to have the best export technology for cleaning up coal." America obviously is not displaying comparable determination—and the saddest aspect of the U.S. performance, he said, is that it seems not deliberate but passive and accidental, the product of modern America's inability to focus public effort on public problems.

"No one in the U.S. government could ever imagine a 10-year plan to ensure U.S. leadership in solar power or batteries or anything else," Joseph Romm, a former Department of Energy official who now writes the blog Climate Progress, told me. "It's just not possible, so nobody even bothers to propose it."

The Chinese system as a whole has great weaknesses as well as great strengths. Its challenges, as I have reported so often in these pages, make the threats facing America look trivial by comparison. But its response to the energy challenge—including its commitment to dealing with the dirty, unavoidable reality of coal—reveals a seriousness about facing big problems that America now appears to lack.

[20101126-01](#) 08:08 SteveB Re: "Dirty Coal, Clean Future"

Dear Pam,

I'm so happy you have found something to be optimistic about, and I'm not shading that with sarcasm or anything. :-)

I hope you had a great Thanksgiving! I think it's such a great idea to have a holiday for expressing and thinking about thankfulness, and eating lots of good food with family and friends. We have so much to be thankful for in this incredible life. I don't ever want to lose sight of that.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Very good article, by the way.

[20101128-01](#) 08:38 SteveB Reasonable Cost Health Care

Dear GaryC,

[Email referenced is not in archive. —SteveB]

You are exactly right. If a poor country like Bolivia can have good, nearly free universal health care, why can't the mighty U.S.?

[20101128-02](#) 10:18 GaryC Re: Reasonable Cost Health Care

Dear SteveB,

Because we let politicians make a career out of serving the voters. Term limits would make politicians make good decisions for the voters and not for themselves. Too bad I am not in charge.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20101130-01](#) 17:21 Dennis "5 Right-Wing Scumbags Bankrolling Dangerous (& Plain Weird) Conservative Causes"

The Sugar Daddy conspirators...

If you haven't gotten your fill of conspiracy theories about billionaire puppet masters by now, here are some more fine examples of why our country is in deep doo-doo because some people have too damn much money.

[I wonder why he left out the Koch brothers? —SteveB]

"5 Right-Wing Scumbags Bankrolling Dangerous (and Plain Weird) Conservative Causes" by Brad Reed, AlterNet

Nov. 29, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/module/printversion/149011>)

A non-insane observer of American politics might wonder why our elite policy makers are considering curbing our budget deficit by cutting Social Security and Medicare payments all while further lowering tax rates for high-income earners.

The answer is that most of our political class and establishment media have bought into the meme that rich people are so super-special that if we hurt their feelings by making them pay the same amount in taxes that they paid in the 1990s, they will get so depressed they will lose the will to work and no one in the country will ever have jobs again.

While this idea may seem insane to all sane people, it's actually one of many ideas promoted over the past several decades by wealthy right-wingers who have plunged significant sums of money into conservative think tanks, political candidates and advertising campaigns. You see, for some reason rich Americans aren't content to have five yachts and a butler named Willivers—rather, they seem obsessed with having the entire country leave red, white and blue smooch marks all over their rear ends.

And just who are these multimillionaire propagandists, you ask? Well, I'm sure you know all about the Koch brothers and Rupert Murdoch, since they've all been relatively high-profile lately. But there are plenty more right-wing sugar daddies out there. So without further ado, let's get started!

Right-Wing Sugar Daddy #1: Sheldon Adelson

Like most neoconservatives, Adelson's goal in life is to make sure the United States and Israel remain in a state of perpetual warfare against Arab countries until most of the world is destroyed. Adelson, who made his fortune as a Las Vegas casino mogul, made headlines in 2007 when he funded Freedom's Watch, a neoconservative advocacy group that supported wars wherever and whenever it could find them.

The group's first campaign was a \$15 million ad blitz urging Americans to support the Iraq troop surge. One of the group's most notorious ads featured an Iraq war vet who lost both his legs during the war imploring Congress to keep funding the war indefinitely because "if we pull out now everything I've given and sacrificed will mean nothing." The ad also shamelessly conflated the Iraq war with the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks by showing pictures of the World Trade Center burning as the vet firmly reminded Americans that "they attacked us." From there, the group held a conference hyping up the dangers of Iran and radical Islam in general. Freedom's Watch disbanded in late 2008, after a sizable chunk of Adelson's spare cash went up in smoke—quite possibly the only good outcome from the global financial crisis.

Although Adelson's impact on U.S. policy is relatively small, he is much more of a factor in Israel where he invested a reported \$180 million to launch the free Israel Hayom tabloid in 2007. The Israeli media apparently refer to the paper as "Bibi-ton" because it serves as a propaganda rage for Netanyahu's hard-line Likud government. The paper, which now has the largest circulation of any daily newspaper in Israel, mercilessly attacked the government of former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, particularly his handling of the 2006 mini-war with Lebanon (sample headline, per the New Yorker: "The a*s-Covering of the Government"). Adelson was also upset that Olmert had the audacity to support a two-state solution where Palestinians are actually given some level of autonomy over their lives.

Right-Wing Sugar Daddy #2: Richard Mellon Scaife

Scaife got his start in politics by giving Richard Nixon's campaign \$1 million in 1972 and he hasn't looked back since. As an heir to the Mellon fortune, Scaife didn't exactly have to pick himself up by his bootstraps on his way to the top. And instead of doing something useful with his life, Scaife has blown hundreds of millions of dollars keeping wastoids like Jonah Goldberg employed by funding conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, newspapers such as the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review and right-wing opinion rags such as the American Spectator.

Scaife really hit his stride in the 1990s when he became obsessed with forcing President Bill Clinton and his penis from office. He kicked things off in 1993 by funding the so-called "Arkansas Project" that sent Spectator hacks down to Little Rock to dig up embarrassing dirt on the Clintons. Although that failed to produce the goods, Scaife decided to simultaneously fund Paula Jones' unsuccessful sexual harassment lawsuit against Clinton, thus setting the stage for later sex scandals that would result in the president getting impeached by the Republican House.

Scaife also got another "gift" when the suicide of Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster sparked a litany of crazed conspiracies asserting that the Clintons had actually murdered Foster themselves.

"The death of Vincent Foster: I think that's the Rosetta Stone to the whole Clinton Administration," Scaife told the New York Times in 1995. "There are just too many questions that have no answers. "

In order to unlock this "Rosetta Stone," Scaife funded "journalists" who were willing to keep the Foster-was-murdered conspiracy alive. As New York Times reporter Tim Weiner noted at the time, Scaife's Tribune-Review was "the only daily newspaper in the nation trying to prove that Mr. Foster might have been murdered." To make a long story short, Scaife never truly nailed Clinton like he wanted to, but he did get to watch Clinton get impeached for lying about a blowjob. God, America was a much nicer country back when we had no real problems to deal with.

Right-Wing Sugar Daddies #3 and #4: The Wyly Brothers

Sam and Charles Wyly gained notoriety during the 2000 Republican presidential primary by bankrolling the most comically Orwellian front group ever assembled.

Dubbed "Republicans for Clean Air" the group spent more than \$2 million for ads that attacked John McCain's environmental record while praising George W. Bush's green credentials. The Wyllys similarly went to bat for their boy Bush by donating \$10,000 apiece to the infamously dishonest Swift Boat Veterans for Truth campaign that attacked John Kerry's war record in Vietnam. The Wyllys also donated more than \$1 million to the Republican National Committee from 2000 through 2004, although they significantly curbed those donations once the Securities and Exchange Commission started investigating them for tax fraud.

Other than funding conservative campaigns, the Wyllys' favorite hobby seems to be getting in trouble for alleged tax evasion. The Wyllys, who started making money in the software business and then branched out to clothing stores, restaurants and energy companies, first got the attention of the SEC in 2004 when they refused to provide Bank of America with details on their offshore assets. Oops!

From there, it was one unfortunate event after another for the Wyllys. In 2005 the brothers copped to "inadvertently" hiding company profits in offshore trusts. In 2006, the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations issued a report detailing a series of trusts the Wyllys set up on the Isle of Man that were used to shelter \$720 million worth of profits from taxation. And this past summer the SEC finally brought the hammer down on the Wyllys, accusing them of reaping more than \$30 million from an insider trading scheme related to the sale of their Sterling Software company. The SEC is seeking millions of dollars in fines from the brothers, which would presumably leave them with less cash to use on political smear campaigns. And what a sad, sad tragedy that would be.

Right-Wing Sugar Daddy #5: Peter Thiel

This super-wealthy technodork, who made his money cofounding the PayPal online payment service and being one of Facebook's earliest investors, is using his cash to influence hearts and minds, albeit in a significantly different way from the previous right-wing sugar daddies we've examined. For instead of funding rightwing political campaigns, advertising blitzes and think tanks, Thiel is instead trying to influence his fellow libertarians to flee society, not change it.

Thiel officially lost faith in American society after the 2008 presidential election and he confessed on the Cato Institute's Web site that he thought democracy and freedom were no longer compatible. The big reason for this, Thiel said, was that over the past century too many people went on welfare and women got the right to vote. Since welfare recipients and women are "two constituencies that are notoriously tough for libertarians," Thiel reasoned, then "the notion of 'capitalist democracy'" has become "an oxymoron. "

To rectify this, Thiel sunk more than \$500,000 into the hilariously bone-headed "Seasteading" project being headed up by Patri Friedman, the grandson of famous conservative economist Milton Friedman. With money from Thiel and other

likeminded rich libertarians, the seasteading project aims to build large, floating, concrete platforms in international waters where libertarians can live without the greedy hands of Uncle Sam taking their hard-earned cash.

They also plan to make money for themselves by using these platforms as intranational havens for drugs and prostitution, since no legal authority would be able to arrest them out in the open waters. And presumably, women living on the platforms won't have any say in how the seasteads are run, lest they transform these aquatic libertarian paradises into scummy socialist hellholes. Thiel is also interested in funding transhumanist life-extension projects, as he has given the Methuselah Foundation excess of \$3.5 million to ensure that he and his buddies can haunt the Earth with their presence for at least the next few hundred years.

When you think about it, Thiel's devotion to dopey libertarian escapism, while elitist and horribly sexist, actually makes him the most palatable of all the right-wing sugar daddies we've examined. Unlike Scaife, Adelson and the Wyllys, Thiel doesn't want to influence how we think about the world. Rather, he wants to flee the wretched mediocrity of his fellow flesh bags and escape to a no-girls-allowed cyber tree house out in the middle of the ocean. To which I say, "You go, Galt!" The only tragedy is that if Thiel succeeds he likely won't bring any of his brethren with him to the seastead platforms. Because what America needs now more than ever is for a bunch of its self-appointed Atlases to go shrug themselves.

Brad Reed is a writer living in Boston. His work has previously appeared in the American Prospect Online, and he blogs at Sadly, No!.

20101130-02 17:53 GaryC Re: "5 Right-Wing Scumbags"

Dear Dennis and SteveB,

Thank GOD none of this happens from left wing liberals. It's nice to know that we can all focus our energy on dealing with right wing nut bags and have nothing to fear from the middle or left. Thanks for sharing. However, if you are going to correctly point out these mother f*ckers you might want to consider if they aren't mirrored on the left. I am pretty sure that would never occur to the writer of this piece (and I ain't saying he's wrong just that he has his agenda also).

Unfortunately, there seem to be no middle of the road fat cats standing up for the citizens of the U.S.

20101202-01 12:48 Dennis "Welcome to the Plutocracy!"

The Gilded Age returned with a vengeance in our time. It slipped in quietly at first, back in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan began a "massive decades-long transfer of national wealth to the rich." As Roger Hodge makes clear, under Bill Clinton the transfer was even more dramatic, as the top 10 percent captured an ever growing share of national income. The trend continued under George W. Bush—those huge tax cuts for the rich, remember, which are now about to be extended because both parties have been bought off by the wealthy—and by 2007, the wealthiest 10% of Americans were taking in 50% of the national income. Today, a fraction of people at the top today earn more than the bottom 120 million Americans. —from a speech given by Bill Moyers at Boston University on Oct. 29, 2010.

This is a rather long read, but well worth it.

"Welcome to the Plutocracy!" by Bill Moyers, TruthOut

Nov. 3, 2010, (<http://archive.truthout.org/bill-moyers-money-fights-hard-and-it-fights-dirty64766>)

(Speech at Boston University, Oct. 29, 2010, as a part of the Howard Zinn Lecture Series.)

I was honored when you asked me to join in celebrating Howard Zinn's life and legacy. I was also surprised. I am a journalist, not a historian. The difference between a journalist and an historian is that the historian knows the difference. George Bernard Shaw once complained that journalists are seemingly unable to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization. In fact, some epic history can start out as a minor incident. A young man named Paris ran off with a beautiful woman who was married to someone else, and the civilization of Troy began to unwind. A middle-

aged black seamstress, riding in a Montgomery bus, had tired feet, and an ugly social order began to collapse. A night guard at an office complex in Washington D.C. found masking tape on a doorjamb, and the presidency of Richard Nixon began to unwind. What journalist, writing on deadline, could have imagined the walloping kick that Rosa Park's tired feet would give to Jim Crow? What pundit could have fantasized that a third-rate burglary on a dark night could change the course of politics? The historian's work is to help us disentangle the wreck of the Schwinn from cataclysm. Howard famously helped us see how big change can start with small acts.

We honor his memory. We honor him, for Howard championed grassroots social change and famously chronicled its story as played out over the course of our nation's history. More, those stirring sagas have inspired and continue to inspire countless people to go out and make a difference. The last time we met, I told him that the stories in *A People's History* of the United States remind me of the fellow who turned the corner just as a big fight broke out down the block. Rushing up to an onlooker he shouted, "Is this a private fight, or can anyone get in it?" For Howard, democracy was one big public fight and everyone should plunge into it. That's the only way, he said, for everyday folks to get justice—by fighting for it.

I have in my desk at home a copy of the commencement address Howard gave at Spelman College in 2005. He was chairman of the history department there when he was fired in 1963 over his involvement in civil rights. He had not been back for 43 years, and he seemed delighted to return for commencement. He spoke poignantly of his friendship with one of his former students, Alice Walker, the daughter of tenant farmers in Georgia who made her way to Spelman and went on to become the famous writer. Howard delighted in quoting one of her first published poems that had touched his own life:

It is true
I've always loved
the daring ones
like the black young man
who tried to crash
all barriers
at once,
wanted to swim
at a white beach (in Alabama)
Nude.

That was Howard Zinn; he loved the daring ones, and was daring himself.

One month before his death he finished his last book, *The Bomb*. Once again he was wrestling with his experience as a B-17 bombardier during World War II, especially his last mission in 1945 on a raid to take out German garrisons in the French town of Royan. For the first time the Eighth Air Force used napalm, which burst into liquid fire on the ground, killing hundreds of civilians. He wrote, "I remember distinctly seeing the bombs explode in the town, flaring like matches struck in the fog. I was completely unaware of the human chaos below." Twenty years later he returned to Royan to study the effects of the raid and concluded there had been no military necessity for the bombing; everyone knew the war was almost over (it ended three weeks later) and this attack did nothing to affect the outcome. His grief over having been a cog in a deadly machine no doubt confirmed his belief in small acts of rebellion, which mean, as Howard writes in the final words of the book, "acting on what we feel and think, here, now, for human flesh and sense, against the abstractions of duty and obedience."

His friend and long-time colleague writes in the foreword that "Shifting historical focus from the wealthy and powerful to the ordinary person was perhaps his greatest act of rebellion and incitement." It seems he never forget the experience of growing up in a working class neighborhood in New York. In that spirit, let's begin with some everyday people.

When she heard the news, Connie Brasel cried like a baby.

For years she had worked at minimum-wage jobs, until 17 years ago, when she was hired by the Whirlpool refrigerator factory in Evansville, Indiana. She was making \$ 18.44 an hour when Whirlpool announced earlier this year that it was closing the operation and moving it to Mexico. She wept. I'm sure many of the other eleven hundred workers who lost their jobs wept too; they had seen their ticket to the middle class snatched from their hands. The company defended its decision by claiming high costs, underused capacity, and the need to stay competitive. Those excuses didn't console

Connie Brasel. "I was becoming part of something bigger than me," she told Steven Greenhouse of the *New York Times*. "Whirlpool was the best thing that ever happened to me."

She was not only sad, she was mad. "They didn't get world-class quality because they had the best managers. They got world-class quality because of the United States and because of their workers."

Among those workers were Natalie Ford, her husband and her son; all three lost their jobs. "It's devastating," she told the *Times*. Her father had worked at Whirlpool before them. Now, "There aren't any jobs here. How is this community going to survive?"

And what about the country? Between 2001 and 2008, about 40,000 U.S. manufacturing plants closed. Six million factory jobs have disappeared over the past dozen years, representing one in three manufacturing jobs. Natalie Ford said to the *Times* what many of us are wondering: "I don't know how without any good-paying jobs here in the United States people are going to pay for their health care, put their children through school."

Now, if Connie Brasel and Natalie Ford lived in South Carolina, they might have been lucky enough to get a job with the new BMW plant that recently opened there and advertised that the company would hire one thousand workers. Among the applicants? According to the *Washington Post*; "a former manager of a major distribution center for Target; a consultant who oversaw construction projects in four western states; a supervisor at a plastics recycling firm. Some held college degrees and resumes in other fields where they made more money." They will be paid \$15 an hour—about half of what BMW workers earn in Germany

In polite circles, among our political and financial classes, this is known as "the free market at work." No, it's "wage repression," and it's been happening in our country since around 1980. I must invoke some statistics here, knowing that statistics can glaze the eyes; but if indeed it's the mark of a truly educated person to be deeply moved by statistics, as I once read, surely this truly educated audience will be moved by the recent analysis of tax data by the economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez. They found that from 1950 through 1980, the share of all income in America going to everyone but the rich increased from 64 percent to 65 percent. Because the nation's economy was growing handsomely, the average income for 9 out of 10 Americans was growing, too—from \$17,719 to \$30,941. That's a 75 percent increase in income in constant 2008 dollars.

But then it stopped. Since 1980 the economy has also continued to grow handsomely, but only a fraction at the top have benefitted. The line flattens for the bottom 90% of Americans. Average income went from that \$30,941 in 1980 to \$31,244 in 2008. Think about that: the average income of Americans increased just \$303 dollars in 28 years.

That's wage repression.

Another story in the *Times* caught my eye a few weeks after the one about Connie Brasel and Natalie Ford. The headline read: "Industries Find Surging Profits in Deeper Cuts." Nelson Schwartz reported that despite falling motorcycle sales, Harley-Davidson profits are soaring—with a second quarter profit of \$71 million, more than triple what it earned the previous year. Yet Harley-Davidson has announced plans to cut fourteen hundred to sixteen hundred more jobs by the end of next year; this on top of the 2000 job cut last year.

The story note: "This seeming contradiction—falling sales and rising profits—is one reason the mood on Wall Street is so much more buoyant than in households, where pessimism runs deep and unemployment shows few signs of easing."

There you see the two Americas. A buoyant Wall Street; a doleful Main Street. The Connie Brasels and Natalie Fords—left to sink or swim on their own. There were no bailouts for them.

Meanwhile, Matt Krantz reports in *USA TODAY* that "Cash is gushing into company's coffers as they report what's shaping up to be a third-consecutive quarter of sharp earning increases. But instead of spending on the typical things, such as expanding and hiring people, companies are mostly pocketing the money or stuffing it under their mattresses." And what are their plans for this money? Again, the *Washington Post*:

.... Sitting on these unprecedented levels of cash, U.S. companies are buying back their own stock in droves. So far this year, firms have announced they will purchase \$273 billion of their own shares, more than five times as much compared with this time last year... But the rise in buybacks signals that many companies are still hesitant to spend their cash on the job-generating activities that could produce economic growth.

That's how financial capitalism works today: Conserving cash rather than bolstering hiring and production; investing in their own shares to prop up their share prices and make their stock more attractive to Wall Street. To hell with everyone else.

Hear the chief economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Ethan Harris, who told the Times: "There's no question that there is an income shift going on in the economy. Companies are squeezing their labor costs to build profits."

Or the chief economist for Credit Suisse in New York, Neal Soss: As companies have wrung more savings out of their work forces, causing wages and salaries barely to budge from recession lows, "profits have staged a vigorous recovery, jumping 40 percent between late 2008 and the first quarter of 2010."

Just this morning the *New York Times* reports that the private equity business is roaring back: "While it remains difficult to get a mortgage to buy a home or to get a loan to fund a small business, yield-starved investors are creating a robust market for corporate bonds and loans."

If this were a functioning democracy, our financial institutions would be helping everyday Americans and businesses get the mortgages and loans—the capital—they need to keep going; they're not, even as the financiers are reaping robust awards.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. But he's run off with all the toys.

Late in August, I clipped another story from the *Wall Street Journal*. Above an op-ed piece by Robert Frank the headline asked: "Do the Rich Need the Rest of America?" The author didn't seem ambivalent about the answer. He wrote that as stocks have boomed, "the wealthy bounced back. And while the Main Street economy" [where the Connie Brasels and Natalie Fords and most Americans live] "was wracked by high unemployment and the real-estate crash, the wealthy—whose financial fates were more tied to capital markets than jobs and houses—picked themselves up, brushed themselves off, and started buying luxury goods again."

Citing the work of Michael Lind, at the Economic Growth Program of the New American Foundation, the article went on to describe how the super-rich earn their fortunes with overseas labor, selling to overseas consumers and managing financial transactions that have little to do with the rest of America, "while relying entirely or almost entirely on immigrant servants at one of several homes around the country."

Right at that point I remembered another story that I had filed away three years ago, also from the *Wall Street Journal*. The reporter Ianthe Jeanne Dugan described how the private equity firm Blackstone Group swooped down on a travel reservation company in Colorado, bought it, laid off 841 employees, and recouped its entire investment in just seven months, one of the quickest returns on capital ever for such a deal. Blackstone made a killing while those workers were left to sift through the debris. They sold their homes, took part-time jobs making sandwiches and coffee, and lost their health insurance.

That fall, Blackstone's chief executive, Stephen Schwarzman, reportedly worth over \$5 billion, rented a luxurious resort in Jamaica to celebrate the marriage of his son. According to the *Guardian News*, the Montego Bay facility alone cost \$50,000, plus thousands more to sleep 130 guests. There were drinks on the beach, dancers and a steel band, marshmallows around the fire, and then, the following day, an opulent wedding banquet with champagne and a jazz band and fireworks display that alone cost \$12,500. Earlier in the year Schwarzman had rented out the Park Avenue Armory in New York (near his 35-room apartment) to celebrate his 60th birthday at a cost of \$3 million. So? It's his money, isn't it? Yes, but consider this: The stratospheric income of private-equity partners is taxed at only 15 percent—less than the rate paid, say, by a middle class family. When Congress considered raising the rate on their Midas-like compensation, the financial titans flooded Washington with armed mercenaries—armed, that is, with hard, cold cash—and brought the "debate" to an end faster than it had taken Schwarzman to fire 841 workers. The financial class had won another round in the exploitation of working people who, if they are lucky enough to have jobs, are paying a higher tax rate than the super-rich.

So the answer to the question: "Do the Rich Need the Rest of America?" is as stark as it is ominous: Many don't. As they form their own financial culture increasingly separated from the fate of everyone else, it is "hardly surprising," Frank and Lind concluded, "that so many of them should be so hostile to paying taxes to support the infrastructure and the social programs that help the majority of the American people."

You would think the rich might care, if not from empathy, then from reading history. Ultimately gross inequality can be fatal to civilization. In his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning anthropologist Jared Diamond writes about how governing elites throughout history isolate and delude themselves until it is too late. He reminds us that the change people inflict on their environment is one of the main factors in the decline of earlier societies. For example: the Mayan natives on the Yucatan peninsula who suffered as their forest disappeared, their soil eroded, and their water supply deteriorated. Chronic warfare further exhausted dwindling resources. Although Mayan kings could see their forests vanishing and their hills eroding, they were able to insulate themselves from the rest of society. By extracting wealth from commoners, they could remain well-fed while everyone else was slowly starving. Realizing too late that they could not reverse their deteriorating environment, they became casualties of their own privilege. Any society contains a built-in blueprint for failure, Diamond warns, if elites insulate themselves from the consequences of their decisions, separated from the common life of the country.

Yet the isolation continues—and is celebrated. When Howard came down to New York last December for what would be my last interview with him, I showed him this document published in the spring of 2005 by the Wall Street giant Citigroup, setting forth an “Equity Strategy” under the title (I’m not making this up) “Revisiting Plutonomy: The Rich Getting Richer.”

Now, most people know what plutocracy is: the rule of the rich, political power controlled by the wealthy. Plutocracy is not an American word and wasn’t meant to become an American phenomenon—some of our founders deplored what they called “the veneration of wealth.” But plutocracy is here, and a pumped up Citigroup even boasted of coining a variation on the word—“plutonomy”, which describes an economic system where the privileged few make sure the rich get richer and that government helps them do it. Five years ago Citigroup decided the time had come to “bang the drum on plutonomy.”

And bang they did. Here are some excerpts from the document “Revisiting Plutonomy”:

Asset booms, a rising profit share and favorable treatment by market-friendly governments have allowed the rich to prosper... and take an increasing share of income and wealth over the last 20 years.

...the top 10%, particularly the top 1% of the United States—the plutonomists in our parlance—have benefitted disproportionately from the recent productivity surge in the U.S.... [and] from globalization and the productivity boom, at the relative expense of labor.

... [and they] are likely to get even wealthier in the coming years. Because the dynamics of plutonomy are still intact.

I’ll repeat that: “The dynamics of plutonomy are still intact.” That was the case before the Great Collapse of 2008, and it’s the case today, two years after the catastrophe. But the plutonomists are doing just fine. Even better in some cases, thanks to our bailout of the big banks.

As for the rest of the country: Listen to this summary in *The Economist*—no Marxist journal—of a study by Pew Research:

More than half of all workers today have experienced a spell of unemployment, taken a cut in pay or hours or been forced to go part-time. The typical unemployed worker has been jobless for nearly six months. Collapsing share and house prices have destroyed a fifth of the wealth of the average household. Nearly six in ten Americans have cancelled or cut back on holidays. About a fifth say their mortgages are underwater. One in four of those between 18 and 29 have moved back in with their parents. Fewer than half of all adults expect their children to have a higher standard of living than theirs, and more than a quarter say it will be lower. For many Americans the great recession has been the sharpest trauma since the Second World War, wiping out jobs, wealth and hope itself.

Let that sink in: For millions of garden-variety Americans, the audacity of hope has been replaced by a paucity of hope.

Time for a confession. The legendary correspondent Edward R. Murrow told his generation of journalists that bias is okay as long as you don’t try to hide it. Here is mine: Plutocracy and democracy don’t mix. Plutocracy too long tolerated leaves democracy on the auction block, subject to the highest bidder.

Socrates said to understand a thing, you must first name it. The name for what’s happening to our political system is corruption—a deep, systemic corruption. I urge you to seek out the recent edition of Harper’s Magazine. The former

editor Roger D. Hodge brilliantly dissects how democracy has gone on sale in America. Ideally, he writes, our ballots purport to be expressions of political will, which we hope and pray will be translated into legislative and executive action by our pretended representatives. But voting is the beginning of civil virtue, not its end, and the focus of real power is elsewhere. Voters still “matter” of course, but only as raw material to be shaped by the actual form of political influence—money.

The article is excerpted from Hodge’s new book, *The Mendacity of Hope*. In it he describes how America’s founding generation especially feared the kind of corruption that occurs when the private ends of a narrow faction succeed in capturing the engines of government. James Madison and many of his contemporaries knew this kind of corruption could consume the republic. Looking at history a tragic lens, they thought the life cycle of republics—their degeneration into anarchy, monarchy, or oligarchy—was inescapable. And they attempted to erect safeguards against it, hoping to prevent private and narrow personal interests from overriding those of the general public.

They failed. Hardly a century passed after the ringing propositions of 1776 than America was engulfed in the gross materialism and political corruption of the First Gilded Age, when Big Money bought the government right out from under the voters. In their magisterial work on *The Growth of the American Republic*, the historians Morrison, Commager, and Leuchtenberg describe how in that era “privilege controlled politics,” and “the purchase of votes, the corruption of election officials, the bribing of legislatures, the lobbying of special bills, and the flagrant disregard of laws” threatened the very foundations of the country.”

I doubt you’ll be surprised to learn that this “degenerate and unlovely age”—as one historian described it—served to inspire Karl Rove, the man said to be George W. Bush’s brain and now a mover and shaker of the money tree for the corporate-conservative complex (more on that later.) The extraordinary coupling of private and political power toward the close of the 19th century—the First Gilded Age—captured Rove’s interest, especially the role of Mark Hanna, the Ohio operative who became the first modern political fund-raiser. (David von Drehle wrote (“Washington Post, July 24, 1999) that “as a tenacious student of political history, Rove had dug so deeply into the McKinley era that he had become “the swami of McKinley mania.” Rove denied it to the writer Ron Susskind, who then went on to talk to old colleagues of Rove “dating back 25 years, one of whom said: “Some kids want to grow up to be president, Karl wanted to grow up to be Mark Hanna. We’d talk about it all the time. We’d say, ‘Jesus, Karl, what kind of kid wants to grow up to be Mark Hanna?’”

“There are two things that are important in politics,” Hanna said. “The first is money and I can’t remember what the second one is.” He had become rich as a business man in Ohio, “the characteristic American capitalist of the Gilded Age” (Columbia Encyclopedia). He was famously depicted by one cartoonist as “Dollar Mark,” the prototype of plutocracy. Hanna tapped the banks, the insurance companies, the railroads and the other industrial trusts of the late 1800s for all the money it took to make William McKinley governor of Ohio and then President of the United States. McKinley was the perfect conduit for Hanna’s connivance and their largesse—one of those politicians with a talent for emitting banalities as though they were recently discovered truth. Hanna raised “an unprecedented amount of money (the biggest check came from the oil baron John Rockefeller) and ran a sophisticated, hardball campaign that got McKinley to the White House, “where he governed negligently in the interests of big business,” wrote Jacob Weisberg in “Slate” (Nov. 2, 2005) His opponent in the 1896 election was the Democrat-Populist candidate, William Jennings Bryan, whose base consisted of aroused populists—the remnant of the People’s Party—who were outraged at the rapacity and shenanigans of the monopolies, trusts, and corporations that were running roughshod over ordinary Americans. Because Bryan threatened those big economic interests he was able to raise only one-tenth the money that Mark Hanna raised for McKinley, and he lost: Money in politics is an old story.

Karl Rove would have learned from his study of Hanna the principles of plutonomy. For Hanna believed “the state of Ohio existed for property. It had no other function...Great wealth was to be gained through monopoly, through using the State for private ends; it was axiomatic therefore that businessmen should run the government and run it for personal profit.”

He and McKinley therefore saw to it that first Ohio and then Washington were “ruled by business...by bankers, railroads, and public utility corporations.” The United States Senate was infamous as “a millionaire’s club.” City halls, state houses and even courtrooms were bought and sold like baubles. Instead of enforcing the rules of fair play, government served as valet to the plutocrats. The young journalist Henry George had written that “an immense wedge” was being forced through American society by “the maldistribution of wealth, status, and opportunity.” Now inequality exploded into what the historian Clinton Rossiter described as “the great train robbery of American intellectual history.” Conservatives of the day—pro-corporate apologists—hijacked the vocabulary of Jeffersonian liberalism and turned words like “progress,” “opportunity,” and “individualism” into tools for making the plunder of America sound like divine right. Laissez faire ideologues and neo-cons of the day—lovers of empire even then—hijacked Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and so distorted it that politicians, judges, and publicists gleefully embraced the notion that progress emerges from the

elimination of the weak and the "survival of the fittest." As one of the plutocrats crowed: "We are rich. We own America. We got it, God knows how, but we intend to keep it."

And they have never given up. The Gilded Age returned with a vengeance in our time. It slipped in quietly at first, back in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan began a "massive decades-long transfer of national wealth to the rich." As Roger Hodge makes clear, under Bill Clinton the transfer was even more dramatic, as the top 10 percent captured an ever-growing share of national income. The trend continued under George W. Bush—those huge tax cuts for the rich, remember, which are now about to be extended because both parties have been bought off by the wealthy—and by 2007, the wealthiest 10% of Americans were taking in 50% of the national income. Today, a fraction of people at the top today earn more than the bottom 120 million Americans.

You will hear it said, "Come on, this is the way the world works." No, it's the way the world is made to work. This vast inequality is not the result of Adam Smith's invisible hand; it did not just happen; it was no accident. As Hodge drives home, it is the result of a long series of policy decisions "about industry and trade, taxation and military spending, by flesh-and-blood humans sitting in concrete-and-steel buildings." And those policy decisions were paid for by the less than one percent who participate in our capitalist democracy political contributions. Over the past 30 years, with the complicity of Republicans and Democrats alike, the plutocrats, or plutonomists (choose your own poison) have used their vastly increased wealth to assure that government does their bidding. Remember that grateful Citigroup reference to "market-friendly governments" on the side of plutonomy? We had a story down in Texas for that sort of thing; the dealer in a poker game says to the dealer, Now play the cards fairly, Reuben; I know what I dealt you." (To see just how our system was rigged by the financial, political, and university elites, run, don't walk, to the theatre nearest you showing Charles Ferguson's new film, "Inside Job." Take a handkerchief because you'll weep for the republic.)

Looking back, it all seems so clear that we wonder how we could have ignored the warning signs at the time. One of the few journalists who did see it coming—Thomas Edsall of the *Washington Post*—reported that "business refined its ability to act as a class, submerging competitive instincts in favour of joint, cooperative action in the legislative arena." Big business political action committees flooded the political arena with a deluge of dollars. They funded think tanks that churned out study after study with results skewed to their ideology and interests. And their political allies in the conservative movement cleverly built alliances with the religious right—Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition—who zealously waged a cultural holy war that camouflaged the economic assault on working people and the middle class.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan also tried to warn us. He said President Reagan's real strategy was to force the government to cut domestic social programs by fostering federal deficits of historic dimensions. Senator Moynihan was gone before the financial catastrophe on George W. Bush's watch that could paradoxically yet fulfill Reagan's dream. The plutocrats who soaked up all the money now say the deficits require putting Social Security and other public services on the chopping block. You might think that Mr. Bush today would regret having invaded Iraq on false pretences at a cost of more than a trillion dollars and counting, but no, just last week he said that his biggest regret was his failure to privatize Social Security. With over 100 Republicans of the House having signed a pledge to do just that when the new Congress convenes, Mr. Bush's vision may yet be realized.

Daniel Altman also saw what was coming. In his book *Neoeconomy* he described a place without taxes or a social safety net, where rich and poor live in different financial worlds. "It's coming to America," he wrote. Most likely he would not have been surprised recently when firefighters in rural Tennessee would let a home burn to the ground because the homeowner hadn't paid a \$75 fee.

That's what is coming to America.

Here we are now, on the verge of the biggest commercial transaction in the history of American elections. Once again the plutocracy is buying off the system. Nearly \$4 billion is being spent on the congressional races that will be decided next week, including multi millions coming from independent tax-exempt organizations that can collect unlimited amounts without revealing the sources. The organization Public Citizen reports that just 10 groups are responsible for the bulk of the spending by independent groups: "A tiny number of organizations, relying on a tiny number of corporate and fat cat contributors, are spending most of the money on the vicious attack ads dominating the airwaves"—those are the words of Public Citizen's president, Robert Wiessman. The Federal Election Commission says that two years ago 97% of groups paying for election ads disclosed the names of their donors. This year it's only 32%.

Socrates again: To remember a thing, you must first name it. We're talking about slush funds. Donors are laundering their cash through front groups with high-falutin' names like American Crossroads. That's one of the two slush funds controlled by Karl Rove in his ambition to revive the era of the robber barons. Promise me you won't laugh when I tell you that although Rove and the powerful Washington lobbyist who is his accomplice described the first organization as "grassroots", 97% of its initial contributions came from four billionaires. Yes: The grass grows mighty high when the roots are fertilized with gold.

Rove, other conservative groups and the Chamber of Commerce have in fact created a "shadow party" determined to be the real power in Washington just like Rome's Opus Dei in Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*. In this shadow party the plutocrats reign. We have reached what the new chairman of Common Cause and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich calls "the perfect storm that threatens American democracy: an unprecedented concentration of income and wealth at the top; a record amount of secret money, flooding our democracy; and a public becoming increasingly angry and cynical about a government that's raising its taxes, reducing its services, and unable to get it back to work. We're losing our democracy to a different system. It's called plutocracy."

That word again. But Reich is right. That fraction of one percent of Americans who now earn as much as the bottom 120 million Americans includes the top executives of giant corporations and those Wall Street hedge funds and private equity managers who constitute Citigroup's "plutonomy" are buying our democracy and they're doing it in secret.

That's because early this year the five reactionary members of the Supreme Court ruled that corporations are "persons" with the right to speak during elections by funding ads like those now flooding the airwaves. It was the work of legal fabulists. Corporations are not people; they are legal fictions, creatures of the state, born not of the womb, not of flesh and blood. They're not permitted to vote. They don't bear arms (except for the nuclear bombs they can now drop on a congressional race without anyone knowing where it came from.) Yet thanks to five activist conservative judges they have the privilege of "personhood" to "speak"—and not in their own voice, mind you, but as ventriloquists, through hired puppets.

Does anyone really think that's what the authors of the First Amendment had in mind? Horrified by such a profound perversion, the editor of the spunky Texas Observer, Bob Moser, got it right with his headline: "So long, Democracy, it's been good to know you."

You'll recall that soon after the Court's decision President Obama raised the matter during his State of the Union speech in January. He said the decision would unleash a torrent of corrupting corporate money into our political system. Sitting a few feet in front of the president, Associate Justice Samuel Alito defiantly mouthed the words: "Not true."

Not true? Terry Forcht knew otherwise. He's the wealthy nursing home executive in Kentucky whose establishments is being prosecuted by Attorney General Jack Conway for allegedly covering up sexual abuse. Conway is running for the Senate. Forcht has spent more than \$1 million to defeat him. Would you believe that Forcht is the banker for one of Karl Rove's two slush funds, American Crossroads, which has spent nearly \$30 million to defeat Democrats?

What's that, Justice Alito? Not true?

Ask Alan Grayson. He's a member of Congress. Here's what he says: "We're now in a situation where a lobbyist can walk into my office...and say, 'I've got five million dollars to spend and I can spend it for you or against you.'"

Alito was either disingenuous, naïve, or deluded. He can't be in this world without knowing he and his four fellow corporatists were giving big donors the one thing they most want in their campaign against working people: an unfair advantage.

My friend and colleague, the writer Michael Winship, told a story this week that illuminates the Court's coup de grace against democracy. It seems the incorrigible George Bernard Shaw once propositioned a fellow dinner guest, asking if she would go to bed with him for a million pounds (today around \$1,580,178 U.S. dollars). She agreed. Shaw then asked if she would do the same for ten shillings. "What do you take me for?" she asked angrily. "A prostitute?" Shaw responded: "We've established the principle, Madam. Now we're just haggling over the price."

With this one decision, the Supreme Court established once and for all that Shaw's is the only principle left in politics, as long as the price is right.

Come now and let's visit Washington's red light district, headquarters of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the front group for the plutocracy's prostitution of politics. The Chamber boasts it represents more than three million businesses and approximately 300,000 members. But in reality it has almost nothing to do with the shops and stores along your local streets. The Chamber's branding, as the economics journalist Zach Carter recently wrote, "allows them to disguise their political agenda as a coalition of local businesses while it does dirty work for corporate titans." Carter reported that when the Supreme Court came down with its infamous ruling earlier this year, the Chamber responded by announcing a 40% boost in its political spending operations. After the money started flowing in, the Chamber boosted its budget again by 50%.

After digging into corporate foundation tax filings and other public records, the New York Times found that the Chamber of Commerce has "increasingly relied on a relatively small collection of big corporate donors"—the plutocracy's senior ranks—"to finance much of its legislative and political agenda." Furthermore, the chamber "makes no apologies for its policy of not identifying its donors." Indeed, "It has vigorously opposed legislation in Congress that would require groups like it to identify their biggest contributors when they spend money on campaign ads."

Now let's connect some dots. While knocking down nearly all limits on corporate spending in campaigns, the Supreme Court did allow for disclosure, which would at least tell us who's buying off the government. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell even claimed that "sunshine" laws would make everything okay. But after the House of Representatives passed a bill that would require that the names of all such donors be publicly disclosed, McConnell lined up every Republican in the Senate to oppose it. Hardly had the public begun to sing "Let the Sunshine In" than McConnell & Company went tone deaf. And when the chief lobbyist for the Chamber of Commerce was asked by an interviewer, "Are you guys eventually going to disclose?" the answer was a brisk: "No." Why? Because those corporations are afraid of a public backlash. Like bank robbers pulling a heist, they prefer to hide their "personhood" behind sock masks. Surely that tells us something about the nature of what they're doing. In the words of one of the characters in Tom Stoppard's play *Night and Day*: "People do terrible things to each other, but it's worse in places where everything is kept in the dark."

That's true in politics, too. Thus it turns out that many of the ads being paid for secretly by anonymous donors are "false, grossly misleading, or marred with distortions," as Greg Sargent reports in his website "The Plum Line." Go to Sargent's site and you'll see a partial list of ads that illustrate the scope of the intellectual and political fraud being perpetrated in front of our eyes. Money from secret sources is poisoning the public mind with toxic information in order to dupe voters into giving even more power to the powerful.

On another site—"thinkprogress.com"—you can find out how the multibillionaire Koch brothers—also big oil polluters and Tea Party supporters—are recruiting "captains of industry" to fund the right-wing infrastructure of front groups, political campaigns, think tanks and media outlets. Now, hold on to your seats, because this can blow away the faint-hearted: Among the right-wing luminaries who showed up among Koch's 'secretive network of Republican donors' were two Supreme Court Justices: Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas. That's right: 2 of the 5 votes to enable the final corporate takeover of government came from justices who were present as members of the plutocracy hatched their schemes for doing so.

Something else is going on here, too. The Koch brothers have contributed significantly to efforts to stop the Affordable Care Act—the health care reforms—from taking effect. Justice Clarence Thomas has obviously been doing some home schooling, because his wife Virginia claims those reforms are "unconstitutional," and has founded an organization that is fighting to repeal them. Her own husband on the Supreme Court may one day be ruling on whether she's right or not ("Play the cards fair, Reuben; I know what I dealt you.") There's more: The organization Virginia Thomas founded to kill those health care reforms—also a goal of the Koch brothers, remember—got its start with a gift of half a million dollars from an unnamed source, and is still being funded by donors who can't be traced. You have to wonder if some of them are corporations that stand to benefit from favorable decisions by the Supreme Court. Now guess the name of the one Supreme Court justice who voted against the disclosure provision. I'm not telling, but Mrs. Thomas can tell you—if, that is, she's willing to share the pillow talk.

This truly puzzles me. It's what I can't figure out about the conservative mindset. The Kochs I can understand: messianic Daddy Warbucks who can't imagine what life is like for people who aren't worth 21 billion dollars. But whatever happened to "compassionate conservatism?" The Affordable Care Act—whatever its flaws—extends health care coverage to over 40 million deprived Americans who would otherwise be uncovered. What is it about these people—the Thomases, the secret donors, the privileged plutocrats on their side—that they can't embrace a little social justice where it counts—among everyday people struggling to get by in a dog-eat-dog world? Health care coverage could mean the difference between life and death for them. Mrs. Thomas is obviously doing okay; she no doubts takes at least a modest salary from that private slush fund working to undermine the health care reforms; her own husband is a government employee covered

by a federal plan. Why wouldn't she want people less fortunate than her to have a little security, too? She headquarters her organization at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University, a reportedly Christian school aligned with the Moral Majority. How is it she's only about "Live and Let Live?" Have they never heard there the Old Time Religion of "Live and help live?" Why would this cushioned, comfortable crowd, pious crowd, resort to such despicable tactics as using secret money to try to turn public policy against their less fortunate neighbors, and in the process compromise the already tattered integrity of the United States Supreme Court?

I don't get it.

You be the judge (Because if you don't, Justice Thomas will.)

Time to close the circle: Everyone knows millions of Americans are in trouble. As Robert Reich recently summed it the state of working people: They've lost their jobs, their homes, and their savings. Their grown children have moved back in with them. Their state and local taxes are rising. Teachers and firefighters are being laid off. The roads and bridges they count on are crumbling, pipelines are leaking, schools are dilapidated, and public libraries are being shut.

Why isn't government working for them? Because it's been bought off. It's as simple as that. And until we get clean money we're not going to get clean elections, and until we get clean elections, you can kiss goodbye government of, by, and for the people. Welcome to the plutocracy.

Obviously Howard Zinn would not have us leave it there. Defeat was never his counsel. Look at this headline above one of his essays published posthumously this fall by the Progressive magazine: DON'T DESPAIR ABOUT THE SUPREME COURT. The Court was lost long ago, he said—don't go there looking for justice. "The Constitution gave no rights to working people; no right to work less than 12 hours a day, no right to a living wage, no right to safe working conditions. Workers had to organize, go on strike, defy the law, the courts, the police, create a great movement which won the eight-hour day, and caused such commotion that Congress was forced to pass a minimum wage law, and Social Security, and unemployment insurance....Those rights only come alive when citizens organize, protest, demonstrate, strike, boycott, rebel and violate the law in order to uphold justice."

So what are we to do about Big Money in politics buying off democracy? I can almost hear him throwing that question back at us: "What are we to do? ORGANIZE! Yes, organize—and don't count the costs." Some people already are. They're mobilizing. There's a rumbling in the land. All across the spectrum people oppose the escalating power of money in politics. Fed-up Democrats. Disillusioned Republicans. Independents. Greens. Even Tea Partiers, once they wake up to realize they have been sucker-punched by their bankrollers who have no intention of sharing the wealth.

Veteran public interest groups like Common Cause and Public Citizen are aroused. There are the rising voices, from web-based initiatives such as "freespeechforpeople.org" to grassroots initiatives such as "Democracy Matters" on campuses across the country, including a chapter here at Boston University. "Moveon.org" is looking for a million people to fight back in a many-pronged strategy to counter the Supreme Court decision.

What's promising in all this is that in taking on Big Money we're talking about something more than a single issue. We're talking about a broad-based coalition to restore American democracy—one that is trying to be smart about the nuts-and-bolts of building a coalition, remembering that it has a lot to do with human nature. Some will want to march. Some will want to petition. Some will want to engage through the web. Some will want to go door-to-door: many gifts, but the same spirit. A fighting spirit. As Howard Zinn would tell us: No fight, no fun, no results.

But here's the key: If you're fighting for a living wage, or peace, or immigration reform, or gender equality, or the environment, or a safe neighborhood, you are, of necessity, strongly opposed to a handful of moneyed-interests controlling how decisions get made and policy set. Because most Americans are attuned to principle of fair play, of not favoring Big Money at the expense of the little guy—at the expense of the country they love. The legendary community organizer Ernesto Cortes talks about the "power to preserve what we value." That's what we want for Americans—the power to preserve what we value, both for ourselves and on behalf of our democracy.

But let's be clear: Even with most Americans on our side, the odds are long. We learned long ago that power and privilege never give up anything without a struggle. Money fights hard, and it fights dirty. Think Rove. The Chamber. The Kochs. We may lose. It all may be impossible. But it's OK if it's impossible. Hear the former farm worker and labor organizer Baldemar Velasquez on this. The members of his Farm Labor Organizing Committee are a long way from the

world of K Street lobbyists. But they took on the Campbell Soup Company—and won. They took on North Carolina growers—and won, using transnational organizing tactics that helped win Velasquez a “genius” award from the MacArthur Foundation. And now they’re taking on no less than R. J. Reynolds Tobacco and one of its principle financial sponsors, JPMorgan-Chase. Some people question the wisdom of taking on such powerful interests, but here’s what Velasquez says: “It’s OK if it’s impossible; it’s OK! Now I’m going to speak to you as organizers. Listen carefully. The object is not to win. That’s not the objective. The object is to do the right and good thing. If you decide not to do anything, because it’s too hard or too impossible, then nothing will be done, and when you’re on your death bed, you’re gonna say, “I wish I had done something. But if you go and do the right thing NOW, and you do it long enough “good things will happen—something’s gonna happen.”

Shades of Howard Zinn!

20101202-02	17:21	Dennis	“The Big Economic Story & Why Obama Isn’t Telling It”
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“The Big Economic Story and Why Obama Isn’t Telling It” by Robert Reich, Huffington Post

Dec. 1, 2010, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-reich/post_1362_b_790614.html)

Quiz: What’s responsible for the lousy economy most Americans continue to wallow in?

- A. Big government, bureaucrats, and the cultural and intellectual elites who back them.
- B. Big business, Wall Street, and the powerful and privileged who represent them.

These are the two competing stories Americans are telling one another.

Yes, I know: It’s more complicated than this. In reality, the lousy economy is due to insufficient demand—the result of the nation’s almost unprecedented concentration of income at the top. The very rich don’t spend as much of their income as the middle. And since the housing bubble burst, the middle class hasn’t had the buying power to keep the economy going. That concentration of income, in turn, is due to globalization and technological change—along with unprecedented campaign contributions and lobbying designed to make the rich even richer and do nothing to help average Americans, insider trading, and political bribery.

So B is closer to the truth.

But A is the story Republicans and right-wingers tell. It’s a dangerous story because it deflects attention from the real problem and makes it harder for America to focus on the real solution—which is more widely shared prosperity. (I get into how we might do this in my new book, *Aftershock*.)

A is also the story President Obama is telling, indirectly, through his deficit commission, his freeze on federal pay, his freeze on discretionary spending, and his wavering on extending the Bush tax cuts for the rich. Most other Washington Democrats are falling into the same trap.

If Obama and the Democrats were serious about story B they’d at least mention it. They’d tell the nation that income and wealth haven’t been this concentrated at the top since 1928, the year before the Great Crash. They’d be indignant about the secret money funneled into midterm campaigns. They’d demand Congress pass the Disclose Act so the public would know where the money comes from.

They’d introduce legislation to curb Wall Street bonuses—exactly what European leaders are doing with their financial firms. They’d demand that the big banks, now profitable after taxpayer bailouts, reorganize the mortgage debt of distressed homeowners. They’d call for a new WPA to put the unemployed back to work, and pay for it with a tax surcharge on incomes over \$1 million.

They’d insist on extended unemployment benefits for long-term jobless who are now exhausting their benefits. And they’d hang tough on the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy—daring Republicans to vote against extending the cuts for everyone else.

But Obama is doing none of this. Instead, he's telling story A—making a big deal out of the deficit—appointing a deficit commission and letting them grandstand with a plan to cut \$4 trillion out of the projected deficit over the next ten years—\$3 of government spending for every \$1 of tax increase—is telling story A. What the public hears is that our economic problems stem from too much government and that if we reduce government spending we'll be fine.

Announcing a two-year freeze on federal salaries—explaining that “I did not reach this decision easily... these are people's lives”—is also telling story A. What the public hears is government bureaucrats are being paid too much, and that if we get the federal payroll under control we'll all be better off.

Proposing a freeze on discretionary (non-defense) spending is telling story A. So is signaling a willingness to extend the Bush tax cuts to the top. So is appointing his top economic advisor from Wall Street (as apparently he's about to do). In fact, the unwillingness of the President and Washington Democrats to tell story B itself promotes story A, because in the absence of an alternative narrative the Republican story is the only one the public hears.

Obama's advisors explain the President's moves are designed to “preempt” the resurgent Republicans—just like Bill Clinton preempted the Gingrich crowd by announcing “the era of big government is over” and then tacking right.

They're wrong. By telling story A and burying story B, the President legitimizes everything the right has been saying. He doesn't preempt them; he fuels them. He gives them more grounds for voting against raising the debt ceiling in a few weeks. He strengthens their argument against additional spending for extended unemployment benefits. He legitimizes their argument against additional stimulus spending.

Bill Clinton had a rapidly expanding economy to fall back on, so his appeasement of Republicans didn't legitimize the Republican world view. Obama doesn't have that luxury. The American public is still hurting and they want to know why. Unless the President and Democrats explain why the economy still stinks for most Americans and offer a plan to fix it, the Republican explanation and solution—it's big government's fault, and all we need do is shrink it—will prevail.

That will mean more hardship for tens of millions of Americans. It will make it harder to remedy the bad economy. And it will set Republicans up for bigger wins in the future.

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20101202-03	20:49	SteveB	“Anti-Earmark Tea Party Caucus Takes \$1 Billion in Earmarks”
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A politician is a politician is a politician...and that ain't necessarily good for any of us.

More Republican lies... It's all about the money and the power with these good folks.

“Anti-Earmark Tea Party Caucus Takes \$1 Billion in Earmarks” by Reid Wilson, *National Journal*

Dec 2, 2010, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/exclusive/anti-earmark-tea-party-caucus-takes-1-billion-164309010.html>)

Members of the Congressional Tea Party Caucus may tout their commitment to cutting government spending now, but they used the 111th Congress to request hundreds of earmarks that, taken cumulatively, added more than \$1 billion to the federal budget.

According to a Hotline review of records compiled by Citizens Against Government Waste, the 52 members of the caucus, which pledges to cut spending and reduce the size of government, requested a total of 764 earmarks valued at \$1,049,783,150 during Fiscal Year 2010, the last year for which records are available.

"It's disturbing to see the Tea Party Caucus requested that much in earmarks. This is their time to put up or shut up, to be blunt," said David Williams, vice president for policy at Citizens Against Government Waste. "There's going to be a huge backlash if they continue to request earmarks." In founding the caucus in July, Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.) said she was giving voice to Americans who were sick of government overspending.

How do deficit-cutters sell the U.S. on pain?

"The American people are speaking out loud and clear. They have had enough of the spending, the bureaucracy, and the government-knows-best mentality running rampant today throughout the halls of Congress," Bachmann said in a July 15 statement. The group, she wrote in a letter to House Administration Committee chairman Bob Brady, "will serve as an informal group of Members dedicated to promote Americans' call for fiscal responsibility, adherence to the Constitution, and limited government."

Bachmann and 13 of her Tea Party Caucus colleagues did not request any earmarks in the last Fiscal Year, according to CAGW's annual Congressional Pig Book. But others have requested millions of dollars in special projects.

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.), for one, attached his name to 69 earmarks in the last fiscal year, for a total of \$78,263,000. The 41 earmarks Rep. Rodney Alexander (R-La.) requested were worth \$65,395,000. Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-Kan.) wanted \$63,400,000 for 39 special projects, and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) wanted \$93,980,000 set aside for 47 projects.

With jobs at issue, what is Washington doing?

Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.) takes the prize as the tea partier with his name on the most earmarks. Rehberg's office requested funding for 88 projects, either solely or by co-signing earmark requests with Sens. Max Baucus (D) and Jon Tester (D), at a cost of \$100,514,200. On his own, Rehberg requested 20 earmarks valued at more than \$9.6 million.

More than one member can sign onto an earmark. Still, there are 29 caucus members who requested on their own or joined requests for more than \$10 million in earmark funding, and seven who wanted more than \$50 million in funding.

Most offices did not respond right away to a request for comment. Those that did said they supported Republicans' new efforts to ban earmarks.

Will Obama's winning campaign plan be used against him in 2012?

Alexander, for one, "stands with his fellow Republicans in the House in supporting the current earmark ban. Since joining the Tea Party Caucus in July, he has not submitted any earmark requests and has withdrawn his outstanding requests that were included in the most recent Water Resources Development Act," said Jamie Hanks, his communications director.

Rep. Gregg Harper (R-Miss.), who requested 25 earmarks in the last Fiscal Year at a total cost of just over \$80 million, has agreed to abide by the Republican earmark ban, according to spokesman Adam Buckalew. "He supported the moratorium and the prohibition adopted recently by the Conference on House earmarks for the 112th Congress," Buckalew said of Harper.

"It's easy to be a member of the TEA Party Caucus because, like them, I agree that we're Taxed Enough Already and we've got to balance the budget by cutting spending instead of raising taxes. Deficit spending is not new, but the unprecedented rate of spending in Congress is," Rehberg said in a statement emailed by his office. "Montanans have tightened their belts, and it's way past time for Congress to follow their lead. The TEA Party Caucus is about listening to concerned Americans who want to fundamentally change how Congress spends their tax dollars. On that, we're in total agreement."

For America's 10 wealthiest Congressional Districts, it will be more happy holidays

Bachmann's office did not respond to emails or phone calls seeking comment. Still, some Republicans—albeit none who belong to the Tea Party Caucus—have said they will not abide by the voluntary earmark ban. And, said CAGW's Williams, the anti-spending organization isn't waiting with baited breath.

"Seeing is believing. It's going to take a lot more than rhetoric to convince us," he said. A list of Tea Party Caucus members and their earmark requests in Fiscal Year 2010, courtesy of Citizens Against Government Waste's *Pig Book*:

<u>NAME</u>	<u># of EARMARKS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Aderholt (R-AL)	69	\$78,263,000
Akin (R-MO)	9	\$14,709,000
Alexander (R-LA)	41	\$65,395,000

Bachmann (R-MN)	0	0
Barton (R-TX)	14	\$12,269,400
Bartlett (R-MD)	19	\$43,060,650
Bilirakis (R-FL)	14	\$13,600,000
R. Bishop (R-UT)	47	\$93,980,000
Burgess (R-TX)	15	\$15,804,400
Broun (R-GA)	0	0
Burton (R-IN)	0	0
Carter (R-TX)	26	\$42,232,000
Coble (R-NC)	19	\$18,755,000
Coffman (R-CO)	0	0
Crenshaw (R-FL)	37	\$54,424,000
Culberson (R-TX)	22	\$33,792,000
Fleming (R-LA)	10	\$31,489,000
Franks (R-AZ)	8	\$14,300,000
Gingrey (R-GA)	19	\$16,100,000
Gohmert (R-TX)	15	\$7,099,000
S. Graves (R-MO)	11	\$8,331,000
R. Hall (R-TX)	16	\$12,232,000
Harper (R-MS)	25	\$80,402,000
Herger (R-CA)	5	\$5,946,000
Hoekstra (R-MI)	9	\$6,392,000
Jenkins (R-KS)	12	\$24,628,000
S. King (R-IA)	13	\$6,650,000
Lamborn (R-CO)	6	\$16,020,000
Luetkemeyer (R-MO)	0	0
Lummis (R-WY)	0	0
Marchant (R-TX)	0	0
McClintock (R-CA)	0	0
Gary Miller (R-CA)	15	\$19,627,500
Jerry Moran (R-KS)	22	\$19,400,000
Myrick (R-NC)	0	0
Neugebauer (R-TX)	0	0
Pence (R-IN)	0	0
Poe (R-TX)	12	\$7,913,000
T. Price (R-GA)	0	0
Rehberg (R-MT)	88	\$100,514,200
Roe (R-TN)	0	0
Royce (R-CA)	7	\$6,545,000
Scalise (R-LA)	20	\$17,388,000
P. Sessions (R-TX)	0	0
Shadegg (R-AZ)	0	0
Adrian Smith (R-NE)	1	\$350,000
L. Smith (R-TX)	18	\$14,078,000
Stearns (R-FL)	17	\$15,472,000
Tiahrt (R-KS)	39	\$63,400,000
Wamp (R-TN)	14	\$34,544,000
Westmoreland (R-GA)	0	0
Wilson (R-SC)	15	\$23,334,000
TOTAL	764	\$1,049,783,150

20101203-01 07:49 Pam My Blog

Dear SteveB,

Guess what! I've started a blog. I can't believe I'm doing this, but I'm going to give it a try. I've also decided to start following a few select blogs—so far Paul Krugman's is the only one I've signed up for. I LOVE what he says.

You can check it out at: <http://pammcrae.blogspot.com>

[20101203-02](#) 19:30 Dennis The Bush Tax Cuts

According to *Newsweek*, George W. Bush "earns" \$4.2 million from paid speeches, public appearances and miscellaneous punditry each year. Hence the Bush Tax Cuts cut Bush's own taxes by an amazing \$187,552 each year. And that's not even counting how much the Bush tax cuts engorge Bush's investment income.

So Bush cut his own taxes. No wonder Bush is in favor of extending those tax cuts. He's not the only one. Here is how much the Bush tax cuts benefit—each year—some other folks you may have heard of:

Rush Limbaugh—\$2,689,135.
Glenn Beck—\$1,512,352
Sean Hannity—\$1,006,352
Bill O'Reilly—\$914,352
Sarah Palin—\$638,352
Newt Gingrich—\$247,352

If I worked for Fox News I'd be for the Bush Tax Cuts too!

[20101205-01](#) 13:51 SteveB Re: The Bush Tax Cuts

Dennis,

If tax cuts, especially tax cuts for the rich (the top 2% of earners), create jobs for Americans, where the hell are all the jobs created by the Bush tax cuts?

Or by the still-existing remnants of the Regan tax cuts, for that matter? Why is unemployment 9.8% if this national debt-building tax cut strategy works?

And unemployment is actually much worse than that if you include people who have given up looking and all the part-time restaurant and retail workers, most of whom make under \$8/hour, working, say 20 hours a week (maybe \$160/week). Hardly a "living wage" anywhere in the country.

Buy hey, folks, they is workin', right?

Don't listen to the Republican lies! All our recent national history proves that these tax cuts do nothing but make the rich richer, the banks bigger, the fat cats fatter, and keep the corrupt politicians in power. The People have been sold down the river.

What a legacy for our generation to pass on to our children handed to us by the "Greatest Generation".

Maybe we should be called the "Failed Generation!" or the "Worst Generation" Just thought I'd try to brighten up your day.

[20101205-02](#) 18:24 SteveB Re: "Welcome to the Plutocracy!"

Dear Dennis,

Ya...this is some good stuff indeed...

[20101206-01](#) 10:50 Ben Re: The Bush Tax Cuts

Dear SteveB,

I don't think ANYBODY believes that tax cuts for the uber-wealthy create jobs, except for rank-and-file Republicans who ignorantly accept either the Party line because it IS the Party line, or who can be fooled by Carl Rove's, "loudly proclaim that 'off' is 'on' and people will except that 'off' is the new 'on'" tactics.

For some, ignorance is truly bliss; there seem to be LOTS of Republicans in this boat. Don't there?

20101206-02	15:04	Dennis	"4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
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Will the future look like this?

"4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire" by Alfred W. McCoy, TomDispatch

Dec. 5, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/149080/>)

A soft landing for America 40 years from now? Don't bet on it. The demise of the United States as the global superpower could come far more quickly than anyone imagines. If Washington is dreaming of 2040 or 2050 as the end of the American Century, a more realistic assessment of domestic and global trends suggests that in 2025, just 15 years from now, it could all be over except for the shouting.

Despite the aura of omnipotence most empires project, a look at their history should remind us that they are fragile organisms. So delicate is their ecology of power that, when things start to go truly bad, empires regularly unravel with unholy speed: just a year for Portugal, two years for the Soviet Union, eight years for France, 11 years for the Ottomans, 17 years for Great Britain, and, in all likelihood, 22 years for the United States, counting from the crucial year 2003.

Future historians are likely to identify the Bush administration's rash invasion of Iraq in that year as the start of America's downfall. However, instead of the bloodshed that marked the end of so many past empires, with cities burning and civilians slaughtered, this twenty-first century imperial collapse could come relatively quietly through the invisible tendrils of economic collapse or cyber warfare.

But have no doubt: when Washington's global dominion finally ends, there will be painful daily reminders of what such a loss of power means for Americans in every walk of life. As a half-dozen European nations have discovered, imperial decline tends to have a remarkably demoralizing impact on a society, regularly bringing at least a generation of economic privation. As the economy cools, political temperatures rise, often sparking serious domestic unrest.

Available economic, educational, and military data indicate that, when it comes to U.S. global power, negative trends will aggregate rapidly by 2020 and are likely to reach a critical mass no later than 2030. The American Century, proclaimed so triumphantly at the start of World War II, will be tattered and fading by 2025, its eighth decade, and could be history by 2030.

Significantly, in 2008, the U.S. National Intelligence Council admitted for the first time that America's global power was indeed on a declining trajectory. In one of its periodic futuristic reports, Global Trends 2025, the Council cited "the transfer of global wealth and economic power now under way, roughly from West to East" and "without precedent in modern history," as the primary factor in the decline of the "United States' relative strength—even in the military realm." Like many in Washington, however, the Council's analysts anticipated a very long, very soft landing for American global preeminence, and harbored the hope that somehow the U.S. would long "retain unique military capabilities... to project military power globally" for decades to come.

No such luck. Under current projections, the United States will find itself in second place behind China (already the world's second largest economy) in economic output around 2026, and behind India by 2050. Similarly, Chinese innovation is on a trajectory toward world leadership in applied science and military technology sometime between 2020 and 2030, just as America's current supply of brilliant scientists and engineers retires, without adequate replacement by an ill-educated younger generation.

By 2020, according to current plans, the Pentagon will throw a military Hail Mary pass for a dying empire. It will launch a lethal triple canopy of advanced aerospace robotics that represents Washington's last best hope of retaining global power despite its waning economic influence. By that year, however, China's global network of communications satellites, backed by the world's most powerful supercomputers, will also be fully operational, providing Beijing with an independent

platform for the weaponization of space and a powerful communications system for missile- or cyber-strikes into every quadrant of the globe.

Wrapped in imperial hubris, like Whitehall or Quai d'Orsay before, the White House still seems to imagine that American decline will be gradual, gentle, and partial. In his State of the Union address last January, President Obama offered the reassurance that "I do not accept second place for the United States of America." A few days later, Vice President Biden ridiculed the very idea that "we are destined to fulfill [historian Paul] Kennedy's prophecy that we are going to be a great nation that has failed because we lost control of our economy and overextended." Similarly, writing in the November issue of the establishment journal *Foreign Affairs*, neo-liberal foreign policy guru Joseph Nye waved away talk of China's economic and military rise, dismissing "misleading metaphors of organic decline" and denying that any deterioration in U.S. global power was underway.

Ordinary Americans, watching their jobs head overseas, have a more realistic view than their cosseted leaders. An opinion poll in Aug., 2010 found that 65% of Americans believed the country was now "in a state of decline." Already, Australia and Turkey, traditional U.S. military allies, are using their American-manufactured weapons for joint air and naval maneuvers with China. Already, America's closest economic partners are backing away from Washington's opposition to China's rigged currency rates. As the president flew back from his Asian tour last month, a gloomy *New York Times* headline summed the moment up this way: "Obama's Economic View Is Rejected on World Stage, China, Britain and Germany Challenge U.S., Trade Talks With Seoul Fail, Too."

Viewed historically, the question is not whether the United States will lose its unchallenged global power, but just how precipitous and wrenching the decline will be. In place of Washington's wishful thinking, let's use the National Intelligence Council's own futuristic methodology to suggest four realistic scenarios for how, whether with a bang or a whimper, U.S. global power could reach its end in the 2020s (along with four accompanying assessments of just where we are today). The future scenarios include: economic decline, oil shock, military misadventure, and World War III. While these are hardly the only possibilities when it comes to American decline or even collapse, they offer a window into an onrushing future.

Economic Decline: Present Situation

Today, three main threats exist to America's dominant position in the global economy: loss of economic clout thanks to a shrinking share of world trade, the decline of American technological innovation, and the end of the dollar's privileged status as the global reserve currency.

By 2008, the United States had already fallen to number three in global merchandise exports, with just 11% of them compared to 12% for China and 16% for the European Union. There is no reason to believe that this trend will reverse itself.

Similarly, American leadership in technological innovation is on the wane. In 2008, the U.S. was still number two behind Japan in worldwide patent applications with 232,000, but China was closing fast at 195,000, thanks to a blistering 400% increase since 2000.

A harbinger of further decline: in 2009 the U.S. hit rock bottom in ranking among the 40 nations surveyed by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation when it came to "change" in "global innovation-based competitiveness" during the previous decade.

Adding substance to these statistics, in October China's Defense Ministry unveiled the world's fastest supercomputer, the Tianhe-1A, so powerful, said one U.S. expert, that it "blows away the existing No. 1 machine" in America.

Add to this clear evidence that the U.S. education system, that source of future scientists and innovators, has been falling behind its competitors. After leading the world for decades in 25- to 34-year-olds with university degrees, the country sank to 12th place in 2010. The World Economic Forum ranked the United States at a mediocre 52nd among 139 nations in the quality of its university math and science instruction in 2010. Nearly half of all graduate students in the sciences in the U.S. are now foreigners, most of whom will be heading home, not staying here as once would have happened. By 2025, in other words, the United States is likely to face a critical shortage of talented scientists.

Such negative trends are encouraging increasingly sharp criticism of the dollar's role as the world's reserve currency. "Other countries are no longer willing to buy into the idea that the U.S. knows best on economic policy," observed Kenneth S. Rogoff, a former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund. In mid-2009, with the world's central

banks holding an astronomical \$4 trillion in U.S. Treasury notes, Russian president Dimitri Medvedev insisted that it was time to end "the artificially maintained unipolar system" based on "one formerly strong reserve currency."

Simultaneously, China's central bank governor suggested that the future might lie with a global reserve currency "disconnected from individual nations" (that is, the U.S. dollar). Take these as signposts of a world to come, and of a possible attempt, as economist Michael Hudson has argued, "to hasten the bankruptcy of the U.S. financial-military world order."

Economic Decline: Scenario 2020

After years of swelling deficits fed by incessant warfare in distant lands, in 2020, as long expected, the U.S. dollar finally loses its special status as the world's reserve currency. Suddenly, the cost of imports soars. Unable to pay for swelling deficits by selling now devalued Treasury notes abroad, Washington is finally forced to slash its bloated military budget. Under pressure at home and abroad, Washington slowly pulls U.S. forces back from hundreds of overseas bases to a continental perimeter. By now, however, it is far too late.

Faced with a fading superpower incapable of paying the bills, China, India, Iran, Russia, and other powers, great and regional, provocatively challenge U.S. dominion over the oceans, space, and cyberspace. Meanwhile, amid soaring prices, ever-rising unemployment, and a continuing decline in real wages, domestic divisions widen into violent clashes and divisive debates, often over remarkably irrelevant issues. Riding a political tide of disillusionment and despair, a far-right patriot captures the presidency with thundering rhetoric, demanding respect for American authority and threatening military retaliation or economic reprisal. The world pays next to no attention as the American Century ends in silence.

Oil Shock: Present Situation

One casualty of America's waning economic power has been its lock on global oil supplies. Speeding by America's gas-guzzling economy in the passing lane, China became the world's number one energy consumer this summer, a position the U.S. had held for over a century. Energy specialist Michael Klare has argued that this change means China will "set the pace in shaping our global future."

By 2025, Iran and Russia will control almost half of the world's natural gas supply, which will potentially give them enormous leverage over energy-starved Europe. Add petroleum reserves to the mix and, as the National Intelligence Council has warned, in just 15 years two countries, Russia and Iran, could "emerge as energy kingpins."

Despite remarkable ingenuity, the major oil powers are now draining the big basins of petroleum reserves that are amenable to easy, cheap extraction. The real lesson of the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico was not BP's sloppy safety standards, but the simple fact everyone saw on "spillcam": one of the corporate energy giants had little choice but to search for what Klare calls "tough oil" miles beneath the surface of the ocean to keep its profits up.

Compounding the problem, the Chinese and Indians have suddenly become far heavier energy consumers. Even if fossil fuel supplies were to remain constant (which they won't), demand, and so costs, are almost certain to rise—and sharply at that. Other developed nations are meeting this threat aggressively by plunging into experimental programs to develop alternative energy sources. The United States has taken a different path, doing far too little to develop alternative sources while, in the last three decades, doubling its dependence on foreign oil imports. Between 1973 and 2007, oil imports have risen from 36% of energy consumed in the U.S. to 66%.

Oil Shock: Scenario 2025

The United States remains so dependent upon foreign oil that a few adverse developments in the global energy market in 2025 spark an oil shock. By comparison, it makes the 1973 oil shock (when prices quadrupled in just months) look like the proverbial molehill. Angered at the dollar's plummeting value, OPEC oil ministers, meeting in Riyadh, demand future energy payments in a "basket" of Yen, Yuan, and Euros. That only hikes the cost of U.S. oil imports further. At the same moment, while signing a new series of long-term delivery contracts with China, the Saudis stabilize their own foreign exchange reserves by switching to the Yuan. Meanwhile, China pours countless billions into building a massive trans-Asia pipeline and funding Iran's exploitation of the world largest natural gas field at South Pars in the Persian Gulf.

Concerned that the U.S. Navy might no longer be able to protect the oil tankers traveling from the Persian Gulf to fuel East Asia, a coalition of Tehran, Riyadh, and Abu Dhabi form an unexpected new Gulf alliance and affirm that China's new fleet of swift aircraft carriers will henceforth patrol the Persian Gulf from a base on the Gulf of Oman. Under heavy

economic pressure, London agrees to cancel the U.S. lease on its Indian Ocean island base of Diego Garcia, while Canberra, pressured by the Chinese, informs Washington that the Seventh Fleet is no longer welcome to use Fremantle as a homeport, effectively evicting the U.S. Navy from the Indian Ocean.

With just a few strokes of the pen and some terse announcements, the "Carter Doctrine," by which U.S. military power was to eternally protect the Persian Gulf, is laid to rest in 2025. All the elements that long assured the United States limitless supplies of low-cost oil from that region—logistics, exchange rates, and naval power—evaporate. At this point, the U.S. can still cover only an insignificant 12% of its energy needs from its nascent alternative energy industry, and remains dependent on imported oil for half of its energy consumption.

The oil shock that follows hits the country like a hurricane, sending prices to startling heights, making travel a staggeringly expensive proposition, putting real wages (which had long been declining) into freefall, and rendering non-competitive whatever American exports remained. With thermostats dropping, gas prices climbing through the roof, and dollars flowing overseas in return for costly oil, the American economy is paralyzed. With long-fraying alliances at an end and fiscal pressures mounting, U.S. military forces finally begin a staged withdrawal from their overseas bases.

Within a few years, the U.S. is functionally bankrupt and the clock is ticking toward midnight on the American Century.

Military Misadventure: Present Situation

Counter intuitively, as their power wanes, empires often plunge into ill-advised military misadventures. This phenomenon is known among historians of empire as "micro militarism" and seems to involve psychologically compensatory efforts to salve the sting of retreat or defeat by occupying new territories, however briefly and catastrophically. These operations, irrational even from an imperial point of view, often yield hemorrhaging expenditures or humiliating defeats that only accelerate the loss of power.

Embattled empires through the ages suffer an arrogance that drives them to plunge ever deeper into military misadventures until defeat becomes debacle. In 413 BCE, a weakened Athens sent 200 ships to be slaughtered in Sicily. In 1921, a dying imperial Spain dispatched 20,000 soldiers to be massacred by Berber guerrillas in Morocco. In 1956, a fading British Empire destroyed its prestige by attacking Suez. And in 2001 and 2003, the U.S. occupied Afghanistan and invaded Iraq. With the hubris that marks empires over the millennia, Washington has increased its troops in Afghanistan to 100,000, expanded the war into Pakistan, and extended its commitment to 2014 and beyond, courting disasters large and small in this guerilla-infested, nuclear-armed graveyard of empires.

Military Misadventure: Scenario 2014

So irrational, so unpredictable is "micro-militarism" that seemingly fanciful scenarios are soon outdone by actual events. With the U.S. military stretched thin from Somalia to the Philippines and tensions rising in Israel, Iran, and Korea, possible combinations for a disastrous military crisis abroad are multifold.

It's mid-summer 2014 and a drawn-down U.S. garrison in embattled Kandahar in southern Afghanistan is suddenly, unexpectedly overrun by Taliban guerrillas, while U.S. aircraft are grounded by a blinding sandstorm. Heavy losses are taken and in retaliation, an embarrassed American war commander looses B-1 bombers and F-16 fighters to demolish whole neighborhoods of the city that are believed to be under Taliban control, while AC-130U "Spooky" gunships rake the rubble with devastating cannon fire.

Soon, mullahs are preaching jihad from mosques throughout the region, and Afghan Army units, long trained by American forces to turn the tide of the war, begin to desert en masse. Taliban fighters then launch a series of remarkably sophisticated strikes aimed at U.S. garrisons across the country, sending American casualties soaring. In scenes reminiscent of Saigon in 1975, U.S. helicopters rescue American soldiers and civilians from rooftops in Kabul and Kandahar.

Meanwhile, angry at the endless, decades-long stalemate over Palestine, OPEC's leaders impose a new oil embargo on the U.S. to protest its backing of Israel as well as the killing of untold numbers of Muslim civilians in its ongoing wars across the Greater Middle East. With gas prices soaring and refineries running dry, Washington makes its move, sending in Special Operations forces to seize oil ports in the Persian Gulf. This, in turn, sparks a rash of suicide attacks and the sabotage of pipelines and oil wells. As black clouds billow skyward and diplomats rise at the U.N. to bitterly denounce American actions, commentators worldwide reach back into history to brand this "America's Suez," a telling reference to the 1956 debacle that marked the end of the British Empire.

World War III: Present Situation

In the summer of 2010, military tensions between the U.S. and China began to rise in the western Pacific, once considered an American "lake." Even a year earlier no one would have predicted such a development. As Washington played upon its alliance with London to appropriate much of Britain's global power after World War II, so China is now using the profits from its export trade with the U.S. to fund what is likely to become a military challenge to American dominion over the waterways of Asia and the Pacific.

With its growing resources, Beijing is claiming a vast maritime arc from Korea to Indonesia long dominated by the U.S. Navy. In August, after Washington expressed a "national interest" in the South China Sea and conducted naval exercises there to reinforce that claim, Beijing's official Global Times responded angrily, saying, "The U.S.- China wrestling match over the South China Sea issue has raised the stakes in deciding who the real future ruler of the planet will be."

Amid growing tensions, the Pentagon reported that Beijing now holds "the capability to attack... [U.S.] aircraft carriers in the western Pacific Ocean" and target "nuclear forces throughout... the continental United States." By developing "offensive nuclear, space, and cyber warfare capabilities," China seems determined to vie for dominance of what the Pentagon calls "the information spectrum in all dimensions of the modern battle space." With ongoing development of the powerful Long March V booster rocket, as well as the launch of two satellites in Jan. 2010 and another in July, for a total of five, Beijing signaled that the country was making rapid strides toward an "independent" network of 35 satellites for global positioning, communications, and reconnaissance capabilities by 2020.

To check China and extend its military position globally, Washington is intent on building a new digital network of air and space robotics, advanced cyber warfare capabilities, and electronic surveillance. Military planners expect this integrated system to envelop the Earth in a cyber-grid capable of blinding entire armies on the battlefield or taking out a single terrorist in field or favela. By 2020, if all goes according to plan, the Pentagon will launch a three-tiered shield of space drones—reaching from stratosphere to exosphere, armed with agile missiles, linked by a resilient modular satellite system, and operated through total telescopic surveillance.

Last April, the Pentagon made history. It extended drone operations into the exosphere by quietly launching the X-37B unmanned space shuttle into a low orbit 255 miles above the planet. The X-37B is the first in a new generation of unmanned vehicles that will mark the full weaponization of space, creating an arena for future warfare unlike anything that has gone before.

World War III: Scenario 2025

The technology of space and cyber warfare is so new and untested that even the most outlandish scenarios may soon be superseded by a reality still hard to conceive. If we simply employ the sort of scenarios that the Air Force itself used in its 2009 Future Capabilities Game, however, we can gain "a better understanding of how air, space and cyberspace overlap in warfare," and so begin to imagine how the next world war might actually be fought.

It's 11:59 p.m. on Thanksgiving Thursday in 2025. While cyber-shoppers pound the portals of Best Buy for deep discounts on the latest home electronics from China, U.S. Air Force technicians at the Space Surveillance Telescope (SST) on Maui choke on their coffee as their panoramic screens suddenly blip to black. Thousands of miles away at the U.S. CyberCommand's operations center in Texas, cyber warriors soon detect malicious binaries that, though fired anonymously, show the distinctive digital fingerprints of China's People's Liberation Army.

The first overt strike is one nobody predicted. Chinese "malware" seizes control of the robotics aboard an unmanned solar-powered U.S. "Vulture" drone as it flies at 70,000 feet over the Tsushima Strait between Korea and Japan. It suddenly fires all the rocket pods beneath its enormous 400-foot wingspan, sending dozens of lethal missiles plunging harmlessly into the Yellow Sea, effectively disarming this formidable weapon. Determined to fight fire with fire, the White House authorizes a retaliatory strike.

Confident that its F-6 "Fractionated, Free-Flying" satellite system is impenetrable, Air Force commanders in California transmit robotic codes to the flotilla of X-37B space drones orbiting 250 miles above the Earth, ordering them to launch their "Triple Terminator" missiles at China's 35 satellites. Zero response. In near panic, the Air Force launches its Falcon Hypersonic Cruise Vehicle into an arc 100 miles above the Pacific Ocean and then, just 20 minutes later, sends the computer codes to fire missiles at seven Chinese satellites in nearby orbits. The launch codes are suddenly inoperative.

As the Chinese virus spreads uncontrollably through the F-6 satellite architecture, while those second-rate U.S. supercomputers fail to crack the malware's devilishly complex code, GPS signals crucial to the navigation of U.S. ships and aircraft worldwide are compromised. Carrier fleets begin steaming in circles in the mid-Pacific. Fighter squadrons are grounded. Reaper drones fly aimlessly toward the horizon, crashing when their fuel is exhausted. Suddenly, the United States loses what the U.S. Air Force has long called "the ultimate high ground": space. Within hours, the military power that had dominated the globe for nearly a century has been defeated in World War III without a single human casualty.

A New World Order?

Even if future events prove duller than these four scenarios suggest, every significant trend points toward a far more striking decline in American global power by 2025 than anything Washington now seems to be envisioning.

As allies worldwide begin to realign their policies to take cognizance of rising Asian powers, the cost of maintaining 800 or more overseas military bases will simply become unsustainable, finally forcing a staged withdrawal on a still-unwilling Washington. With both the U.S. and China in a race to weaponize space and cyberspace, tensions between the two powers are bound to rise, making military conflict by 2025 at least feasible, if hardly guaranteed.

Complicating matters even more, the economic, military, and technological trends outlined above will not operate in tidy isolation. As happened to European empires after World War II, such negative forces will undoubtedly prove synergistic. They will combine in thoroughly unexpected ways, create crises for which Americans are remarkably unprepared, and threaten to spin the economy into a sudden downward spiral, consigning this country to a generation or more of economic misery.

As U.S. power recedes, the past offers a spectrum of possibilities for a future world order. At one end of this spectrum, the rise of a new global superpower, however unlikely, cannot be ruled out. Yet both China and Russia evince self-referential cultures, recondite non-roman scripts, regional defense strategies, and underdeveloped legal systems, denying them key instruments for global dominion. At the moment then, no single superpower seems to be on the horizon likely to succeed the U.S.

In a dark, dystopian version of our global future, a coalition of transnational corporations, multilateral forces like NATO, and an international financial elite could conceivably forge a single, possibly unstable, supra-national nexus that would make it no longer meaningful to speak of national empires at all. While denationalized corporations and multinational elites would assumedly rule such a world from secure urban enclaves, the multitudes would be relegated to urban and rural wastelands.

In *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis offers at least a partial vision of such a world from the bottom up. He argues that the billion people already packed into fetid favela-style slums worldwide (rising to two billion by 2030) will make "the 'feral, failed cities' of the Third World... the distinctive battle space of the twenty-first century." As darkness settles over some future super-favela, "the empire can deploy Orwellian technologies of repression" as "hornet-like helicopter gun-ships stalk enigmatic enemies in the narrow streets of the slum districts... Every morning the slums reply with suicide bombers and eloquent explosions."

At a midpoint on the spectrum of possible futures, a new global oligopoly might emerge between 2020 and 2040, with rising powers China, Russia, India, and Brazil collaborating with receding powers like Britain, Germany, Japan, and the United States to enforce an ad hoc global dominion, akin to the loose alliance of European empires that ruled half of humanity circa 1900.

Another possibility: the rise of regional hegemonies in a return to something reminiscent of the international system that operated before modern empires took shape. In this neo-Westphalian world order, with its endless vistas of micro-violence and unchecked exploitation, each hegemon would dominate its immediate region—Brasilia in South America, Washington in North America, Pretoria in southern Africa, and so on. Space, cyberspace, and the maritime deeps, removed from the control of the former planetary "policeman," the United States, might even become a new global commons, controlled through an expanded U.N. Security Council or some ad hoc body.

All of these scenarios extrapolate existing trends into the future on the assumption that Americans, blinded by the arrogance of decades of historically unparalleled power, cannot or will not take steps to manage the unchecked erosion of their global position.

If America's decline is in fact on a 22-year trajectory from 2003 to 2025, then we have already frittered away most of the first decade of that decline with wars that distracted us from long-term problems and, like water tossed onto desert sands, wasted trillions of desperately needed dollars.

If only 15 years remain, the odds of frittering them all away still remain high. Congress and the president are now in gridlock; the American system is flooded with corporate money meant to jam up the works; and there is little suggestion that any issues of significance, including our wars, our bloated national security state, our starved education system, and our antiquated energy supplies, will be addressed with sufficient seriousness to assure the sort of soft landing that might maximize our country's role and prosperity in a changing world.

Europe's empires are gone and America's imperium is going. It seems increasingly doubtful that the United States will have anything like Britain's success in shaping a succeeding world order that protects its interests, preserves its prosperity, and bears the imprint of its best values.

(Alfred W. McCoy is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A TomDispatch regular, he is the author, most recently, of *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (2009). He is also the convener of the "Empires in Transition" project, a global working group of 140 historians from universities on four continents. The results of their first meetings at Madison, Sydney, and Manila were published as *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* and the findings from their latest conference will appear next year as *Endless Empire: Europe's Eclipse, America's Ascent, and the Decline of U.S. Global Power.*)

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Want to know how some of the rich are preparing for the future?

Go to....www.escapefromamerika.com/move or
<http://www.sovereignsociety.com/pages/svs/video/PassportVideo.php?pub=SVS&code=DSVSLA33>

20101206-03	16:55	SteveB	Re: The Bush Tax Cuts
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Dear Ben,

Yet the only reason given (or possible) for why tax rates for the rich must be so low (and budget-busting) is that low rates are necessary so that these silver-spooners can/will create jobs. Well, then where are the jobs? China, I guess...

So, at least all the Republicans seem to believe these lies, and maybe many of the ball-less Democrats.

20101206-04	21:16	SteveG	Re: "4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
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Dear Dennis,

With the pending continuation of the Bush tax scenarios and the continuation of our mounting national debt as well as the continuation of the 2 war sites, where are we borrowing the money to pay for this life style? Saudi Arabia and China for certain, but where else??

20101207-01	06:07	SteveB	Re: "4 Scenarios for the Coming Collapse of the American Empire"
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Dear SteveG,

I read that Haiti and Greece are thinking about helping us with loans...

20101207-02	10:21	Jim	Fw: Changes Are Coming & "19 Facts About the De-industrialization of America That Will Blow Your Mind"
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These are continuations of processes that have been going on for many years.....Not new but escalating to critical points.

Like anything you read, this is not 100%—but some of these changes may very well happen. Make sure you read this and then the following article: "The De-Industrialization of the U.S."

There is nothing political about this email. It simply points out very probable changes that are in our future.

[Original source of email unknown. —SteveB]

CHANGES ARE COMING—Whether these changes are good or bad depends in part on how we adapt to them. But, ready or not, here they come!

1. The Post Office

Get ready to imagine a world without the post office. They are so deeply in financial trouble that there is probably no way to sustain it long term. Email, Fed Ex, and UPS have just about wiped out the minimum revenue needed to keep the post office alive. Most of your mail every day is junk mail and bills.

2. The Check

Britain is already laying the groundwork to do away with checks by 2018. It costs the financial system billions of dollars a year to process checks. Plastic cards and online transactions will lead to the eventual demise of the check. This plays right into the death of the post office. If you never paid your bills by mail and never received them by mail, the post office would absolutely go out of business.

3. The Newspaper

The younger generation simply doesn't read the newspaper. They certainly don't subscribe to a daily delivered print edition. That may go the way of the milkman and the laundry man. As for reading the paper online, get ready to pay for it. The rise in mobile Internet devices and e-readers has caused all the newspaper and magazine publishers to form an alliance. They have met with Apple, Amazon, and the major cell phone companies to develop a model for paid subscription services.

4. The Book

You say you will never give up the physical book that you hold in your hand and turn the literal pages. I said the same thing about downloading music from iTunes. I wanted my hard copy CD. But I quickly changed my mind when I discovered that I could get albums for half the price without ever leaving home to get the latest music. The same thing will happen with books. You can browse a bookstore online and even read a preview chapter before you buy. And the price is less than half that of a real book. And think of the convenience! Once you start flicking your fingers on the screen instead of the book, you find that you are lost in the story, can't wait to see what happens next, and you forget that you're holding a gadget instead of a book.

5. The Land Line Telephone

Unless you have a large family and make a lot of local calls, you don't need it anymore. Most people keep it simply because they've always had it. But you are paying double charges for that extra service. All the cell phone companies will let you call customers using the same cell provider for no charge against your minutes.

6. Music

This is one of the saddest parts of the change story. The music industry is dying a slow death. Not just because of illegal downloading. It's the lack of innovative new music being given a chance to get to the people who would like to hear it. Greed and corruption is the problem. The record labels and the radio conglomerates are simply self-destructing. Over 40% of the music purchased today is "catalog items," meaning traditional music that the public is familiar with. Older established artists. This is also true on the live concert circuit. To explore this fascinating and disturbing topic further, check out the book, *Appetite for Self-Destruction*, by Steve Knopper, and the video documentary, "Before the Music Dies."

7. Television

Revenues to the networks are down dramatically. Not just because of the economy. People are watching TV and movies streamed from their computers. And they're playing games and doing lots of other things that take up the time that used to be spent watching TV. Prime time shows have degenerated down to lower than the lowest common denominator. Cable rates are skyrocketing and commercials run about every 4 minutes and 30 seconds. I say good riddance to most of it. It's time for the cable companies to be put out of our misery. Let the people choose what they want to watch online and through Netflix.

8. The "Things" That You Own

Many of the very possessions that we used to own are still in our lives, but we may not actually own them in the future. They may simply reside in "the cloud." Today your computer has a hard drive and you store your pictures, music, movies, and documents. Your software is on a CD or DVD, and you can always re-install it if need be. But all of that is changing. Apple, Microsoft, and Google are all finishing up their latest "cloud services." That means that when you turn on a computer, the Internet will be built into the operating system. So, Windows, Google, and the Mac OS will be tied straight into the Internet. If you click an icon, it will open something in the Internet cloud. If you save something, it will be saved to the cloud. And you may pay a monthly subscription fee to the cloud provider. In this virtual world, you can access your music or your books, or your whatever from any laptop or handheld device. That's the good news. But, will you actually own any of this "stuff" or will it all be able to disappear at any moment in a big "Poof?" Will most of the things in our lives be disposable and whimsical? It makes you want to run to the closet and pull out that photo album, grab a book from the shelf, or open up a CD case and pull out the insert.

9. Privacy

If there ever was a concept that we can look back on nostalgically, it would be privacy. That's gone. It's been gone for a long time anyway. There are cameras on the street, in most of the buildings, and even built into your computer and cell phone. But you can be sure that 24/7, "They" know who you are and where you are, right down to the GPS coordinates, and the Google Street View. If you buy something, your habit is put into a zillion profiles, and your ads will change to reflect those habits. And "They" will try to get you to buy something else. Again and again. All we will have that can't be changed are Memories."

"Nineteen Facts About the De-industrialization of America That Will Blow Your Mind" The Economic Collapse

Sept. 24, 2010, (<http://theeconomiccollapseblog.com/archives/19-facts-about-the-deindustrialization-of-america-that-will-blow-your-mind>)

The United States is rapidly becoming the very first "post-industrial" nation on the globe. [there was Gr.Br.!] All great economic empires eventually become fat and lazy and squander the great wealth that their forefathers have left them, but the pace at which America is accomplishing this is absolutely amazing.

It was America that was at the forefront of the industrial revolution. It was America that showed the world how to mass produce everything from automobiles to televisions to airplanes. It was the great American manufacturing base that crushed Germany and Japan in World War II.

But now we are witnessing the de-industrialization of America. Tens of thousands of factories have left the United States in the past decade alone. Millions upon millions of manufacturing jobs have been lost in the same time period. The United States has become a nation that consumes everything in sight and yet produces increasingly little. Do you know what our biggest export is today? Waste paper. Yes, trash is the number one thing that we ship out to the rest of the world as we voraciously blow our money on whatever the rest of the world wants to sell to us.

The United States has become bloated and spoiled and our economy is now just a shadow of what it once was. Once upon a time America could literally out produce the rest of the world combined. Today that is no longer true, but Americans sure do consume more than anyone else in the world. If the de-industrialization of America continues at this current pace, what possible kind of a future are we going to be leaving to our children? Any great nation throughout history has been great at making things. So if the United States continues to allow its manufacturing base to erode at a staggering pace how in the world can the U.S. continue to consider itself to be a great nation?

We have created the biggest debt bubble in the history of the world in an effort to maintain a very high standard of living, but the current state of affairs is not anywhere close to sustainable. Every single month America goes into more debt and every single month America gets poorer. So what happens when the debt bubble pops? The deindustrialization of the United States should be a top concern for every man, woman and child in the country. But sadly, most Americans do not have any idea what is going on around them.

For people like that, take this article and print it out and hand it to them. Perhaps what they will read below will shock them badly enough to awaken them from their slumber:

1. The United States has lost approximately 42,400 factories since 2001. About 75 percent of those factories employed over 500 people when they were still in operation.
2. Dell Inc., one of America 's largest manufacturers of computers, has announced plans to dramatically expand its operations in China with an investment of over \$100 billion over the next decade.
3. Dell has announced that it will be closing its last large U.S. manufacturing facility in Winston-Salem , North Carolina in November. Approximately 900 jobs will be lost.
4. In 2008, 1.2 billion cell phones were sold worldwide. So how many of them were manufactured inside the United States ? Zero.
5. According to a new study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute, if the U.S. trade deficit with China continues to increase at its current rate, the U.S. economy will lose over half a million jobs this year alone.
6. As of the end of July, the U.S. trade deficit with China had risen 18 percent compared to the same time period a year ago.
7. The United States has lost a total of about 5.5 million manufacturing jobs since Oct., 2000.
8. According to Tax Notes, between 1999 and 2008 employment at the foreign affiliates of U.S. parent companies increased an astounding 30 percent to 10.1 million. During that exact same time period, U.S. employment at American multinational corporations declined 8 percent to 21.1 million.
9. In 1959, manufacturing represented 28 percent of U.S. economic output. In 2008, it represented 11.5 percent.
10. Ford Motor Company recently announced the closure of a factory that produces the Ford Ranger in St. Paul, Minnesota. Approximately 750 good paying middle class jobs are going to be lost because making Ford Rangers in Minnesota does not fit in with Ford's new "global" manufacturing strategy.
11. As of the end of 2009, less than 12 million Americans worked in manufacturing. The last time less than 12 million Americans were employed in manufacturing was in 1941.
12. In the United States today, consumption accounts for 70 percent of GDP. Of this 70 percent, over half is spent on services.
13. The United States has lost a whopping 32 percent of its manufacturing jobs since the year 2000.
14. In 2001, the United States ranked fourth in the world in per capita broadband Internet use. Today it ranks 15th.
15. Manufacturing employment in the U.S. computer industry is actually lower in 2010 than it was in 1975.
16. Printed circuit boards are used in tens of thousands of different products. Asia now produces 84 percent of them worldwide.
17. The United States spends approximately \$3.90 on Chinese goods for every \$1 that the Chinese spend on goods from the United States.

18. One prominent economist is projecting that the Chinese economy will be three times larger than the U.S. economy by the year 2040.

19. The U.S. Census Bureau says that 43.6 million Americans are now living in poverty and according to them that is the highest number of poor Americans in the 51 years that records have been kept.

So how many tens of thousands more factories do we need to lose before we do something about it? How many millions more Americans are going to become unemployed before we all admit that we have a very, very serious problem on our hands? How many more trillions of dollars are going to leave the country before we realize that we are losing wealth at a pace that is killing our economy? How many once great manufacturing cities are going to become rotting war zones like Detroit before we understand that we are committing national economic suicide?

The de-industrialization of America is a national crisis. It needs to be treated like one. America is in deep, deep trouble folks. It is time to wake up.

20101210-01 17:09 SteveB Re: My Blog

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I did read your blog and loved it. I wish I were that ambitious! I'll certainly follow yours!

The big news is that Marci and I are moving back to the States for a while. We arrive in Miami on Dec. 31. I don't know where we're going to live for sure (probably Florida or Montana), while Marci pursues citizenship (because she is so patriotic haha), because it's the practical thing to do.

I can't wait to see my kids and grandkids and eat all the decadent foods I love. But, next week, we're taking a two-day, intensive class in just making salteñas, a special Bolivian empanada. Salteñas are a delicious pastry crust wrapped and baked around a spicy, or not so spicy, juicy chicken stew. They might make a good money-maker in the U.S.

20101211-01 16:09 Dennis "Don't Shoot the Messenger for Revealing Uncomfortable Truths"

Much has been written lately, amid a lot of authoritarian posturing, about WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. But what does Assange himself have to say?

"Don't Shoot the Messenger for Revealing Uncomfortable Truths" by Julian Assange

Dec. 7, 2010, (<http://www.dailypaul.com/151479/breaking-article-by-julian-assange-dont-shoot-messenger-for-revealing-uncomfortable-truths>)

(Wikileaks deserves protection, not threats and attacks.)

In 1958 a young Rupert Murdoch, then owner and editor of Adelaide's *The News*, wrote: "In the race between secrecy and truth, it seems inevitable that truth will always win."

His observation perhaps reflected his father Keith Murdoch's expose that Australian troops were being needlessly sacrificed by incompetent British commanders on the shores of Gallipoli. The British tried to shut him up but Keith Murdoch would not be silenced and his efforts led to the termination of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign. Nearly a century later, WikiLeaks is also fearlessly publishing facts that need to be made public.

I grew up in a Queensland country town where people spoke their minds bluntly. They distrusted big government as something that could be corrupted if not watched carefully. The dark days of corruption in the Queensland government before the Fitzgerald inquiry are testimony to what happens when the politicians gag the media from reporting the truth.

These things have stayed with me. WikiLeaks was created around these core values. The idea, conceived in Australia, was to use Internet technologies in new ways to report the truth.

WikiLeaks coined a new type of journalism: scientific journalism. We work with other media outlets to bring people the news, but also to prove it is true. Scientific journalism allows you to read a news story, then to click online to see the original document it is based on. That way you can judge for yourself: Is the story true? Did the journalist report it accurately?

Democratic societies need a strong media and WikiLeaks is part of that media. The media helps keep government honest. WikiLeaks has revealed some hard truths about the Iraq and Afghan wars, and broken stories about corporate corruption.

People have said I am anti-war: for the record, I am not. Sometimes nations need to go to war, and there are just wars. But there is nothing more wrong than a government lying to its people about those wars, then asking these same citizens to put their lives and their taxes on the line for those lies. If a war is justified, then tell the truth and the people will decide whether to support it.

If you have read any of the Afghan or Iraq war logs, any of the U.S. embassy cables or any of the stories about the things WikiLeaks has reported, consider how important it is for all media to be able to report these things freely.

WikiLeaks is not the only publisher of the U.S. embassy cables. Other media outlets, including Britain's The Guardian, The New York Times, El Pais in Spain and Der Spiegel in Germany have published the same redacted cables.

Yet it is WikiLeaks, as the coordinator of these other groups, that has copped the most vicious attacks and accusations from the U.S. government and its acolytes. I have been accused of treason, even though I am an Australian, not a U.S., citizen. There have been dozens of serious calls in the U.S. for me to be "taken out" by U.S. Special Forces. Sarah Palin says I should be "hunted down like Osama bin Laden", a Republican bill sits before the U.S. Senate seeking to have me declared a "transnational threat" and disposed of accordingly. An adviser to the Canadian Prime Minister's office has called on national television for me to be assassinated. An American blogger has called for my 20-year-old son, here in Australia, to be kidnapped and harmed for no other reason than to get at me.

And Australians should observe with no pride the disgraceful pandering to these sentiments by Julia Gillard and her government. The powers of the Australian government appear to be fully at the disposal of the U.S. as to whether to cancel my Australian passport, or to spy on or harass WikiLeaks supporters. The Australian Attorney-General is doing everything he can to help a U.S. investigation clearly directed at framing Australian citizens and shipping them to the U.S.

Prime Minister Gillard and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have not had a word of criticism for the other media organisations. That is because The Guardian, The New York Times and Der Spiegel are old and large, while WikiLeaks is as yet young and small.

We are the underdogs. The Gillard government is trying to shoot the messenger because it doesn't want the truth revealed, including information about its own diplomatic and political dealings. Has there been any response from the Australian government to the numerous public threats of violence against me and other WikiLeaks personnel? One might have thought an Australian prime minister would be defending her citizens against such things, but there have only been wholly unsubstantiated claims of illegality. The Prime Minister and especially the Attorney-General are meant to carry out their duties with dignity and above the fray. Rest assured, these two mean to save their own skins. They will not.

Every time WikiLeaks publishes the truth about abuses committed by U.S. agencies, Australian politicians chant a provably false chorus with the State Department: "You'll risk lives! National security! You'll endanger troops!" Then they say there is nothing of importance in what WikiLeaks publishes. It can't be both. Which is it?

It is neither. WikiLeaks has a four-year publishing history. During that time we have changed whole governments, but not a single person, as far as anyone is aware, has been harmed. But the U.S., with Australian government connivance, has killed thousands in the past few months alone.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates admitted in a letter to the U.S. Congress that no sensitive intelligence sources or methods had been compromised by the Afghan war logs disclosure. The Pentagon stated there was no evidence the WikiLeaks reports had led to anyone being harmed in Afghanistan. NATO in Kabul told CNN it couldn't find a single person who needed protecting. The Australian Department of Defence said the same. No Australian troops or sources have been hurt by anything we have published.

But our publications have been far from unimportant. The U.S. diplomatic cables reveal some startling facts:

- The U.S. asked its diplomats to steal personal human material and information from UN officials and human rights groups, including DNA, fingerprints, iris scans, credit card numbers, Internet passwords and ID photos, in violation of international treaties. Presumably Australian UN diplomats may be targeted, too.
- King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia asked the U.S. to attack Iran.
- Officials in Jordan and Bahrain want Iran's nuclear program stopped by any means available.
- Britain's Iraq inquiry was fixed to protect "U.S. interests".
- Sweden is a covert member of NATO and U.S. intelligence sharing is kept from parliament.
- The U.S. is playing hardball to get other countries to take freed detainees from Guantanamo Bay.
- Barack Obama agreed to meet the Slovenian President only if Slovenia took a prisoner.
- Our Pacific neighbour Kiribati was offered millions of dollars to accept detainees.

In its landmark ruling in the *Pentagon Papers* case, the U.S. Supreme Court said, "only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government". The swirling storm around WikiLeaks today reinforces the need to defend the right of all media to reveal the truth.

(Julian Assange is editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks.)

20101212-01	14:09	Pam	Re: My Blog
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Dear SteveB,

It must feel strange to be changing your life so drastically. There must be a lot to do to get ready. Your whole life sounds like one big adventure; I'm amazed you still have the gumption to persist. I admire that.

I dreamed last night that I met Obama and sort of took him under my wing. He was shaken by all the criticism aimed at him lately, and I literally held his hand and encouraged him to be strong. He looks like (back in real life now) he's aged ten years in two years. On a purely human level I feel for the man. He really is pretty young and he doesn't seem as seasoned as someone like, say, Ted Kennedy. I heard a piece on NPR (by James Fallows) that Obama and Bill Clinton gave a joint press conference or something the other day. Fallows said that while Clinton and Obama stood side by side and each spoke, Clinton looked stiff and awkward, but as soon as Obama left the room—without mingling—Clinton became his old affable, garrulous (don't know how to spell that and my dictionary is missing the g's) self. It's too bad Clinton screwed around. Except for the Kosovo mess, he was a pretty good President.

Now Newt Gingrich is gearing up again. I thought we'd seen the last of him. Lord knows what the new Republican Congress is going to put us through. I'm so fed up with rampant conservatism I can hardly stand it. If I were you, I'd settle in a liberal part of the country. I love where I live, but it is awfully conservative for my taste. At least we live in a liberal neighborhood

Good luck with your move. Do the Bolivians celebrate Christmas in a big way? I hope that despite all your trials and tribulations you have a very happy holiday. A new year, a new life—who knows what's next?

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20101212-02	14:36	Dennis	"Free Trade Doesn't Work: Interview with Economist Ian Fletcher"
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I think this article on the failure of free trade will be of interest to you guys:

"Free Trade Doesn't Work: Interview with Economist Ian Fletcher" by Michael Hughes, Huffington Post

Dec. 8, 2010, (<http://www.truth-out.org/free-trade-doesnt-work-interview-with-economist-ianfletcher65810>)

Free trade doesn't work, the global economy is a myth and the U.S. has been duped during trade negotiations for the past 40 years, according to Ian Fletcher, an adjunct fellow with the U.S. Business and Industry Council and author of *Free Trade Doesn't Work: What Should Replace It and Why*, who relayed these concepts to me in an exclusive interview.

During our exchange I discovered that Mr. Fletcher certainly is not opposed to capitalism, underlined by his experience working for hedge funds and private equity firms as an economist, but what he is opposed to are bad economic policies that have led to an ever-burgeoning U.S. trade deficit well on its way to hitting \$500 billion this year.

Michael Hughes: You argue that protectionism is more "American" than free trade. How would you respond to libertarian types who might see this as an assault on America's deeply-held capitalistic values?

Ian Fletcher: Libertarians simply don't know their history. Take out a \$10 bill and have a look at the portrait on it. Alexander Hamilton, founding father and intellectual architect of American capitalism, was a protectionist, and protectionism was American policy from Independence until after WWII. The reality is that a blend of government support for economic growth along with vigorous market-oriented competition has been the American tradition from the transcontinental railroad to the Internet. Entire industries like semiconductors and aircraft were effectively launched by Cold War military industrial policy. Is it an accident that nations, like China, that still do this sort of thing are cleaning our clock right now?

Hughes: You thoroughly and convincingly document, supported by countless inconvenient facts, how protectionism has been much more beneficial to the U.S. throughout history than free trade. If protectionism is clearly the better economic policy, why is the U.S. so resistant to change?

Ian Fletcher: The U.S. isn't totally resistant to change on this issue, and it is, in fact, changing. Since the late 1990s, one can trace public opinion and congressional majorities inexorably turning against "free" trade, which has really been a distinctive, off-shoring-focused approach to trade policy to benefit multinational corporate interests. Why has it taken so long? Corruption, both the obvious kind driven by campaign finance, and the subtler kind deriving from the laziness, complacency, and intellectual arrogance of economists.

The "American" multinationals, which are no longer American corporations but find this fiction convenient on Capitol Hill, and other free trade advocates have prevailed because a critical mass of American voters has not yet seen through the delusional economics of free trade, and because America can still borrow money abroad and sell off assets to cover its trade deficit. But this music is going to stop fairly soon.

Hughes: But doesn't foreign competition force U.S. corporations to become leaner and more productive?

Ian Fletcher: Sure, but I'm not against foreign competition. I'm not against trade either. I'm against free trade and the ersatz version thereof we are being subjected to, neither of which are the same thing as trade per se. Companies need enough competition to keep them on their toes, but not so much as to knock them off their feet. The U.S. color TV industry hasn't exactly been driven to heights of efficiency by foreign competition—because foreign competition killed it. And a lot of that competition wasn't free at all; it was subsidized by foreign nations seeking a foothold in strategic industries, i.e. those with a future.

Hughes: India's prime minister recently suggested off-shoring processes to India makes American corporations more productive overall. Is there any validity to this statement?

Ian Fletcher: This is a mirage created by the fact that if you offshore the low-productivity jobs from an American company, the jobs remaining in the U.S. will have, by definition, higher productivity—creating the illusion that the company is now more productive. But jobs have still been lost, and there is, pace laissez-faire economic theory, no guarantee that the workers who formerly held them will find new jobs of equal or greater value. What works on the level of the individual company is a net loss for the economy as a whole.

And it's erroneous to suppose that merely upgrading skill sets will be enough to protect American wages and employment levels if we do nothing to fix our employment situation. Educating people for jobs that don't exist because they've moved abroad will not magically cause jobs to come into existence.

Hughes: Which products should the U.S. target immediately for protectionist measures?

Ian Fletcher: I don't advocate industry-specific tariffs, which obviously could lead to all kinds of political mischief. I prefer a flat tariff. But if America imposed, say, a flat 30% tariff on all imports, this would tend to bring back to the U.S. high-value industries like producing flat-panel displays, not the cheap-labor stuff like T-shirts.

Hughes: Can China sustain its unprecedented growth through free trade, and what would happen to China if America woke up one day and became protectionist?

Ian Fletcher: Free trade does not even remotely characterize what China practices. China practices industrial policy and mercantilism, which are the systematic manipulation of the domestic economy and foreign trade to increase economic growth. Right now, the interests of China's ruling elite are far more closely aligned with the interests of the Chinese economy as a whole than in the U.S. China's elite wants to build up its own country; the American elite is quite happy to let America gradually decline so long as they can make investments and money overseas. At some point, America's ability to absorb China's trade surpluses will end, and it doesn't look like China can smoothly segue to satisfying domestic demand quickly enough. Their manufacturing base is set up to produce goods, like fax machines, pitched at the income levels of their trading partners, not their own people.

Hughes: Explain how free trade actually leads to artificial pricing (i.e., dubious assumption #2 in your book: "there are no externalities").

Ian Fletcher: An externality is a missing price tag. For example, this means that products produced in environmentally-harmful ways impose economic costs on the environment that ought to show up in their price and don't. To take another example, buying so many cheap imports that you kill off an entire domestic industry will deprive America's economy of the future value of that industry and everything that would have grown out of it. Because we lost the color TV industry, we've never had a flat screen TV industry either—but the cost of that wasn't factored into all those cheap color TVs in 1981.

Hughes: Countless jobs have been lost from corporations procuring parts, relocating or outsourcing entire manufacturing operations overseas. Why is manufacturing important to America?

Ian Fletcher: Because Americans want to consume manufactured goods, which means that either we must make them, or we must make something else to trade for them. And there just aren't enough other things we can offer the rest of the world, to keep them supplying us manufactured goods forever. Exporting soybeans and investment banking services just won't cut it; the numbers (which are easy to look up) aren't nearly big enough. Non-elite service-industry jobs are also much more productivity-constrained than manufacturing, so you're never going to be able to pay most people decent wages there.

20101214-01 07:29 SteveB Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"
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Dear Dennis,

Thanks for this. I liked it so well, I thought it deserved to be quoted (see below). Why does the right-wing press never publish anything like this? It's just economics, not politics...

What? Republicans don't want a thriving, vibrant economy for their grandchildren? They don't understand that a large middle class helps the rich too? That a prosperous America is a better place to live than a Third World America, even for the rich and super-rich? That only farming, mining (incl. drilling), and manufacturing generate wealth? That it can never be in the strategic interest of any country to export its manufacturing and jobs to other countries?

To do so is suicidal!

China, on the other hand, is very protectionist. And why shouldn't they be? They act in their own self-interest. This is rational.

Only America seems to have lost the realization of what its self-interest is and must be—America for all! Just, please, not at the cost of sticking our heads in the sand like we used to do...provincial America, ignoring the rest of the world.

We should be doing exactly what China and India and other countries are doing...protecting and nourishing our industries, educating our children well in foreign languages, science, business, and creative problem solving, then going out there and trying to win this new Cold War with our ingenuity and manufacturing might, because only that can give us any future prosperity.

[20101214-02](#) 07:37 GaryC Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"

Dear SteveB,

Are you leaving Bolivia? I assume you are headed to the worker's paradise of Cuba, Yemen or Venezuela! What's up?

[20101214-03](#) 08:52 Charis Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"

Dear Dennis and SteveB,

The author's right that exporting our jobs to countries like India is a mistake because there is no guarantee Americans who lose those jobs will find other jobs. But there's another point he didn't happen to mention. Americans used to be very hard working and considered any job honorable as long as a person was working. Now Americans have gotten too high-falutin' for manual labor and with millions of people out of work, those jobs are still being given to foreigners, many of them illegals, not because there aren't Americans to fill them, but because Americans consider those jobs to be beneath them.

[20101214-04](#) 18:00 SteveB Re: "Don't Shoot the Messenger for Revealing Uncomfortable Truths"

"In its landmark ruling in the Pentagon Papers case, the U.S. Supreme Court said, 'Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.' The swirling storm around WikiLeaks today reinforces the need to defend the right of all media to reveal the truth." —Julian Assange, editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks.

[20101214-05](#) 18:45 SteveB Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work" Travel

Dear GaryC,

Well, it's kind of a long story, but I'll tell the short version. I had found the ideal location for my restaurant. My lawyer and I worked quite some time on the contract with the landlord, who assured me the whole time that it was essentially a done deal. We agreed on everything and even got along great (he owns a bar where they salsa and do Cuban music and dancing and rum all night long on weekends). Then things broke down and it became a family thing with the guy's father really the owner and deciding to rent the place to a relative. They finally opened and are failing miserably. After that, we kept looking at other places, but nothing was quite right. I have a very definite business plan for this place (actually a couple of alternatives), but location and facility need to fit definite specs, so to speak.

So, anyway, I was going to stay here and run the restaurant while my wife, Marcela, headed back to the States at the end of this month to finish up her U.S. citizenship stuff. That could take as long as 3-6 month. I'm embarked on the same citizenship path down here in Bolivia. As you know, visas can get expensive and a hassle, so we're doing what we have to do to travel back and forth more easily.

But now, without the restaurant to occupy me, I have not so much to do and I miss my White Castles, so I'm coming with Marci to spend a little time back in Dixie or the U.S.S.R. or whatever. Will spend a while with my daughters and grandkids in Florida, then try to visit with as many old friends as possible and my brothers on the way to, probably, Montana for a while.

Then back to Bolivia. It will be time to buy and sell cattle again. I love helping the cowboys drive them into town to the market, a long, perilous journey down a tiny dirt road, across two rivers, but I do it from a pick-up, not horseback. Can you even imagine what it would feel like after being on a horse most of the time for 10-12 hours?

Also hoping that, by that time, the local cocaine boom will have settled down a little so we can get the restaurant started up. Right now there's so much construction going on in this city that they've run out of cement and can't import enough, so much of the construction has come to a screeching halt as concrete is rationed out to, probably, whoever bribes somebody the most. About all they build here anymore are reinforced concrete towers about 20-30 floors, so the concrete is sort of essential. Wood is never used except for a few special insect-proof jungle woods that are used decoratively more than anything. Everything else is mortar and bricks or ceramic bricks or tile, so the cement is sort of necessary. Sure wish I had some stock in the local cement industry.

Take care. May you and yours have a great Christmas! Would love to see you when we pass through God's Country, otherwise known as Indiana.

20101215-01 06:38 SteveB Re: U.S. Photos: 1935-1939

Dear Jim,

Thank you for this. The photos not only remind me of how lucky most of us are, but also make me think of how many millions of jobless people may be headed for the same scenario because those jobs simply don't exist in the U.S. anymore. The fat cats have moved them to China.

When I was a young boy, we lived close to the New York Central tracks outside Greencastle. I can remember, even in the early '50's, many desperate, homeless people who still traveled by rail. Often, they would appear at our door for a handout. My parents were always careful and distrustful of these folks. We kids were certainly never allowed to be alone with them, but we always gave them something to eat and drink before they continued on their journey to who knows where. My mother was always gentle and sympathetic with them, even through her distrust.

I pray we never see again in America what we saw then and what I commonly see in my Third World travels, but I have become less hopeful with time.

20101215-02 17:48 Dennis "Tax Cuts Simply Do Not Create Jobs"

Okay, business geniuses, if this doesn't make sense, let me know why....

"Tax Cuts Simply Do Not Create Jobs" by Larry Beinhart, AlterNet

Dec. 14, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/149201/>)

MYTH #1: Tax cuts create jobs. Tax increases cost jobs.

All Republican politicians, and many Democratic ones as well, make the claim that tax increases will prevent small business people from hiring. Indeed, it may force them to fire people.

Alright, we expect politicians to say loony things.

But we have a right to expect reporters to break out in hysterical laughter, economists to call their nearest media outlet to say how ridiculous that is, and competing politicians to explain why they're wrong. That doesn't happen. And that's the weird part. Because it's pretty simple.

Let's do some basic economics. Real basic. Taxes are not paid on revenue. Taxes are paid on profits. Profits are revenues minus costs. Labor is a cost.

Let's imagine a small business. For the sake of simplicity, let's say it's a personal business, not a corporation. It has gross revenues of \$10,000,000 a year. It has one hundred employees. They each make about the median income, about \$35,000 a year. So they have a payroll of \$3,500,000.

All its other expenses come to \$5,000,000 a year. This includes all the things it buys to make whatever it sells, rent, utilities, shipping, legal, accounting, etc., etc., and so forth. That leaves a profit of \$1,500,000 a year.

Let's look at a very high tax situation. Taxes on everything over a million dollars a year is 90%. (The rate from WWII until 1964) So, on the final half million of my profits, I have to give the government \$450,000, leaving just \$50,000.

If I add ten employees at \$35,000 each, that costs me \$350,000. Those are costs, deducted from revenues, decreasing profits. Do I want to do that? I would only have kept \$35,000 of that \$350,000 anyway. You bet I want to do it. I get to add ten employees at a cost—to me—of just \$35,000. Or \$3,500 per employee. I get more production, more territories, more sales. My business grows. Indeed, the whole community benefits.

Let's look at a much lower tax situation. Say 30% (just 1% lower than what we have now.) We'll assume the same business, same employees, same costs and profits.

Let's say I'm approached by a factory in China. For simplicity's sake, let's say that even with shipping and other ancillary costs, I can cut fifty jobs and walk away with half their salaries as profits. Fifty employees cost me \$1,750,000. Half of that is \$875,000. After taxes (30%), I keep \$612,000. That's worth doing. I'm a bit tired of Chinese villains.

Let's say that by increasing hours, decreasing benefits, firing older workers, hiring new workers at a lower pay scale and a variety of other maneuvers, I can decrease my costs by the equivalent of ten employees. That's \$350,000. At a 90% tax rate I only keep \$35,000. Not chump change. But balanced against continuity, happiness, and efficiency in my company and the likelihood that it will grow my business, I'm likely to keep my people. At a 30% tax rate I keep \$245,000. I'll jump on it.

In any debate on taxes and their effect on business, keep in mind that taxes are only paid on profits. Costs are counted against profits. High taxes are, therefore, an inducement to invest (create deductible costs). Labor is a cost. High taxes are, therefore, an inducement to hire people. Not, of course, at random, but people who will grow the business and increase the value of the business.

Low taxes are an inducement to reduce costs—at whatever cost—and take profits. We currently have low taxes. If the theoretical model above is correct, the result should be high unemployment and high corporate profits. Moreover, profits that are retained. That are not reinvested. Except to purchase other companies. Which is exactly what we have.

20101216-01	06:26	SteveB	"A Few Things You Should Know About Minimum Wage"
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Below is another example of Republican attempts to destroy American workers. How do these crazy idiots get any votes at all? Only through lies, manipulation, and corruption. As we discussed before the election in terms of the Tea Party, why would anybody but the super-rich or the super-stupid vote Republican, since to do so (if you ain't super-rich) is to vote against your own self-interest?

["A Few Things You Should Know About Minimum Wage" by Kaitlin Madden, The Work Buzz, CareerBuilder.com](#)

Nov 1, 2010, (<http://www.theworkbuzz.com/news/pop-culture/current-affairs/a-few-things-you-should-know-about-minimum-wage/>)

The principle of the minimum wage comes with an inherent debate: Some argue that it contributes to an increased unemployment rate; others say that the minimum wage is crucial in keeping poverty levels low. It's a debate that's been going on since the establishment of a federal unemployment rate in the 1930s, but it has become even more relevant during these difficult economic times.

Many economists now argue that eliminating the minimum wage would allow cash-strapped companies to create more jobs. While this side of the argument does raise logical points, an article by *The New York Times* highlighted a recent study that makes a strong case for the opposite.

The study, called "Minimum Wage Effects Across State Borders: Estimates Using Contiguous Counties" not only found that the minimum wage has virtually no effect on employment levels of low-wage jobs, but that it also successfully increases the standard of living for workers in low-paying industries like food service and retail.

The research was conducted by economists at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of California at Berkeley, who analyzed 16 years of employment data for low-wage workers. Full results of the study can be read here:

https://udrive.oit.umass.edu/folbre/REST_a_00039-Dube_proof2.pdf.

Though the study presents interesting information, it's especially compelling given the recent midterm elections, which could have an impact on both the minimum wage and employment. Here are a few things to keep in mind about the minimum wage:

- Historically, the Democratic Party has proposed increases to the minimum wage, while the Republican Party has been in favor of capping or eliminating the minimum wage.
- According to the 2000 Census, there are more than 10 million minimum-wage workers in the U.S.
- In 2006, nearly half of surveyed economists said the minimum wage should be abolished. Only one-third said it should be increased.
- Washington state has the highest minimum wage, at \$8.55, followed by Oregon, at \$8.40.
- In Jan., 2011, the minimum wage in San Francisco will be raised to \$9.92. San Francisco also has one of the nation's highest costs of living.
- Five states in the U.S. have no minimum-wage requirement: Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee.
- Working a job at the current federal minimum wage, \$7.25, for 40 hours per week, all 52 weeks of the year produces an annual, pre-tax income of \$15,080. If about one-third of that income is paid in taxes and benefits, net annual income becomes \$10,556.
- In Oklahoma City, the major U.S. metropolitan area with the lowest average housing costs, one year of rent averages \$8,676.
- The poverty line for a family of four is an annual income of \$22,050.

20101216-02	10:29	SteveB	Re: "Free Trade Doesn't Work"
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Dear Charis,

I've been thinking about your points and find that I cannot agree with your point about American workers.

I have been lucky enough to work with lower level workers in many industries and businesses, from many countries, both abroad and in the U.S. You'd be amazed how many Polish, Eastern European, Russian, German, Latin American, Chinese, and other workers they have in and around Chicago whose expat communities are so large that they need to learn very little English.

I have always found American workers to be at least as good, hard working, and dedicated as any workers in the world. Bar none!

I believe the problem is related to the little article I've quoted below. We Americans all grew up, not expecting a hand-out or an easy life, but a life at least as good, if not better, than had already been achieved by our parents. That's the American way. It always has been. And there was no reason American jobs had to be destroyed. There was no good reason why our government had to sell us down the river and our good jobs too. No reason except greed and evil.

Now look at America. The article, I think, actually vastly understates the problem. Most people making minimum wage don't even have the option of working 40-hour weeks...they're stuck with part-time work at even less than minimum wage, which only applies to full-time workers. And all these workers are counted by the government as "employed". What B.S.!

I don't blame workers for being discouraged. Why work or have a good attitude about a job that leaves you essentially homeless? Maybe some Mexicans can have a better attitude because they can get by living in garages with 16 other families. If American workers have trouble doing this, I don't blame them. I swear I wouldn't do it either. I will not work rather than work for what is, in reality, nothing! We Americans expect better than this. The world seems to expect better than this. We did not expect our government and our businesses to fail so utterly to protect our best interests. I believe this was a reasonable expectation. What a tragedy, but don't blame American workers...the best workers in the world! Blame the greed and short-sightedness of the rich and powerful!

20101220-01	11:38	Dennis	"Glenn Beck Book Tour Makes Bizarre Visit to Heartland America"
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Beck certainly knows how to fleece the gullible to get his piece of the pie....

"Glenn Beck Book Tour Makes Bizarre Visit to Heartland America" by Nina Berman, AlterNet

Dec. 19, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/149257/>)

Peddling a book called *Broke* in a city busted through and through, Glenn Beck rolled into Wilmington, Ohio last week to gleefully proclaim miracles.

Styling himself as a real-life Santa Claus, Beck promised the city a celebrity stimulus surge. He would host live shows at a downtown theater, charging people \$125 a ticket and \$500 for breakfast meet-and-greet. Up to 20,000 people would come, and what was left in their pockets would be spent on Main Street, buying chocolate chip cookies, Tupperware and homemade handbags.

Maybe it was the cold weather. Maybe Beck overestimates his appeal. The anticipated 20,000 topped off at about 3,000, according to police. And while there was a buzz on Main Street, particularly in the bookstore where Beck signed copies of *Broke*, what was startling about his visit to Wilmington, a city with nearly 16 percent unemployment, was how many people either didn't know who he was ("Beck, you mean the guitarist?"), or didn't care ("I'm not seeing his show, he's just a man, not a God.").

Accompanied by an entourage of young male assistants, Beck was a charmer in person, doughy, approachable and eager to please, dressed in jeans and an upscale Loro Piana scarf. Most of the face time required a fee, either \$500 for a photo with him at breakfast, a \$125 ticket to one of his shows, or \$30 for a book that came with a prayer if asked. He spoke at one free evening event on an outdoor stage and by that time, the local police were treating him more like a candidate than an entertainer, with barricades and no-go zones.

In Beck's eyes, the 12,000-strong Wilmington is a shining example of the righteousness of his own conservative narrative. He describes the town as a place too proud to accept federal stimulus or government handouts even after losing thousands of jobs when the DHL distribution hub closed in 2008. On his Nov. 22 radio broadcast he said, "This town hasn't taken any money from the government. They don't want any money from the government." During his visit he described Wilmington as "going through liberating strife," which sounds a little like Rumsfeld's "freedom can be messy."

The problem is that none of it is true. The non-partisan Politifact.com gave Beck's depiction of Wilmington a "pants on fire" rating. In fact, Wilmington has received more than \$13 million in a variety of federal funds since a Bush-era 2008 emergency job training allocation. The very theater where Beck performed just received a \$250,000 federal grant to help renovate a heating system and leaky roof. The grant was secured by Republican Congressman Mike Turner, a frequent critic of federal handouts—he voted against the federal stimulus package—and an author of HR 57, the "Preserving Capitalism in America Amendment," which would give permanent constitutional protection to American free enterprise.

Beck follows a path of media stars who have adopted Wilmington as the little town that could. Comedian Jay Leno gave a free performance there during his 2009 Comedy Stimulus tour. The same year, celebrity chef Rachel Ray cooked

Thanksgiving dinner for 2,000 people and donated a year's food supply and a brand-new kitchen to Sugartree Ministries, the local soup kitchen that feeds 150 people a day. But only Beck had the entrepreneurial spirit to mix good old capitalist greed with Christian charity, hawking his book and charging admission. To be fair, Beck claims that net proceeds of his Wilmington shows will go to local charities but no figures were made public and he never said he would forgo his own fee. The bookstore that sold 800 *Broke* titles also touted the event as charity, but it was coming from their end, not from Beck or the publisher.

In person, Beck comes off as a caring person, all smiles, handshakes, head nods and an understanding ear. He even acknowledges that the poor and destitute at times require assistance. Recently, he has cultivated the persona of a small town baker, donning a white apron over his suit, with the words "I'm a baker not a divider." According to Beck, the nation has been beaten down by communists and socialists* who have robbed Americans of their can-do spirit. We are a nation full of people scrounging around for pieces of pie, leftover from the one federal pie offered us. As a result, we've gotten lazy, we've become beggars waiting for handouts. "Some people need help, that's where charity comes in, but the vast majority of us, get off your a*s and bake some pie."

*Beck must be referring here to the communists and socialists at the Fed, Goldman Sachs and Citibank.

20101220-02	12:09	Dennis	"Getting to the Truth About Taxes and Public Spending"
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Okay right-wingers, repudiate these facts!

"Getting to the Truth About Taxes and Public Spending" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Dec. 19, 2010, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/149265/>)

It's difficult to know where to begin deconstructing conservative rhetoric on taxes and spending. It's such a central part of their worldview, and yet it's a view informed by a whole slew of falsehoods that have been repeated again and again during this year's debates over the Bush tax cuts, public spending and the deficit.

What follows are nine of the biggest fact-free whoppers that conservatives insist are true:

1. Cutting Taxes Leads to More Money for the Government

Conservatives can't say they oppose popular programs on ideological grounds, and they can't admit they're happy to run up huge budget deficits, so they've come up with the fiction that cutting taxes actually brings in more revenues to finance the public sector.

What's especially brazen about this is that it's usually preceded by debate-stifling phrases such as "as everyone knows," "history shows us" or "every single time taxes have been cut."

In 2007, Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, said, "Tax cuts, starting with Kennedy, as we all know, increase revenues"; Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson, R-Texas, claimed that "Every major tax cut we've had in history has created more revenue," and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-KY said earlier this year that the myth represented "the view of virtually every Republican on that subject."

It's also complete nonsense, and it's worth noting that only conservative politicians and pundits make the claim—economists across the ideological spectrum agree that the argument is cursed by voodoo math.

As *Time* Magazine's Justin Fox noted in 2007, "Every economics Ph.D. who has worked in a prominent role in the Bush administration acknowledges that the tax cuts enacted during the past six years have not paid for themselves—and were never intended to." Harvard professor Greg Mankiw, a former chairman of Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, dedicated a whole section of his economics textbook to debunking the claim.

And in an opinion column in the *Wall Street Journal* responding to Bush's claim that "You cut taxes, and the tax revenues increase," Andrew Samwick, who served as chief economist on Bush's Council of Economic Advisers, wrote, "You are smart people....You know that the tax cuts have not fueled record revenues... You know that the first order effect of cutting taxes is to lower tax revenues."

2. Conservatives' Favorite Economist Proves the Point

As I note in my book, *The Fifteen Biggest Lies About the Economy*, that falsehood is based in large part on an abuse of "Laffer's curve," the conservative media's favorite economic theorem. The idea, first scribbled on a cocktail napkin by economist George Laffer (according to lore), is pretty simple. It holds that you can raise income taxes to a degree, but when the top tax rate exceeds a certain point, people will go to such extraordinary lengths to avoid paying the piper that the government will actually end up collecting less revenue.

When Dylan Thomas asked a number of experts where the Laffer Curve "bends" for the *Washington Post*, the economists (he asked some conservative opinion columnists as well) all agreed that a top rate of 50 percent—several went as high as 70 percent—would still fall below the curve. That's important to keep in mind as we debate the merits of letting the top rate return to the 39 percent that prevailed during the Clinton years.

Each time taxes have been cut in the past few decades, it's led to a drop in revenues, which is why people like McCain like to go back to the Kennedy era, when cutting the top rate did spur growth and bring more money into the government's coffers. What they don't mention is that Kennedy cut the top rate from 91 percent to 70 percent, which has no bearing on the debate we're having today. (The "Kennedy tax cuts" were signed into law by Johnson, a year after JFK's assassination.)

3. Taxes on the Rich Keep 'Wealth Producers' from 'Creating Jobs'

We're all familiar with this one. In a New York Post column last week, Fox Business columnist Charles Gasparino claimed that businesses have "been hoarding cash instead of hiring" because of "the likelihood for higher taxes." Media Matters responded by citing the CBO's finding that "Increasing the after-tax income of businesses typically does not create much incentive" to hire.

What's noteworthy about the narrative is the degree to which it defies simple common sense. It shouldn't be a matter of debate that only one thing creates jobs, and that's demand for companies' goods and services. The idea that a business that was booming would refuse to hire people and forego expansion because top tax rates might nudge upward is as silly as the idea that a business that has no customers would add new employees because its owners expect taxes to be low.

4. The Opposite: Tax Cuts for Upper Earners Spur Job Growth

Demand creates jobs, and U.S. Demand is way down because American households lost around \$15 trillion dollars in wealth during the downturn. So it's important to note that research has shown that when you give a tax break to high-earners, they bank it, and when you give relief to working people, they spend it, increasing demand.

Like other types of public spending, giving cuts to those at the top does stimulate the economy, but very, very badly. According Mark Zandi, chief economist for Moody's, a dollar in tax cuts on capital gains adds .38 cents of economic growth and a dollar in corporate tax cuts brings us just .30 cents worth of stimulus, but a dollar in unemployment benefits gives the economy a boost of \$1.63 and a buck worth of food stamps adds \$1.73 in stimulus.

5. Only Half of American Families Pay Taxes

Rush Limbaugh put it this way: "The bottom 50 percent is paying a tiny bit of the taxes.... Remember this the next time you hear the 'tax cuts for the rich' business. Understand that the so-called rich are about the only ones paying taxes anymore."

That's an entirely false narrative that emerges from some rather transparent sleight-of-hand. You have to look at the federal income tax in isolation and then pretend that it represents the government's entire take. But the reality is that the government isn't financed from federal income taxes alone—far from it. Payroll taxes, for example, represent the biggest tax bite for the average worker.

When you add it all up—state and local taxes, federal taxes, sales taxes and excise fees—it turns out that the rich, the poor, and those in between all end up with about the same tax rate. That's the conclusion of a 2007

study by Boston University economists Laurence J. Kotlikoff and David Rapson. They summarized, "The average marginal tax rate on incomes between \$20,000 and \$500,000 is 40.3%, the median tax rate is 41.8%, and the standard deviation of all of those rates is 5.3 percentage points. Basically, most of us pay about 40%, plus or minus 5.3 percentage points."

6. Americans Are Taxed to Death

This is one of those claims made so frequently that it becomes a matter of faith. But faith doesn't rely on fact, and this one is totally untrue. In 2008, we ranked 26th out of the 30 countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in terms of our overall tax burden—the share of our economy we fork over to the government. The U.S. came in almost 9 percentage points below the average of the group of wealthy nations, and some 20 percentage points below highly taxed countries like Denmark.

7. We're Being Killed by Runaway Government Spending

Public spending has increased with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and, temporarily, with the stimulus package. And it will rise in the future as more baby boomers retire. But beyond that, it's important to understand how "limited" our government really is relative to other wealthy countries.

Sabina Dewan and Michael Ettlinger of the Center for American Progress crunched the data and found that between 2004 and 2007, the U.S. ranked 24th out of 26 OECD countries in overall government spending as a share of our economic output. Only Ireland and South Korea, both relative newcomers to the club, had a more "limited government" than we did during that span. Again, we came in around 7 percentage points of GDP below the OECD average—and almost 20 percentage points beneath that of big spenders like France.

8. Conservatives Favor Low Taxes and Limited Government

The Right loves "Big Government" as long as it's pursuing their preferred agenda. What they don't like are the government's most popular functions—assuring a social safety net, protecting consumers and the environment, subsidizing education, etc. They don't want to debate priorities, so they claim an ideological preference for a smaller government while showering tons of money on the military, law enforcement, corporate subsidies, etc.

That's why the share of the economy represented by government spending (at the local, state, and federal levels combined) has been remarkably consistent during the last 40 years or so, regardless of which party controlled the White House or Congress.

In the two years that Gerald Ford presented budgets, government spending as a share of GDP averaged 31.4 percent; in ultra-liberal Jimmy Carter's four years, it dropped to 30.7 percent; Ronald Reagan, the patron saint of fiscal conservatism, came into office, and it rose to 32.2 percent. It nudged slightly higher during the first George Bush's term in office, then dropped to an almost Nixonian 30.3 percent during the Clinton years, before rising to 31.6 percent during the second Bush administration.

Looking at the other side of the ledger, overall government revenues have also remained relatively stable, but the pattern is reversed. The government's take, as a share of GDP, dropped during the Ford era, rose again under Carter, and fell again under Reagan. Revenues rose by almost 2 percent under Clinton and fell by a percent and a half under George W. Bush. (The only exception: government revenues rose from 27.3 percent of GDP during the Reagan years to 27.6 percent under George Herbert Walker Bush—that was the "peace dividend.")

Although the government taxes and spends at fairly similar rates, under Republican leadership the nation shells out a bit more for government services and takes in just a bit less in taxes. With a \$15 trillion economy, those little differences add up to pretty big deficits, and this, rather than hot school lunches for poor kids, is responsible for a large chunk of our federal debt.

Given that reality, it's a wonder that conservatives have managed to convince the mainstream media and much of the country that they're the fiscally responsible ones who are always ready to step in and clean up the nation's budgetary mess.

9. Taxes on Top Earners Are Actually Taxes on 'Small Businesses'

For years, Republicans have pushed the spin that most of the Bush cuts for the highest earners were going to "small business owners," the proverbial lifeblood of Small Town U.S.A. Then Republican national committee chair Ed Gillespie launched the meme in a 2003 speech, saying that "80% of the tax relief for upper income filers goes to small businesses."

Fact-check.org, the nonpartisan campaign watchdog, looked at the claim, which was cooked up by GOP staffers on the House Economic Committee, and concluded that "it's untrue—and a classic example of a statistical distortion gone amok." The lie is pretty simple: around 80 percent of the wealthiest Americans report some business income on their tax returns, either from private partnerships (think big law firms) or from "hobby" businesses. And the GOP committee counted everyone who reported even a dollar on Schedule C of their returns as a "small business owner."

The reality? Less than 2 percent of tax returns reporting small-business income are filed by people in the top two income brackets. As a Washington Post analysis concluded, "If the objective is to help small businesses, continuing the Bush tax cuts on high-income taxpayers isn't the way to go—it would miss more than 98 percent of small-business owners and would primarily help people who don't make most of their money off those businesses."

20101220-03 19:12 Dennis Excerpt: *Make Members of Congress Wear NASCAR Patches*

Corporate control of government...

Here's an excellent article by a small business entrepreneur on the.....Corporate Control of Government....and includes a rundown on the huge number of corporate lobbyists and the corporations that pay them huge amounts of money, as well as what Americans can do about being screwed by America's six big banks.

Lots of good stuff and well worth reading.

from *Make Members of Congress Wear NASCAR Patches*, by: Thom Hartmann, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, book excerpt

June 23, 2011, (<http://www.truth-out.org/make-members-congress-wear-nascar-patches/1308863083>)

The liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it comes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism—ownership of government by an individual, by a group.—Franklin D. Roosevelt

I started my first business at the age of 17 with \$25. I paid that amount to rent a shelf in a head shop (which sold mostly pipes, bongs, and cigarette papers) across the street from Michigan State University in East Lansing. The shelf had a sign: "The Electronics Joint—leave your stereo or TV here for repair, and we'll return it fixed within a week. Free estimate of charges before work is done." The guy who ran the head shop managed the shelf for 10 percent of our revenues plus the \$25-per-month shelf rental; within two years the venture had grown to include five employees, and we moved into our own storefront down the street.

As the business grew, however, I didn't manage it wisely and ended up about \$3,000 in debt, which was a lot of money in 1968 for a part-time student and part-time DJ. Ultimately, I had to shut the company down and go to work full-time as a radio DJ.

That didn't turn out so well either. I got fired when I played two black female artists back-to-back, a violation of station policy at the time, and then refused to promise to never do it again. With my unemployment check, I bought some herbs at a local General Nutrition Center store and started an herbal tea company—Woodley Herber—that grew over the next six years to having 19 employees. One of our products that contained ginseng (which was then hot as an aphrodisiac) was picked up by Larry Flynt to market through his brand-new magazine, *Hustler*, making him a million bucks and turning a nice profit for my partner and me. Louise and I sold our half of that company to our employees in 1978 to move to New Hampshire and start a community for abused kids.

We wiped out our savings buying land for the children's village and living for almost five years on a salary of \$25 per week.* I still had an American Express Platinum Card, a leftover from the prosperous Woodley Herber days, so in 1983, with a \$10,000 (or was it \$15,000?) line of credit and some income from writing for a few magazines (I was contributing editor to seven of them that year), Louise and I moved to Atlanta and opened International Wholesale Travel and its retail operation Sprayberry Travel. That turned out to be quite a success. Within three years we'd marketed the company to the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* and had about \$6 million in annual revenues, so we sold the company in 1986 to retire to Germany for a year to do volunteer work for the international relief agency Salem International.

We moved back to Atlanta in 1987 and used about \$50,000 we had left from selling the travel company to start an advertising agency, The Newsletter Factory, which quickly grew to generating several million dollars a year in revenue and had about 20 employees. We sold that business to our employees on a seven-year buyout in 1996 and retired to the backwoods of Vermont to write books and enjoy life.

All of this is a way of saying that I am a somewhat typical "serial entrepreneur," and fortunately we have a lot of them in America. They are generally middle-class people (my dad worked in a tool-and-die shop for 40 years, and my mom was a full-time homemaker with four sons), they generally do not have an inheritance or family money to draw on, and yet they spend their lives pursuing the American Dream.

I have never relied on a member of Congress or a government agency to do me a favor or bend the rules. I have never given campaign contributions to politicians in hopes of getting favors that would help my business. I have never hired a lobbyist to try to amend laws that would serve my financial interest. And this is generally true of *all* the hundreds of thousands of sole proprietors and partnerships and small businesses across America.

But that is not how big-time corporate America operates. To them making large campaign contributions and spending millions of dollars each year on lobbyists is just another investment that pays off handsomely. Their motto (in behavior, if not in fact) is *You've got to pay to play*.

This flood of corporate money and influence in our government makes for a decidedly uneven playing field for businesses as well as taints and corrupts our government. Unfortunately, the trend is moving in the direction of allowing even more money to encroach into our politics, thanks to the Supreme Court. The absolutely necessary solution here is to bring honesty and transparency to our politics.

"Capital" Hill

Tom DeLay famously (and apparently illegally—as of this writing he's managed to keep postponing his trial for years) took all sorts of goodies from lobbyists when he was a Republican leader in the House of Representatives, ranging from campaign contributions to a golf trip to St. Andrews in Scotland, the (incredibly expensive) "home" of the sport. His major patron was Jack Abramoff, lobbyist, businessman, head of conservative organizations—and criminal, sentenced to prison for felonies related to defrauding Indian tribes and plying politicians with gifts in exchange for political favors.

DeLay even went beyond just taking money and favors from lobbyists. He famously told lobbying firms on K Street in Washington, D.C., that they shouldn't even bother to show up at his office looking for favors if they had any Democrats working in their offices. In 2005, DeLay was charged with violations of campaign finance laws and money laundering, while two of his former aides were convicted in the Abramoff scandal.

Similarly, former Republican senator Phil Gramm took a few million dollars over the years (and his wife, on Enron's board of directors, took somewhere between \$900,000 and \$2 million) from the financial services and energy industries. And then, while still a senator, he slipped into the must-pass 2000 omnibus spending bill a sweet little feature, the 262-page Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 (CFMA), which came to be known as the "Enron loophole."

The CFMA allowed Enron to squeeze an estimated *\$40 billion* out of California consumers, creating an energy crisis in the state in 2000 and 2001 and a political crisis for Governor Gray Davis that led to his replacement in 2003 by Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger (nominated for the job after he had a private and largely secret meeting with Enron CEO Ken Lay). It also opened the doors for Wall Street to use the new law to "create" what they called "new financial instruments" like credit default swaps, leading directly to the near-worldwide crash of the banking system in 2008.

After leaving Congress, Gramm followed in the footsteps of more than 100 of his colleagues in the past three decades and became a lobbyist himself in 2002, immediately going to work for UBS, a massive Swiss bank that is the world's second-largest manager of "wealth assets." In 2009, UBS was accused of helping American millionaires and billionaires

evade taxes. The IRS filed a lawsuit in Feb., 2009 alleging that 52,000 Americans secretly held up to \$14.8 billion in accounts at UBS to avoid paying U.S. income taxes¹.

As the cases of DeLay and Gramm show (and there are hundreds of similar congressional examples), for major corporations and very rich individuals and families, national or international, campaign contributions and lobbying do produce healthy returns. Invest a few million, make a few billion. Putting money into the careers of members of Congress, past or present, it turns out, is among the most consistently lucrative investments in the world.

As I noted in my book *Unequal Protection*, as of 2009 there were roughly 64 registered lobbyists for every member of Congress—more than 34,750 in total—and 138 of them are former members of Congress. Include state lobbyists, and there are more than 60,000 (because of variations in state laws on what is or isn't a lobbyist, and who and how they should register, this may well be a significant underestimate: nobody really knows the true number).²

Senator Bernie Sanders noted on my radio show during the Senate debates on financial services industry regulation that the banking industry was spending more than \$1 million per day on lobbying and had hired more than 250 former members of Congress to lobby their peers, including people who had previously been considered to have highly ethical and spotless reputations like former Democratic presidential candidate Dick Gephardt.

As Jeffrey H. Birnbaum noted in the *Washington Post* in June 2005, "The number of registered lobbyists in Washington has more than doubled since 2000 to more than 34,750 while the amount that lobbyists charge their new clients has increased by as much as 100 percent. Only a few other businesses have enjoyed greater prosperity in an otherwise fitful economy." He added that "lobbying firms can't hire people fast enough" and that salaries *started* at \$300,000 per year. "Big bucks lobbying is luring nearly half of all lawmakers who return to the private sector when they leave Congress," Birnbaum noted, citing a study by Public Citizen's Congress Watch.³ The situation has only gotten worse since then.

From Lobbying to Regulating—Another Way Corporations Control Government

One of the primary goals of lobbyists is to affect legislation—introduce new bills or amendments, slip in key provisions, kill bills, and so on. But just as important is to affect regulations being considered by myriad federal agencies that could have huge financial impacts on the lobbyists' corporate clients. So when the lobbyists have friends in the White House, as they did with George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, they actually get to take over the regulatory agencies through appointments.

A Rogues' Gallery

During the Bush Jr. administration, more than a hundred very well paid lobbyists decided to forsake their big incomes for relatively paltry civil service paychecks for a year or two to become the actual regulators of the agencies they used to lobby.

J. Steven Griles, for example, moved from a \$585,000-per-year paycheck as a lobbyist for oil and gas interests to become the number two person in the Department of the Interior, right under Interior Secretary Gale Norton, accepting a salary of \$150,000 (a pay cut of \$435,000 per year). His department then opened 8 million acres of western lands for oil and gas exploration and gave \$2 million in no-bid contracts to one of Griles's former clients—while Griles continued to receive a four-year \$284,000-per-year bonus from his former employer.⁴

Griles was also helping Jack Abramoff at the Interior Department (a government prosecutor said Griles was "Abramoff's guy at the Interior"); he eventually pleaded guilty to lying to the Senate about his relationship with Abramoff and was sentenced to 10 months in prison and a \$30,000 fine.⁵

The Denver Post in 2004 looked into the revolving-door phenomenon in the Bush administration, tallying more than 100 "high-level officials under Bush who helped govern industries they once represented as lobbyists, lawyers or company advocates." The newspaper reported:⁶

In at least 20 cases, those former industry advocates have helped their agencies write, shape or push for policy shifts that benefit their former industries. They knew which changes to make because they had pushed for them as industry advocates. The president's political appointees are making or overseeing profound changes affecting drug laws, food policies, land use, clean-air regulations and other key issues.

Government watchdogs call it a disturbing trend, not adequately restrained by existing ethics laws.

Among the cases the article identified were Charles Lambert, a 15-year lobbyist for the meat industry in its effort to block labeling and mad cow disease investigations, who went to work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (U.S.D.A.), where he officially determined that mad cow disease wasn't a threat and shouldn't be investigated and that meat shouldn't be labeled with regard to its safety.

Then there was Daniel E. Troy, a lawyer who worked for a lobbying firm representing Pfizer Inc., Eli Lilly & Co., and others in Big Pharma. In 2001 he left the lobbying firm and became the chief counsel for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Mysteriously, the main focus of the FDA's position on regulating the drug companies moved "to discourage frivolous lawsuits, which drive up costs," making it harder for consumers damaged by prescription drug side effects to sue Troy's former employers.

The Denver Post story also pointed out the case of Thomas A. Scully, a lobbyist who represented HCA, a huge hospital corporation originally started by Bill Frist's family. HCA was embroiled in a fraud investigation by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, started by a whistleblower. In 2001 Scully left his job to head the CMS. By coincidence, eight months later, the agency worked out a \$250 million settlement—which critics said was far too lenient—that kept the feds from looking further into HCA's books and kept the Justice Department away. Under pressure from some members of Congress, the settlement was delayed and eventually HCA ended up paying the \$250 million plus \$631 million in civil penalties. Scully then left the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and went back to work again as a lobbyist for Medicare providers.

Then there was the case of lobbyist Jeffrey Holmstead, who worked at a law firm that represented big utility companies and which had proposed 12 paragraphs of changes in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations affecting those utilities. Holmstead then went to work for the EPA as a regulator overseeing the air pollution division, and soon thereafter those 12 paragraphs—which would have given a pollution exemption to 168 of 232 western-based power plants—appeared in proposed EPA rules changes. The case was so blatant that 45 U.S. senators—including three Republicans—and 10 states' attorneys general wrote a letter asking the EPA to void the proposed rule because of "undue industry influence." Their complaints were largely ignored by the Bush administration.

Lobbying as Big Business

Given how lucrative lobbying is as an investment, it's become a huge business. In Feb., 2010, the Center for Responsive Politics laid out which industries had invested how much in Congress the previous year. Overall it found that in 2009 the number of registered lobbyists who actively lobbied Congress was 13,694 and the total lobbying spending was a whopping \$3.47 billion—a 240 percent increase since 1999.

The report showed that the top federal lobbying spending was carried out in 2009 by the health-care sector (\$543.9 million); followed by the finance, insurance, and real estate sector (\$465 million); and energy and natural resources (\$408.9 million) (see Table 1 below). Among the biggest lobbying clients were the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (\$144.5 million), ExxonMobil (\$27 million), and the pharmaceutical industry group PhRMA (\$26 million) (see Table 2 below).

Table 1 Top Congressional Lobbying Spending in 2009 by Sector

Sector	Total (in dollars)
Miscellaneous business (retail, manufacturing, etc.)	558,230,086
Health	543,992,861
Finance, insurance and real estate	465,018,131
Energy and natural resources	408,966,962
Communications/electronics	360,048,798
Other (education, nonprofits, religious)	247,684,383
Transportation	243,941,558
Ideological/single-issue	153,357,071
Agribusiness	141,834,541
Defense	135,879,762
Construction	56,759,414
Labor	43,391,295
Lawyers and lobbyists	35,020,209

Source: The Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2010/02/federal-lobbying-soars-in-2009.html>

Table 2 Top Congressional Lobbying Spending in 2009 by Client

Lobbying Client	Total (in dollars)
U.S. Chamber of Commerce	144,496,000
ExxonMobil	27,430,000
Pharmaceutical Research & Mfrs. of America	26,150,520
General Electric	25,520,000
Pfizer Inc.	24,619,268
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	22,715,439
AARP	21,010,000
American Medical Association	20,830,000
Chevron Corp.	20,815,000
National Association of Realtors	19,477,000
American Beverage Association	18,850,000
American Hospital Association	18,347,176
ConocoPhillips	18,069,858
Verizon Communications	17,820,000
FedEx Corp.	17,050,000
Boeing Co.	16,850,000
BP	15,990,000
National Cable and Telecommunications Assoc.	15,980,000
Northrop Grumman	15,180,000
AT&T Inc.	14,729,673

Source: The Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2010/02/federal-lobbying-soars-in-2009.html>

The most recent example of the toxic and pernicious influence of industry in government (as of this writing) is the BP/Transocean/Halliburton oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Both Norway and Brazil allow companies to engage in deep-water offshore drilling, but both of those countries also require by law that companies put blowout preventer devices on all oil wells that can be remotely activated in the event of a catastrophic failure. When Dick Cheney's Energy Task Force (comprising Cheney, a few hand-picked bureaucrats, and executives from the fossil fuels industry, meeting in secret behind closed doors) reviewed a suggestion that the United States put into our regulations a similar provision, they dismissed it as "too expensive." The cost for one of those devices—which would have prevented the BP Gulf spill—is a paltry \$500,000 per well.

Rein in Corporate Control of Government

It wasn't always this way. Consider this old Wisconsin statute, broadly representative of laws virtually every state had up until the rise of the robber barons—railroad magnates and other businessmen who became wealthy using anti-competitive and unfair business practices—in the 1880s:⁷

Political Contributions by Corporations

No corporation doing business in this state shall pay or contribute, or offer consent or agree to pay or contribute, directly or indirectly, any money, property, free service of its officers or employees or thing of value to any political party, organization, committee or individual for any political purpose whatsoever, or for the purpose of influencing legislation of any kind, or to promote or defeat the candidacy of any person for nomination, appointment or election to any political office. [*Italics added for emphasis—it makes a great “out loud” read when you shout the word “any”.*]

The penalty for an individual (representing a corporation) violating such a law was not just a fine but a prison term; and if the corporation itself was found to be violating the law, the penalty could even include the corporate death penalty: *dissolution* of the corporation.

Reflected in that law (and in similar laws across the nation at the time) is a healthy skepticism of corporate interests and motives and an assumption that those interests are often contrary to the larger public interest.

We’ve gone the wrong way since then.

What we have lost is the moral and ethical view of our civic life and replaced it with a story that says that anything is acceptable so long as it is *legally* permitted. Campaign contributions, lobbyist wining-and-dining, and revolving-door careers—all are seen as legally permissible and that’s that, end of story, even though these unethical and immoral acts interfere with our fundamental democratic process and are therefore really crimes against the public good.

The British Lobbying Sting

While lobbying isn’t explicitly illegal in the United Kingdom, it’s seriously frowned upon, particularly when done by former members of the government. In Mar., 2010, the *Sunday Times* and Britain’s privately owned Channel 4 TV ran a sting operation on former cabinet ministers and members of Parliament by pretending to be a U.S. lobbying firm. The reporters-lobbyists approached 20 former members of Parliament (MPs) altogether, 13 from the Labour Party and seven Conservatives, and used hidden cameras to record the conversations. The offer was for the former MPs to try to influence their associates and to do so for 3,000 to 5,000 British pounds per day in payment as lobbyists.⁸

Two out of 20 agreed to do so. No money was paid, no work was done, but the politicians simply agreed to work as lobbyists and use their connections to advance the interests of the (fake) American firm.

When the story hit the newspaper and the hidden camera clips were aired, all hell broke loose. The scandal rocked London. “Ex-ministers in ‘Cash for Influence’ Row under Fire” screamed the headline on the BBC’s Web site, noting that other ministers “have condemned ex-cabinet colleagues who were secretly filmed apparently offering to try to influence government policy in return for cash.”

The day after the story hit, the Labour Party suspended three of the cabinet ministers involved in the investigation. *The Guardian* newspaper reported:⁹

Three former cabinet ministers, Geoff Hoon, Stephen Byers and Patricia Hewitt were suspended from the Parliamentary Labour party last night in an unprecedented crack down on sleaze.

The move was implemented by the party’s chief whip, Nick Brown, and fuelled by backbench revulsion at claims that the trio had been using their ministerial experience to seek profit-able lobbying consultancies.

What’s important to note is the absolute shock expressed by everyone at the basic idea—something we take for granted in America—that politicians would even consider using their connections to make money as lobbyists. The BBC noted in its article that this behavior shocked and horrified even the most senior financial officer in the prime minister’s cabinet. Alistair Darling, the chancellor of the Exchequer (similar to Treasury secretary in the United States), told the BBC:¹⁰

The best answer when you get a call like that is to put the receiver back down again. It’s obvious...But really, what on earth did they think they were doing?

And equally for a company, you don’t need a lobbyist. If you’ve got something to say, go directly to the government department and make your case. It’s just ridiculous.

Corporate Bedfellows

So how is it that lobbying is widespread in the developing world (where it's often referred to as "bribery") but rare in developed countries—except for the United States? The answer has much to do with the U.S. Supreme Court's interpretation of the "rights" of corporations and its interpretation of our First Amendment, which forbids the government from limiting "free speech," particularly interpreted to mean *political free speech*.

Supreme Court rulings notwithstanding (more on this in chapter 10), this is definitely not what the Founders of this nation or the Framers of the Constitution had in mind. Numerous legislative solutions to corporations' corrupting politicians with money or influence have been offered over the years, from the Tillman Act of 1907 to the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, commonly known as McCain-Feingold. All have been weakened or even struck down, in whole or in part, by the Supreme Court in its defense of the free-speech rights of very wealthy individuals and corporations.

The most powerful lever that lobbyists have is the campaign contribution, since it costs a member of Congress more than \$1 million every two years to get reelected and a senator around \$6 million (and far more in the very large states).

So for years now, reform efforts have focused on transparency and limits on campaign contributions and on pushing a system of publicly financing elections to take money out of politics. But all of that has been negated by the Supreme Court, and its latest ruling pretty much puts a nail in the coffin of public financing of campaigns. In 2010, in the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations—even foreign corporations—and wealthy individuals can spend *unlimited* amounts of money to influence elections; they just have to spend it independently of the candidate's or party's official campaign.

So now if a candidate wants a few million dollars spent for his campaign, all he has to do is get the commitment (informally, of course) from a corporation that it'll do it. Assuming the corporation keeps its word, this blows up pretty much every strategy anybody has come up with so far to clean up the elections mess in the United States and will probably lead, over the next few years, to an entirely corporate-controlled and beholden Congress.

Because the Supreme Court (with corporate lawyers like Antonin Scalia and former Monsanto attorney Clarence Thomas, with Thomas's wife working at the corporate- and rich-guy-funded think tank Heritage Foundation) has completely jumped into bed with corporations with the *Citizens United* ruling, about the only real solutions to this are either amending the Constitution or changing the composition of the Court (through attrition over time in the hopes of a Democrat in the White House or through impeachment, which is extremely unlikely). We'll get back to this in detail in chapter 10.

Fix Our Monetary System

But there are other things that we can fix, starting with how we handle our money. Some of this will be helped by having an honest White House and Congress, but other things we can do ourselves right now.

One of the biggest private sectors funneling money into politics these past few years—and causing the revolving door to rotate ever faster—is the financial services industry. As a joint report in late 2009 showed:¹¹

Since the beginning of 2009, organizations in the financial services sector—including banks, investment firms, insurance companies and real estate companies—have commissioned 940 former federal employees as federal lobbyists, Public Citizen's analysis of data provided by the Center for Responsive Politics shows....

So far in 2009, the industry has employed at least 70 former members of Congress, nearly half of the 150 former members who have reported lobbying in 2009. These include former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.); former Senate Majority Leader and Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole (R-Kansas); former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.); former House Majority Leaders Dick Armey (R-Texas) and Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.); former Appropriations Chairman Bob Livingston (R-La.); and former Ways & Means Chairman Bill Thomas (R-Calif.). Former Rep. Vin Weber (R-Minn.) boasts the most financial sector clients (11) among former members of Congress.

It is no surprise that financial services corporations are extremely interested in influencing government these days. The financial systems of the United States have been as badly corrupted by corporate influence as have most of our politicians.

The Fickle Fed

Perhaps the most important player in our national economy is the Federal Reserve. In reality, the “Fed” is not federal and has no reserves. The Constitution specifies that only the Treasury Department—part of the federal government—has the power to “coin money, [and] regulate the value thereof” and lays out no provision for a separate corporation such as the Fed to produce our money supply.

The Fed was created in 1913 by an act of Congress but is a separate-from-government corporation, owned by its member banks, which are themselves owned by their stockholders. It therefore, arguably, has no constitutional authority to “coin money” for us. To get around the constitutional provision that only the government can mint money, the U.S. Treasury Department still runs the U.S. mints, where our actual coins are produced. If you have dollar coins, or half-dollars, quarters, dimes, nickels, or pennies, you have actual money produced by the U.S. government. But if you have paper money that says “Federal Reserve Note” at the top, it is not produced by the U.S. government but by the corporate-bank-owned Federal Reserve.

The distinction is at once significant and irrelevant in this age of electronic money flying across the Internet.

It’s significant because in all the years since it was created, the Fed has never been audited. When in 2009 and 2010 Congress wanted to know why the Fed was creating trillions of U.S. dollars electronically out of thin air and “loaning” them to foreign central banks (and wanted to know which banks got them), the Fed bluntly told Congress that it wasn’t going to disclose the information. It similarly told members of Congress to take a leap when they asked what banks got Fed help during the Bush Great Crash of 2008. If the Treasury Department controlled our money supply instead, decisions would be more transparent (and subject to Freedom of Information Act lawsuits) and “profits” from handling the money supply would inure to We the People.

It’s arguably irrelevant because dollars—even those “created” by the Fed—are backed by the full faith and credit of the United States. We’re stuck with them.

There are two “solutions” that people knowledgeable about these matters suggest and that seem to make a lot of sense.

The first solution is that the Federal Reserve be nationalized and brought under the purview of the Treasury Department, so the United States goes back to producing and controlling its own money and money supply. “Banking profits” from the Fed could even help support the federal budget.

In this scenario the Fed would simply be purchased—or taken with compensation under provisions of the Fifth Amendment—by the U.S. government from the private banks that own it.

As we work on that change, we can start with the idea of immediately setting up a system to audit the Fed. We have the system in place to conduct such an audit—the Government Accountability Office (GAO), which audits most other federal agencies. Congress could simply require that the GAO audit the Fed, given that the Fed makes loans that amount to more money than our national budget.*

The second solution is for each of the 50 states to do what North Dakota did about 90 years ago—create its own state-chartered and state-run bank. Because banks can be enormous profit centers, North Dakota started its own bank to inexpensively loan money to its farmers and small businesses; and when it does so (as it has all these years), all the profits from the interest paid go back into the state’s coffers. This has a lot to do with why that state was among those least affected by the Bush financial crisis that began in 2008.

If every state did this, over time these state-run banks would provide strong competition to corporate banks, running many of them out of business or forcing them to operate more efficiently and to pay their CEOs less. State-run banks could also offer loans to citizens at a lower interest rate than the commercial banks, thus stimulating and stabilizing the states’ local economies.†

That afternoon the president changed his mind, deciding to oppose both pieces of legislation, and that night the bill to break up the big banks (which control much of the trading on Wall Street) failed by 66 votes in the 100-member Senate. The bill to audit the Fed, after a meeting at the White House, was hastily rewritten that afternoon to limit the audit to a very narrow scope of the Fed’s activities during the banking crisis of 2008.

[Bring Back the STET](#)

One of the biggest problems the United States has grappled with since the great waves of deregulation under Reagan and Clinton has been the bubble like nature and the incredible velocity of the stock market. There is, however, a way to put a very small amount of sand into the stock market's gears, to borrow a phrase from economist Dean Baker, who has written on this topic, and thus stabilize both the markets and the economy.

We did it in the United States from 1914 to 1966 (and before that we did it to finance the Spanish-American War and the Civil War), and it's called the Securities Turnover Excise Tax (STET). For example, if we were to institute a 0.25 percent STET on every stock, swap, derivative, or other trade today, it would produce—in its first year—around \$150 billion in revenue. Wall Street would be generating the money to fund its own bailout.

But there are other benefits as well.

As John Maynard Keynes pointed out in 1936 in his seminal economics tome *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*, such a securities transaction tax would have the effect of "mitigating the predominance of speculation over enterprise."¹²

In other words, it would tamp down toxic speculation while encouraging healthy investment. The reason is pretty straightforward: when there's no cost to trading, the behavior of Wall Street shifts from careful investment to careless gambling. The current system is like a casino where the house never makes any money and nobody's watching the players on closed-circuit TVs to prevent cheating.

A STET would, for instance, at least dampen if not deter the unethical tactics that are routinely employed these days. Consider one such scenario for a person or bank with lots of money or a huge line of credit: you buy a million shares of a particular stock over a day or two purely with the goal of driving up the stock's price (because everybody else sees all the buying activity and thinks they should jump onto the bandwagon) so that three days later you can sell all your stock at a profit and get out before its price collapses as the result of the sale.

Investment, on the other hand, is what happens when people buy stock because they believe the company has an underlying value. They're expecting the value to increase over time because the company has a good product or service and good management. Investment stabilizes markets, makes stock prices reflect real company value, and helps small investors securely build their own personal wealth over time.

Historically, from the founding of our country through the twentieth century, most people invested rather than speculated. When rules limiting speculation were gutted in the first big Republican deregulation binge during the administrations of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover (1921 to 1933), it created a speculative fever that caused the housing bubble of the early 1920s only to burst nationally starting in 1927 as housing values began to collapse. That housing collapse, which started in Florida, popped the stock market bubble and produced the Great Crash of 1929. That, in turn, crashed the national housing and stock markets and produced the Republican Great Depression of 1930 to 1942.

As part of the New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt put into place a series of rules to discourage speculation and promote investment, including maintaining—and doubling—the STET. Other countries followed our lead, and Australia, Austria, Belgium, Chile, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom all had or have STETs.

Reinstating a STET now would generate money, so we wouldn't have to borrow it on the international market, as the Bush administration borrowed \$700 billion (or more) from China, Saudi Arabia, and other countries and investors, adding to our national debt and saddling us with repaying it, with interest, at an actual cost of \$1.4 trillion over 20 years.

So let's go back to what we know works. After Hoover's bail-out of the banks failed, FDR did a cold reboot of the entire system, putting into place strong rules to prevent speculative abuse. His doubling of the STET tax both produced revenue that more than funded the Securities and Exchange Commission and further prevented a repeat of the speculative bubble of the 1920s.

In the United Kingdom, a major campaign was launched in early 2010 to impose a variation on the STET—a 0.05% tax on interbank activities—that the British campaigners are calling the "Robin Hood Tax." Actor Ben Kingsley starred in a clever short video promoting the tax as a tiny charge on bankers but a boon for the public, enabling the funding of social programs and helping mitigate climate change.

We've done it before. We financed the Spanish-American War and partially financed the Civil War and World Wars I and II with STETs. We stabilized our stock market with a STET from the mid-1930s to 1966, and other nations are doing it today. It's time to do it again, this time using the STET to stop speculative behavior and so Wall Street can pay for its own bailout.

Don't Bank On the Banks

Banks should be thought of as public utilities, even if they're privately run. They exist to take deposits, facilitate commerce, and lend money to businesses and individuals. As such they shouldn't be in the business of gambling or speculating with other people's money. From the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 until its 1999 repeal with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (put forward by Republican senator Phil Gramm—there's that name again), banks could *not* get into the business of speculation.

After Phil Gramm's spectacular little bit of deregulation in 1999, banks went on a consolidation binge (we still weren't enforcing the Sherman Antitrust Act), with some buying up investment houses and others being bought *by* investment houses. The result was a speculative frenzy that nearly crashed the entire world banking system—and still may.

Because of this and another 2000 change in the law brought to us by Phil Gramm, it is currently perfectly legal for your bank to engage in what's called "proprietary trading"—and most all of the big national banks do. Proprietary trading is where the bank takes your deposits and, instead of loaning them out to your neighbors to buy a house or start a business, "invests" that money in the stock market, trading stocks, currencies, credit default swaps, and all manner of other things, minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, 24 hours a day on superfast and highly sophisticated computer systems.

When the market is going up, your bank shows a huge profit and pays its traders and CEO millions. When the market goes down, your bank declares an emergency and gets bailed out by Congress and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—and continues to pay its traders and CEO millions.

This is, frankly, insane. FDR was right: banks should be banks and nothing else. Nice boring businesses—green eyeshades and flannel suits, banker's hours, nothing exciting. It's your money, after all, that they're holding.

Until the day when the big banks are brought back under control, there are two alternatives.

Local Banks and Credit Unions

The first option is to move your money into local, community-oriented banks. These institutions are typically owned by one or more local people who—sometimes generations ago—set out to make money in the banking business. But because they're not national and they don't do bizarre things like proprietary trading or gambling in currency default swaps, they're generally pretty safe and stable. There's a movement—strongly publicized in 2010 by Arianna Huffington of the Huffington Post—to get individuals and government agencies to move their money from big banks into local community banks, and billions of dollars (including the accounts of some states and big unions) have been transferred as a result.

But still, even local community banks are for-profit operations. They often imitate the big banks when it comes to fees and interest rates because—just like the big banks—their primary reason for being in business is to make a profit. The upside is that the profit is going to local wealthy people. The downside is that it's going anywhere other than back to you.

So how can we get banking services—from checking accounts to mortgages to credit cards—without having to deal with a for-profit bank of *any* size?

The answer is community credit unions, which are depositor-owned financial institutions, run on a nonprofit basis, which do pretty much everything that a bank can do. When you give them your money to open a checking or savings account, you actually become a member of a nonprofit cooperative and can even run for a seat on the credit union's board of directors.

Breaking Your Bank

Community credit unions are answerable to their communities and usually use the profits from their bank-like operations to support local charities and to reduce the overall cost of the bank-like services they offer their depositors. And, just like banks, the federal government guarantees their deposits.

Community credit unions grew in membership by around 2 percent in 2009, a time when a lot of banks both big and small were shrinking or even collapsing. The Credit Union National Association (the trade association for credit unions) notes that in 2008 credit unions saved their members \$9.2 billion that, had it been "earned" by banks (large or small), would instead have gone to banking corporation stockholders and CEOs.¹³

When Louise and I moved from Vermont to Portland, Oregon, the nearest bank branch to our home was owned by one of the six largest banks in the United States. The bank offered reasonable service and hours, but when they took billions in bailout money because of questionable activities that I'd call gambling, and their CEO and other senior executives continued to pay themselves millions in the face of obvious incompetence, we decided enough was enough.

We looked around Portland and discovered that there were more than 30 community credit unions in the area. While credit unions offer traditional banking services—from checking and savings accounts to credit cards to mortgages and car loans—they are owned by their members—not stockholders or local rich guys.

The idea of cooperative, locally owned, not-for-profit institutions getting into the banking business started in Germany in 1852, and the first U.S. credit union was opened in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1908. Since then credit unions have spread across the country, and—particularly after the failure of so many savings-and-loan institutions after that industry was deregulated by the Reagan administration—many Americans have moved their money from banks or savings and loans into credit unions.

Louise and I did the same, as did others who are among my readers and radio listeners. Here's a note I received from a listener in 2010 that's quite enlightening and reflects in many ways our personal experience:¹⁴

I found your New Year's resolution very inspiring and vowed that I too would take my money out of Bank Against America and put it into a local credit union. I did some research and found that Columbia Credit Union (right down the street from my house, no less) had a really good rating and had been voted "Grand Poobah Of Credit Unions" several years in a row. So I decided to go with that one. I had considered joining years ago when my wife was a member but, as soon as they told me they would have to do a credit check, I backed off. No sense in wasting everyone's time, I always say. But, as it turns out, they just wanted to be sure I didn't suck, they didn't really care if I was a few months overdue on my electric bill.

With that taken care of, I decided to give Bank Against America a couple of weeks to make sure everything had cleared. I went in fully intending to close my account but there was a phantom charge on the account and they couldn't close it until that cleared. I thought that was odd since I hadn't used the account in some time. They assured me it would clear the next day and I could find out the nature of the charge and close my account so I took out half of the money in the account and vowed to return the next day. The next day, the charge had cleared but they had no idea what the charge was and, as far as they could tell, there had been no charge, she said looking at me from the corner of her eye. I assumed that, if I tried closing the account, another phantom charge would suddenly appear so I took out all but eight dollars and decided I would let them send me monthly statements for the rest of my life and really get my \$8 worth.

Well, two months later, I got a notice that my account was over-drawn, my account that I had not used since the end of January was overdrawn eighty cents. By the time I got to the bank the following Monday, it was overdrawn almost ten dollars. When I confronted the teller with the fact that I had not used the account in months and was told there were no monthly service charges, she agreed to waive the fees that should not have been charged in the first place. She then zeroed out the accounts and closed them for good.

I am now out from under the thumb of Bank Against America and am very happy with my credit union. I don't get my picture on my card, it doesn't have a groovy Autism Speaks symbol on it and they don't have a "Keep The Change" benefit, but I'm also not paying \$5 for a money order while the CEOs get billions in bonuses and charge me \$35 for going one cent over my balance. Thanks for the inspiration, Thom.

We can all move from the banksters to owning our own deposits, owning our own piece of a credit union. Try it, you'll like it!

*Although we moved on, the Salem Children's Village is still there and doing fine 30-plus years later; <http://www.salemchildrensvillage.org>. It's a great charity if you're inclined to help out!

†Interestingly, on May 6, 2010, two pieces of legislation were scheduled for a vote in the U.S. Senate, and both were expected to pass. One was a bill to audit the Fed, and the other was a bill to break up the six largest banks in America so

none would be “too big to fail.” Around 2:40 p.m. that day, the stock market suddenly dropped 998 points in a matter of a few minutes, with six stocks falling in value to a penny or less and one stock—Sotheby’s—rising in value from around \$33 per share to more than \$100,000 per share. Five minutes later the market had largely recovered, but the shot across the bow by the large bankers wasn’t missed by Congress or the White House.

*Ellen Brown has written extensively about these topics at her Web site, <http://www.WebOfDebt.com>.

¹Kevin McCoy, “IRS Unlocks UBS Vault Hiding Americans Evading Taxes,” *USA Today*, Feb. 20, 2009, http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/banking/2009-02-19-ubs-tax-evaders-irs_N.htm,

²Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, “The Road to Riches Is Called K Street: Lobbying Firms Hire More, Pay More, Charge More to Influence Government,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/21/AR2005062101632.html>

³Ibid.

⁴Anne C. Mulkern, “When Advocates Become Regulators: President Bush Has Installed More Than 100 Top Officials Who Were Once Lobbyists, Attorneys or Spokespeople for the Industries They Oversee,” *Denver Post*, May 23, 2004, <http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2004/Advocates-Become-Regulators23may04.htm>.

⁵Matt Apuzzo “Former Interior Official Gets Prison,” *Washington Post*, June 26, 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/26/AR2007062600179_pf.html.

⁶See note 4 above.

⁷Lyman J. Nash, ed. *Wisconsin Statutes 1919, Volume II: Embracing All General Statutes in Force at the Close of the General and Special Sessions of 1919, Consolidated and in Part Revised Pursuant to Sections 43.07, 43.03, 35.18 and 35.19 of These Statutes* (Madison: State of Wisconsin, 1919), sec. 4479a, 1771—1775, <http://books.google.com/books?id=6ZCxAAMAAMAJ&pg=PA2299&lpg=PA2299&ots=WxkbUWGxMn&dq=wisconsin+1905+section+4479a&output=text>.

⁸“Ex-ministers in ‘Cash for Influence’ Row under Fire,” BBC News, Mar. 21, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8578597.stm>. 212 Rebooting the American Dream

⁹Patrick Wintour and Allegra Stratton, “Stephen Byers and Other Ex- ministers Suspended from Labour Party over Lobbying Allegations,” Mar. 23, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/mar/23/stephen-byers-geoff-hoon-patricia-hewitt>.

¹⁰See note 8 above.

¹¹“Ca\$hing In: More Than 900 Ex—Government Officials, Including 70 Former Members Of Congress, Have Lobbied for the Financial Services Sector in 2009,” Public Citizen, <http://www.citizen.org/publications/publicationredirect.cfm?ID=7714>.

¹²John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1936, 1997).

¹³Daniel Mica, “Consumers Are Moving Their Money to Credit Unions, Rising Membership Shows,” Jan. 6, 2010, Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-mica/consumers-are-moving—t_b_414190.html.

¹⁴E-mail message received by the author from a listener. Reprinted verbatim with his permission.

(Thom Hartmann is a New York Times bestselling Project Censored Award winning author and host of a nationally syndicated progressive radio talk show.)

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Dear SteveB,

I remember when my Daddy took me to the Evans Products office and his boss showed me an IBM disk pack. It wasn't a LOT smaller than that; late 1960s. It was waist-height and about the size of a very large desk. Capacity unknown; not so awfully big — probably 5 MB as well.



[20110119-01](#) 09:59 SteveB Re: Giant 1956 5MB IBM Hard Drive

Dear Ben,

My first computer "job" was between my junior & senior years in high school. I won a National Science Foundation grant to study at IU for the summer. I learned how to program and operate the university's biggest computer—an IBM 709 or 790 (I can't remember which). This was 1963. They has a smaller 1401 that used transistors, but the giant computer used tubes. It took a whole army of people to keep it going. On weekends and some nights, I got to operate the whole thing by myself. Very scary. I remember that their air conditioning bill, just for the computer room, was \$1,000,000/year. We had no hard drives, just a slew of giant tape units the size of large refrigerators. The main I/O was, of course, IBM cards, and I became quite proficient with them. In my spare time, I completed a science project involving prime numbers. Lots of fun for a high school kid!

I think it's time to sell our Apple stock. I have my sell order in.

20110128-01 16:27 SteveB Cenesthetic Hallucination

This is wild!

<http://www.neave.com/strobe/>

Weird, huh? **Maybe reality is not what it seems to be?**

20110203-01 06:51 SteveB Gasparilla

Dear Pam,

Haha! I think it's supposed to represent Uri Geller (the spoon bender) heading toward the black hole at the center of the galaxy during the End Times/Rapture. :-) [About a photo I had sent. —SteveB]

We're still in Florida, spending time on the beach, seeing my daughters and little Zach and Natalie, eating too much rich American food, getting along pretty well. Marci is working on the final stages of her citizenship. Very happy we're avoiding that amazing winter up north, but also wish we were immersed in the worst of it. Otherwise, winter is worthless, as far as I'm concerned.

We had a lot of fun at the Tampa Gasparilla Pirate Invasion last weekend!

20110203-02 07:54 Pam Re: Gasparilla

Dear SteveB,

I love the pictures!! Marci is so pretty. I always love getting pictures from people. I'd send you some of my world, but I haven't yet figured out how to get pictures from my cell phone to the computer. I ordered a cable, but I haven't got it working—waiting on my son-in-law to help me out.

I am SO glad to not be in that awful storm. My brother is right in the thick of it. Last time I heard from him their furnace had quit on them. I must find out if he's OK. I think global warming is screwing up our weather all over the place. I look forward to spring, but I bet we'll have lots of thunderstorms, if not worse. Growing up in Indiana, I developed quite a phobia of tornadoes.

I'm glad you're enjoying time with your family. I bet they're tickled to have you there. Do you think you'll stay in Florida? Do you have a condo or something? I think you like balmy climes better than I do. I like a change of seasons—just not extreme hot or cold. North Carolina is pretty good actually. Over all. All things considered.

I wonder what's going to happen in Egypt. It's a mess over there. I just heard Glenn Beck (via the Daily Show) saying the whole Middle East is going to blow up and the whole world is going to implode. Don't see how both could happen at once, but when did he ever use logic? What a moron. There are lots of people out there who believe him, which makes him hugely irresponsible. How does he get away with it?

20110204-01 10:45 SteveB Re: Gasparilla

Dear Pam,

I do appreciate warm weather; water—not so much as I used to, for some reason. But I really loved the winters in Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Montana (mmmm...all M's), but not enough, I guess, to go out of my way to travel there. I really need to buy a condo here...prices are very low right now, but I hate to tie-up money here, especially in real estate. My ex-wife has taken some real losses down here. So we are just staying with friends and family a little and at resorts and hotels most of the time. Trying to stay light on our feet; though, being America, we did have to buy a car. I really miss public transportation.

It is great seeing my daughters and our conversations. I love the grandkids!

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Glenn Beck is amazing, isn't he? How can anybody ever listen to his insane idiocy? A dangerous man to the public climate. I believe fervently in free speech, but this guy should be arrested for sedition and for yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater! How can no one look back at his dire predictions and see that none of them even came true?

Egypt is worrisome. There we are, just like we used to always be in South America, seemingly backing a dictator and order instead of the people and chaos or potential chaos. Tough choices that don't let us win, whichever way we go. Poor Obama! Now we just mostly avoid that continent, but we can't ignore the oil.

The photo is my daughter, Marissa, who will graduate from college at the end of this semester. We were at the weekly sundown drum circle on Treasure Island Beach—another respite from all the oldies down here, with whom I absolutely cannot identify!



[20110204-02](#) 11:46 Pam Re: Gasparilla

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Your daughter is very pretty. What does she plan to do with her life?

I do hope Obama does the right thing re. Egypt. We carry on about how we want democracy in the Middle East, then when they actually go for it on their own, we get all worried. Do we really think such a huge shift would be painless? I deplore the violence in Cairo, but I can't say I'm surprised. It's like Hungary in the 50s or Prague in 1968. I just hope the Egyptians come out of this better. When I see tanks rolling down the streets, I know there's trouble. Mubarak must go—now. I just hope a bunch of radicals don't take over and introduce another kind of tyranny.

I didn't mind the cold and snow too much when I lived up north, but I don't care if I never see snow again. My brother says this is the coldest, snowiest winter he can remember, and he's been in upstate New York for over 30 years. But I don't like the tropics either. No offense, but I really dislike Florida. My first husband's parents owned a condo in Jensen Beach (I think it was), where they went in the winters from Akron. They let us use it one Christmas. We took the kids—Saskia must have been about seven—and did all the touristy stuff. Lots of old people, balmy air that seemed unnatural, and over-development. There's no wilderness there, and what little there is looks like hell. So there you have it: my opinion of sunny Florida. Do you ever go to Tampa?

I don't mean to sound like I'm criticizing everything you do, but doesn't being so rootless get a little old after a while? I've always believed that people get more like themselves the older they get. I always liked staying at home and doing my own thing, even in high school. I went to basketball and football games, but only because I didn't want to be totally out of it. I never enjoyed them. Especially basketball in the old gym across from the old junior high. It was so LOUD in there. Maybe you like being a rolling stone. I think my dad had a bit of that in him. He always wanted to drive off into the sunset, dragging my mother and me with him.

Walking on the beach sounds fine though. Enjoy.

20110205-01 10:48 SteveB Re: Gasparilla

Dear Pam,

You're really pi*sing me off with all this criticism! haha

I wonder if being from Greencastle has anything to do with using sarcastic humor? I guess we grew up "getting it", but when I use it with other people—especially in places like Bolivia—they sometimes look at me like I'm crazy. How could anybody say something but mean the opposite? They'll just have to get used to it, because I'm addicted.

Well...we talked about dogs and music (which we always do, Billy loves music, as do I)...an incredible band named "Gomez". Give them a listen if you like rock. Slant rhyme, my poem "Dark Matter", Sarasota, the cool weather down here, though that day was perfect.

Do you believe in astrology? I don't either, but I am a Sagittarius...supposed to be more rootless than other people. Some of my poems talk about rootlessness and alienation..."What Passes for Home" comes to mind...maybe "Picture of Marigot Bay"...or "My House" (below).

But, no, I don't get tired of travel or exotic places, though I understand where you're "coming from". My father and my brother, the doctor, got so they weren't really comfortable leaving their houses. I guess I'm just the opposite. Always wanted to sail around the world, but probably never will, though I've logged at least a few thousand nautical miles. But I do have places I sort of call home—Marigot Bay, St. Lucia, the Bitterroot Valley in Montana, Santa Cruz, Beaver Island, Michigan.

You mentioned Tampa. That's our center of operations at the moment.

I loved the old gym! Wish it were still there! The basketball games were so exciting, especially for a junior high kid. After junior high football practice we would leave our equipment in piles up on the bleachers. The smell of sweaty leather mixed with adolescent B.O. always reminds me of those days. :-)

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20110205-02 16:14 Pam Re: Gasparilla
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Dear SteveB,

I always used to tell my students to go out and have adventures. I believe a life without adventures (and that can mean a whole host of things) is too dull to endure. When I was young I traveled a lot and assumed I'd do that forever. I even thought about working overseas somehow. But then one thing led to another, and here I am, right where I want to be.

I've always had a thing about houses and the stuff that goes in them. A house reflects the personalities of the people who live in it and has a character of its own. That fascinates me. I've only been in a few (very few) houses that I felt at home in, that I felt I could happily live in. Come to think of it, they were all in Canada. Here's the perfect house, based on these two or three favorites of mine: a small stone cottage with some age on it, hardwood floors, French doors between living and dining room, weathered eclectic furniture, tiled kitchen floor (terra cotta) with blue tiled countertops, an overhead rack with copper pans hanging. Interesting art on the walls, worn oriental rugs here and there, old windows with the original glass.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20110205-03	22:48	SteveB	Re: Gasparilla
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Dear Pam,

I usually have very many dreams, strange and unstrange (if that's a word...if it's not, it should be). But, for some reason, I had very few dreams I remembered while sleeping in my condo in Santa Cruz. Now, in our little apartment by the sea, I'm having tons once again. I have thought of a theory I don't believe in but find interesting. Maybe dreams are not what they appear to be...our sleeping minds simply creating stories. Maybe we're really being prodded into revealing our innermost secrets by...something...the mind of God, spirits from the "other side" or something reading them (or us) as we create them. Maybe "they" even create them from our beings and we just receive them. Maybe there are more "spirits" here in this apartment than there were in my condo? Maybe it's just the rich American food?

I had one the other night that involved my deceased Mom's spirit and other "spirits" (or something) from the "other side". I never actually saw any of the beings in the dream, but I perceived them. My mother was accompanied by the spirits, and I was part of a "team" of people on this side (of whatever). We had a "job" to do that seemed to be very important. Now, this part is a little Stephen Kingish (I know him too. haha. Met him when I was a young teacher in Maine and he was just getting started. Boy, did we end up on different paths, but at the time I wouldn't have predicted that.)

Our job was to travel around and repair "tears (rips) in the fabric of reality". That's what I knew they were in my dream. I and all these "invisibles" from both sides (because it was necessary for both sides to work together to repair the rips) traveled around to places where the rips were occurring and fixed them, but I have no idea how we would actually do the repair, yet I was part of the process somehow. The rips seemed to be a sort of drip which just appeared in a room or wherever, moving down from high to lower as if reality were a canvas or something. When we saw one, we knew we had to move fast to close it back up or something very bad would/could happen. We fixed several of them, then I awoke. I have no idea what the hell that dream could mean.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20110208-01	10:36	Pam	Re: Gasparilla
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Dear SteveB,

Dreams are fascinating, at least mine are. :-) I've never read Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams" but he would undoubtedly find much to talk about in yours. Fixing the rips in reality, humn.

I think you have a much more spiritual side than I do, and I suggest that your dream indicates your desire to somehow unite the two sides to existence, the one you can sense and the one you intuit. As for me, I don't believe our dreams come from outside but rather they reflect deeply ingrained patterns that are carved into our brains. I have several recurring dreams that proceed sort of like chapters in a book. At least the one about husband #2 does. The one I have most is set in Greencastle. I am walking from somewhere on campus toward my house. Everything appears just as I remember it in great detail. Often I have been away for a long time and am returning, expecting to reunite with a lover, only he is never there. I think our fears, memories, and desires all appear in our dreams with their own logical consistency. Last night I dreamed I was driving with Atty over very dangerous mountain roads. I'd say most of my dreams involve going from one place to another—or trying to.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Dear Tom,

I do find the Egyptian situation worrisome for the future of the U.S.

Unemployment here is about the same as in Egypt. Here, as in Egypt, the rich have gotten richer, the poor have gotten poorer, and the middle class is disappearing rapidly. Our good jobs have been shipped to China, our politicians of both parties have sold us down the river, we're left with huge debt and part-time Wal-Mart jobs selling Chinese goods. The solutions the Republicans offer is more free trade, lower taxes for the very rich, more illegal immigration, reduced spending on education, and more deregulation. Want fair, non-bankrupting health care—f*ck you! The same tired old policies that have created our problems.

I wonder how much longer it will take for Americans to wake-up and join their Egyptian brothers fighting for and demanding change, this time in the streets of our own cities?

"Joe Republican" posted by Jeff Parker, Nomad Life

Nov. 19, 2009, (<http://neverbetter.nomadlife.org/2011/02/joe-republican-by-jeff-parker.html>)



Joe gets up at 6 a.m. and fills his coffeepot with water to prepare his morning coffee. The water is clean and good because some tree-hugging liberal fought for minimum water-quality standards. With his first swallow of water, he takes his daily medication. His medications are safe to take because some stupid commie liberal fought to ensure their safety and that they work as advertised. All but \$10 of his medications are paid for by his employer's medical plan because some liberal union workers fought their employers for paid medical insurance—now Joe gets it too. He prepares his morning breakfast, bacon and eggs. Joe's bacon is safe to eat because some girly-man liberal fought for laws to regulate the meat packing industry. In the morning shower, Joe reaches for his shampoo. His bottle is properly labeled with each ingredient and its amount in the total contents because some crybaby liberal fought for his right to know what he was putting on his body and how much it contained.

Joe dresses, walks outside and takes a deep breath. The air he breathes is clean because some environmentalist wacko liberal fought for the laws to stop industries from polluting our air. He walks to the subway station for his government-subsidized ride to work. It saves him considerable money in parking and transportation fees because some fancy-pants liberal fought for affordable public transportation, which gives everyone the opportunity to be a contributor.

Joe begins his work day. He has a good job with excellent pay, medical benefits, retirement, paid holidays and vacation because some lazy liberal union members fought and died for these working standards. Joe's employer pays these standards because Joe's employer doesn't want his employees to call the union. If Joe is hurt on the job or becomes

unemployed, he'll get a worker compensation or unemployment check because some stupid liberal didn't think he should lose his home because of his temporary misfortune.

It's noontime and Joe needs to make a bank deposit so he can pay some bills. Joe's deposit is federally insured by the FDIC because some godless liberal wanted to protect Joe's money from unscrupulous bankers who ruined the banking system before the Great Depression. Joe has to pay his Fannie Mae-underwritten mortgage and his below-market federal student loan because some elitist liberal decided that Joe and the government would be better off if he was educated and earned more money over his lifetime. Joe is home from work.

He plans to visit his father this evening at his farm home in the country. He gets in his car for the drive. His car is among the safest in the world because some America hating liberal fought for car safety standards. He arrives at his boyhood home. His was the third generation to live in the house financed by Farmers' Home Administration because bankers didn't want to make rural loans. The house didn't have electricity until some big-government liberal stuck his nose where it didn't belong and demanded rural electrification.

He is happy to see his father, who is now retired. His father lives on Social Security and a union pension because some wine-drinking, cheese-eating liberal made sure he could take care of himself so Joe wouldn't have to.

Joe gets back in his car for the ride home, and turns on a radio talk show. The radio host keeps saying that liberals are bad and conservatives are good. He doesn't mention that the beloved Republicans have fought against every protection and benefit Joe enjoys throughout his day. Joe agrees: "We don't need those big government liberals ruining our lives! After all, I'm a self-made man who believes everyone should take care of themselves, just like I have."

[20110212-02](#) 16:21 SteveB Re: Joe, the Self-Made Republican

Dear Dennis,

Ah so, most excellent! Thanks, Dennis.

[20110215-01](#) 19:17 Tom 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

No new taxes? Hardly.

"Uncovered: The 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget" posted by Jonathon M. Seidl, The Blaze

Feb. 14, 2011, (<http://www.theblaze.com/stories/uncovered-the-15-tax-hikes-hidden-in-obamas-new-budget/>)

Over the last two years, the president has regularly touted his fight to *lower* taxes for Americans. In fact, his latest budget proposal offered up today is being billed as a package of tough cuts. But buried within the budget's rhetoric and numerous pages are actually a healthy amount of increases — tax increases, that is. 15 of them.

The folks over at Business Insider (<http://www.businessinsider.com/tax-hikes-obama-budget-2011-2#ixzz1DxbARoKu>) note "the budget contains as much as \$1.5 trillion in hikes over ten years," thanks to some diligent sleuthing by the group Americans for Tax Reform (<http://www.atr.org/obamas-fy-budgetbr-taxes-more-a5844#>).

Here are the hidden increases:

- Raising the top marginal income tax rate (at which a majority of small business profits face taxation) from 35% to 39.6%. This is a \$709 billion/10 year tax hike.
- Raising the capital gains and dividends rate from 15% to 20%.
- Raising the death tax rate from 35% to 45% and lowering the death tax exemption amount from \$5 million (\$10 million for couples) to \$3.5 million. This is a \$98 billion/ten year tax hike.

- Capping the value of itemized deductions at the 28% bracket rate. This will effectively cut tax deductions for mortgage interest, charitable contributions, property taxes, state and local income or sales taxes, out-of-pocket medical expenses, and unreimbursed employee business expenses. A new means-tested phase-out of itemized deductions limits them even more. This is a \$321 billion/ten year tax hike.
- New bank taxes totaling \$33 billion over ten years.
- New international corporate tax hikes totaling \$129 billion over ten years.
- New life insurance company taxes totaling \$14 billion over ten years.
- Massive new taxes on energy, including LIFO repeal, Superfund, domestic energy manufacturing, and many others totaling \$120 billion over ten years.
- Increasing unemployment payroll taxes by \$15 billion over ten years.
- Taxing management capital gains in an investment partnership ("carried interest") as ordinary income. This is a tax hike of \$15 billion over ten years.
- A giveaway to the trial lawyers—not letting companies deduct the cost of punitive damages from a lawsuit settlement. This is a tax hike of \$300 million over ten years.
- Increasing tax penalties, information reporting, and IRS information sharing. This is a ten-year tax hike of \$20 billion.

[20110216-01](#) 11:23 SteveB Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear Tom,

I don't see a single one of these taxes that I don't agree should be raised. (What? I'm supposed to feel sorry for millionaires, who pay less taxes here than in any other developed country?)

Spending (especially on the military) must be cut too. Everybody must suffer a little...especially the rich (Veterans and folks on Social Security already are! Why not the rich too? Don't they have a debt to society?). Excuuuuse me! :-)

The alternative is America becoming a 6th-rate, debt-ridden country like Greece. Come to think of it, we're pretty much already there! It's now or never!

[20110216-02](#) 11:46 GaryC Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear SteveB,

I know you have traveled a lot and been to a lot of other countries. But your statement is dead wrong about taxing millionaires. First, you may have forgotten that I was a tax attorney for many years in Washington representing clients around the world.

Second, the U.S. corporate tax rate is the HIGHEST in the world at 35% plus another 4% for the average state tax. The average corporate tax rate is 25% and most foreign countries do not tax outside of their territory. Third, my friends around the world laugh at our tax rate and tax deductions as the whole system is gamed for social engineering. Without getting into specifics, my friends in Hong Kong pay a top rate on income of 18% and pay nothing on capital gains. This country would be a lot better off if the rates were lower for everyone and all deductions were eliminated. This would encourage more job growth, less IRS intrusion and more compliance with the tax laws.

In addition, you keep harping on the wealthy's social responsibility to the country. I will ask you the question I ask others who want to soak the rich. First, what is the "social responsibility" of the poor to our society? Second, if I make a lot of money shouldn't I have the option of using it for charitable pursuits instead of letting the government make those

decisions and wasting the money? Of course, my favorite charity is educating Chinese peasant girls on the sexual proclivities of American fat cats.

20110216-03	13:35	Dennis	"Sleepwalking Toward Plutocracy"
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The hijacking of America...

Here's a link to a rather extensive article by my friend, Marsh Whitfield: "Sleepwalking Toward Plutocracy."

It's a bit of a long read, but if you're interested in how and why America has been hijacked (despite warnings by Jefferson, Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Eisenhower, and others).

"Sleepwalking Toward Plutocracy" by Marsh Whitfield, BuzzFlash at TruthOut

Feb. 15, 2011, (<http://blog.buzzflash.com/node/12358>)

"Corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."—Abraham Lincoln¹

This grim vision caused Lincoln to "tremble for the safety of my country," as he wrote on Nov. 21, 1864. It foretold of Plutocracy (rule by the wealthy) in America.

Today, we watch his vision coming true: the richest 1 percent of Americans now take home 24 percent of U.S. income, up from 9 percent in 1976.² America's wealth is "aggregating in a few hands" right before our eyes, in plain view.

And we stare uncomprehendingly, like deer in the headlights.

Perhaps our inertness is understandable. For nearly 150 years since Lincoln's awful premonition, who has worried about Plutocracy? The last time greedy corporations threatened our country, President Teddy Roosevelt's trust-busting broke up their monopolies quite handily.

Since then, Plutocracy disappeared from America's headlines. Until recently. We are now slowly waking up to the tsunami of money drowning democracy. But we're a bit late. We've slept through an epochal shift in American politics: the Plutocrats (huge corporations, Wall Street, and billionaire oligarchs) have been quietly busy, hijacking the Republican Party.

The Hijacking

Let me be clear. We are not talking here about mere corruption—the random bribery by which businesses and wealthy individuals have always tried to influence government officials in all societies. Plutocracy means governance by the wealthy. This is the story of how modern Plutocrats have converted the power of money into the control of government.

They did it by gradually hijacking the Republican Party—its ideology, political agenda, and legislation. Their payoff is already in the trillions of dollars.

Does this sound like an exaggeration? It is as undeniable as a pregnancy. Let's start with the evidence:

1. The Bribe: Why do the Plutocrats spend tens of billions on conservative think tanks, Republican campaigns, and GOP lobbyists' salaries? (Sure, they try to buy Democrats as well, to control both parties, but—see next two questions—which party has been bought?)
2. Republican Acceptance: Since Reagan's time, the Republican agenda has slavishly matched the Plutocrats' demands: lower taxes and less government regulation.
3. Democratic Rejection: Despite shameful bribe-taking by "Blue Dogs" and other individual Democrats on specific legislation, the Democratic party as a whole opposes tax cuts for the wealthy and is responsible for almost all

environmental, safety and financial regulations (such as the financial regulatory overhaul in the 2010 Dodd-Frank Act).

4. The Payoff: Here's what our government (Republican since 1980 except for Clinton's eight years) has delivered to the Plutocrats: from 1980 to 2005, more than four-fifths of the total increase in American incomes went to the richest 1 percent.² Presently, despite staggering deficits and the distress of 14.8 million unemployed, the top 1 percent of Americans enjoy tax rates a third lower than in 1970.³

If Republicans are not governing on behalf of their rich patrons, what else explains this massive upward redistribution of American wealth?

"Wait!" You might protest. "Perhaps the rich are getting richer for other reasons, like—ahem—smart people coping better with globalization than average people." "Or, um, coincidence?"

No dice. If there was ever any argument for innocence of intent or accidental outcome in the Plutocrats' ongoing payoff, it vanished during Dec., 2010, when Republicans threatened to block extension of unemployment insurance unless tax cuts for America's richest 2% were extended.

It was a revealing moment. Prosperity and huge bonuses had returned to the Wall Street firms which caused the recession and to the corporations which had shipped jobs overseas, yet the millions of workers they had left jobless were suffering terribly. Fairness demanded the insurance extension, and so did 66% of the American public.⁴

By holding unemployment insurance extension hostage in exchange for billionaire tax cuts, Republican leaders Mitch McConnell and John Boehner defied both public opinion and fairness—and added \$900 billion to our ballooning deficit. Showing neither shame nor remorse, they stood naked for all to see as extortionists for their Plutocrat patrons.

The Hijacking's Threat to our Democracy

The problem with the hijacked Republican party goes deeper than the gluttonous enrichment of the Plutocrats in control.

Thomas Jefferson wrote in a 1816 letter to George Logan: I hope we shall... crush in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations which dare already to challenge our government in a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our country.⁵

Then came Lincoln's worrisome vision, cited above, of how Plutocrats—"the money power of the country"—could destroy our republic.

Unfortunately, our Supreme Court judges have lacked the wisdom and foresight of Jefferson and Lincoln. In the 1886 *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* decision, the Supreme Court recognized corporations as persons for purposes of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁶

The 1886 decision was a key stepping-stone toward the devastating 2010 *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* decision by the Roberts Supreme Court, which opened the floodgates for corporate money in election campaigns.⁷

These decisions make it perfectly legal for corporations to buy control of American democracy, to replace our government "of, by and for" the people with a government "by and for" big corporations.

The difference is as profound as it is obvious: People have everyday human concerns about jobs, security, and the welfare of their kids and grandkids. And they possess normal human feelings such as patriotism and fairness.

Corporations, in contrast, have no grandchildren, no morality, no patriotism. With corporations in control of government, government exists only to increase corporate profits and rich people's wealth—at any cost to America's environment and the lives and welfare of its citizens.

To corporations, taxes are anathema, even for schools and infrastructure, because they reduce profits. It's that simple. "America really needs infrastructure? Well, don't expect me to pay for it. Go borrow some more from China and pay it back later."

Also, because environmental and safety regulations cost money, they are ignored and flagrantly broken by the Plutocrats. Think of BP's monstrous—and avoidable—spill, or Massey Energy's 29 miners negligently killed in Apr., 2010.⁸

In short, the laws and government services which make our society livable are merely an onerous burden to the Plutocrats. Their objective is stated candidly in the famous Grover Norquist quote: "Our goal is to shrink the government to the size where you can drown it in a bathtub." A reckless, almost suicidal goal, for weak governments invite anarchy.

And how are the Plutocrats doing in their dangerous quest? They're winning, and their wins beget more wins. Example: in 2001, a conservative majority on the Supreme Court helped Bush gain the Presidency. That enabled Bush to appoint Alito and Roberts to the Court, which decided the 2010 Citizens United case (cited above) in favor of the Plutocrats, which will allow unlimited funding for future Republican election campaigns.

The nightmare premonitions of Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln have materialized before us in the hijacked Republican party. No longer "of, by and for the people," it's "by and for General Dynamics, Goldman Sachs, Monsanto, BP, News Corp (etc.)." Please pause and reflect on that: one of our two major parties has been captured by Plutocrats—half of American democracy has already been lost.

Like Lincoln, we should all "tremble for the safety of our country."

How The Hell Did This Happen?

In the period following WWII, while corporations and wealthy individuals were still making business-as-usual donations to Republican politicians, a new element—policy institutes—became a factor in the game. These "think tanks" offered the Plutocrats an opportunity to influence conservative ideology at its very source.

Naturally, the think tanks which best advocated small government and lower taxes were rewarded with the most donations. Over time, the think tanks became dependent on a lavish flow of dollars, and the Plutocrats attained effective control over Republican ideology.

One of the more zealous true believers in this ideology was Ronald Reagan. In 1981, Reagan became President promising lower taxes and proclaiming that "government is not the solution to our problems; government IS the problem." That was the pivotal capitulation. At that point, the Republican party quietly and willingly became a de facto subsidiary of the Plutocrats.

It's worth noting that, in this process, no conspiracy or collusion was necessary between the various Plutocrats. They were and are united by sharing a common enemy: government regulations and taxes. They all bribe in pitch-perfect unison without even needing to talk to one another.

Money—for the right-thinking think tanks, the loyal candidates, and the can-do Beltway lobbyists—has always been their carrot, but the Plutocrats now have a stick. Tea Party candidates have become the Plutocrats' enforcers. As we all saw in the 2010 mid-term elections, if any Republican isn't prepared to drink the Plutocratic Kool-Aid, they can count on being opposed by a massively-financed Tea Party candidate in their next primary.

Thus the Plutocrats' control over the Republican party has closed like a vise. Respected moderates like Mike Castle were eliminated in the 2010 GOP primaries by Tea Party candidates. Remaining moderates like Olympia Snow are an endangered species. There is little hope that even a universally-admired Republican like Colin Powell could rise up to wrest control from the Plutocrats.

...little hope, but two remaining, puzzling questions: Many of the surviving Congressional Republicans are people of principle; how were they seduced into adopting the Plutocrats' agenda? Next, how did these hijacked Republican standard-bearers then persuade millions of lower-income Americans to vote for the Plutocrats' agenda and against their own interests?

It required a kind of alchemy. If that sounds medieval, it's apt. The alchemy in this case is Libertarianism, a somewhat obscure but persistent political philosophy. Like the classic alchemist's dream of turning lead into gold, it has never proven workable but has always attracted passionate believers.

The Hijacking's Alchemy

Without Libertarianism as a philosophy, the hijacking could never have happened. It's the rarely acknowledged but indispensable Swiss army knife of right-wing ideology. Its fiercely anti-Government, anti-tax doctrine gives Republicans a rationale for prostituting themselves to the Plutocrats. It provides an excuse for their shameful unwillingness to pay for wars and government services.

Libertarian worship of "free market capitalism" has proved tailor-made to justify the Plutocrats' demands for deregulation (the root cause of the Wall Street crash, the BP oil spill, and countless other disasters).

Any coherent understanding of American politics today requires some knowledge of Libertarianism—a knowledge most Americans lack. Here's a quick overview.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, a Libertarian "is one who advocates maximizing individual rights and minimizing the role of the state."

"... maximizing individual rights" refers to civil liberties, which sounds good to most Americans. That's what makes Libertarianism so seductive, especially to young people. What makes it dangerous is how "maximizing individual rights" is coupled with "minimizing the role of the state," as if the state was the enemy of individual rights rather than the guarantor.

This upside-down view of reality was popularized in the 1950s by Ayn Rand, charismatic author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. She portrayed the real producers in society as independent, wealthy and talented heroes, burdened and oppressed by government. Her biographer Jennifer Burns called her a "gateway drug to life on the right."

By 1972, Rand's extremist anti-government philosophy merged with older Libertarian thinking and free-market ideology into the American Libertarian Party, which has fielded a presidential candidate every election year since 1972. Twice this candidate has been Ron Paul, whose mild-mannered country doctor charm has put a friendly, almost reasonable face on Libertarianism. By 2006, polls showed that 15 percent of American voters identified themselves as Libertarian.

All these people either fail to grasp, or are in denial about, Libertarianism's fatal flaws:

1. It sells a cruel mirage by flattering Americans as rugged individualists, self-sufficient and contemptuous of Medicare, Social Security, etc. Sadly, that arrogant self-image dissolves in the face of sickness, disability, and old age. I've never met a Libertarian who wasn't either wealthy or young and healthy.
2. It rejects the long human struggle to develop civilized societies with empathy for those who need help. It defies Judeo-Christian traditions about being our brother's keeper, and scorns Mahatma Gandhi's belief that "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members."
3. Its outrage over government growth ignores society's obvious need to protect the planet and cope with the world's growing complexities. Environmental regulations never entered our forefathers' thoughts when we were four million people in a mostly unexplored wilderness; now, with 311 million creating garbage, controls are desperately needed. We didn't need the FAA until our skies got crowded; now we do.
4. It cites wasteful spending as a prime evil of government, as if bureaucracy and waste were not universal in all human endeavors. Even well-run small businesses have human problems and make mistakes. So the FDA is not perfectly efficient? Instead of trying to fix it, Libertarians would dismantle it, trusting the capitalist profit motive to somehow keep our food safe.
5. Its blind belief in a free-market economy is a triumph of theory over real-world experience. If we learned nothing else from the Bush years, when runaway U.S. banks almost destroyed the world's economy, we should have learned that capitalism simply can't be trusted to regulate itself.

Libertarianism has never worked in any country because it denies basic human needs and is far too simplistic to provide practical governance. In the words of one bright young Republican, Meghan McCain, "Libertarianism is logical in the classroom and not necessarily applicable in real life."

Nevertheless, in its contempt for government and celebration of individual self-sufficiency, Libertarianism is absolute catnip for Americans who yearn for the simpler times of our pioneer ancestors. These are the zealous True Believers. How

can you distinguish them from those who cynically claim Libertarian beliefs merely to mask their greed and lack of social conscience? It doesn't really matter; they're both equally dangerous.

This is the cornerstone ideology of the hijacking. Now let's look at how the Plutocratic Republican machinery works.

The Hijacked Republicans' Propaganda Machine

The Plutocratic Republican political strategy is breathtakingly brazen: to manipulate ill-informed working Americans into voting directly against their own interests—i.e., to allow more water and air pollution, and to give tax breaks to billionaires.

This manipulation strategy is implemented with a well-organized propaganda factory. At its upstream end, several dozen conservative think tanks churn out papers on current events, foreign relations, etc. All of these articles and opines are based on carefully selected actual facts, cleverly woven together with simplistic elements of Libertarianism, jingoistic patriotism and everyone's aversion to taxes.

Downstream, this professionally-prepared propaganda is fed to Republican politicians, who wrap themselves in flags, guns and religion and promise to "restore the constitution," reduce taxes for everyone, and "get government off your back".

Democrats are portrayed as socialists trying to steal Americans' liberty and freedom, as enemies of free enterprise, as wastrels in favor of a welfare state, as godless secularists attacking Christian family values, and as traitors who somehow put a black man in the White House.

In response to these threats, Republicans must "take back our government," and doing so may require our "Second Amendment rights." With this, the Plutocratic Republican rhetoric flirts with insurrection—recklessly dangerous in an already-gun-crazed nation.

There's nothing new, of course, about political propaganda. But what is new is the recent evolution of media outlets. Before 1980, nothing like Fox News or right wing talk radio existed, and the Internet was in its infancy. Now, with talk radio and the Internet, any political message can reach most of the population.

This wider array of media offers synergy to the Republican machine's highly disciplined propaganda. Because their messages all conform to the master party line, these various media outlets form a self-reinforcing, self-verifying echo chamber. The messages can be quite disconnected from reality, but they are convincing in their consistency, and the echo chamber becomes a familiar comfort zone. Unless you force yourself to step outside, it becomes your own confirmed truth.

Of these outlets, the least understood by liberals is right-wing talk radio. If your car radio should happen to stop on such a channel, you'll hear some guy haranguing you about how Obama is a secret Muslim, how his Stimulus didn't create a single job, how the START treaty proves he wants to unilaterally disarm the U.S., or how Pelosi is really "Mussolini in a skirt,"—on and on. It's annoying, crazy talk, so you turn the dial.

By doing so, you miss the power of talk radio. Its effect takes time and repetition, like Chinese water torture. To grasp its insidious potency, imagine yourself as Joe Six-pack, a typical guy with money worries and family distractions, someone who "keeps up on things" by watching a hour or so of Fox News each evening.

Imagine that you have a two-hour commute—one hour each way to work and back. The car radio brings you Dennis Prager in the morning and Michael Medved going home. These guys are very, very good at what they do. They give you the inside scoop on Obama's endless misdeeds, his traitorous "Marxist regime," and grave foreign threats being ignored. You hear this two hours a day, five days a week, year after year. And what you hear is "confirmed" on Fox News.

This is classic brainwashing. Over time, it works on virtually anyone, regardless of IQ or education. As Joe Six-pack sits in traffic, the lies he hears over and over provide an answer for why his life isn't better, and slowly, they become his worldview. Which, per a 2010 poll of Republicans, includes the following:⁹

- 31 percent believe Obama is a racist who hates white people.
- 23 percent want their state to secede from the U.S.

The Republican propaganda machine has succeeded in brainwashing millions of American voters, leaving them not only primed to vote Republican, but paranoid, angry about government, cynical about democracy, and ready to reach for their guns. Which is fine with the Plutocrats. The last thing they want is a contented populace with minds clear to reflect on what exactly the Republican party really offers them.

These brainwashed millions add to the science-deniers, states-righters, and Christians awaiting Rapture, creating a huge block of our electorate which is susceptible to the vote-against-your-interest manipulation that is critical to the Plutocrats' strategy.

So that's the hijacking, how it happened, its ideology, and how it works. It's the key to understanding American politics today. Once you get your head around the fact that conservative ideology and the Republican party are controlled by Plutocrats, our biggest political and economic problems snap into place and are readily understandable.

The Hijacking and the Deficit

For example, take the deficit (approaching \$14 trillion in late 2010), falsely attributed by Republicans to "tax and spend Democrats." The truth is that all Presidents prior to Reagan patriotically contributed to paying down our WWII debt.¹⁰

Then came the hijacking, and from Reagan through G.W. Bush, Republican administrations increased our national debt by roughly \$9 trillion (Clinton actually ran a small surplus). [10] Most of that \$9 trillion was, quite simply, a Republican payoff to the Plutocrats in the form of irresponsibly low taxes. (An interesting micro-example: the Bush tax cuts continue to put an extra \$187,000 in George W.'s personal pocket each year.¹¹)

But turning America into a debtor country wasn't bad enough. The hijacking also brought a profound shift in our population's thinking about debt. Reagan came into office preaching "Voodoo Economics" (so named by George H. W. Bush), severing the link to depression-era realities learned by our grandparents.

Suddenly, after years of relative fiscal conservatism, U.S. citizens heard the President himself—a lovable and believable father figure—telling us we didn't have to "pay as we go" after all. This permissiveness marks the start of the great American consumer borrowing binge, which brought us to the 2008 housing bubble and crash.

The final connection between the Republican hijacking and the deficit is a masterpiece of devious subtlety. Remember, for the Plutocrats, the whole point of the hijacking was to reduce government regulations and taxes—and nothing accomplishes those objectives better than shrinking government.

And how do you scare the American public into supporting smaller government? With huge deficits. Huge, scary deficits that "will have to be paid off by your children and grandchildren." With that image filling voters' minds, Republicans have neatly framed the entire deficit issue as a matter of cutting Social Security, Medicare and other programs to avoid impoverishing our grandchildren. No one mentions the other solution to the deficit problem: paying for what we spend.

No one mentions that in WWII, the top tax rate was 94% (starting at today's equivalent of \$2.4 million). If today's top tax rate of 34.5% was raised to far less than that, in order to responsibly fund two wars and recovery from the Bush recession, our deficit would steadily come under control. But Republicans (with rare exceptions like Senator Dick Lugar) are in the iron grip of the Plutocrats and will never let that happen. Yachts for billionaires now trump patriotism.

Sadly, we have all become seduced to some degree by Reagan's Voodoo Economics, spoiled by paying insufficient taxes. And alarmingly, even non-Republicans are starting to believe the Plutocrats' propaganda that U.S. corporate tax rates are already "uncompetitive." Which is patently false if you take into account all the Plutocrat-designed loopholes and exclusions in our tax code—but how many people dig through our tax code to find that out?

Then there's the big threat: "If we raise taxes on corporations and the wealthy job-creators, they'll leave the U.S." Such bullsh*t! Big corporations have already outsourced most labor-intensive work—because of wage, not tax, differentials—and the "wealthy job-creators" (the Murdochs and Koch brothers, our version of Russian oligarchs) aren't going anywhere. They know that the U.S. is the best place in the world to live and bring up a family.

The Hijacking and Washington's Dysfunctionality

The hijacking also explains the maddening stalemate in Washington. For nearly two years, Republicans like SC Senator Jim DeMint have openly described their intent to "break" Obama, to seek his "Waterloo." In Oct., 2010, Mitch McConnell,

Senate minority leader, announced "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president."

This obstructionism reveals the core strategy of the Plutocrats. A non-functioning government can't enforce existing environmental and safety regulations, let alone add new ones. If obstructionism brings government to a standstill, so much the better for the Plutocrats.

This is a policy of national sabotage, in effect if not by design. The cost to our country of blocked or crippled legislation, blocked judicial appointments, and unenforced regulation is incalculable.

And the damage is accelerating, compounding. For example, as Republicans pursue "smaller government," funding for public education shrinks, and we fall even further behind other countries (we're now down to #22 in Science¹²). Which suits the Plutocrats just fine: a less-educated electorate is more susceptible to the brainwashing of the Republican propaganda machine—and Republicans gain a further advantage in subsequent elections.

Who's To Blame?

So who's really responsible for this crippling of America? Some pundits, finally waking up to the hijacking, are blaming "Corporate Greed." They are apparently unaware that corporations are intended to be "greedy."

Follow the bouncing dollar sign here: every investor has a natural, legitimate desire to make money on his/her investment. This holds true not just for Wall Street hedge funds, but also for millions of small investors all across America. If you've ever bought a few shares of stock, ask yourself "how much profit is enough?" I'll bet that visions of Microsoft or Google flash across your mind, and your honest answer is "Well, as much as I can get. Why not?"

The Plutocrats' top executives are hired hands, paid to deliver that profit. No matter how outrageously they're paid and how powerful they appear, they can be locked out of their offices in less than 24 hours if they fail to perform. And no level of profitability is ever "enough."

Shareholders and the stock market always want more from them. The pressure for profits is unrelenting and implacable, driving corporations to do anything—anything—within the law to deliver. Morality? Patriotism? Sorry. Not even in the corporate dictionary.

Despite the enormous damage the Plutocrats have done to our country, we cannot call them evil. It was not their deliberate plan to hollow out industrial America by shipping jobs overseas. Nor is it their personal intent to impoverish working Americans and destroy the environment. They are simply doing their job: producing profits for themselves and return on investment for us shareholders.

Toward that goal, and with the same brilliance and ruthlessness that made them global leaders, they found a legal way to control their government environment and maximize their profits: the hijacking.

To sum up, the core problem of the hijacking is not in the legitimacy of corporate profits. Nor does it lie in the legality of the hijacking's methods; massive political contributions are, sadly, within the law. It's the cold, inhuman amorality of corporations. That's what makes them unsuitable to be in control of any human society—especially American democracy. That's what made Lincoln "tremble for the safety of my country."

What To Do

First, we must recognize that the hijacked Republican party is poised to become irreversibly entrenched in power—through additional Supreme Court appointments and reactionary legislation. By gaining control of the Senate and winning the Presidency in 2012, they may become unstoppable.

The Plutocratic Republican juggernaut cannot be stopped in the courts (thanks again to the Roberts Supreme Court Citizens United decision). Nor with utopian ideas or protests. It can only be done at the ballot box, and certainly not with some Ralph Nader-like third party. It will require the massive efforts of an existing political entity which already has money, momentum and infrastructure. That means the Democratic party, with all of its flaws. It's our only real-world alternative to Plutocracy.

For now, our traditional progressive/conservative arguments must be considered secondary. A national emergency confronts us: the Plutocratic Republican party vs. patriots of all political stripes, in a battle to save American democracy.

With the Plutocrats currently winning, American patriots need to wake up, get motivated and get in shape for the battle. We've become fat (literally and figuratively) and spoiled (living on borrowed money). We're all too selfish. Our country's in a hole financially, and we all need to sacrifice a little to work our way out.

For example, everyone knows that the real cost of gasoline is far more than we're paying, but we throw a national tantrum if anyone proposes an increase in gas taxes. I'm old enough to remember WWII, when our response to a national crisis was totally different: we all toiled in "Victory Gardens" growing our own vegetables, limited our driving because of gas rationing, and no one complained. We need to find that American spirit again—if we still have it.

And what if we have to work a couple of years longer before Social Security kicks in? Instead of going into knee-jerk protest mode, maybe we should be thankful for the greater longevity that medical advances have given us.

If you're a Democrat, forget progressive purity for now and pull your boots on. Quit pouting in the corner, badmouthing Obama because the Public Option didn't make it into his health care reform. Or because he and Bernanke and Geithner weren't tough enough on Wall Street. Hey, they were rushed. They had a global economy to save.

And how about acknowledging that Obama's "majority in congress" was always a fiction, because the Blue Dog Democrats were really Republicans? How about applauding him for achieving so much progress in two years despite the Blue Dogs, the great Bush recession, and historically unprecedented obstructionism? In this emergency, we are fortunate to have a calm, clear-headed, pragmatic President.

To lead this battle as Democrats, let's get our priorities straight and be more inviting to independents and moderate Republicans. We need to create solidarity with every potential voter who recognizes the threat of Plutocracy.

Most important, don't wait to get active. It will take all of two years for truth about the hijacking to overcome Republican brainwashing. Start today and support Democrats with your money, your time, your heart, and your vote.

If you're an Independent, here's my challenge to you: if you disagree with me about the hijacking, I respectfully invite you to offer an alternate explanation which matches and accounts for the facts cited above—especially the massive shift of wealth from ordinary Americans to rich Americans.

If you're a Republican and have no answer to this challenge, perhaps you will at least consider the awful possibility that the hijacking is a fact—that your party is no longer "of, by and for" American citizens, but "by and for" oligarchs and global corporations which don't deserve your loyalty—and that any vote in any election which strengthens the Republican party is a vote for Plutocracy.

American democracy needs YOU. Let your conscience be your guide. Make Honest Abe proud of you.

¹Anup Shah, *The Rise of Corporations, Global Issues*, Updated: Dec. 5, 2002

²<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/07/opinion/07kristof.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha211> (Income distribution)

³<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/14/opinion/14rich.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=a212> (Tax rates)

⁴<http://www.gallup.com/poll/145109/americans-support-major-elements-tax-compromise.aspx> (Tax cuts & unemployment extension)

⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_personhood (Thomas Jefferson 1816 letter to George Logan)

⁶http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Clara_County_v._Southern_Pacific_Railroad (1886 Supreme Court decision)

⁷http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_United_v._Federal_Election_Commission (2010 Supreme Court decision)

⁸http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/opinion/11sat3.html?_r=1&nl=todaysheadlines&emc=a211 (Coal miner deaths)

⁹<http://www.aolnews.com/the-point/article/daily-kos-poll-of-Republicans-met-with-shock-skepticism/19343356>

¹⁰<http://zfacts.com/p/480.html> (Debt by President)

¹¹<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/03/grayson-bashes-bush-on-tax-cuts/?partner=rss&emc=rss> (Bush tax cut take-home)

¹²http://www.geographic.org/country_ranks/educational_score_performance_country_ranks_2009_oecd.html (Science scores)

Comments

posted by Chris Moran—Online Editor/Content Producer at Newspaper:

"Without Libertarianism as a philosophy, the hijacking could never have happened. It's the rarely acknowledged but indispensable Swiss army knife of right-wing ideology." (My note: Ignore the poor 80s-ish web design of this site. It offers some compelling and reasonable arguments.)

posted by William Miller—Works at Greenville Public Library:

For the most part, this is a solid, informative diagnoses of the problem before us, and how it came to be. But I do think the author seriously down-played the role of Democrats in not standing united for the working men and women in this country over the past quarter century. At about the time that baby-boomers were leaving their peace, love and community world-view behind for careers in the private sector, but still, for social reasons identified themselves as Democrats, the Democratic Party became untethered from its working class, blue collar base. In a word, it became elitist. This is the essence of the problem; if you can no longer identify with poor and working class whites, and you actively insult their Guns, God, and Patriotism world view, then you have left them nowhere to turn but the other party! Why should a working class guy in West Virginia, whose daddy and granddaddy voted Democrat when Democrats paid attention to working class concerns, now feel loyalty to a party led by upper middle class baby-boomers who have never had to take a bus to work, have never had to worry about where their next meal is coming from, and who now live in a suburban cul-de-sac, safely removed from the unwashed masses? Until the Democratic Party remembers its roots, and remembers who its logical base is, it will always be fighting a battle on the enemy's turf. And this is a battle that it cannot, in the long run, win.

20110216-04	17:23	Mark	Fw: A Reminder in History; Viet Nam
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I learned about the U.S. Strategic Bombing in Vietnam in a Vietnam history class. It is true, we could have won the war in a day with the right kind of bombing—perhaps the U.S. was afraid that Russia would get into the war and go against us if we did that. Also; the Chiefs of Staff were not allowed to run the bombing but Johnson's men ran it instead. I don't know about the news mentioned below, but it sure would not surprise me if it played a big role.

General VoNguyen Giap was a brilliant, highly respected leader of the North Vietnam military. The following quote is from his memoirs currently found in the Vietnam war memorial in Hanoi : 'What we still don't understand is why you Americans stopped the bombing of Hanoi . You had us on the ropes. If you had pressed us a little harder, just for another day or two, we were ready to surrender! It was the same at the battle of TET. You defeated us!

We knew it, and we thought you knew it.

But we were elated to notice your media was helping us. They were causing more disruption in America than we could in the battlefields We were ready to surrender. You had won!'

General Giap has published his memoirs and confirmed what most Americans knew. The Vietnam war was not lost in Vietnam—it was lost at home. The same slippery slope, sponsored by the U.S. media, is currently underway. It exposes the enormous power of a Biased Media to cut out the heart and will of the American public.

A truism worthy of note: ... Do not fear the enemy, for they can take only your life. Fear the media for they will destroy your honour

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Two years ago today, Barack Obama was inaugurated as president of the United States . Are you better off today than you were two years ago? Numbers don't lie, and here are the data on the impact he has had on the lives of Americans:

Statistic	Jan., 2009	Feb., 2011	% chg
Avg. retail price/gallon gas in U.S.	\$1.83	\$3.104	69.6% ¹
Crude oil, European Brent (barrel)	\$43.48	\$99.02	127.7% ²
Crude oil, West TX Inter. (barrel)	\$38.74	\$91.38	135.9% ²
Gold: London (per troy oz.)	\$853.25	\$1,369.50	60.5% ²
Corn, No.2 yellow, Central IL	\$3.56	\$6.33	78.1% ²
Soybeans, No. 1 yellow, IL	\$9.66	\$13.75	42.3% ²
Sugar, cane, raw, world, lb. fob	\$13.37	\$35.39	164.7% ²
Unemployment rate, non-farm, overall	7.6%	9.4%	23.7% ³
Unemployment rate, blacks	12.6%	15.8%	25.4% ³
Number of unemployed	11,616,000	14,485,000	24.7% ³
Number of fed. employees, ex. military*	2,779,000	2,840,000	2.2% ³
Median household income (2008 v 2009)	\$50,112	\$49,777	-0.7% ⁴
Number food stamp recipients (10/10)	31,983,716	43,200,878	35.1% ⁵
Number unemployed (12/10)	7,526,598	9,193,838	22.2% ⁶
Number of long-term unemployed	2,600,000	6,400,000	146.2% ³
Poverty rate, individuals (2008 v 2009)	13.2%	14.3%	8.3% ⁴
People in poverty in U.S. (2008 v 2009)	39,800,000	43,600,000	9.5% ⁴
U.S. Economic Freedom World Rankings	5	9	n/a ¹⁰
Present Situation Index (curr = 12/10)	29.9	23.5	-1.4% ¹¹
Failed banks (curr = 2010 + 2011 to date)	140	164	17.1% ¹²
U.S. dollar vs. Japanese yen exchange rate	89.76	82.03	-8.6% ²
U.S. money supply, M1, in billions*	1,575.1	1,865.7	18.4% ¹³
U.S. money supply, M2, in billions*	8,310.9	8,852.3	6.5% ¹³
National debt, in trillions	\$10.627	\$14.052	32.2% ¹⁴

*Dec., 2010 prelim.

Just take this last item: In the last two years we have accumulated national debt at a rate more than 27 times as fast as during the rest of our entire nation's history. Over 27 times as fast! Metaphorically, speaking, if you are driving in the right lane doing 65 MPH and a car rockets past you in the left lane 27 times faster, it would be doing 1,755 MPH! This is a disaster!

Sources: (1) U.S. Energy Information Administration; (2) *Wall Street Journal*; (3) Bureau of Labor Statistics; (4) Census Bureau; (5) U.S.D.A.; (6) U.S. Dept. of Labor; (7) FHFA; (8) Standard & Poor's/Case-Shiller; (9) RealtyTrac; (10) Heritage Foundation and WSJ; (11) The Conference Board; (12) FDIC; (13) Federal Reserve; (14) U.S. Treasury

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I'm a one percenter! (read the last sentence)...This just about says it all.

"Where can I get my pistol engraved like this?"

A reporter did a human-interest piece on the Texas Rangers. The reporter recognized the Colt Model 1911 the Ranger was carrying and asked him 'Why do you carry a 45?' The Ranger responded, 'Because they don't make a 46.'

The old sheriff was attending an awards dinner when a lady commented on his wearing his sidearm. 'Sheriff, I see you have your pistol. Are you expecting trouble?' He promptly replied, 'No Ma'am. If I were expecting trouble, I would have brought my shotgun.'

Beware the man who only carries one gun. HE PROBABLY KNOWS HOW TO USE IT!

I was once asked by a lady visiting if I had a gun in the house. I said I did. She said, 'Well I certainly hope it isn't loaded!' To which I said, "Of course it is loaded, it can't work without bullets!" She then asked, "Are you that afraid of someone evil coming into your house?" My reply was, "No not at all. I am not afraid of the house catching fire either, but I have fire extinguishers around, and they are all loaded too."

HAVE A NICE DAY But don't Monkey with Me...And Remember? I'm a firm believer of the 2nd Amendment!

20110219-01	11:18	SteveB	Re: Who will Protect You & Your Family?
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Dear Tom,

I kind of agree with this one. Yet non-violence is better than violence, peace is better than war, and when push finally comes to shove on our shores, it's going to be a bloody, tragic mess.

"Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose."—Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster, performed by Janis Joplin

20110219-02	18:17	SteveB	Fw: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?
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[Source of original email unknown —SteveB]

1. Republicans not only want to reduce women's access to abortion care, they're actually trying to redefine rape. After a major backlash, they promised to stop. But they haven't.
2. A state legislator in Georgia wants to change the legal term for victims of rape, stalking, and domestic violence to "accuser." But victims of other less gendered crimes, like burglary, would remain "victims."
3. In South Dakota, Republicans proposed a bill that could make it legal to murder a doctor who provides abortion care. (Yep, for real.)
4. Republicans want to cut nearly a billion dollars of food and other aid to low-income pregnant women, mothers, babies, and kids.
5. In Congress, Republicans have proposed a bill that would let hospitals allow a woman to die rather than perform an abortion necessary to save her life.
6. Maryland Republicans ended all county money for a low-income kids' preschool program. Why? No need, they said. Women should really be home with the kids, not out working.
7. And at the federal level, Republicans want to cut that same program, Head Start, by \$1 billion. That means over 200,000 kids could lose their spots in preschool.
8. Two-thirds of the elderly poor are women, and Republicans are taking aim at them too. A spending bill would cut funding for employment services, meals, and housing for senior citizens.
9. Congress voted yesterday on a Republican amendment to cut all federal funding from Planned Parenthood health centers, one of the most trusted providers of basic health care and family planning in our country.
10. And if that wasn't enough, Republicans are pushing to eliminate all funds for the only federal family planning program. (For humans. But Republican Dan Burton has a bill to provide contraception for wild horses. You can't make this stuff up).

[20110219-03](#) 18:20 Charis Re: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?

Dear SteveB,

While these spending cut proposals do make me hopping mad, my question would be, what is the solution to our multi-trillion dollar deficit and foreign debt?

[20110219-04](#) 18:51 SteveB Re: Have Republicans Declared War on Women?

Dear Charis,

Ah, as Shakespeare said, "Therein lies the rub!" I don't think it will happen, because our politicians are totally corrupted by large campaign contributions, but taxes on the rich need to be increased, government needs to be smaller and more efficient, without the savings being born by those in poverty. Illegal immigration and free trade need to end immediately. Companies need to be encouraged to manufacture in America by manipulating taxes—make it here and pay less taxes, make it "there" and be penalized. Education must not be cut, but more of our educational resources need to go to Americans and not foreigners. Markets need to be a little more regulated (but not as "regulated" as Bolivia's sugar market). :-) We have to work much harder to quickly end our dependence on foreign oil. We need electric cars and more trains. We need to bring manufacturing back to our shores. We need to end the wars and shrink the military. Every whining baby American must learn to make some small sacrifices temporarily. We need constitutional amendments in all 50 states and at the federal level to eventually force budget balancing except in cases of direst emergency. We need to learn languages and go out into the world and sell American products. And, unfortunately, we need to gradually inflate our currency to the point that we can pay our debts with cheaper dollars.

If we could do all these things—which of course we won't—we just might save ourselves from joining the Third World.

I'm not pro-abortion, but very much against governmental intrusion into the private lives, bedrooms, and bodies of citizens.

[20110220-01](#) 09:57 SteveB Movie Recommendations

Three well-acted, well-written movies about love that appears out of nowhere, endures great adversity, yet emerges triumphant. I know it sounds sappy, but I like that kind of movie.

- *Original Sin*
- *The Lake House*
- *Only You*

Hope you enjoy!

[20110220-02](#) 13:16 Pam Re: Movie Recommendations

Dear SteveB,

I'll put them on my Netflix list. I like "sappy" movies too:

- *Love Actually*
- *Enchanted April*
- *Sirens* (early Hugh Grant)
- *Truly, Madly, Deeply*

Some more of my favorites:

- *Jean de Florette*
- *Manon of the Spring*
- *Il Postino*
- *Four Weddings and a Funeral*
- *Immortal Beloved*

I saw a crocus and a daffodil in bloom yesterday. It was in the mid-seventies. Today it's 20 degrees cooler. If you watch any of "my" movies, let me know what you think

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20110221-01	14:43	Phil	Fw: Joys of a Muslim Woman
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB

from: http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/religion/a/joys_of_muslim_women.htm:

Analysis: Despite the attribution at the top—"Joys of Muslim Women by Nonie Darwish"—this text wasn't written by Nonie Darwish; indeed, the bottom two-thirds of it refer to her repeatedly in the third person. Darwish confirmed via email that she did not write the article, though it is, in her words, "to a large extent accurate." She also told me her 2009 book, *Cruel and Usual Punishment*, better represents her views.

It should be noted that while the email is at least partially based on Darwish's personal experiences growing up in a Muslim country and reading the Qur'an, it's awash in generalizations and makes pronouncements about Islam and Islamic practices that don't necessarily pertain to all Muslims.

For more on Nonie Darwish's views in her own words, see [Cruel and Usual Punishment \(Interview\)](http://www.familysecuritymatters.org)—<http://www.familysecuritymatters.org>, Jan. 8, 2009.

For a differing view on the Islamic faith, see [Myths About Islam](#) by Christine Huda Dodge—About.com.]

You may have seen this before...but I see it happening in our town....

A VERY INTERESTING READ AND VERY IMPORTANT

Worth the read. Joys of a Muslim Woman. 20 years from now, I will be in Heaven This was written by a woman born in Egypt as a Muslim. This is not hearsay, and it may scare the life out of you.

[Joys of a Muslim Woman, by Nonie Darwish](#)

In the Muslim faith a Muslim man can marry a child as young as 1 year old and have sexual intimacy with this child.

[Consummating the marriage by 9](#)

The dowry is given to the family in exchange for the woman (who becomes his slave) and for the purchase of the private parts of the woman, to use her as a toy. Even though a woman is abused she cannot obtain a divorce. To prove rape, the woman must have (4) male witnesses.

Often, after a woman has been raped, she is returned to her family and the family must return the dowry. The family has the right to execute her (an honor killing) to restore the honor of the family. Husbands can beat their wives 'at will' and he does not have to say why he has beaten her.

The husband is permitted to have (4 wives) and a temporary wife for an hour (prostitute) at his discretion.

The Sharia Muslim law controls the private as well as the public life of the woman.

In the West World (America) Muslim men are starting to demand Sharia Law so the wife cannot obtain a divorce and he can have full and complete control of her. It is amazing and alarming how many of our sisters and daughters attending American Universities are now marrying Muslim men and submitting themselves and their children unsuspectingly to the Sharia law.

By passing this on, enlightened American women may avoid becoming a slave under Sharia Law.

Ripping the West in Two

Author and lecturer Nonie Darwish says the goal of radical Islamists is to impose Sharia law on the world, ripping Western law and liberty in two.

She recently authored the book, *Cruel and Usual Punishment: The Terrifying Global Implications of Islamic Law*.

Darwish was born in Cairo and spent her childhood in Egypt and Gaza before immigrating to America in 1978, when she was eight years old. Her father died while leading covert attacks on Israel . He was a high-ranking Egyptian military officer stationed with his family in Gaza. When he died, he was considered a "shahid," a martyr for jihad. His posthumous status earned Nonie and her family an elevated position in Muslim society. But Darwish developed a skeptical eye at an early age. She questioned her own Muslim culture and upbringing. She converted to Christianity after hearing a Christian preacher on television.

In her latest book, Darwish warns about creeping Sharia law—what it is, what it means, and how it is manifested in Islamic countries.

For the West, she says radical Islamists are working to impose Sharia on the world. If that happens, Western civilization will be destroyed. Westerners generally assume all religions encourage a respect for the dignity of each individual. Islamic law (Sharia) teaches that non-Muslims should be subjugated or killed in this world. Peace and prosperity for one's children is not as important as assuring that Islamic law rules everywhere in the Middle East and eventually in the world.

While Westerners tend to think that all religions encourage some form of the golden rule, Sharia teaches two systems of ethics—one for Muslims and another for non-Muslims. Building on tribal practices of the seventh century, Sharia encourages the side of humanity that wants to take from and subjugate others...

While Westerners tend to think in terms of religious people developing a personal understanding of and relationship with God, Sharia advocates executing people who ask difficult questions that could be interpreted as criticism. It's hard to imagine, that in this day and age, Islamic scholars agree that those who criticize Islam or choose to stop being Muslim should be executed. Sadly, while talk of an Islamic reformation is common and even assumed by many in the West, such murmurings in the Middle East are silenced through intimidation.

While Westerners are accustomed to an increase in religious tolerance over time, Darwish explains how petro dollars are being used to grow an extremely intolerant form of political Islam in her native Egypt and elsewhere. (In twenty years there will be enough Muslim voters in the U.S. To elect the President by themselves! Rest assured they will do so... You can look at how they have taken over several towns in the U.S.... Dearborn Mich. is one... And there are others...)

I think everyone in the U.S. Should be required to read this, but with the ACLU, there is no way this will be widely publicized, unless each of us sends it on! It is too bad that so many are disillusioned with life and Christianity to accept Muslims as peaceful.. some may be but they have an army that is willing to shed blood in the name of Islam.. the peaceful support the warriors with their finances and own kind of patriotism to their religion. While America is getting rid of Christianity from all public sites and erasing God from the lives of children the Muslims are planning a great jihad on America.

This is your chance to make a difference...! Pass it on to your email list or at least those you think will listen. Some of those I'm sending it to WILL NOT! Put your head back under the covers so you can't see the boogie man!

20110221-02 19:29 SteveB Re: Joys of a Muslim Woman

Dear Phil,

Ma fellow Americans (I can clearly hear LBJ saying that now),

This email contains some untruths. There will almost certainly not be enough Muslims in America within 20 years (or ever) to elect a President by themselves. Do the math, if you don't believe me. There are between 2.0 and 2.7 million at the present time.

And I think of myself as a tolerant, open-minded, non-racist world traveler. But I am worried.

Though many Muslims seem to be sweet people, I don't understand why we feel the need to give our country away to them, rather than passing America on to our children and grandchildren, as our parents did. These are immigrants with no plans to integrate into American society. Their plans are to stand apart or even to change American society.

But it is somehow considered un-American and racist to state these truths. One of the biggest problems right now (maybe the biggest) is jobs. And I believe in seniority when it comes to jobs. I want to see the children and grandchildren of American citizens of all races have good jobs. Yet our factories are now in China and India, etc. As I travel around the country, I can't help but notice that every convenience store, gas station, motel, and many of the shops are owned and run by Indians or Pakistanis who barely speak English. I won't even mention taxi drivers Surely this is work/business practically no American considers below them. Where are the Americans?

Why do we feel compelled to give our country and our children's future to strangers who don't even appear to like us? Why is it not OK to say this?

The other day, my wife and I were walking around the lakes of Celebration, Florida...a lovely planned community partly designed and built by Walt Disney near Orlando. Google it. The average home there probably sells for \$1,000,000, despite the bottom falling out of Florida home prices. I embrace the few Cubans here, even the Colombian drug dealers who can afford to live there. With these people we share a cultural heritage. Like the Irish, Italians, Russians, Germans, and Eastern Europeans who came here before them, the Hispanic immigrants, though rightfully proud of their language and culture, are integrating into the American melting pot amazingly rapidly, to my mind. That is their plan and their desire. I like them, though there are a tad too many of them, especially the illegal variety.

But, frankly, when I saw a Muslim woman coming down the path in her burqa, I felt resentment. Sorry, my friends even more liberal than I, I just don't feel enough guilt to want to allow these people to steal the rightful places of my children and grandchildren. Let them return to their homelands. I don't really want them here, and I say that out of love, not racism.

Unfortunately, though this email exaggerates, it also contains a lot of truth about Muslim treatment of women.

20110221-03 21:53 Tom Video: "Rewriting Black History Month"

Video: "Rewriting Black History Month" by AlfonZo Rachel, PJTV

<http://www.rantrave.com/Rave/Black-History-Month---A-Different-Take.aspx>

<http://www.pjtv.com/?cmd=mpg&mpid=84&load=4853>

This is a very good view, well done presentation.

AlfonZo rewrites black history on this episode. AlfonZo takes serious issue with black history month and is not afraid to say why. For example, why is it that you never hear about black Republicans? Zo thinks it is time to wrest control of the educational system from the Democratic party and set history free. Find out more.

20110222-01 08:26 SteveB Re: "Rewriting Black History Month"

Dear Tom,

..."Black Republicans"??? Like Mr. Five-Years-of-Silence, Clarence Thomas? What a buffoon that guy is! Another fool: Michael Steele!

Let's face it, there are good, fundamental reasons why about 90% of blacks and union members are Democrats. Or do you want to go back to Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*? Not me!

Without the unions, working conditions in the U.S. would be just like those in China or Haiti. Or do you imagine that rich employers love you? In my working life, I always recognized that, in reality, it was them against me! That's the way it's always been and the way it will always be.

The rich deserve their bigger share of the pie, but not the whole damn pie!

20110222-02 11:04 SteveB Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear GaryC,

All I can say is that if current trends continue, our great nation is in very, very much trouble. We're on our way to the Third World.

By the way, the U.S. has the about the lowest tax rates of any First World country. I don't think it will happen, because our politicians are totally corrupted by large campaign contributions, but here are the things that I think need to be done.

Taxes on the rich need to be increased, government needs to be smaller and more efficient, without the savings being born by those in poverty. Illegal immigration and free trade need to end immediately. Companies need to be encouraged to manufacture in America by manipulating taxes—make it here and pay less taxes, make it "there" and be penalized. Education must not be cut, but more of our educational resources need to go to Americans and not foreigners. Markets need to be a little more regulated (but not as "regulated" as Bolivia's sugar market). :-) We have to work much harder to quickly end our dependence on foreign oil. We need electric cars and more trains. We need to bring manufacturing back to our shores.

We need to end the wars and shrink the military. Every whining baby American must learn to make some small sacrifices temporarily. We need constitutional amendments in all 50 states and at the federal level to eventually force budget balancing except in cases of direst emergency. We need to learn languages and go out into the world and sell American products. And, unfortunately, we need to gradually inflate our currency to the point that we can pay our international debts with cheaper dollars.

20110222-03 18:50 SteveB Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget; Gasoline Tax

Dear GaryC,

Oh...and one other thing I think should be done: Gasoline taxes should be raised and constantly adjusted to maintain the price of a gallon of gasoline at \$5 to \$6 (at least). This would reduce consumption, help our federal deficit, and allow the more rapid development of alternative vehicles and public transportation. (What a fool the Republican governor of Florida is for refusing \$2 billion for high speed rail!) Even if oil were to fall to \$20/barrel, this gasoline price should be maintained via the adjustable tax. I'm tired of our alternative development efforts being sabotaged by the oil producers yo-yoing the price of oil. We need to get wise to their cr*p.

Go Libya!

20110222-04 20:06 GaryC Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget; Gasoline Tax

Dear SteveB,

I totally agree on the gas tax. That is really a no brainer as it would keep kids from cruising around and would get more people to look at public transportation. When I am in Europe, I rarely drive but take trains everywhere. Also, in China I take trains whenever I can. I do see why the governor in Florida did not take the money. That corridor is not traveled that much. I would rather see an eastern seaboard, west coast and maybe central line to start and then start filling in the pieces. If I could ride the train to Chicago or Cincinnati, I would never drive.

20110223-01	15:18	GaryC	Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget
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SteveB: All I can say is that if current trends continue, our great nation is in very, very much trouble. We're on our way to the Third World. By the way, the U.S. has the about the lowest tax rates of any First World country.

GaryC: Really, where did you get this information? Are you talking personal income tax or corporate income tax? I do know a little about this but if this is the case, it has sure changed in recent years. Plus, and this is a big plus, almost all foreign countries DO NOT tax income earned outside of their territory unlike the U.S., so the local rates might be higher but the income included is much lower.

SteveB: I don't think it will happen, because our politicians are totally corrupted by large campaign contributions, but here are the things that I think need to be done.

GaryC: Yes, including contributions from unions. Do you think it is any surprise that so many unions have received waivers from Obama Care?

SteveB: Taxes on the rich need to be increased, government needs to be smaller and more efficient.

GaryC: Yes.

SteveB: Without the savings being born by those in poverty. Illegal immigration and free trade need to end immediately.

GaryC: Illegal immigration, yes, Free trade, no. This works both ways. I personally believe the poor will be hurt more if we restrict trade. The poor jobs, mainly at Kmart, Walmart and Costco. If China prices go up by 20-30%, it will be the poor paying the price.

SteveB: Companies need to be encouraged to manufacture in America by manipulating taxes—make it here and pay less taxes, make it "there" and be penalized. Education must not be cut, but more of our educational resources need to go to Americans and not foreigners. Markets need to be a little more regulated. (but not as "regulated" as Bolivia's sugar market). :-)

GaryC: Yes and no. Protect people but not industries or create more government jobs to intrude on commerce. This is a fine line and no one (Repubs or Dems) every gets the right balance. Self regulation is the best with government oversight.

SteveB: We have to work much harder to quickly end our dependence on foreign oil. We need electric cars and more trains. We need to bring manufacturing back to our shores. We need to end the wars and shrink the military. Every whining baby American must learn to make some small sacrifices temporarily. We need constitutional amendments in all 50 states and at the federal level to eventually force budget balancing except in cases of direst emergency We need to learn languages and go out into the world and sell American products. And, unfortunately, we need to gradually inflate our currency to the point that we can pay our international debts with cheaper dollars.

GaryC: Yes to the above. I am not a Tea Party guy, but I may become one listening to your rhetoric. One thing I will disagree with you on is the need to tax (soak) the rich. I think rates need to go down to encourage investment and growth. I think the vast amount of deductions or credits need to be eliminated to do away with social engineering and industry preferences. I also think everyone needs to pay something to the government albeit it a small amount. If you have no skin in the game and only have your hand out for freebies, how do you think you will vote? If we reduce the rates and eliminate deductions and credits, we shrink the IRS and get more compliance. One thing that scares the hell out of me is the fact that only about 55% of American families pay tax now. When that number goes over 50%, we will have really big problems and class warfare will erupt like never before. Guess who pays in that scenario? It would sure be

nice if we had term limits and politicians had to recuse themselves on votes concerning an interest benefiting their contributors.

[20110223-02](#) 17:17 SteveB Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear GaryC,

We're not that high, especially when you consider the effective rate (not really shown here):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tax_rates_around_the_world.

<http://www.sourcingline.com/country-data/smb-effective-tax-rate/>.

And I still say the effective personal tax rate is not nearly high enough for upper brackets after the Reagan and Bush cuts have put it at a near record low at a time the contribution is badly needed. The gasoline tax, as we've discussed, would also help the deficit. Also, marijuana should be legalized and taxed highly. I also believe there should be a special "gay" tax (very high). Other taxes I would consider to alleviate the deficit—a Muslim tax, a special illegal immigrant tax, and (highest of all) a special "ugly" Muslim or illegal immigrant tax. Ugly, gay, Muslim illegal immigrants would pay 100%.

[20110224-01](#) 12:08 GaryC Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear SteveB,

I would really hate to see you pay higher taxes because you are ugly and gay but if you personally feel you should pay more, then more power to you. And, thanks. BTW, if the liberals are all concerned about the rich paying more taxes why don't they voluntarily pay more?

Also, I really don't understand the soak the rich argument of liberals (and I consider myself a liberal on many issues). When I was younger and working 50 hours a week and going to school, I paid much higher rates than what a person of comparable salary pays today. The consequence was that it took me longer to save up \$100,000 to start my first business. Had the rates been lower and investment lending more attractive, I would have begun my personal business career much sooner.

Assuming I have more disposal income with lower rates, I have four options for the extra cash. One, put it in the bank and earn 1/4%. Two, expand my current businesses or start a new business and hire more people. This puts people to work at the lower end of the earnings scale. Three, spend the money on hookers, wine and fun. This puts money into the economy mostly at the low income wage scale. Fourth, give the money to charity to help the poor in ways I deem most useful.

Or, under your approach, I can give it to Washington and let weak people spend it in ways to insure they stay in power.

For me, this is a no brainer argument. I feel way better spending the money in the way I want instead of letting whores spending it for me. (Excluding of course those young women who want to make me feel better for 2—3 minutes).

BTW, you never did respond to my query regarding the responsibility of the poor to our society.

[20110224-02](#) 21:40 SteveB Re: 15 Tax Hikes Hidden in Obama's New Budget

Dear GaryC,

The responsibility of the poor is to consume and be maids and gardeners and Wal-Mart workers for low wages. Too bad they don't have public transportation and decent cheap housing like the poor of Bolivia enjoy.

I don't think business taxes should be increased, merely tailored to what society needs. Look how slow the investment has been in alternative vehicles and fuels. Look how all our manufacturing has been shipped overseas. Taxes can help correct these situations.

Oh, another partial remedy I didn't mention: oil companies should be made to pay royalties on Gulf oil! Not have a free ride for billions of taxpayer dollars. Also, you know the rich and big corporations do many things to lower their effective tax rates (aka loopholes). The poor don't have these opportunities. But I think everyone should pay something and vote. Take a look, though, at the corporations in your investment portfolio and see what effective tax rate they pay.

Regardless, we're deep in debt and need to do something to get out. More importantly, we need a booming economy, which now seems impossible under current trends.

All I know is we went wrong 20-30 years ago and it's probably too late to correct the course of the ship without great hardship. Many Americans are already experiencing this hardship—I could give you a myriad of examples. The rich need to share a little in this hardship, not enjoy record low tax rates.

When are you getting to Florida again? Just watched the shuttle launch a while ago. My first. So very cool!

20110224-03 23:08 Tom "Missouri Ahead of the Game in Dealing with Illegal Immigration"
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FYI: Missouri has no illegals....

I believe Missouri's laws make that very clear and give our law enforcement officials the authority they need to deal with the problem.

"Missouri Ahead of the Game in Dealing with Illegal Immigration" by Nita Jane Ayres, *The Ozarks Sentinel*

May 13, 2010, (<http://ozarkssentinel.com/missouri-ahead-of-the-game-in-dealing-with-illegal-immigrantsp1034.htm>)

Missouri's approach to the problem of illegal immigration appears to be more advanced, sophisticated, strict and effective than anything to date in Arizona.

So, why doesn't Missouri receive attention?

Answer: There are no Mexican illegals in Missouri to demonstrate.

The "Show Me" state has once again shown us how it should be done. There needs to be more publicity and exposure regarding what Missouri has done.

In 2007, Missouri placed on the ballot a proposed constitutional amendment designating English as the official language of Missouri. In Nov., 2008, nearly 90% voted in favor! Thus, English became the official language for ALL governmental activity in Missouri. No individual has the right to demand government services in a language OTHER than English.

In 2008, a measure was passed that required the Missouri Highway Patrol and other law enforcement officials to verify the immigration status of any person arrested, and inform federal authorities if the person is found to be in Missouri illegally. Missouri law enforcement officers receive specific training with respect to enforcement of federal immigration laws.

In Missouri, illegal immigrants do NOT have access to taxpayers benefits such as food stamps and health care through Missouri HealthNET.

In 2009, a measure was passed that ensures Missouri's public institutions of higher education do NOT award financial aid to individuals who are illegally in the United States.

In Missouri, all post-secondary institutions of higher education to annually certify to the Missouri Dept. of Higher Education that they have NOT knowingly awarded financial aid to students who are unlawfully present in the United States.

So, while Arizona has made national news for its new law, it is important to remember, Missouri has been far more proactive in addressing this horrific problem.

Missouri has made it clear that illegal immigrants are NOT welcome in the state and they will certainly NOT receive public benefits at the expense of Missouri taxpayers.

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."—Thomas Paine

"A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."—George Bernard Shaw

"There is no worse tyranny than to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him."—Robert Heinlein

"Dictators ride to and fro on tigers from which they dare not dismount. And the tigers are getting hungry."—Sir Winston Churchill

<http://www.usasurvival.org/911.shtml>

<http://www.bartleby.com/>

<http://euphoricreality.com/>

20110225-01	19:09	Dennis	"Obama's Secret Plot to Bring 100 Million Muslims to the U.S." & "The Plutocrat's Coup d'Etat, Their Republican Allies & Their Democratic Enablers"
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Fantasies and realities...

Read what the wackos are now saying about Obama in the first article.

However, if you're sane and prefer to know what's really going on, read the second instead.

"Obama's Secret Plot to Bring 100 Million Muslims to the U.S." by David Corn, Islamophobia Today

Feb. 25, 2011, (<http://www.islamophobiatoday.com/2011/02/25/obamas-secret-plot-to-bring-100-million-muslims-to-the-us/>)



In the past few years, paranoid conservatives have cooked up all sorts of conspiracy theories about President Barack Obama. Some have claimed he has a secret plan to confiscate guns. Others have said he has a secret plan to confiscate IRA accounts. Still others have contended he's setting up clandestine FEMA concentration camps. And, of course, there's the big one: Obama's is an undercover socialist purposefully trying to wreck the U.S. economy so he can implement a dictatorial takeover. But here's the mother of all right-wing conspiracy theories: Obama is scheming to bring tens of millions of Muslims—perhaps up to 100 million—from the Middle East into the United States in order to turn this country into an Islamic nation by the end of his second term.

Fortunately, this diabolical plan has been exposed by an American-born Israeli named Avi Lipkin, who says he once was a translator for the Israeli government, and an outfit called Special Guests, which books conservative commentators and advocates on popular television and radio talk shows. Lipkin's website claims that since 1990 he has lectured on various topics—including the threat of Islam and Israel—in over 1000 churches and synagogues in the United States, Canada, England, Greece, Israel, and other countries. His bio notes that he heads the Judeo-Christian Bible Bloc party in Israel. (The party's Facebook page listed 103 members yesterday.)

This week, Lipkin and Special Guests sent an email to television and radio bookers pitching the biggest story of all time:

According to Arabic language broadcasts intercepted and interpreted by Lipkin and his team, "The Moslem world is saying that President Obama wants amnesty for the current Hispanic 12 million illegal immigrants in the U.S. in order to pave the way for the next wave of tens of millions of illegals from the Middle East to the United States, leading to 50 to 100 million Muslims living in the U.S. before the end of Obama's second term, which will be brought forth by these new U.S. citizens voting for their savior, Obama."

Lipkin, who also goes by the name Victor Mordechai, claims to have "a source with a senior United Nations official" (whatever that means) who says that the United States "will be a Muslim country by the end of Obama's second term." This grand plan is so organized that it even has three parts. Phase One: Obama foments unrest in "each Middle East country" so that these regimes are toppled and replaced by "fanatic" Sunni Muslims, who go on to "overthrow the competing Shiite regime in Iran without involving American troops." Phase Two: A massive exodus of Muslims heads toward Europe, Canada, and the United States, turning all of these Western nations into Muslim countries. Phase Three:

The nations now controlled by Islamic extremists “march on Israel in an effort to destroy it” and Obama “keeps his promise...to destroy Israel.”

Of course, there’s a YouTube video (embedded below) that explains Lipkin’s scoop. It’s called, “Is Barack Obama Really A Saudi/Muslim ‘Plant’ in the White House?” The answer is obvious. The video claims that “for years before” the 2008 election, Lipkin’s wife, who worked for the Israeli government monitoring Arabic radio broadcasts, picked up broadcasts of Saudis saying, “We will have a Muslim in the White House in 2008.” (Remember Obama’s bow before the Saudi king in 2009? Wink, wink.) The video notes that Obama has refused “to reveal” his long-form birth certificate “or anything else about his past.” (Convergence with the birthers!) The video suggests that Obama and his crew have pulled off the “greatest...scam in history” and “put an anti-American and Saudi-sponsored Muslim in the White House, thanks to a brain-dead American public and news media, both obsessed with skin color and an American Idol mentality.” The video goes on to say that in 2009 Lipkin’s wife listened to an Egyptian television broadcast featuring the then-foreign minister saying that Obama had sworn to him that he was a Muslim. Obama—according to Lipkin’s account of his wife’s account of the foreign minister’s account—also told this Egyptian official that after he finished with the health care debate, “You Muslims will see what I will do for Islam regarding Israel.”

The video does not specifically cover Obama’s secret scheme to bring up to 100 million Muslims into the United States. But isn’t that what a Saudi plant would do?

Avi Lipkin puts Glenn Beck to shame as a conspiracy theorist. But though he’s on the fringe, he’s not on his own. His video has been viewed 2.9 million times. And Special Guests is an outfit that works within the conservative establishment. According to its website, the organization has collaborated with the National Right To Life Committee, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, the Second Amendment Foundation, and other conservative groups. The site boasts, “We regularly place guests on radio shows including Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, Sean Hannity Radio, [and] Michael Savage.” The group says it only promotes causes that “are pleasing to The Maker, our Creator.” It asks potential clients, “What is your special message? Is it helpful to humanity? Is it God-honoring?” Apparently, it pleases God to accuse the president of covertly plotting—and implementing!—a Muslim takeover of the United States.

(David Corn is Mother Jones’ Washington bureau chief. He’s also on Twitter and Facebook.)

[“The Plutocrat’s Coup d’Etat, Their Republican Allies and Their Democratic Enablers” by John Atcheson, CommonDreams](#)

Feb. 25, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/02/25-1>)

For thirty years, now, Republicans have been yammering about small government, deficits, the glories of the free market, and the incompetence and wastefulness of government.

It’s all been a big lie, part of a well funded and cleverly executed coup d’etat, designed to enable the ultra rich and corporations to literally take power out of the hands of government and money out of the pockets of individual citizens.

Democrats have either actively participated in the coup or watched in near silence. The press has been passively playing the part of a mute stenographer. The basis of this coup is simple—money has become the lingua franca of political power, eclipsing the vote.

They’ve just about pulled it off.

Hyperbole? Hardly. Let’s examine their message against their actions.

[Do Republicans Really Favor Small Government?](#)

Nope. Republicans and their corporate over lords were never really concerned with making government small. In fact, the size of government exploded under Reagan and Bush II, and we didn’t hear a peep out of Republicans. In the last thirty years, only Clinton reduced the size of government significantly, and he did so while declaring “the era of big government” to be over.

[What they really wanted was a weak government.](#)

Government is one of the only forces capable of preventing the excesses of unconstrained markets, so step one of the Plutocrat's coup had to be to thoroughly discredit it. It began with Reagan's famous quote, "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem," and despite massive and growing evidence to the contrary, it's been repeated so often, that it is now accepted as revealed truth.

Don't look for the Democrats to set things straight, though. If Republicans are merely paid mouthpieces for corporate America, Democrats are wholly owned subsidiaries of it. As for the main stream media? They are corporate America.

Are Republicans Genuinely Worried about Deficits?

Not so much. Here again, deficits grew under Reagan, Bush I, and Bush II. In fact, Reagan and Bush II added more to the deficit than all previous Presidents combined, and again, not a peep was heard. In recent times, only Clinton reduced it. If deficits were really an issue, we should have heard protests well before Obama took office.

What the Republican Plutocracy has really been doing is to "...starve the beast down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub." That's why Republicans increased the budget while decreasing revenue—not a good strategy for dealing with deficits, but a great way to create excuses for selectively shrinking key government programs. In Wisconsin, for example, Walker gave away \$140 billion in tax breaks to industry cronies just weeks before declaring the compelling need cut government workers' salaries and eliminate their right to conduct collective bargaining. The State's Legislative Reference Bureau, the equivalent of the federal government's non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, said that absent those tax cuts, Wisconsin would have run a budget surplus.

Talk About Bait-and-Switch

The looming showdown in the House of Representatives over deficits is similarly a self-inflicted hot foot. Simply eliminating the Bush tax cuts for the rich, cutting back agricultural subsidies, closing a few corporate tax loopholes (including the infamous offshore tax provisions which reward companies for moving jobs out of America), instituting a small financial trading tax (something that would have the added benefit of reducing market volatility) and reducing the defense budget to reasonable levels would enable us to approach a balanced budget with relatively little pain. And each of these are supported by the majority of Americans.

So, if there are politically popular, pain-free strategies for balancing the budget that actually create jobs and help the economy, why aren't we even discussing them? Because they don't "starve the beast."

The fact that Republicans are picking on the miniscule portion of the budget devoted to the poor and middle class shows they're not serious. There simply isn't enough there to make even a small dent in the deficit. But a large pool of unemployed workers with no safety net certainly helps the fat cats keep wages down.

How About the Notion that Unconstrained Markets Create Prosperity and Jobs? Again not so much. The fact is, laissez-faire, free market policies have failed miserably every time they've been tried. It turns out they have a nasty habit of consistently causing grotesque income inequalities, huge market volatility and severe financial collapses. In fact, the Great Recession we are now climbing out of should have been strike 3 for the Free Marketeers. Strike one was the Panic of 1893 and the depression which followed it. Strike two was the Great Depression of the 30's. In all three cases, these collapses were preceded by conservative, laissez-faire policies featuring deregulation, low taxes and weak governments.

Three tries—each resulting in a catastrophic economic meltdown. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out this strategy doesn't work. But it does help the Plutocrats continue their policy of plundering the nation's wealth.

Is Government Really the Problem?

There was a time when people knew that government was a critical contributor to our nation's prosperity. Up until the 80's many folks still remembered how government had won two World Wars. They knew that it had been instrumental in helping us out of a major Depression. They knew that it had built world-class infrastructure that created wealth—including dams, public buildings, and the federal highway system. They'd watched as government R&D generated unprecedented prosperity and whole new industries, including the agricultural revolution, the aerospace industry, nuclear energy, the Internet, leadership in chip manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and many of the health innovations we enjoy.

Until recently, people realized that government regulation of corporations and the financial sector had assured a level playing field, transparent markets, and international trust, creating the longest sustained period of prosperity in U.S. history—a prosperity that was shared by all.

Portraying the government as a collection of bumbling bureaucrats who can't do anything other than get in the private sector's way and waste our tax money serves three purposes in the Plutocrat's coup. First, it provides a scapegoat for the increasing economic pain people will inevitably feel in a Plutocratic world. Second, it reinforces the desire to cut taxes—to starve the beast. Why give incompetent boobs and wastrels more money? And third, it prevents citizens from looking at government as an effective solution to the problems created by a Plutocratic society.

The Press as Mute Stenographer

At one time, facts would have been more important than slogans and the media would have given people those facts, exposing The Big Lie as a steaming pile of elephant dung in our collective national living room. The fact that Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans health programs have an overhead of 4% or less, and produce better outcomes than private health insurance with its 30% overhead would have been known to folks, and lies about death panels wouldn't have survived.

The fact that Social Security is not in danger, that it has nothing to do with current deficits and that it is far more efficient—and less costly—than privatized systems would have mattered. For example, the U.S. Social Security system has an overhead of less than 4%—in Chile, the fully privatized system (which has since been abandoned) had administrative fees as high as 20%.

The fact that government programs are often cheaper and better run, than privatized programs in everything from healthcare, to transportation to water supplies to trash collection to prison administration to firefighting would have been more important than baseless sound bites about government incompetence repeated endlessly. But facts no longer rule. Now, Plutocrats such as Rupert Murdoch control much of the media and rather than exposing the elephant dung for what it is, they shovel more into our national dialogue, piling it higher and deeper, obscuring the truth rather than revealing it.

The End-Game is Near

The thirty-year Plutocratic plan to take over America is reaching fruition. The Republicans have cleverly played a game of divide and conquer and the Democrats have either been active participants or complicit in their silence. The Plutocrats and their Republican allies have taken away workers' rights, reduced their compensation and eliminated their benefits in the private sector, and now they're coming after the public sector, turning it into an all-purpose bogeyman, responsible for all that ails us.

At a time when all workers are getting screwed, the Republicans and the Plutocrats have managed to make them fight among themselves over a rapidly dwindling share, rather than joining together to demand their equitable share of the national wealth.

Here's the deal. Worker productivity in the private sector has been going steadily up for three decades. That means corporations are making more money off of each hour worked. Yet wages have stagnated over that time, and benefits have shrunk. Where has the wealth from the increased productivity gone? Straight into the pockets of the Plutocrats. For example, in 1966, CEOs made about 50 times the minimum wage. Today, they make more than 821 times minimum wage.

Now that government has been all but vanquished, unions and public employees are the last bastion of individual political power and equitable compensation, and there is a clear and concerted effort to break them and discredit them, once and for all. But rather than protest this economic rape by corporations, too many citizens have been duped or distracted. From flag burners, to immigrants, to gay marriage to abortions, to Technicolor terrorist alerts, to myths about incompetent fat-cat government workers, Republicans have been throwing up flack and creating scapegoats. Public workers are simply the latest distraction.

The takeover has been generously funded, cleverly plotted, patiently played, and skillfully executed.

Democrats, once the Party of labor and the middle class have either actively supported the Plutocratic coup, or stood idly by while it proceeded unopposed. Has Obama championed the efforts of the workers of Wisconsin? Has he used his

eloquence to capture their plight and halt this coup? No. He's squandered this week with empty platitudes about small business and he's introduced a budget that essentially endorses the Plutocrat's lies.

What Can We Do?

Citizens, we have a choice. We can confront this Plutocratic coup, or we can draft an apology to our founders, beg the forgiveness of the brave men and women who fought valiantly over the last two centuries to defend the ideals of this country, and then kiss those ideals goodbye.

At the end of the day, we have the three things that can trump money: truth, the vote and market power. If we insist on candid, transparent discussions on the issues of the day; refuse to vote for dirty-money or mealy-mouthed candidates; and punish Plutocrats like Murdoch and Koch and Rove who intentionally distort the truth in the one place where it hurts—the market place—we can win this country back.

It will take commitment, organization, a willingness to endure some hardship, and a passion for justice and fairness—the kind of things that animated exploited workers back when facts mattered, but it can be done. The pieces of a resistance to the Plutocratic coup are coming together.

Russ Feingold has established a PAC called Progressives United with a mission to reverse the infamous Citizens United Decision and get the money out of politics. Bill McKibben's 350.org has announced a campaign called the U.S. Chamber doesn't speak for me.

Van Jones and progressive groups are creating a movement to restore the American Dream—the notion that government isn't a punch line—it is a contract between we the people; a vehicle that enables us to come together to accomplish that which must be done together; that which has, in times past, made us a prosperous, just, and noble nation.

If we back these efforts, we can prevail. If we don't, then the words of Edmund Burke should haunt our conscience as we slide inevitably into a well-deserved Plutocratic dystopia: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [and women] do nothing."

(John Atcheson's writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, as well as in several wonk journals. He is currently at work on a fictional trilogy that centers on climate change. Atcheson's book reviews are featured on Climateprogress.org.)

20110226-01	11:10	Robert	Fw: Divorce Agreement
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Note: I will be on my Bike heading for Fl. Mar. 1st will likely return 13th of March my computer will be off line and down!!——

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Ref: Divorce Agreement

THIS IS SO INCREDIBLY WELL PUT AND I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT'S BY A YOUNG PERSON, A STUDENT!!! WHATEVER HE RUNS FOR, I'LL VOTE FOR HIM.

Dear American liberals, leftists, social progressives, socialists, Marxists and Obama supporters, et al:

We have stuck together since the late 1950's for the sake of the kids, but the whole of this latest election process has made me realize that I want a divorce.... I know we tolerated each other for many years for the sake of future generations, but sadly, this relationship has clearly run its course.

Our two ideological sides of America cannot and will not ever agree on what is right for us all, so let's just end it on friendly terms. We can smile and chalk it up to irreconcilable differences and go our own way.

Here is a model separation agreement:

Our two groups can equitably divide up the country by landmass each taking a similar portion. That will be the difficult part, but I am sure our two sides can come to a friendly agreement.. After that, it should be relatively easy! Our respective representatives can effortlessly divide other assets since both sides have such distinct and disparate tastes.

We don't like redistributive taxes so you can keep them. You are welcome to the liberal judges and the ACLU. Since you hate guns and war, we'll take our firearms, the cops, the NRA and the military. We'll take the nasty, smelly oil industry and you can go with wind, solar and biodiesel. You can keep Oprah, Michael Moore and Rosie O'Donnell (You are, however, responsible for finding a bio-diesel vehicle big enough to move all three of them).

We'll keep capitalism, greedy corporations, pharmaceutical companies, Wal-Mart and Wall Street. You can have your beloved lifelong welfare dwellers, food stamps, homeless, homeboys, hippies, druggies and illegal aliens. We'll keep the hot Alaskan hockey moms, greedy CEO's and rednecks. We'll keep the Bibles and give you NBC and Hollywood .

You can make nice with Iran and Palestine and we'll retain the right to invade and hammer places that threaten us. You can have the peaceniks and war protesters. When our allies or our way of life are under assault, we'll help provide them security.

We'll keep our Judeo-Christian values.. You are welcome to Islam, Scientology, Humanism, political correctness and Shirley McClain. You can also have the U.N.. but we will no longer be paying the bill.

We'll keep the SUV's, pickup trucks and oversized luxury cars. You can take every station wagon you can find.

You can give everyone healthcare if you can find any practicing doctors. We'll continue to believe healthcare is a luxury and not a right. We'll keep The Battle Hymn of the Republic and the National Anthem. I'm sure you'll be happy to substitute Imagine, I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing, Kum Ba Ya or We Are the World.

We'll practice trickledown economics and you can continue to give trickle up poverty your best shot. Since it often so offends you, we'll keep our history, our name and our flag.

Would you agree to this? If so, please pass it along to other like minded liberal and conservative patriots and if you do not agree, just hit delete. In the spirit of friendly parting, I'll bet you Answer which one of us will need whose help in 15 years.

Sincerely, John J. Wall, Law Student and an American

P. S. Also, please take Ted Turner, Sean Penn, Martin Sheen, Barbara Streisand, & Jane Fonda with you.

P. S. S. And you won't have to press 1 for English when you call our country.

20110226-02 14:49 Robert Fw: This Should Be Posted in Every School
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Isn't life strange? I never met one Veteran who enlisted to Fight for Socialism. [Oh...Ummmmm...uh...I enlisted to fight for socialism and the American way. Actually I was drafted to fight for socialism. —SteveB]

86% will send this on. This should be posted in every school in the U.S. Only 31 words— Think about it

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG, OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA , AND TO THE REPUBLIC FOR WHICH IT STANDS, ONE NATION UNDER GOD, INDIVISIBLE, WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!

[I believe this is probably already posted in every school. Why not? But if the government is going to require such a pledge of its citizens, when is the government going to make a pledge to its citizens to provide "liberty and justice for all"? —SteveB]

If Muslims can pray on Madison Avenue, why are Christians banned from praying in public and erecting religious displays on their holy days?

[They pretty much aren't. —SteveB]

Tell me again, whose country is this? Ours or the Muslims? I was asked to send this on if I agree, or delete if I don't. It is said that 86% of Americans believe in God.

[I think it's 100% of Muslims. —SteveB]

Therefore I have a very hard time understanding why there is such a problem in having 'In God We Trust' on our money and having 'God' in the Pledge of Allegiance. I believe it's time we stand up for what we believe! If you agree, pass this on, if not, delete

20110227-01 07:28 Skimantom2000 Re: This Should Be Posted in Every School; Healthcare

Dear Robert,

This is bullsh*t!! Let me ask all you right wingers: Why is the United States number 46 in health care in developed countries??? And the top countries (number 1 for sure in health care) all have (oh my GOD) Socialized medicine!! MMMM

When the United States had government controlled health care, we were NUMBER ONE in the world!! "Oh my God figure that" Your boy Richard Milhous "f*ck you" Nixon took care of that!!! Our country (which I can have my say, because I put my life on the line for) is on its last legs because of deregulation!! Mostly the right wing f*cks in our government are the ones who put them there!! I rest my case!!!

20110227-02 17:58 SteveB Re: This Should Be Posted in Every School

Yes, this "socialism" cr*p is just more lies concocted by the Republican lie machine. Almost nothing they say is the truth and thinking people know it. Yes, the state of healthcare, the state of the middle class, the state of infrastructure, the state of national debt, the balance of payments, wise energy policy, the very state of the union is in pathetic condition and the fault can squarely be blamed on the Republicans. (Though the Democrats are not much better at times, but they are more honest and bipartisan.)

The real problem is that all our politicians are corrupt and short-sighted. They think only of how they can get re-elected in the next election, how they can get campaign contributions, and how they can pay back the big contributors. The future of America is the farthest thing from their minds. We need campaign finance reform badly, yet notice that this is something the Republicans never talk about. I could go on and on...

20110302-01 10:38 Phil Fw: Letter to Sen. Alan Simpson About Social Security

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says partly true. (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/simpson.asp>) —SteveB]

Alan Simpson, Senator from Wyoming, Co-Chair of Obama's deficit commission, calls senior citizens the "Greediest Generation", as he compared " Social Security " to a Milk Cow with 310 million teats.

Here's a response in a letter from an unknown fellow in Montana, I think he is a little ticked off!

He also tells it like it is! "Hey Alan, let's get a few things straight..

1. As a career politician, you have been on the public dole for FIFTY YEARS.
2. I have been paying Social Security taxes for 48 YEARS (since I was 15 years old. I am now 63).
3. My Social Security payments, and those of millions of other Americans, were safely tucked away in an interest bearing account for decades until you political pukers decided to raid the account and give OUR money to a bunch of zero ambition losers in return for votes, thus bankrupting the system and turning Social Security into a Ponzi scheme that would have made Bernie Madoff proud.

4. Recently, just like Lucy & Charlie Brown, you and your ilk pulled the proverbial football away from millions of American seniors nearing retirement and moved the goalposts for full retirement from age 65 to age 67.. NOW, you and your shill commission is proposing to move the goalposts YET AGAIN.

5. I, and millions of other Americans, have been paying into Medicare from Day One, and now you morons propose to change the rules of the game. Why? Because you idiots mismanaged other parts of the economy to such an extent that you need to steal money from Medicare to pay the bills.

6. I, and millions of other Americans, have been paying income taxes our entire lives, and now you propose to increase our taxes yet again. Why? Because you incompetent bastards spent our money so profligately that you just kept on spending even after you ran out of money. Now, you come to the American taxpayers and say you need more to pay off YOUR debt.

To add insult to injury, you label us "greedy" for calling "bullsh*t" on your incompetence. Well, Captain Bullsh*t, I have a few questions for YOU:

1. How much money have you earned from the American taxpayers during your pathetic 50-year political career?
2. At what age did you retire from your pathetic political career, and how much are you receiving in annual retirement benefits from the American taxpayers?
3. How much do you pay for YOUR government provided health insurance?
4. What cuts in YOUR retirement and healthcare benefits are you proposing in your disgusting deficit reduction proposal, or, as usual, have you exempted yourself and your political cronies?

It is you, Captain Bullsh*t, and your political co-conspirators who are "greedy". It is you and they who have bankrupted America and stolen the American dream from millions of loyal, patriotic taxpayers. And for what Votes? That's right, sir. You and yours have bankrupted America for the sole purpose of advancing your pathetic political careers. You know it, we know it, and you know that we know it.

And you can take that to the bank, you miserable son of a b*tch.

PASS IT ON!!!! And I say double miserable. This is a good one!!! This should be Posted in every school in the U.S.

20110303-01	12:03	Marci	Fw: And God Created Montana
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I love it.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

And God Created Montana ...

God was missing for six days. Eventually, Michael, the archangel, found him, resting on the seventh day.

He inquired, "Where have you been?"

God smiled deeply and proudly pointed downwards through the clouds, "Look, Michael. Look what I've made."

Archangel Michael looked puzzled, and said, "What is it?"

"It's a planet," replied God, and I've put life on it. I'm going to call it Earth and it's going to be a place to test Balance."

"Balance?" inquired Michael, "I'm still confused."

God explained, pointing to different parts of Earth. "For example, northern Europe will be a place of great opportunity and wealth, while southern Europe is going to be poor. Over here I've placed a continent of white people, and over there is a continent of black people. Balance in all things."

God continued pointing to different countries. "This one will be extremely hot, while this one will be very cold and covered in ice."

The Archangel, impressed by God's work, then pointed to a land area and said, "What's that one?"

"That's Montana, the most glorious place on earth. There are beautiful mountains, rivers and streams, lakes, forests, hills, and plains. The people from Montana are going to be handsome, modest, intelligent, and humorous, and they are going to travel the world. They will be extremely sociable, hardworking, high achieving, carriers of peace, and producers of good things."

Michael gasped in wonder and admiration, but then asked, "But what about balance, God? You said there would be balance."

God smiled, "I will create Washington, D.C. Wait till you see the idiots I put there."

20110303-02 18:12 Dennis "Fighting Over Crumbs Left from Military Spending"

Who took your cookie?

"Fighting Over Crumbs Left from Military Spending" by Laura Flanders, CommonDreams

Mar. 3, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/03/03-14>)

There's been a joke going around the labor protests. It goes something like this:

A union member, a CEO and a Tea Party member are sitting at a table with 12 cookies. The CEO grabs 11, turns to the Tea Partier and says "The Union's out to take your cookie!"

I've been thinking that the joke applies pretty well to another situation. For instance, the military. Our military spending grabs 11 cookies and leaves us all battling over the 12th.

Christopher Hellman at TomDispatch added up all the military-related spending in the budget and came to a startling number: for fiscal year 2012, the actual military budget is something like \$1.2 trillion dollars.

Trillion with a T.

Just to put that in perspective for a second, a million seconds is 12 days. A trillion seconds is 31,688 years.

So after all that cash is gone, what are we left with? Not a whole heck of a lot for the rest of us. "Discretionary" spending is nearly 40% of the budget, but if Hellman's numbers are accurate, that \$1.2 trillion eats up nearly 90% of discretionary funds, leaving just 10% for the rest of us. (That doesn't include mandatory spending on things like Social Security and Medicare, which are separate.)

To be fair, Tea Partiers have called for military spending cuts, too. Rand Paul, hardly a progressive, pointed out that you could cut all of the non-military discretionary spending and not balance the budget—and Politifact rated it True.

The point behind the joke still holds, though. Instead of fighting over the last crumbs, maybe it's time to team up and grab some of the cookies back from the people who've been hanging on to far more than their share.

20110304-01 09:45 SteveB Re: "Fighting Over Crumbs Left from Military Spending"

Dear Dennis,

Yep, just like Eisenhower warned 50-some years ago!

But all we need is a third war in Libya and everything will be OK!

20110304-02 10:52 SteveB Apple iPad 2

Dear Ben.

Looks like Apple got the iPad 2 right, with Wi-Fi and USB and all. The new Kindle with Wi-Fi and free 3G for life in 100 countries (including Bolivia) is looking pretty cool too. Still glad I sold my Apple stock at \$345 (bought at \$90-something). I don't think they're going to go too much higher, but if they do, more power to 'em! Now, if I could just get out of my pharmaceutical stocks with a profit!

20110304-03 23:47 Jim Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

I am writing to about everybody in my contact list who lives in Indiana or has ties to Indiana because I am very concerned with the concerted attack on public education by the governor and his cronies like Tony Bennett. I don't usually do something like this but it is a crisis.

I thank the Democratic legislators who left the state to delay action long enough for people to examine the proposals themselves and apply some common sense and pressure on the Republicans, but I am concerned that most people have not done that.

The children and taxpayers of Indiana will suffer greatly if these bills pass and the vengeful Republicans have the votes to force it through the House as soon as they have a quorum. I don't think it can be stopped in the Senate either without a public outcry.

There are a number of bad provisions around but the bill that concerns me most is HB 1479. This sounds like it is concerned for turning around bad schools, but they have done the testing in such a way that all high schools in South Bend and Mishawaka could be given over to a special team set up by or contracted by the state board of education that can be profit-making company. That team can then replace all the teachers and administrators with their own choice of staff and only 51 per cent of the new teachers need to be certified. The team can take over all the buildings and contents with a lease payment of \$1 per year for five years. They have five years to make what the state agrees is acceptable progress and if they do they can transform themselves into an independent school district and get all the same tuition money and building funds as a regular corporation. This could mean six or more school districts in St Joseph county.

For some reason the Republicans are also after local school boards as well as teachers. They want to make each building principal responsible for hiring and firing all the teachers in his/her building rather than having the board and superintendent involved.

In licensing for teaching they are removing the current advisory board that works with the state board and actually has people on it who have taught or are involved with preparing teachers.

I hope more citizens will talk to teachers they know and trust and talk with their legislators. If nothing is done to stop it we will have a very centralized school system run from Indianapolis by politicians and their friends who can make a buck at public expense.

20110305-01 08:30 SteveB Coffee Party

<http://www.coffeepartyusa.com/>

20110305-02 12:03 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

THE REPREHENSIBLE REPUBLICAN ATTACKS ON THE EDUCATION OF AMERICA'S CHILDREN!

GEE, LET'S BALANCE THE BUDGET ON THE BACKS OF OUR CHILDREN AND OUR FUTURE, INSTEAD OF MAKING THE CHEAPSKATE RICH PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE!

AH, GOOD IDEA!

[20110305-03](#) 12:55 AliceMarie Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear SteveB,

In response to SteveB, first, I have not lived in Indiana since 1975, so I know none of the back story of what is happening. My connection is that Jim was a teacher for me back in Mishawaka and continues as such even today with his "virtual" teaching via educational (and funny) emails. Second, during this recession/depression/QE2 economic disaster of the last few years, at the federal level at least, blame should be borne on both sides of the aisle. Obama's QE2 and darned nigh everything else he and his corporatist crew have done has worked to steal from the little guys to give to the rich.

I grew up the daughter of a man who supported his children (and the leftovers his wife brought from her 1st marriage) by working in the bowels of Ball Band—UniRoyal for those who came lately to Mishawaka, Indiana. As a result of "the union," in the mid-1950s, my father gained health care coverage for his family. As a result of the strength of the union, things were good—for a while. However, it was also because of "the union" that there was a six-month strike in 1967-1968 that ended with a nickel an hour raise. And that strike happened because "the union" had become full of itself and refused to police members and make sure that the side paying the wages was getting its full due from all members of the union. And anyone with Michiana connections knows what happened to all of those good "union jobs" in Michiana in the years soon after the '67-'68 six-month strike where "the union" had the gall to look at its members after six months of no wages and say, "We won a nickel an hour for you."

Regarding the overall economic mess, we are fooling ourselves if we pretend this is just "Republicans trying to steal from children to give to or to protect 'the rich.'" Damned nigh EVERYTHING Obama (a Democrat) and his crew have done since taking office has done no more than steal from the poor and from our children's future to protect the wealthy fat-back bankers and corporatists. If you imagine today's disasters can be analyzed in the form of "GOP = working for the rich, and Dems = working for the poor and the downtrodden," you're not seeing or comprehending what has been happening in this country. And if you understand so little, please don't try to paint in your big (and ignorant) brush strokes. And, yes, I agreed with what Jim had to say enough—and I respect him enough—that I did a copy & paste of his message and sent it to over 250 people from the Mishawaka High School Class of 1968.

But overall, the economic disasters of today are not a case of being able to call the Democrats—lead at the top by Obama—as "the good guys." Obama's QE2 and Obama's bank bailout and Obama's funding money to corporations have been nothing more than taking from the poor and giving to the wealthy.

As my son says, "We can debate over whether it is right to take from the rich and give to the poor after we agree that doing the opposite is criminal." And, thus far, except for a few "crumbs to the starving," everything that Obama and his crew have done has been a case of taking from the poor and giving to the rich and powerful.

[20110305-04](#) 12:56 DaveY Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear SteveB,

We are having the same problem in Arizona, not only is Gov. Brewer cutting educational funding by 30%, she is cutting out Medicaid for 250,000 residents (mostly the poor and elderly). So, Steve, lets add balancing the budget on the backs of the poor and elderly too. I am not Democratic nor Republican, but this is just wrong, ethically, morally, and humanitarianly (new word). How shortsighted these politicians are!!! And here's the kicker—they are making it legal for people to carry guns in schools—that should prove real interesting!

[20110305-05](#) 13:00 Bill Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear DaveY,

Not quite that bad here but not too far behind.

[20110305-06](#) 14:37 SteveBA Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Bill,

Every year the education lobby asks for more money or children will be stupid, so we give them more money and they are still stupid. There needs to be a change made, after all doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity. I think that it costs us \$10,000 a year to educate our children, so we aren't getting our money's worth. Where is the problem, let's start with the ISTA and a bloated bureaucratic structure. In the end we are out of money and we can only support so much, so everything is on the table. Does anyone here not think we can get more for less when have thrown so much money at the problem.

[20110305-07](#) 17:53 SteveG Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Hunger, poverty, illnesses, drugs, not having a home, single parents, parents working 2 or more jobs or both parents working all play a part in the decline of the education of American children! If we are truly concerned about our youth and their education a holistic approach needs to be taken rather than a systematic tearing apart of the systems that support youth and their education. The Ben Davis school corporation gave a retiring superintendent a \$1M retirement package. None of the school board read the contract when they voted on it. Indiana has counties with population around 35,000 supporting 3-4 school corporations: Montgomery (3), Clinton (4), Putnam (3.5—Cloverdale consolidated with a school corporation from Owen County decades ago). The township systems in Indiana holds a billion dollars worth of unspent and non-invested money because no one wants to give up control of the money or use it as intended. The problem and the solutions are complex and need to be examined individually and collectively in order to solve the problem.

[20110305-08](#) 20:23 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

SteveBA,

Yet teachers are still underpaid. Take a look at what it costs to live in America!

Despite all the problems, America's school must be among the world's best. I make that judgment based on three things:

1. My experience with the public schools I and my friends attended.
2. My experience with the public schools my children and friends' children attended.
3. The fact that the world seems to want to come here to attend our schools and universities. Why? Because they largely work, despite underfunding.

Maybe it's time to pony up for our children's education instead of over-funding war and the development of China and India. I say that without prejudice. What other country doesn't place the welfare of its own citizens first?

Republicans have lowered the tax rates to the point where no public structure can be maintained except the war machine. Maybe it's time for that to change.

[20110306-01](#) 06:54 Susette Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear SteveBA,

Come on down to a school and give being a teacher a try before your start spouting your invectives. I dare you.

I work at a school every day and in my opinion anyone who is critical of schools had better jump right in. And if you don't have time to give up your lucrative (compared to a teacher's) career come one hour a week and mentor a child who needs just one person who will change their life.

By the way if there were no public school education you would have paid about \$10,000 per child for a private school education—or more. Or whatever pittance you think your own children's education is worth.

20110306-02 08:05 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Susette,

Right on!

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

20110306-03 08:20 Jim Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Video: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-march-3-2011/diane-ravitch>

Here is a link to Jon Stuart's show. You may have to search for Mar. 3 since new ones will be there too. He does his bit first talking about WI and the governors claim about how rich the teachers are compared to others (although like CBS news pointed out if you compare them to others who also have a bachelor's degree they are lower.)

But then he shows all the talking heads when the discussion was going on about extending the Bush tax cuts and the idea of limiting it to families with less than \$250,000 and the comment were all about how nobody can live well on just \$250,000.

After that he has Diane Raditch on talking about her book and the effect of poverty on children's readiness to learn.

It is the full show and takes a while but I thought it was well done.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Fellow Educators and Friends of Education:

I would like you to watch this and share it with anyone who cares about Education in America. It is available at www.TheDailyShow.com and will probably be available on Facebook. The show is from Mar. 3. I don't know what you think of Jon Stewart or The Comedy Channel but I believe this is an important message.

Diane Ravitch (*The Death and Life of the Great American School System*) will be a guest on THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART on the Comedy Channel at 11:00pm Thursday night Mar. 3. It will be rebroadcast at 1:30am, 9:30am, and at 1:00pm and 7:00pm on Friday. I think it might be worth watching. I think Stewart is one of the few insightful, sane, and honest voices on Television. He has been mocking Republican Governors and their approach to School Reform and Unions. Daniels has been mentioned a couple of times.

Video: <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/thu-march-3-2011/diane-ravitch>

20110306-04 08:44 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Alice Marie,

I appreciate your thoughtful reply. I agree with much you say. I have been writing for a long time that both parties are almost totally corrupted by our campaign finance system, which creates nothing but politicians whose hunger for power leaves them deeply indebted to the "fat cats" and, apparently, foreign interests. I agree that I, too, have been disappointed by Mr. Obama.

But it is the Republican ideologues who have led the attack on education, which is the present subject.

It is the Republicans who led the fights during the Reagan and GW Bush administrations to reduce taxes to the point of national bankruptcy, especially the taxes on the "fat cats". This with the promise that the economy and all Americans would benefit. Where is the benefit? Surely this policy has been proven to be the stupidest idea of all time.

It is the Republicans who lead the present and led past attacks on unions. I agree with you that there have been union abuses. But, though not guaranteed by the Constitution the way gun ownership is, surely human beings in America have the right to organize and collectively bargain? Read your history books about what working conditions were like for American's before the unions came along. Read Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, for example. I have seen with my own eyes the abject working conditions here in America sans unions, and in Mexico, China, and Indonesia where so many workers are virtual slaves.

By the way, it was the Republicans who bailed-out Wall St., not Obama, though I think this was a good move and so did Obama. In fact, the government seems to be making a nice profit on the deal. But it was Bush and his stupid wars and overspending that led us to the very brink and to the Great Recession itself. So, your idea of Republican-Democrat equal culpability, though I am no Democrat, I find to be simply incorrect.

20110306-05 11:05 Bill Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Steve(s) et al.,

Great to audit the discourse and debate and gotta throw in my own two cents' worth, mainly from the middle:

At the state level, where borrowing capacities are far, far smaller than that of the federal government, the budgets pretty much have to be balanced. (It's a constitutional requirement in Indiana, for example, although long term financings confined to a sovereign entity, e. g. a municipality building a bridge, are allowed.) It seems to be that the burden must be jointly shouldered, and what I'm talking about is both a bit more taxation and forbearance on the part of those paid from public funds. Both of these may be anathema to respective viewpoints, but the political process, if operating properly, openly, and honestly, can sort it out. I would acknowledge, with others commenting in this string, that I received a decent public school education and that a public education is all that most people will get. Bludgeoning the teachers by removing their right to bargain collectively is a harsh measure; the political changes precipitated in the last election have brought it to that in many states. The public's gratitude to schools and recognition of their importance may cause that harsh measure to be tempered. Abrasion of the two (or more) sides may be productive in finding compromise. These tough times demand it; Ideological victory is a luxury no one should be allowed to have now.

At the federal level, the need for a balanced budget is far, far more aggravated. I'm sympathetic with the stimulus program and to some degree with bailing out the financial firms that are the nexus of the operation of capitalism. Without these, we'd probably be in for a new iteration of the Great Depression and near insuperable unemployment for God knows how long. The national debt, however, must be dealt with. So often, it seems, Washington, D. C., cannot discipline itself or act without a crisis. The debt now approaches \$14 trillion, and debt service on that nearly unreckonable amount will swallow us, if reversal does not materialize—somehow. Our government, a la Argentina and many other undisciplined republics, can inflate the currency and take other sleazy methods to diminish the debt-service load, but, if the load becomes too great, failure to pay means that the treasury won't be able to borrow—at which time the crisis in Biblical proportion is here and government becomes shaky. I suppose there isn't any way a politician can be elected by saying he or she intends to raise taxes, radically cut programs, reduce military spending while staying the hell out of more wars, and temporize on Social Security payments (God forbid!). That is one of democracy's problems; I'll just hope that politicians who do have guts enough to walk that line will find a way to lead.

20110306-06 12:25 AliceMarie Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear SteveB,

I suspect we would agree on little, and my opinion is that you are way wrong on much of your "analysis."

Regarding unions, you didn't see me write that I am opposed to unions, only that there can be and have been problems resulting from unions that become corrupt themselves and that refuse to police members. I don't know about you, but I grew up dirt poor. Jim has known me since I was in 7th grade and he was a young teacher. He has some knowledge of the poverty I grew up in, but not complete knowledge.

Regarding who bailed out Wall Street, that was a joint deal between Bush II and Obama. Don't kid yourself, and don't try to fool others. Save your broad strokes for the ignorant.

The Democratic Party of today long ago walked away from what it was as I grew up. As I understand, you have lived outside the U.S. for many years, and I suspect you may be a little less familiar with what's happening here and perhaps a little more interested in the situation and circumstances existing where you now have your life based.

No matter. That initial knee-jerk response you sent to all of the folks whom Jim wrote about the teacher situation in Indiana was ignorant and typical of left wing liberals who grew up with more privilege than I grew up with. Both of my adult children have been unemployed for about two years now. One had been self-employed and therefore had ZERO unemployment insurance compensation. They are not alone in their circumstances. Things are not good in the U.S.

People are hurting lots. Obama was put in because he was "anyone but Bush," but Obama has shown himself to be equally evil, and Dems who want to beat up on the GOP simply because it's the only song they know aren't part of the solution. There are bad things happening in the U.S. now. You are not on the ground here and cannot see, feel, or comprehend them. Another man on Jim's list responded privately to my tirade basically said my analysis was correct. He's a Ph.D./J.D. economist at U. of Chicago.

So, you began by reading Jim's plea for help to oppose one specific piece of legislation in Indiana and moved it into the typical left-wing attitude of "the GOP are rich and greedy and Bush was awful." Then you misread my comments regarding unions, suggest that I might not have read Upton Sinclair, and suggest that I want to get rid of all labor unions. And then you allow yourself to go back to blaming the GOP for the economic meltdown.

Might I suggest that, regarding the mortgage disaster which is behind much of the economic mess, some big Dems were major causes of the problem. It was the Barney Frank & Pelosi duo who shouted that home ownership was a RIGHT in the U.S., and who promoted the risky mortgage lending that was imposed by the federal government on lenders, and on Fannie and Freddie, who then were forced to buy the often worthless paper.

You've been gone from the U.S. for a long time. [Who says? —SteveB] The Dems no longer are seen as the men in white hats looking out for the little guys.

Talking about "the cheapskate rich" not wanting to "pay their fair share" really does no more than say that all you want done is a redistribution of wealth. Well, your powerful and elected Dems have done lots to redistribute it their way. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER trust a man who became wealthy as a politician. Obama has gained his wealth that way. Bill Clinton gained his wealth that way. Pelosi gained her wealth that way.

The Dems put Obama into the White House. They will have to deal with that shame for decades.

I should end this. We have the mutual friend of Jim, but you and I should simply agree to disagree.

20110307-01	12:40	Dale	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools & "Public vs. Private—Two Entirely Different Animals" & "Time to Restore Voter Control: End the Government-Union Monopoly"
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Dear SteveB,

I live in Wisconsin and have been bombarded with rhetoric from both sides; however, there are some fundamental differences between Public Unions and Private Unions which conveniently get swept under the rug. Perhaps reading the following will help clear up your very fuzzy thinking.

It has been further reported locally that the Public Unions, the teachers' union in particular, are the major sources of campaign funds for the Democrat Senators who are hiding in Illinois right now. Without their financial support, the election/re-election of these people could be severely affected.

This is in concert with your thesis that the political system is corrupt and basically FUBAR. What we are seeing in Wisconsin and other states is a shakeout of at least one element of the corruption. Will it lead to excesses on the other side? Probably, unfortunately.

"Public vs. Private—Two Entirely Different Animals" posted by Brian Lehman, Pundit League

Mar. 1, 2011, (<http://www.punditleague.us/editorials/public-vs-private-two-entirely-different-animals/>)

[“Perhaps the most frequently uttered word on the news the past few weeks has been “union”. Most of it has centered on the events going on in Wisconsin, but term is not alien to even ESPN, as negotiations begin between the players and owners in the NFL. The first affects the fiscal health of our nation; the second affects whether or not the NFL will play next fall. So, in importance, they are roughly equal. But that is besides the point.” Omitted by Dale.—SteveB] The real thing lacking from coverage of these union debates is the crucial difference between private and public unions.

This distinction is missed by those on both sides of the debate. Those on the left, largely supportive of unions, continue to portray the reforms proposed by Governors Walker, Christie and others as attacks on unions in general. At the same time, many on the right, opposed to unions for both political and ideological reasons, also continue to misunderstand the difference. Both sides are missing the fact that most of what people think of as union successes, such as limits to the work week, child labor, etc. are entirely the doing of private unions. Public unions, on the other hand, are a more recent phenomenon and have little in common with their private brethren.

A private union is, and should be, an example of voluntary association. The rights of free association are crucial to the functioning of a free market system, and thus private unions are going to be a part of any free economy. The market has largely relegated these unions to control over a small portion of the workforce, as their usefulness has decreased and the burdens they impose have weighed many companies down. But this process should be controlled by market forces, not by the decisions of government either for or against unionization. For this reason both liberal and conservative attempts to encourage or limit unions should be very limited. For example, there needs to be a healthy debate over whether “right to work” laws are an appropriate intervention. In short, the subject of private unions is one in which good faith individuals can take various positions while still operating within a common intellectual framework.

Public unions, on the other hand, are a very different beast. Instead of regulating the differences between management and employees, these unions involve two parties that are deeply joined—public workers and politicians. In this system, the workers actually do elect their bosses. Through political action they have immense influence in choosing who will negotiate with them. Because of this, the “management” has little incentive to do anything but accede to union demands, lest their own careers be affected. And because the government does not have to worry about going out of business, the natural market forces do not have any effect. In short, it’s an inherently corrupt system that is essentially designed to lead to unsustainable results.

Both sides must then be clear on this. It is deeply dishonest for liberals to continue to conflate the two types of unions as the same thing. This is done for the sole reason of imputing the occasionally celebrated history of private unions on their twisted public counterparts. At the same time, though, conservatives must make clear that the common perception of unions has nothing to do with public unions. [“We have an extraordinary chance to make a very strong moral and ideological case against the unionization of public employees. We can’t get dragged down by generalized anti-unionism. By understanding a bit about the difference between public and private unions, we can make a much more convincing case.” This is what Dale left out here. Note the strategizing about how the party-line can disseminated. —SteveB]

"Time to Restore Voter Control: End the Government-Union Monopoly" by James Sherk, Heritage Foundation

Feb. 25, 2011, (<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/02/time-to-restore-voter-control-end-the-government-union-monopoly>)

(Abstract: With Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker attempting to rein in the unbalanced power of government unions, and given the fierce stranglehold that union members have on their ever-increasing taxpayer-provided benefits, now is a crucial time for Americans to understand the difference between private-sector and public-sector unions. Collective bargaining in the private sphere—where companies face competition—is a world away from collective bargaining in

government—which faces no competition, and where unions have a legal monopoly. Heritage Foundation labor expert James Sherk explains why it is time to restore voter control over elected government, and how it can be done.)

Collective bargaining by unions takes place very differently in government than it does in the private sector. Private-sector unions have competitors and bargain over the profits they help create. The government earns no profits. Government unions have a legal monopoly and bargain for a greater share of tax dollars. Collective bargaining in government means that voters' elected representatives must agree on tax and spending decisions with union representatives.

Collective bargaining also politicizes the civil service. Government unions negotiate contract provisions that force workers to join and subsidize their fundraising. These subsidies have made them the top political spenders in the country. They use that money to lobby for higher taxes and protect their inflated compensation. America can no longer afford these special-interest subsidies. State and local governments should:

- Restore voter control over government spending by ending collective bargaining with government unions.
- Restore a nonpartisan civil service by ending subsidies for union fundraising and giving workers the choice of paying union dues. Voters should tell the government how to spend their money, not the other way around.

Collective Bargaining: The Process

Under collective bargaining, a union is designated as the employees' "exclusive bargaining representative." The employer must negotiate with the union over pay, benefits, and work rules. The employer may not employ workers for anything other than the union-negotiated terms. This gives the union a monopoly on the labor supplied to an employer. Even if other workers would take the job, the employer may not hire them for anything other than union rates.

The Private and Public Sectors

The labor movement grew out of the difficult working conditions of the industrial revolution. The founders of the labor movement saw unions as a way to prevent employers from exploiting workers. They also believed that labor and capital were opposed to one another. They believed that workers and management fought to divide the profits they mutually created. Labor leaders wanted monopoly bargaining power to gain clout to win more of those profits. Competition moderates union demands in the private sector. Unions know that excessive pay makes their employer uncompetitive and puts their jobs at risk.

The government operates very differently. Government employees need not fear exploitive bosses. Since the late 1800's, public employees have enjoyed the protection of civil service laws. The government also creates no profits over which to bargain. Government unions bargain for a greater share of taxes to go to their members. Since the government has no competitors and no profits, unions have little reason to restrain their demands and government has little incentive to resist them. Taxpayers, not government leaders, bear the cost of concessions.

The arguments for unions in the private sector do not apply to government. Up through the 1950s, the union movement recognized and agreed with this analysis. Movement supporters believed, as AFL-CIO president George Meany did, that "It is impossible to bargain collectively with government." President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who signed the National Labor Relations Act, had the same view. In his words, "the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service."

Strikes Paralyze Public Services

Private businesses have competitors. Consequently, private-sector strikes have a limited effect on the general public. Consumers can buy from another company during a strike. A strike by the United Auto Workers against General Motors does not shut down the auto industry—Americans simply buy cars from Ford or Toyota instead.

The government generally has no competition. The public cannot purchase alternative police; alternatives to public education and mass transit are not accessible to everyone. A monopoly on essential services gives government unions tremendous leverage to force concessions from the public. Unless the voters' elected representatives give in, they can grind large parts of the economy to a halt.

Unions are willing to use this leverage. Detroit public school teachers went on strike illegally in 2006. The teachers union ignored the Michigan law prohibiting teacher strikes. As a result, 130,000 students started the school year late while the

union pressed for concessions. The final contract gave the Detroit teachers raises. In Dec., 2005, New York City transit workers went on strike over a proposal to increase their contributions to their pension plans. The strike paralyzed New York City during the busiest shopping days of the year and cost the city an estimated \$400 million a day. The government ultimately agreed to a new contract that did not increase pension contributions.

President Roosevelt deplored the possibility of strikes if government bargained collectively: "A strike of public employees manifests nothing less than an intent on their part to prevent or obstruct the operations of Government until their demands are satisfied. Such action, looking toward the paralysis of Government by those who have sworn to support it, is unthinkable and intolerable."

Binding Arbitration Imposes Terms

Many states recognize the danger of public-sector strikes and have passed laws that prohibit government unions from striking. Instead, "binding arbitration" resolves disputes between the government and unions. Under binding arbitration both unions and management make their case to an arbitrator. The arbitrator considers their arguments and hands down a contract which is binding on both sides. The voters' elected representatives may not choose a different plan. The taxpayers must pay whatever the arbitrator awards, which is often quite generous. Studies show that binding arbitration significantly raises the cost of employing government workers.

Representative Government Undermined

Collective bargaining gives unions a monopoly on the labor supplied to government. This takes away the final say on government policy from the voters' elected representatives. Elected representatives must negotiate with unions over acceptable spending and policy decisions. State and local governments cannot hire nonunion employees to work for different terms. If the government and unions disagree, the union can strike against the public or call in an arbitrator to impose terms.

Collective bargaining forces elected representatives to negotiate a contract with union leaders, excluding all other citizens and potential workers from the bargaining table. Voters' representatives do not fully control spending and tax decisions. They must reach agreement with union leaders who are unaccountable to the general public. This undermines the principle of voter sovereignty. Union leaders once recognized and opposed this. As recently as 1959, the AFL-CIO Executive Council stated flatly that "In terms of accepted collective bargaining procedures, government workers have no right beyond the authority to petition Congress—a right available to every citizen."

Inflated Government Pay

Nonetheless, many state governments decided to bargain collectively. As a result, state and local government employees now earn above-market compensation.

In terms of cash wages, state and local government employees' earnings are comparable to similar private-sector workers, but they receive much more generous benefits. As of Feb., 2011, for instance, government employees in Wisconsin contributed almost nothing to their defined-benefit pension plans, and paid only 6 percent of their health care premiums. In the private sector, workers pay 18 percent of their premiums for single plans and 29 percent for family plans. Including the value of these benefits, state and local government employees earn noticeably more than their private-sector counterparts.

The public pays for these benefits with higher taxes and less spending on other priorities. Some union-funded organizations, such as the Economic Policy Institute, contend that state and local government employees are underpaid. These groups arrive at this conclusion using data from the National Compensation Survey (NCS). The NCS measures private-sector compensation accurately. But for government compensation, it only measures employer pay expenditures—not the value of what the government promises to pay. Thus, the NCS ignores the value of promised pension benefits for which the government has not set aside enough money. It also ignores the value of retiree health benefits.

These benefits systematically inflate government pay. The NCS also omits the value of the strong job security that government employees receive. Studies based on NCS data systematically undercount the value of government benefits, which leads to the claim that state workers are underpaid.

Using Government to Serve Private Interests

Government unions use collective bargaining to profit at the public's expense in ways that go beyond pay. Unions can negotiate contract provisions that direct public resources to the union. The Wisconsin Education Association (WEA) runs a health insurance plan known as WEA Trust. WEA Trust premiums outstrip those of competing insurance carriers. During collective bargaining, however, WEA presses school districts to purchase health insurance through WEA Trust. Currently 64 percent of Wisconsin school districts do so. Allowing school districts to purchase competitively priced health insurance would save Wisconsin taxpayers \$68 million a year.

Collective bargaining also enables unions to negotiate work rules that benefit their members at the expense of quality public services. During negotiations, government unions typically insist on seniority pay and job security. No matter how hard or little they work, they will earn the same amount. This eliminates most of the incentive to shine on the job.

Standard pay regardless of performance also hurts the public. School districts find it almost impossible to reward good teachers or fire bad ones. One study has found that merely replacing the worst performing 5 percent of teachers with average quality teachers would move the U.S. near the top of international math and science rankings. Union contracts that prevent schools from replacing failing teachers hurt children.

Unions further negotiate provisions that benefit them institutionally at their members' expense. Many government employees oppose their union's agenda. In the 28 states without right-to-work laws, however, unions negotiate contracts that require government employees to pay union dues or lose their jobs. Unions also negotiate large subsidies for their fundraising. They negotiate for the government to collect union dues through its payroll system. This spares unions the expense of doing their own fundraising.

Without these provisions unions would bring in far less money. Federal law gives most federal employees the choice of belonging to a union. Most choose not to join. The federal unionization rate is only 18 percent—far lower than for states like Wisconsin, where 50 percent of state and local government employees belong to unions.

Politicized Civil Service

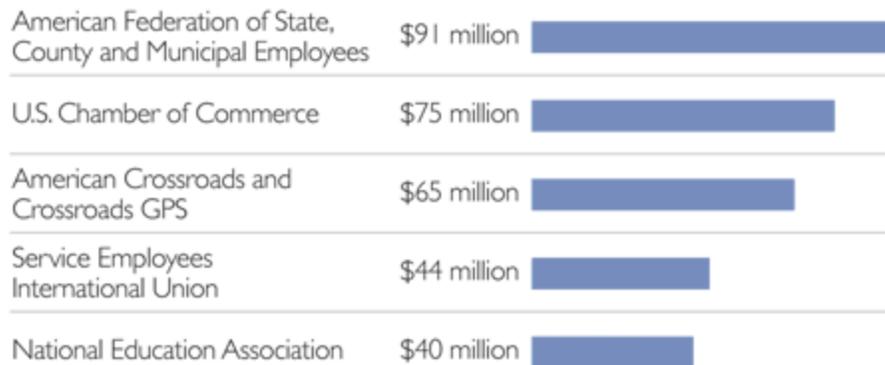
America has embraced the principle of a nonpartisan civil service for more than a century. Government employees should serve the public under the law and under lawful direction of elected officials—not the interests of the union or whichever political party the union favors. Collective bargaining in government politicizes the civil service—because government unions negotiate and decide how much voters and taxpayers will pay for government services. To achieve greater concessions, they campaign for supportive politicians to be their bosses. When they succeed, unions control both sides of the bargaining table: Labor and management will collude to raise government salaries at taxpayer expense.

Unions' special legal privileges give them enormous financial clout. Nationwide, 5.5 million state and local government employees must either pay union dues or lose their jobs. The government subsidizes the collection of these forced dues with its payroll system, raising billions of dollars for government unions.

Part of this money goes to pay union leaders' generous salaries. Gerald McEntee, President of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) earned \$376,000 in base salary in 2009. But government unions spend far more of their money on politics. In the election year of 2008, AFSCME's national headquarters spent 32 percent of its budget—\$63.3 million—on political activities and lobbying. Local AFSCME chapters spent millions more.

Three of Top Five Political Spenders Are Government Unions

Non-Political-Party Spending During 2009–2010 Election Cycle



Sources: Brody Mullins and John McKinnon, "Campaign's Big Spender," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2010; and Steven Greenhouse, "Union Spends \$91 Million on Midterms," *The Caucus*, New York Times Blog, October 22, 2010.

Chart I • B 2522 heritage.org

Government-employee unions now spend more than any other outside group on U.S. elections. Of the five largest spenders in the 2010 election cycle outside of political parties, three were unions that represent government employees. AFSCME took the top spot, spending \$91 million to elect its members' bosses. That total dwarfed the Chamber of Commerce's \$75 million, and the \$65 million raised by Republican Party-allied groups. As Larry Scanlon, head of AFSCME's political operation said: "We're the big dog, but we don't like to brag." This spending gives government unions significant political power.

Government unions use this power to campaign for higher taxes and more government employees—in order to increase union membership and the amount of money flowing to the union from dues. They are the driving force behind most campaigns to raise taxes and prevent budget cuts. They attempt to make government expansion the path of least political resistance. If politicians refuse to support this agenda, government unions will use their power to defeat them.

At times they state this openly. A Service Employees International Union (SEIU) representative told California legislators that "We helped to get you into office, and we got a good memory. And come November, if you don't back our program, we'll help get you out of office." Collective bargaining has thoroughly politicized the civil service in many states. Increasingly—and contrary to basic democratic principles—it is union leaders, not elected officials, who essentially decide how much taxes people pay, and how the government will spend those taxes.

A Policy Choice

Institutional collective bargaining was a policy decision made by state and local governments. Labor unions had traditionally opposed collective bargaining in government. During the 1950s, private-sector union membership peaked and began to decline. The union movement then came to see government employees as valuable new dues-paying members. It reversed its stance on government bargaining in the late 1950s. Beginning with New York City in 1958 and Wisconsin in 1959, many state and local governments across the country began to bargain collectively, largely as a result of union pressure.

Many other states concluded that this decision was a mistake. While 25 states have comprehensive collective-bargaining laws, the remaining 25 states limit collective bargaining for some or all classes of government employees. Voters can exercise full control over their government. Some states, such as Virginia, ban collective bargaining by government unions outright.

Restoring Voter Control and a Nonpartisan Civil Service

Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has proposed restoring voters' control over their elected government. He proposes eliminating negotiations over government benefits and work rules, and requires voters to approve any wage increases beyond inflation. These changes allow Governor Walker to reduce the generosity of government health and pension benefits to close Wisconsin's budget gap.

Walker also proposes significant steps to restore a nonpartisan civil service: He would allow government employees in Wisconsin to keep their jobs without paying union dues. Unions would have to demonstrate support among employees in an annual secret-ballot vote in order to remain recognized as the employees' bargaining representative. The state government would also end collection of union dues through its payroll system. The changes would remove the special privileges that inflate government unions' political clout.

Other states should follow Wisconsin's lead and cease collective bargaining with government unions. Government collective bargaining raises the cost of public services, politicizes the civil service, and directs tax dollars to special interests. The arguments in favor of collective bargaining do not apply to government: The government earns no profits and has a monopoly on its services. Government unions bargain to get more money from taxpayers. This does not serve the public's interests. Elected representatives, not unions, should have the final say on government policy.

States should also stop subsidizing union politicking. The law should not force government employees to hand over hundreds of dollars a year to unions, and should not subsidize union fundraising. Stopping this would go a long way toward restoring a nonpartisan civil service. American government should once again serve the needs of the people.

(James Sherk is Senior Policy Analyst in Labor Economics in the Center for Data Analysis at The Heritage Foundation.)

20110307-02	13:46	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
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Dear Dale, GaryC et al.,

I might be convinced were it not for the attacks on unions of all kinds that have been going on for years now. These latest attacks on "public unions" are just a small part of the overall pattern of attacks on all unions. I believe there is ample historical evidence.

Let's bring back slave labor such as I've seen in Mexico, Indonesia, and China. Let's eliminate more factories and more jobs. Let's see how long all these part-time "service" jobs at Wal-Mart for minimum wage and no benefits are going to last when there is no one left to buy anything except the rich.

Interesting to me how all of this is allegedly so non-political. It's just a coincidence that unions tend to vote for Democrat candidates and that it is Republicans who have led the fight against them, while protecting, aiding, and abetting the "fat cats". And has any of this led to the promised prosperity? Have the huge tax cuts from Reagan to DW Bush brought the promised prosperity and independence? NO! A thousand times no!

My wife is working on her U.S. citizenship here in Florida, so we have recently gone back and re-read the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

We were struck by four glaring omissions from our freedoms (though we have, of course, the explicit right to guns):

1. There is apparently no right to organize as a union, no right to collective bargaining.
2. We are not "innocent until proven guilty" because of anything in the Constitution.
3. We don't have the right to be free from the blatant political corruption caused by large campaign contribution and their undue influence. (Recently backed- up by the Supreme Court.)
4. We don't have a way to control unbridled war, spending, and/or federal debt.

No wonder the middle class is rapidly disappearing! (Check it out! Do you really think that's a good thing?) No wonder our rights are being stripped. No wonder the jobs are gone. No wonder we're on the fast track to becoming bankrupt.

Ask yourself this, which party has led the way in all these catastrophes? I'll give you a hint, it starts with "R".

And I'm not complaining or vociferating because of myself. I'm pretty blessed. Thank you, America the Great! But I can empathize, and I can see the writing on crumbling walls.

But, hey, I'm just a radical communist, right?

20110307-03 16:21 GaryC Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear SteveB,

All things in life follow a pendulum pattern. At any given time there may be too much or too little (depending on where the pendulum is for an object) of a particular item. Unions are needed, but bad unions are not needed. In most cases, the bad unions have nothing to do with the members, it is the leadership. In addition, when union members are protected by legislation and regulatory agencies, the need for union leadership is focused on feathering their own nest at the expense of the membership or the company they are fighting.

The main reason the middle class is evaporating in the Midwest is the lack of manufacturing jobs for unskilled workers. At a certain point, the pendulum went too far in favor of the unions and companies rightly figured out that to be competitive they needed to move elsewhere. Union leadership did this in most cases without understanding the consequences to their constituency. In Anderson, when I was growing up, over 35,000 union jobs were in that town working for GM. Most workers were making \$25 on up. But due to union work rules and labor rate increase, the rates went to over \$40 per hour. The net result is there are ZERO GM jobs in Anderson now.

So what is better, \$25 per hour jobs with job protection by legislation and state or federal agencies or NO JOBS. Just because it is union doesn't make it better or right.

20110307-04 17:48 Sandy Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

I get tired of reading your tirades back and forth! Don't you have anything else to do? Try teaching in the public school for 31 years, as I did, and then I'll give your opinions credibility. Just like I wish each of you could be president for 6 months before you start tearing apart Obama or any other pres. for that matter.

20110307-05 18:29 Dennis "This Time We're Taking the Whole World With Us"

I've been to Easter Island and next month will travel to Central America to view the remnants of the Mayans, a preview of our own delusions and terminal decline.

"This Time We're Taking the Whole World With Us" by Chris Hedges, TruthDig

Mar. 7, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/03/07-0>)

I have walked through the barren remains of Babylon in Iraq and the ancient Roman city of Antioch, the capital of Roman Syria, which now lies buried in silt deposits. I have visited the marble ruins of Leptis Magna, once one of the most important agricultural centers in the Roman Empire, now isolated in the desolate drifts of sand southeast of Tripoli. I have climbed at dawn up the ancient temples in Tikal, while flocks of brightly colored toucans leapt through the jungle foliage below. I have stood amid the remains of the ancient Egyptian city of Luxor along the Nile, looking at the statue of the great Egyptian pharaoh Ramesses II lying broken on the ground, with Percy Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" running through my head:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Civilizations rise, decay and die. Time, as the ancient Greeks argued, for individuals and for states is cyclical. As societies become more complex they become inevitably more precarious. They become increasingly vulnerable. And as they begin to break down there is a strange retreat by a terrified and confused population from reality, an inability to acknowledge the self-evident fragility and impending collapse. The elites at the end speak in phrases and jargon that do not correlate to reality. They retreat into isolated compounds, whether at the court at Versailles, the Forbidden City or modern palatial estates. The elites indulge in unchecked hedonism, the accumulation of vaster wealth and extravagant consumption. They are deaf to the suffering of the masses who are repressed with greater and greater ferocity. Resources are more ruthlessly depleted until they are exhausted. And then the hollowed-out edifice collapses. The Roman and Sumerian empires fell this way. The Mayan elites, after clearing their forests and polluting their streams with silt and acids, retreated backward into primitivism.



People collect scraps from a garbage dump in Hyderabad, India. (AP / Mahesh Kumar A.)

As food and water shortages expand across the globe, as mounting poverty and misery trigger street protests in the Middle East, Africa and Europe, the elites do what all elites do. They launch more wars, build grander monuments to themselves, plunge their nations deeper into debt, and as it all unravels they take it out on the backs of workers and the poor. The collapse of the global economy, which wiped out a staggering \$40 trillion in wealth, was caused when our elites, after destroying our manufacturing base, sold massive quantities of fraudulent mortgage-backed securities to pension funds, small investors, banks, universities, state and foreign governments and shareholders. The elites, to cover the losses, then looted the public treasury to begin the speculation over again. They also, in the name of austerity, began dismantling basic social services, set out to break the last vestiges of unions, slashed jobs, froze wages, threw millions of people out of their homes, and stood by idly as we created a permanent underclass of unemployed and underemployed.

The Mayan elite became, at the end, as the anthropologist Ronald Wright notes in *A Short History of Progress*, "...extremists, or ultra-conservatives, squeezing the last drops of profit from nature and humanity." This is how all civilizations, including our own, ossify and die. The signs of imminent death may be undeniable. Common sense may cry out for a radical new response. But the race toward self-immolation only accelerates because of intellectual and moral paralysis. As Sigmund Freud grasped in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, human societies are as intoxicated and blinded by their own headlong rush toward death and destruction as they are by the search for erotic fulfillment.

The unrest in the Middle East, the implosion of national economies such as those of Ireland and Greece, the increasing anger of a beleaguered working class at home and abroad, the growing desperate human migrations and the refusal to halt our relentless destruction of the ecosystem on which life depends are the harbingers of our own collapse and the consequences of the idiocy of our elite and the folly of globalization. Protests that are not built around a complete reconfiguration of American society, including a rapid dismantling of empire and the corporate state, can only forestall the inevitable. We will be saved only with the birth of a new and militant radicalism which seeks to dethrone our corrupt elite from power, not negotiate for better terms.

The global economy is built on the erroneous belief that the marketplace—read human greed—should dictate human behavior and that economies can expand eternally. Globalism works under the assumption that the ecosystem can continue to be battered by massive carbon emissions without major consequences. And the engine of global economic expansion is based on the assurance that there will always be plentiful and cheap oil. The inability to confront simple truths about human nature and the natural world leaves the elites unable to articulate new social, economic and political paradigms. They look only for ways to perpetuate a dying system. Thomas Friedman and the array of other propagandists for globalization make as much sense as Charlie Sheen.

Globalization is the modern articulation of the ancient ideology used by past elites to turn citizens into serfs and the natural world into a wasteland for profit. Nothing to these elites is sacred. Human beings and the natural world are exploited until exhaustion or collapse. The elites make no pretense of defending the common good. It is, in short, the defeat of rational thought and the death of humanism. The march toward self-annihilation has already obliterated 90 percent of the large fish in the oceans and wiped out half of the mature tropical forests, the lungs of the planet. At this rate by 2030 only 10 percent of the Earth's tropical forests will remain. Contaminated water kills 25,000 people every day around the globe, and each year some 20 million children are impaired by malnourishment. Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere now are at 329 parts per million and climbing, with most climate scientists warning that the level must remain below 350 ppm to sustain life as we know it. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that the measurement could reach 541 to 970 ppm by 2100. At that point huge parts of the planet, beset with overpopulation, droughts, soil erosion, freak storms, massive crop failures and rising sea levels, will be unfit for human existence.

Jared Diamond in his essay "The Last Americans" notes that by the time Hernan Cortés reached the Yucatán, millions of Mayan subjects had vanished.

"Why," Diamond writes, "did the kings and nobles not recognize and solve these problems? A major reason was that their attention was evidently focused on the short-term concerns of enriching themselves, waging wars, erecting monuments, competing with one another, and extracting enough food from the peasants to support all these activities."

"Pumping that oil, cutting down those trees, and catching those fish may benefit the elite by bringing them money or prestige and yet be bad for society as a whole (including the children of the elite) in the long run," Diamond went on. "Maya kings were consumed by immediate concerns for their prestige (requiring more and bigger temples) and their success in the next war (requiring more followers), rather than for the happiness of commoners or of the next generation. Those people with the greatest power to make decisions in our own society today regularly make money from activities that may be bad for society as a whole and for their own children; those decision-makers include Enron executives, many land developers, and advocates of tax cuts for the rich."

It was no different on Easter Island. The inhabitants, when they first settled the 64-square-mile island during the fifth century, found abundant fresh water and woods filled with the Chilean wine palm, a tree that can reach the size of an oak. Seafood, including fish, seals, porpoises and turtles, and nesting seabirds were plentiful. Easter Island's society, which split into an elaborate caste system of nobles, priests and commoners, had within five or six centuries swelled to some 10,000 people. The natural resources were devoured and began to disappear.

"Forest clearance for the growing of crops would have led to population increase, but also to soil erosion and decline of soil fertility," Paul Bahn and John Flenley write in "Easter Island, Earth Island." "Progressively more land would have had to be cleared. Trees and shrubs would also be cut down for canoe building, firewood, house construction, and for the timbers and ropes needed in the movement and erection of statues. Palm fruits would be eaten, thus reducing regeneration of the palm. Rats, introduced for food, could have fed on the palm fruits, multiplied rapidly and completely prevented palm regeneration. The over exploitation of prolific sea bird resources would have eliminated these for all but the offshore islets. Rats could have helped in this process by eating eggs. The abundant food provided by fishing, sea birds and rats would have encouraged rapid initial human population growth. Unrestrained human population increase would later put pressure on availability of land, leading to disputes and eventually warfare. Non-availability of timber and rope would make it pointless to carve further statues. A disillusionment with the efficacy of the statue religion in providing the wants of the people could lead to the abandonment of this cult. Inadequate canoes would restrict fishing to the inshore waters, leading to further decline in protein supplies. The result could have been general famine, warfare and the collapse of the whole economy, leading to a marked population decline."

Clans, in the later period of the Easter Island civilization, competed to honor their ancestors by constructing larger and larger hewn stone images, which demanded the last remnants of the timber, rope and manpower on the island. By the year 1400 the woods were gone. The soil had eroded and washed into the sea. The islanders began to fight over old timbers and were reduced to eating their dogs and soon all the nesting birds.

The desperate islanders developed a belief system that posited that the erected stone gods, the moai, would come to life and save them from disaster. This last retreat into magic characterizes all societies that fall into terminal decline. It is a frantic response to loss of control as well as despair and powerlessness. This desperate retreat into magic led to the Cherokee ghost dance, the doomed Taki Onqoy revolt against the Spanish invaders in Peru, and the Aztec prophecies of the 1530s. Civilizations in the last moments embrace a total severance from reality, a reality that becomes too bleak to be absorbed.

The modern belief by evangelical Christians in the rapture, which does not exist in biblical literature, is no less fantastic, one that at once allows for the denial of global warming and of evolution and the absurd idea that the righteous will all be saved—floating naked into heaven at the end of time. The faith that science and technology, which are morally neutral and serve human ambitions, will make the world whole again is no less delusional. We offer up our magical thinking in secular as well as religious form.

We think we have somehow escaped from the foibles of the past. We are certain that we are wiser and greater than those who went before us. We trust naively in the inevitability of our own salvation. And those who cater to this false hope, especially as things deteriorate, receive our adulation and praise. We in the United States, only 5 percent of the world's population, are outraged if anyone tries to tell us we don't have a divine right to levels of consumption that squander 25 percent of the world's energy. President Jimmy Carter, when he suggested that such consumption was probably not beneficial, became a figure of national ridicule. The worse it gets the more we demand illusionary Ronald Reagan happy talk. Those willing to cater to fantasy and self-delusion are, because they make us politically passive, lavishly funded and promoted by corporate and oligarchic forces. And by the very end we are joyfully led over the cliff by simpletons and lunatics, many of whom appear to be lining up for the Republican presidential nomination.

"Are the events of three hundred years ago on a small remote island of any significance to the world at large?" Bahn and Flenley ask. "We believe they are. We consider that Easter Island was a microcosm which provides a model for the whole planet. Like the Earth, Easter Island was an isolated system. The people there believed that they were the only survivors on Earth, all other land having sunk beneath the sea. They carried out for us the experiment of permitting unrestricted population growth, profligate use of resources, destruction of the environment and boundless confidence in their religion to take care of the future. The result was an ecological disaster leading to a population crash. A crash on a similar scale (60 percent of the population) for the planet Earth would lead to the deaths of about 1.8 billion people, roughly 100 times the death toll of the Second World War. Do we have to repeat the experiment on this grand scale? Do we have to be as cynical as Henry Ford and say 'History is bunk'? Would it not be more sensible to learn the lesson of Easter Island history, and apply it to the Earth Island on which we live?"

Human beings seem cursed to repeat these cycles of exploitation and collapse. And the greater the extent of the deterioration the less they are able to comprehend what is happening around them. The Earth is littered with the physical remains of human folly and human hubris. We seem condemned as a species to drive ourselves and our societies toward extinction, although this moment appears to be the denouement to the whole sad show of settled, civilized life that began some 5,000 years ago. There is nothing left on the planet to seize. We are now spending down the last remnants of our natural capital, including our forests, fossil fuel, air and water.

This time when we go down it will be global. There are no new lands to pillage, no new peoples to exploit. Technology, which has obliterated the constraints of time and space, has turned our global village into a global death trap. The fate of Easter Island will be writ large across the broad expanse of planet Earth.

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(Chris Hedges writes a regular column for Truthdig.com. Hedges graduated from Harvard Divinity School and was for nearly two decades a foreign correspondent for The New York Times. He is the author of many books, including: *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, *What Every Person Should Know About War*, and *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. His most recent book is *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*.)

20110308-01	08:17	Pam	Common Dreams
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Dear SteveB,

Thanks, SteveB, for forwarding those articles from CommonDreams.org. I just joined and suddenly I feel less alone. It's so nice to feel connected—in some fashion—with others who think as I do. I'm not as extreme as some (I use non-organic products and eat meat, though I know I shouldn't do either), but Whew! I've found a community.

20110308-02	08:58	SteveB	Re: "This Time We're Taking the Whole World With Us"
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Dear Dennis,

This should be required reading for all world citizens. I know this article sounds a little like Glenn Beck (Mr. Gloom & Doom), but it comes from a different direction entirely—the realm of truth! Please don't doubt the seriousness of our situation, at least not without serious study and self-examination.

[20110308-03](#) 09:19 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear GaryC,

I enjoy our discussions. I'm familiar with the arguments you present here, but I don't buy them. Without greed and unbridled ambition for power, we would have been able to maintain our manufacturing base (even in the Midwest) even with unions. In my experience, \$25/hour is about what a wage-earner has needed to make to support a family in America during much of my lifetime. Especially if one parent is going to be able to stay at home and actually raise the children.

I don't see how a decent life for people who toil in factories or garbage or landscaping is too much to ask, is detrimental to America, or is too much of a burden for America to bear. But then, we are not beyond "greed and unbridled ambition for power" of the elite, are we?

And I have actually worked in factories with union work rules (thank God!) and without (when I was nearly killed), so I am not without first-hand knowledge on the subject.

Take care. Hope you make it south sometime soon so we can argue this stuff over some beers and reminisce.

[20110308-04](#) 09:44 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Bill,

This union thing has really raised a firestorm (not just a "forest fire")! I always appreciate your reasoned approach to the topics under discussion. I agree with much you had to say below.

But I think "the pendulum went too far in favor of the unions" only because of free trade. Before that, when I paid \$2400 [= \$12,632 in 2011 dollars. —SteveB] for a brand-new, union-made Ford Pinto in 1972, that was an affordable price for even a working-class American, let alone a recent college graduate teaching high school for \$6500/year [= \$34,211 in 2011 dollars. —SteveB].

I guess the recent interchange, above, with an old fraternity brother illustrates the two sides of the issue.

Take care. Don't forget, if you can, please get me a price for Bolivian rights to that coney recipe.

[20110308-05](#) 09:51 SteveB Unions & the Middle Class

Dear GaryC,

I don't see how a decent life for people who toil in factories or garbage or landscaping is too much to ask, is detrimental to America, or is too much of a burden for America to bear. And are only the rich entitled to affordable health care and eventual retirement? But then, we are not beyond "greed and unbridled ambition for power" of the elite, are we?

And I have actually worked in factories with union work rules (thank God!) and without (when I was nearly killed), so I am not without first-hand knowledge on the subject. But I support only the rights of unions—unionism, not particular excesses which could also have been curbed with intelligent, fair legislation., just as the excesses of capitalism in general must be. For the good of society, all excessive "greed and unbridled ambition for power" (even that of unions and politicians) must be curbed by some force.

But, in the long run, for the good of America or any free country, the middle class must prevail. No other option seems workable.

[20110308-06](#) 12:55 SteveB Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools

Dear Sandy,

I taught for 8 years and never "tear... apart Obama". Maybe, though, you have noticed, as have I, that the country seems to be getting into deeper and deeper trouble? That the standard of living of most Americans has declined over our lifetimes? This worries me. I think of my children and grandchildren and their future. Makes me want to try to help. Sorry.

[20110308-07](#) 15:51 SteveB Re: Common Dreams

Dear Pam,

We're currently stuck at a fancy resort in Orlando that I got a great deal on because of my little resort in St. Lucia. And I'm spending a little time pissing off all the Republicans I can...getting my book finally finished up...seeing old friends...trying to cope with the Dept. of Immigration, etc.

It's the last day of Carnival, so we're missing Santa Cruz a lot, missing all the fun. I suppose we could mosey on over to Disney World or somewhere, but I did all that years ago with my kids, so it would not be good now, and those places are all so fake.

One of my old sailing buddies and his wife came over from Jacksonville for the weekend and we always have a lot of fun together. His wife is French but speaks perfect Spanish, so that's a good thing for Marci, though both of them also speak almost perfect English, just with cute accents. Joyce is 69 but looks about 50, so I guess there is hope for us yet.

[20110309-01](#) 10:42 Ben Video: Republicans Attack Voters' Rights in 22 States & "Wisconsin Republicans Really Don't Want Me to Vote" & "Texas Attorney General's Wild Goose Chase"

Dear SteveB,

Republicans attack voting rights in 22 states...

Of course, we knew this was a goal all along.

Make no mistake about it. With huge majorities elected in 2010, the Republicans are at it again with their voter ID "fraud".

Below is a great video from 2 students with their own show in North Carolina. They did a great job putting it together calling out Republicans for their utter B.S.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yINv61hzHdM>

The Republicans have opened up the flood gates with *Citizens United* allowing corporations to make UNLIMITED donations to a political candidate or campaign and now they want to cut all public services in order to pave the way to privatization. Making it harder for people to vote is the last plank in their platform.

It's truly amazing and sad. Check out this article written by a student at the University of Wisconsin:

["Wisconsin Republicans Really Don't Want Me to Vote" posted by David Vines, Huffington Post](#)

Feb. 15, 2011, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-vines/wisconsin-republicansrea_b_822649.html)

Legislator takes aim at UW programs. Among other things, he wants to cut money to a Sociology Department Center because it's too far left, he says.

http://host.madison.com/news/local/article_bed0652e-035e-51b4-97da-aa8c0df1614b.html

State rep wants to stop city's use of Euro-style bike markers (excerpt). "It's basically about liberal extremists in Madison who hate cars and think everyone should bike to work," Nass said. "It is basically making it difficult to use an automobile."

http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt_and_politics/article_233e0e24-6602-11df-a306-001cc4c002e0.html

Our very own Attorney General, Greg Abbott, conducted a 2 year investigation in Texas of the "massive voter fraud". When it was all said and done, his office prosecuted less than 10 people in the ENTIRE state! Voter fraud is a totally bogus issue.

"Texas Attorney General's Wild Goose Chase" by *Austin Statesman* Editorial Board

May 22, 2008, (http://www.statesman.com/blogs/content/shared-gen/blogs/austin/editorial/entries/2008/05/22/texas_ag_wild_goose_chase.html)

After a two-year investigation of voter fraud, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott has only 26 minor cases of voting irregularities to show for his expenditure from a \$1.4 million grant. Some of that money also was spent on other cases.

All of those cases involved Democrats and 18 of them were instances where lawful voters cast proper ballots that were collected and handled by someone else. That's technically illegal unless the carrier's name and address is on the envelope, but it's a petty prosecution.

Actually, the paltry results of Abbott's initiative are a good thing. It shows that vote fraud is hardly the "persistent problem" Abbott claimed it was when he announced the investigation in Jan., 2006. The outcome of Abbott's efforts was published by The Dallas Morning News this week.

Republicans in the Legislature have been pushing for a more stringent voter identification law in Texas. Although the issue died in the chaos at the end of the 2007 session, it is sure to return in January. Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst, who has made tougher voter identification a cornerstone of his administration, will see to that.

Nationally, tougher voter identification laws are favorite issues for Republicans, though there is little evidence of widespread voting fraud. Democrats contend that the GOP effort is a way to suppress turnout, since many of the voters who lack sufficient identification are the poor and elderly and minorities—who tend to vote Democratic.

Abbott's misguided investigation lends credence to the Democrats' argument. Several of the cases prosecuted by the attorney general's office involved people helping homebound senior citizens get and mail absentee ballots.

Is this the great voter fraud that Abbott said triggered an investigation into "a dramatic increase in indictments for voter fraud" in his initial press release? If so, it wasn't worth the time or the money.

In Texas, residents must show identification to obtain a voter's registration certificate that is to be presented when voting. Properly registered voters who don't have the registration card when they go to vote still must show another approved form of identification to cast a ballot.

So it is highly unlikely that Texas is brimming with illegal voters stealing elections. In his two-year probe, Abbott uncovered only eight cases of ineligible voters or manufactured votes. They included one woman who voted for her dead mother, one man who voted twice and three women who used false addresses to get registration cards. While it is proper to find and punish anyone voting improperly, if those eight cases are as bad as it gets, Texas is safe from a takeover at the ballot box.

When Republican lawmakers in January again demand tougher regulations on voters to discourage fraud, they should look at the results of Abbott's assault on what he termed an epidemic of voter fraud. Voting is a right and a privilege, and Texas legislators should make it easier to vote, not deliberately try to suppress it. There is no need to stiffen voter identification beyond what Texas already requires. And, clearly, there is no epidemic of voter fraud as the attorney general first alleged. His own investigation proved it.

"The Greatest Country on Earth?" By Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Slate*

Mar. 7, 2011, (http://www.slate.com/articles/business/project_syndicate/2011/03/the_greatest_country_on_earth.html)

(What the United States can learn from the tiny island nation of Mauritius.)



Suppose someone were to describe to you a small country that provided free education through university for all of its citizens, transportation for school children, and free health care—including heart surgery—for all. You might suspect that such a country is either phenomenally rich or on the fast track to fiscal crisis.

After all, rich countries in Europe have increasingly found that they cannot pay for university education and are asking young people and their families to bear the costs. For its part, the United States has never attempted to give free college for all, and it took a bitter battle just to ensure that America's poor get access to health care—a guarantee that the Republican Party is now working hard to repeal, claiming that the country cannot afford it.

But Mauritius, a tropical island nation of 1.3 million people off the east coast of Africa, is neither particularly rich nor on its way to budgetary ruin. Nonetheless, it has spent the last decades successfully building a diverse economy, a democratic political system, and a strong social safety net. Many countries, not least the United States, could learn from its experience.

In a recent visit I had a chance to see some of the leaps Mauritius has taken—accomplishments that can seem bewildering in light of the debate in the United States and elsewhere. Consider home ownership: While American conservatives say that the government's attempt to extend home ownership to 70 percent of the U.S. population was responsible for the financial meltdown, 87 percent of Mauritians own their own homes—without fueling a housing bubble.

Now comes the painful number: Mauritius's GDP has grown faster than 5 percent annually for almost 30 years. Surely, you think, this must be some "trick." Mauritius must be rich in diamonds, oil, or some other valuable commodity. But Mauritius has no exploitable natural resources. Indeed, so dismal were its prospects as it approached independence from Britain, which came in 1968, that the Nobel Prizewinning economist James Meade wrote in 1961: "It is going to be a great achievement if [the country] can find productive employment for its population without a serious reduction in the existing standard of living. ... [T]he outlook for peaceful development is weak."

As if to prove Meade wrong, the Mauritians have increased per capita income from less than \$400 around the time of independence to more than \$6,700 today. The country has progressed from the sugar-based monoculture of 50 years ago to a diversified economy that includes tourism, finance, textiles, and, if current plans bear fruit, advanced technology.

During my visit, my interest was to understand better what had led to what some have called the Mauritius miracle and what others might learn from it. There are, in fact, many lessons, some of which should be borne in mind by American and European politicians as they fight their budget battles. First, the question is not whether we can afford to provide health care or education for all or ensure widespread homeownership. If Mauritius can afford these things, America and Europe—which are several orders of magnitude richer—can, too. The question, rather, is how to organize society. Mauritians have chosen a path that leads to higher levels of social cohesion, welfare, and economic growth—and to a lower level of inequality.

Second, unlike many other small countries, Mauritius has decided that most military spending is a waste. The United States need not go as far. If the United States reduced by just a fraction its defense spending, much of which goes toward weapons that don't work against enemies that don't exist, it would go a long way toward creating a more humane society, including the provision of health care and education to those who cannot afford them.

Third, Mauritius recognized that without natural resources, its people were its only asset. Maybe that appreciation for its human resources is also what led Mauritius to realize that, particularly given the country's potential religious, ethnic, and political differences—which some tried to exploit in order to induce it to remain a British colony—education for all was crucial to social unity. So was a strong commitment to democratic institutions and cooperation between workers, government, and employers—precisely the opposite of the kind of dissension and division being engendered by conservatives in the United States today.

This is not to say that Mauritius is without problems. Like many other successful emerging-market countries, Mauritius is confronting a loss of exchange-rate competitiveness. And as more and more countries intervene to weaken their exchange rates in response to America's attempt at competitive devaluation through quantitative easing, the problem is becoming worse. Almost surely, Mauritius, too, will have to intervene.

Moreover, like many other countries around the world, Mauritius worries today about imported food and energy inflation. To respond to inflation by increasing interest rates would simply compound the difficulties of high prices with high unemployment and an even less competitive exchange rate. Direct interventions, restrictions on short-term capital inflows, capital-gains taxes, and stabilizing prudential banking regulations will all have to be considered.

The "Mauritius miracle" dates to independence. But the country still struggles with some of its colonial legacies: inequality in land and wealth, as well as vulnerability to high-stakes global politics. The United States occupies one of Mauritius's offshore islands, Diego Garcia, as a naval base without compensation, officially leasing it from the United Kingdom, which not only retained the Chagos Islands in violation of international law but expelled its citizens and refuses to allow them to return.

The United States should now do right by this peaceful and democratic country: recognize Mauritius' rightful ownership of Diego Garcia, renegotiate the lease, and redeem past sins by paying a fair amount for land that it has illegally occupied for decades.

(This article comes from Project Syndicate.)

20110312-01	04:32	Sandy	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
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Dear SteveB,

I didn't mean to be attacking you. I was just telling all of you guys that you need to find a worthwhile hobby! Besides, talking about it doesn't do any good. Find a way to help. I did. I manage a free clothing closet for foster children at our church and I have taken in 16 foster children in the past 2 years. God has a purpose for all of us.

20110312-02	07:10	A. Grayson	Did They Die in Vain?
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Dear SteveB:

On May 4, 1886, in Haymarket Square in Chicago, the public rallied peacefully in support of 40,000 workers in Chicago who had gone on strike, to win the right to organize. The police attacked, and eight died.

On July 6, 1892, in Homestead, Pennsylvania, 3800 workers went on strike, to win the right to organize. Three hundred hired and armed goons attacked them. Five people died.

On Apr. 20, 1914, in Ludlow, Colorado, 1200 coal miners went on strike, to win the right to organize. The Colorado National Guard attacked their shantytown, and burned it to the ground. Nineteen people died. Two women and 11 children were asphyxiated, and they burned to death.

Here and around the world, many people have fought and died, so that you and I would have the right to organize.

And so that 250,000 public workers in Wisconsin would have that right, too.

This is not exactly a new idea. Six months after the Ludlow Massacre, President Wilson signed the Clayton Act, prohibiting the prosecution of union members under Antitrust Law. That was almost a century ago.

Two decades later, during the Franklin Roosevelt's first term as President, he signed the National Labor Relations Act into law. It protects the right to organize. That was over 75 years ago.

The right to organize also is a fundamental principle of international law. Over 150 countries have ratified the "Right to Organize" Convention, an international treaty. It was adopted in 1949, over 60 years ago. So why are we even talking about this, 11 years into the 21st Century?

Because the Teabaggers want to "take back America." They want to take it back, all right—take it all the way back to the 19th century. When there was no right to organize. When people worked for a dollar a day. When grown men competed against children for jobs. When women were barred from most jobs entirely. When you worked until you died.

Not to mention slavery.

I want to see an America that is healthy and wealthy.

They want an America that provides cheap labor to our corporate overlords. An America where the middle class is chained by debt.

We didn't ask for this fight. But we have no choice except to fight back. For the survival of the middle class in America. For us, for our children, and for our grandchildren. And so that the victims in Haymarket, in Homestead and in Ludlow did not die in vain.

As Cardinal Spellman said 45 years ago, "It is a war thrust upon us, and we cannot yield to tyranny." I'm ready to fight for what's right. What about you?

Courage, Alan Grayson

20110312-03	09:32	SteveB	Re: Indiana Governor's Attack on Public Schools
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Dear Sandy,

Thanks for the message. People help in different ways. I have found ways to provide support (from partial to complete) to poor families in St. Lucia and Bolivia by starting businesses using local friends to manage them. I give to many good causes which help people and the Earth.

But, let's face it, our great nation is in deep trouble. It doesn't do any good to run away from that fact. When I was a kid growing up in Greencastle, my barbers (the Eitelgeorge brothers), the fellow who worked at the shoe store, janitors, etc. were able to drive decent (if not new) cars, live in decent (if small) homes, and, often, send their children to college without incurring a mountain of debt. Now people in all those jobs are hurting. Those good jobs and the manufacturing jobs, which were even better, have been replaced by part-time jobs at Wal-Mart, without benefits and paying maybe

\$8/hour. Try to live on that, let alone support a family. We are in decline. There is no need for us to be handing our children and grandchildren a dismal future. I believe in America and Americans.

I have studied this decline. Though there is plenty of blame for both political parties, and though I have been a Republican most of my adult life, I firmly believe it has been the Republicans who have done everything they can to destroy the middle class, move manufacturing offshore, deregulate industries which need regulation (oil companies and banks come to mind), attack education, and enforce their small-minded, often hypocritical morality upon all of us.

If you think I am wrong, you will have to prove it to me. The biggest things leading to our impending bankruptcy are the Reagan and Bush tax cuts and the Bush wars. The deficits created by these overt actions are completely contrary to the proclaimed principles of the Republicans. I also believe their lies (starting with that rat, Richard Nixon) to the American people have been and continue to be monstrous. Like all politicians in our nation completely corrupted by the fat cats and big corporations because of our antiquated campaign finance laws, the Democrats resemble the Republicans, but I have not seen them attack the middle class with the same vigor. Have you?

So I try to do what I can to spread the truth about what is happening in my beloved country. I worry about the fact that we were handed a thriving country and a bright future by our parents (the "greatest generation") and, in one generation, have managed to destroy that promise to leave our children and grandchildren with a future which looks extremely problematical to me and to many other people. Republicans and Democrats alike seem to be extremely worried—and for good reason—but they don't seem to be willing to do much about it.

I commend your efforts to help others. My ways of trying to help may be different than yours. My ways do absolutely nothing to benefit me. I simply believe that it is about time for a call to action. Let us all start trying to work together to start the healing. Let us call to task those who are the problem.

[20110313-01](#) 11:53 SteveB The Church of Steve

Dear Larry,

As you might know, I'm always trying to figure things out, think about what could be next, develop theories and dogma, and try to see if any of it could provide a living. So this is one of my latest theories:

for "The Church of Steve" - You've got to try to be someone God would want to spend time with...because you're going to be spending an eternity together. And he doesn't like to hang with bad or boring people. Maybe, otherwise, heaven can get pretty boring, like it was before Earth and people were created. None of this would be good news for boring Fundamentalist Christians.

What do you think?

[20110313-02](#) 18:15 SteveB Re: Letter to Sen. Alan Simpson About Social Security

Dear Phil,

I certainly agree with you and my fellow Montanan on this one! Another morally bankrupt Republican who wants to destroy the middle class!

[20110313-03](#) 18:21 SteveB Re: Did They Die in Vain?

Dear Pam,

Every time I think the country has taken a turn as bad as possible, so things have to get better, we take a turn in an even worse direction. :-)

But, hey, after robbing Social Security and threatening to further destroy it, a little union busting must seem almost harmless to these a**-holes! End the wars now!

20110314-01 17:29 Pam Re: Did They Die in Vain?

Dear SteveB,

It's really hard for me to take in all the dreadful things going on—here and in the rest of the world. I keep trying to tell myself it was ever thus, but somehow things seem worse than usual lately. It's hard to be an optimist.

Good news: flowers are blooming and it's supposed to be 78 this weekend.

20110314-02 06:09 Larry Re: The Church of Steve

Dear SteveB,

I don't know... You're right, of course, that this would not work with fundamentalists for the most part, but many liberal Quakers (Friends) Churches would welcome you openly, I think. They always need Pastor's but the pay is usually very poor. On the other hand you could often get free housing one way or another and such a job would open up many contacts and, who knows what that could lead to.

You would also find such freedom in Unitarian type Churches and Congregational Churches and quite a few others.

To be honest, I am a Christ centered Quaker, but there are many who are not and would welcome you. As a dear cousin your religion would not affect our relationship in any way, of course.

If you have any other questions or would like more specific information, please ask any time.

20110314-03 08:47 SteveB Re: Did They Die in Vain?

Dear Pam,

Hey, welcome to spring, finally! :-) We've been having such great weather here and there's so much to do.

Yep, the news is all bad. I'm thinking of becoming apolitical again. Hope I can pull it off...at least until the election stuff starts in earnest.

I don't know what the rich are going to do when they have finally destroyed the middle class. Start shooting and bombing the poor who are left a la Libya? What the hell are they thinking? Where do they think all their money came from? Themselves? Our very way of life demands consumers who can spend. And that's really all we are to those people. Things who can consume. Like the people in *Matrix*, who were kept alive by the cold machines only for their body heat.

20110314-04 21:22 Dick "A Speech Every American High School Principal Should Give"

We watched Dennis Prager of Colorado, along with Sara Palin and Tom Brokaw on TV a couple of weeks ago....what a dynamic, down to earth speaker. Even though Palin and Brokaw were also guest speakers they did little but nod and agree with him. This is the guy that should be running for President in 2012!

"A Speech Every American High School Principal Should Give" by Dennis Prager

July 13, 2010, (<http://www.dennisprager.com/columns.aspx?g=07f08515-be95-4197-955e-327f6a0b98f8>)

(If every school principal gave this speech at the beginning of the next school year, America would be a better place.)

To the students and faculty of our high school:

I am your new principal, and honored to be so. There is no greater calling than to teach young people.

I would like to apprise you of some important changes coming to our school. I am making these changes because I am convinced that most of the ideas that have dominated public education in America have worked against you, against your teachers and against our country.

First, this school will no longer honor race or ethnicity. I could not care less if your racial makeup is black, brown, red, yellow or white. I could not care less if your origins are African, Latin American, Asian or European, or if your ancestors arrived here on the Mayflower or on slave ships. The only identity I care about, the only one this school will recognize, is your individual identity—your character, your scholarship, your humanity. And the only national identity this school will care about is American. This is an American public school, and American public schools were created to make better Americans. If you wish to affirm an ethnic, racial or religious identity through school, you will have to go elsewhere. We will end all ethnicity, race and non-American nationality based celebrations. They undermine the motto of America, one of its three central values—*e pluribus Unum*, "from many, one." And this school will be guided by America's values. This includes all after-school clubs. I will not authorize clubs that divide students based on any identities. This includes race, language, religion, sexual orientation or whatever else may become in vogue in a society divided by political correctness.

Your clubs will be based on interests and passions, not blood, ethnic, racial or other physically defined ties. Those clubs just cultivate narcissism—an unhealthy preoccupation with the self—while the purpose of education is to get you to think beyond yourself. So we will have clubs that transport you to the wonders and glories of art, music, astronomy, languages you do not already speak, carpentry and more. If the only extracurricular activities you can imagine being interested in are those based on ethnic, racial or sexual identity, that means that little outside of yourself really interests you.

Second, I am uninterested in whether English is your native language. My only interest in terms of language is that you leave this school speaking and writing English as fluently as possible. The English language has united America's citizens for over 200 years, and it will unite us at this school. It is one of the indispensable reasons this country of immigrants has always come to be one country. And if you leave this school without excellent English language skills, I would be remiss in my duty to ensure that you will be prepared to successfully compete in the American job market. We will learn other languages here—it is deplorable that most Americans only speak English—but if you want classes taught in your native language rather than in English, this is not your school.

Third, because I regard learning as a sacred endeavor, everything in this school will reflect learning's elevated status. This means, among other things, that you and your teachers will dress accordingly. Many people in our society dress more formally for Hollywood events than for church or school. These people have their priorities backward. Therefore, there will be a formal dress code at this school.

Fourth, no obscene language will be tolerated anywhere on this school's property—whether in class, in the hallways or at athletic events. If you can't speak without using the f-word, you can't speak. By obscene language I mean the words banned by the Federal Communications Commission, plus epithets such as "N*gger," even when used by one black student to address another black, or "b*tch," even when addressed by a girl to a girlfriend. It is my intent that by the time you leave this school, you will be among the few your age to instinctively distinguish between the elevated and the degraded, the holy and the obscene.

Fifth, we will end all self-esteem programs. In this school, self-esteem will be attained in only one way—the way people attained it until decided otherwise a generation ago—by earning it. One immediate consequence is that there will be one valedictorian, not eight.

Sixth, and last, I am reorienting the school toward academics and away from politics and propaganda. No more time will be devoted to scaring you about smoking and caffeine, or terrifying you about sexual harassment or global warming. No more semesters will be devoted to condom wearing and teaching you to regard sexual relations as only or primarily a health issue. There will be no more attempts to convince you that you are a victim because you are not white, or not male, or not heterosexual or not Christian. We will have failed if any one of you graduates this school and does not consider him or herself inordinately lucky—to be alive and to be an American.

Now, please stand and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country. As many of you do not know the words, your teachers will hand them out to you.

Dear SteveB,

I'm sure it doesn't matter whether I'm "political" or not. My little voice is a drop in the ocean. The only thing we can do is tend to things close to home and hope for the best. At least from where I sit. Maybe if I were President there would be a thing or two I could do. Maybe. I guess you could call me a lucky, grateful pessimist. Yesterday was exhausting with Atty. He didn't feel good, and I felt just about as bad. He screamed, I sighed, and last night I slept about 13 hours. Amazing what a little shut-eye can do.

Isn't it amazing how one news story pushes the last one right off the front page?! No more New Zealand earthquake, no more Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, or Saudi Arabia. Now it's all Japan. There's just too much happening to take it all in. One of my former students is stranded outside Tokyo. She's over there for a year teaching English. She sounds like she's doing OK, a brave girl, but I bet her parents are having fits.

You sound good. Orlando must be what you needed just now. Any thought of returning to Montana? Take care and keep in touch.

20110315-02 11:53 SteveB Re: Did They Die in Vain? Japanese Disasters, Energy

Dear Pam,

I empathize and suffer with the Japanese people. But I also feel so sorry for the Libyan people, who have been so brave and suffered so much. Now, because the stupid world media can only think about and cover one news story at a time, Kadafi what's-his-a*s can do anything he wants. Ridiculous news coverage. I guess only disaster and suffering sells news, so they can only tell the most horrific story.

I once spent a couple of months in Japan, studying Zen Buddhism. I loved it there and loved the people. Despite that, I have never had a Japanese (or even an oriental) girlfriend, and have always felt a little impoverished for that. Now I will probably never fulfill my fantasy of loving one of those cute little porcelain dolls. But I digress. Isn't it amazing the way they handle a crisis? So stoical, strong, and self-contained, even in their suffering. Now, don't get me wrong. I absolutely love black people and so much of black culture too. My very bestest sailing buddy was a very black guy from St. Lucia and we were the very closest of friends for years. I really loved him...in a non-gay sort of way, of course. :-). Then he was lost at sea...

But what a contrast between Japan in disaster and New Orleans, huh? Interesting. Yet how much great music has Japan produced? Maybe a lot, but I can't appreciate it perhaps. I love the way they don't steal or loot, not because they want to go to heaven or are religious, just because they are basically good and shy and don't want to embarrass themselves or be any kind of spectacle. Something like that used to be cause for suicide, I guess it still is, everywhere...

I am as pi*sed as much at the nuclear engineers of the world and the power companies as I am at the Republicans and our other fat cats. For years and years they've been telling us how safe nuclear power is, and I've been saying, "BS!" They may have containment vessels and redundant cooling systems, but that's not nearly enough. How about simple fail-safe, spring-loaded fuel rod extractors that take over when all else fails? Stupid, stupid, arrogant scientists and engineers. They are idiots in their assumptions and demonstrate how much trouble stupid mankind is in. And they have no idea how to transport and store all the nuclear waste these monsters produce. Maybe the Japanese Godzilla movies weren't so far off. All these plants are disasters waiting to happen.

Enough "venting" for one day. Let us all not suffering disaster appreciate the gift of peace and life. I hope Atty and you are feeling much better. I think Montana is looking unlikely this trip. I'm hoping we make it to Indiana for a while.

20110315-03 13:44 Phil Fw: Bill Gates' Rules for Students

Love him or hate himI thought this was interesting, hope you do too.

[According to snopes.com (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/schoolrules.asp>), Bill Gates had nothing to do with these "rules". Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

(This should be posted in every school or kid's bedroom. Love him or hate him, he sure hits the nail on the head with this!)

Bill Gates recently gave a speech at a High School about eleven things they did not and will not learn in school. He talks about how feel-good, politically correct teachings created a generation of kids with no concept of reality and how this concept set them up for failure in the real world.

Rule 1: Life is not fair—get used to it!

Rule 2: The world doesn't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will NOT make \$60,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your Grandparents had a different word for burger flipping: They called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you thought you were So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room..

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life HAS NOT. In some schools, they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as MANY TIMES as you want to get the right answer. *This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you FIND YOURSELF. *Do that on your own time.

Rule 10: Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

If you can read this... Thank a Teacher. [If you can't read it, thank a Republican. —SteveB] If you can read this in English... Thank a Soldier! And for life and everything else you have... Thank God!! Now... think about this and smile if you agree and please pass this on... If you don't agree, go stick your head in the sand and take a deep breath!

20110315-04 15:50 SteveB "Power Concedes Nothing Without a Demand"
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"Power Concedes Nothing Without a Demand" by Chris Hedges, Truthdig

Mar. 14, 2011, (http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/power_concedes_nothing_without_a_demand_20110314/)

The liberal class is discovering what happens when you tolerate the intolerant. Let hate speech pollute the airways. Let corporations buy up your courts and state and federal legislative bodies. Let the Christian religion be manipulated by charlatans to demonize Muslims, gays and intellectuals, discredit science and become a source of personal enrichment. Let unions wither under corporate assault. Let social services and public education be stripped of funding. Let Wall Street loot the national treasury with impunity. Let sleazy con artists use lies and deception to carry out unethical sting operations on tottering liberal institutions, and you roll out the welcome mat for fascism.

The liberal class has busied itself with the toothless pursuits of inclusiveness, multiculturalism, identity politics and tolerance—a word Martin Luther King never used—and forgotten about justice. It naively sought to placate ideological and corporate forces bent on the destruction of the democratic state. The liberal class, like the misguided democrats in the former Yugoslavia or the hapless aristocrats in the Weimar Republic, invited the wolf into the henhouse. The liberal

class forgot that, as Karl Popper wrote in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, "If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."

Workers in this country paid for their rights by suffering brutal beatings, mass expulsions from company housing and jobs, crippling strikes, targeted assassinations of union leaders and armed battles with hired gun thugs and state militias. The Rockefellers, the Mellons, the Carnegies and the Morgans—the Koch Brothers Industries, Goldman Sachs and Wal-Mart of their day—never gave a damn about workers. All they cared about was profit. The eight-hour workday, the minimum wage, Social Security, pensions, job safety, paid vacations, retirement benefits and health insurance were achieved because hundreds of thousands of workers physically fought a system of capitalist exploitation. They rallied around radicals such as "Mother" Jones, United Mine Workers' President John L. Lewis and "Big" Bill Haywood and his Wobblies as well as the socialist presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs. Lewis said, "I have pleaded your case from the pulpit and from the public platform—not in the quavering tones of a feeble mendicant asking alms, but in the thundering voice of the captain of a mighty host, demanding the rights to which free men are entitled."

Those who fought to achieve these rights endured tremendous suffering, pain and deprivation. It is they who made possible our middle class and opened up our democracy. The elite hired goons and criminal militias to evict striking miners from company houses, infiltrate fledgling union organizations and murder suspected union leaders and sympathizers. Federal marshals, state militias, sheriff's deputies and at times Army troops, along with the courts and legislative bodies, were repeatedly used to crush and stymie worker revolts. Striking sugar cane workers were gunned down in Thibodaux, La., in 1887. Steel workers were shot to death in Homestead, Pa. Railroad workers in the Pullman strike of 1894 were murdered. Coal miners at Ludlow, Colo., in 1914 and at Matewan, W.Va., in 1920 were massacred. Our freedoms and rights were paid for with their courage and blood.

American democracy arose because those consciously locked out of the system put their bodies on the line and demanded justice. The exclusion of the poor and the working class from the systems of power in this country was deliberate. The Founding Fathers deeply feared popular democracy. They rigged the system to favor the elite from the start, something that has been largely whitewashed in public schools and by a corporate media that has effectively substituted myth for history. Europe's poor, fleeing to America from squalid slums and workhouses in the 17th and 18th centuries, were viewed by the privileged as commodities to exploit. Slaves, Native Americans, indentured servants, women, and men without property were not represented at the Constitutional Conventions. And American history, as Howard Zinn illustrated in *The People's History of the United States*, is one long fight by the marginalized and disenfranchised for dignity and freedom. Those who fought understood the innate cruelty of capitalism.

"When you sell your product, you retain your person," said a tract published in the 1880s during the Lowell, Mass., mill strikes. "But when you sell your labor, you sell yourself, losing the rights of free men and becoming vassals of mammoth establishments of a moneyed aristocracy that threatens annihilation to anyone who questions their right to enslave and oppress. Those who work in the mills ought to own them, not have the status of machines ruled by private despots who are entrenching monarchic principles on democratic soil as they drive downwards freedom and rights, civilization, health, morals and intellectuality in the new commercial feudalism."

Our consumer society and celebrity culture foster a frightening historical amnesia. We chatter mindlessly about something called the "American Dream." And now that the oligarchic elite have regained control of all levers of power, and that dream is being exposed as a cruel hoax, we are being shoved back into the cage. There will be hell to pay to get back to where we were.

Slick public relations campaigns, the collapse of public education—nearly a third of the country is illiterate or semilliterate—and the rise of amoral politicians such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, who posed as liberals while they sold their souls for corporate money, have left us largely defenseless. The last vestiges of unionized workers in the public sector are reduced to protesting in Wisconsin for collective bargaining—in short, the ability to ask employers for decent working conditions. That shows how far the country has deteriorated. And it looks as though even this basic right to ask, as well as raise money through union dues, has been successfully revoked in Madison. The only hope now is more concerted and militant disruptions of the systems of power.

The public debate, dominated by corporate-controlled systems of information, ignores the steady impoverishment of the working class and absence of legal and regulatory mechanisms to prevent mounting corporate fraud and abuse. The airwaves are saturated with corporate apologists. They ask us why public-sector employees have benefits—sneeringly called "entitlements"—which nonunionized working- and middle-class people are denied. This argument is ingenious. It pits worker against worker in a mad scramble for scraps. And until we again speak in the language of open class warfare,

grasping, as those who went before us did, that the rich will always protect themselves at our expense, we are doomed to a 21st century serfdom.

The pillars of the liberal establishment, which once made incremental and piecemeal reform possible, have collapsed. The liberal church forgot that heretics exist. It forgot that the scum of society—look at the new Newt Gingrich—always wrap themselves in the flag and clutch the Christian cross to promote programs that mock the core teachings of Jesus Christ. And, for all their years of seminary training and Bible study, these liberal clergy have stood by mutely as televangelists betrayed and exploited the Gospel to promote bigotry, hatred and greed. What was the point, I wonder, of ordination? Did they think the radical message of the Gospel was something they would never have to fight for? Schools and universities, on their knees for corporate dollars and their boards dominated by hedge fund and investment managers, have deformed education into the acquisition of narrow vocational skills that serve specialized corporate interests and create classes of drone-like systems managers. They make little attempt to equip students to make moral choices, stand up for civic virtues and seek a life of meaning. These moral and ethical questions are never even asked. Humanities departments are vanishing as swiftly as the ocean's fish stocks.

The electronic and much of the print press has become a shameless mouthpiece for the powerful and a magnet for corporate advertising. It makes little effort to give a platform to those who without them cannot be heard, instead diverting us with celebrity meltdowns, lavish lifestyle reports and gossip.

Legitimate news organizations, such as NPR and *The New York Times*, are left cringing and apologizing before the beast—right-wing groups that hate "liberal" news organizations not because of any bias, but because they center public discussion on verifiable fact. And verifiable fact is not convenient to ideologues whose goal is the harnessing of inchoate rage and hatred.

Artists, who once had something to say, have retreated into elite enclaves, preoccupied themselves with abstract, self-referential garbage, frivolous entertainment and spectacle. Celebrities, working for advertising agencies and publicists, provide our daily mini-dramas and flood the airwaves with lies on behalf of corporate sponsors. The Democratic Party has sold out working men and women for corporate money. It has permitted the state apparatus to be turned over to corporate interests. There is no liberal institution left—the press, labor, culture, public education, the church or the Democratic Party—that makes any effort to hold back the corporate juggernaut. It is up to us.

We have tolerated the intolerant—from propaganda outlets such as Fox News to Christian fascists to lunatics in the Republican Party to Wall Street and corporations—and we are paying the price. The only place left for us is on the street. We must occupy state and federal offices. We must foment general strikes. The powerful, with no check left on their greed and criminality, are gorging on money while they busily foreclose our homes, bust the last of our unions, drive up our health care costs and cement into place a permanent underclass of the broken and the poor. They are slashing our most essential and basic services—including budgets for schools, firefighters and assistance programs for children and the elderly—so we can pay for the fraud they committed when they wiped out \$14 trillion of housing wealth, wages and retirement savings. All we have left is the capacity to say "no." And if enough of us say "no," if enough of us refuse to cooperate, the despots are in trouble.

"Let me give you a word of the philosophy of reforms," Frederick Douglass said in 1857. "The whole history of the progress of human history shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. ... If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. ..."

(Chris Hedges, a fellow at The Nation Institute and a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, is the author of *Death of the Liberal Class*.)

20110315-05	19:09	SteveB	"Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
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Yes, irony of ironies...

["Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus" by Phil Zuckerman, Huffington Post](#)

Mar. 3, 2011, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/phil-zuckerman/why-evangelicals-hate-jes_b_830237.html)

The results from a recent poll published by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (<http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Tea-Party-and-Religion.aspx>) reveal what social scientists have known for a long time: White Evangelical Christians are the group least likely to support politicians or policies that reflect the actual teachings of Jesus. It is perhaps one of the strangest, most dumbfounding ironies in contemporary American culture. Evangelical Christians, who most fiercely proclaim to have a personal relationship with Christ, who most confidently declare their belief that the Bible is the inerrant word of God, who go to church on a regular basis, pray daily, listen to Christian music, and place God and His Only Begotten Son at the center of their lives, are simultaneously the very people most likely to reject his teachings and despise his radical message.

Jesus unambiguously preached mercy and forgiveness. These are supposed to be cardinal virtues of the Christian faith. And yet Evangelicals are the most supportive of the death penalty, draconian sentencing, punitive punishment over rehabilitation, and the governmental use of torture. Jesus exhorted humans to be loving, peaceful, and non-violent. And yet Evangelicals are the group of Americans most supportive of easy-access weaponry, little-to-no regulation of handgun and semi-automatic gun ownership, not to mention the violent military invasion of various countries around the world. Jesus was very clear that the pursuit of wealth was inimical to the Kingdom of God, that the rich are to be condemned, and that to be a follower of Him means to give one's money to the poor.

And yet Evangelicals are the most supportive of corporate greed and capitalistic excess, and they are the most opposed to institutional help for the nation's poor—especially poor children. They hate anything that smacks of "socialism," even though that is essentially what their Savior preached. They despise food stamp programs, subsidies for schools, hospitals, job training—anything that might dare to help out those in need. Even though helping out those in need was exactly what Jesus urged humans to do. In short, Evangelicals are that segment of America which is the most pro-militaristic, pro-gun, and pro-corporate, while simultaneously claiming to be most ardent lovers of the Prince of Peace.

What's the deal?

Before attempting an answer, allow a quick clarification. Evangelicals don't exactly hate Jesus—as we've provocatively asserted in the title of this piece. They do love him dearly. But not because of what he tried to teach humanity. Rather, Evangelicals love Jesus for what he does for them. Through his magical grace, and by shedding his precious blood, Jesus saves Evangelicals from everlasting torture in hell, and guarantees them a premium, luxury villa in heaven. For this, and this only, they love him. They can't stop thanking him. And yet, as for Jesus himself—his core values of peace, his core teachings of social justice, his core commandments of goodwill—most Evangelicals seem to have nothing but disdain.

And this is nothing new. At the end of World War I, the more rabid, and often less educated Evangelicals decried the influence of the Social Gospel amongst liberal churches. According to these self-proclaimed torch-bearers of a religion born in the Middle East, progressive church-goers had been infected by foreign ideas such as German Rationalism, Soviet-style Communism, and, of course, atheistic Darwinism. In the 1950s, the anti-Social Gospel message piggybacked the rhetoric of anticommunism, which slashed and burned its way through the Old South and onward through the Sunbelt, turning liberal churches into vacant lots along the way. It was here that the spirit and the body collided, leaving us with a prototypical Christian nationalist, hell-bent on prosperity. Charity was thus rebranded as collectivism and self-denial gave way to the gospel of accumulation. Church-to-church, sermon-to-sermon, evangelical preachers grew less comfortable with the fish and loaves Jesus who lived on earth, and more committed to the angry Jesus of the future. By the 1990s, this divine Terminator gained "most-favored Jesus status" among America's mega churches; and with that, even the mention of the former "social justice" Messiah drove the socially conscious from their larger, meaner flock.

In addition to such historical developments, there may very well simply be an underlying, all-too-human social-psychological process at root, one that probably plays itself out among all religious individuals: they see in their religion what they want to see, and deny or despise the rest. That is, religion is one big Rorschach test. People look at the content of their religious tradition—its teachings, its creeds, its prophet's proclamations—and they basically pick and choose what suits their own secular outlook.

They see in their faith what they want to see as they live their daily lives, and simultaneously ignore the rest. And as is the case for most White Evangelical Christians, what they are ignoring is actually the very heart and soul of Jesus' message—a message that emphasizes sharing, not greed. Peace-making, not war-mongering. Love, not violence.

Of course, conservative Americans have every right to support corporate greed, militarism, gun possession, and the death penalty, and to oppose welfare, food stamps, health care for those in need, etc.—it is just strange and contradictory when they claim these positions as somehow "Christian." They aren't.

[20110316-01](#) 05:43 Charis Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear SteveB,

As an evangelical I find this completely and totally offensive and untrue. But I can be tolerant of the opinions others, even if they haven't a clue what they're talking about.

[20110316-02](#) 12:17 Larry Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear SteveB,

I will accept your premise if you will agree to the following:

All Germans have a trace of Nazism even if they swear on a stack of beer a mile high.

All Frenchmen fill their bathtubs with perfume and bathe with their little brothers.

All Canadians kill their babies in hospitals.

[20110316-03](#) 15:10 SteveB Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus" Japanese Disasters

Dear Larry,

Yes, the author overstates his case. But are many of the tenants of the Evangelical movement antithetical to the apparent teachings of Jesus? It seems to me that they are. While it is wrong to over-generalize, the results of polling do seem to strongly suggest that:

"...conservative Americans...support corporate greed, militarism, gun possession, and the death penalty, and oppose welfare, food stamps, health care for those in need, etc.—it is...strange and contradictory when they claim these positions as somehow "Christian." They aren't." Really enjoyed your last email about the "Church of Steve", which is looking for converts all over the globe.

Am praying for the brave, stoical, unlucky Japanese. I don't know what's wrong with these idiot nuclear engineers. Why would they think the nuclear plant would somehow be immune from tsunamis, when tsunami is a Japanese word? Maybe an emergency generator on the roof? Maybe spring-loaded fuel rods which automatically withdraw the fuel upon a complete power failure and/or a preset high temperature? Maybe an emergency, gravity-fed cooling system? Something! Godzilla will arise!

[20110316-04](#) 15:22 SteveB Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear Charis,

Thank you for the tolerance. Didn't mean to offend. The author is , I have to admit, a little over the top, yet I have been struck many times by the lack of tolerance, charity, and forgiveness in many of the positions of the American Evangelical political movement. Maybe Jesus would be struck too.

P.S. The poll is real, not "totally untrue". Now, whether these positions are unchristian, I'm sure that can be debated.

[20110316-05](#) 15:32 Charis Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear SteveB,

Well you didn't offend me—the writer of the article did :-). And I agree, there are lots of people who call themselves evangelical Christians who don't act in a Christian way. Those people can't be truly Christians then can they. I think it's not a whole movement. It's always individuals we have to look at.

Jesus would, of course, be appalled. But then he'd be appalled at a lot of people evangelical or not. I think things like this always should be judged at the individual level. You can't ever make stereotypical or general comments like the writer of the article does about a whole movement of people. It's kind of like our government. If everyone judged us by our government we'd all be total schleps wouldn't we. But the truth is, they don't represent ALL of our personal one-on-one points of view.

Then there's the whole other separate discussion we could have about forgiveness. Many people who truly are Christians don't act in Christian ways 100% of the time. If we did and never made a single mistake we'd BE God. So really what the writer is missing is that ALL of us sin. Christians are not sinless. Christians are, however, forgiven.

20110316-06 16:31 Larry Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear SteveB,

I do not specifically consider myself to be an evangelical, especially the evangelical as described. The great majority of protestant people I know are like any other segment of society.

Some of them are failures in many ways, but would it be wise to demand that they no longer be seekers? For what sins should we call them "Jesus Haters"? Is the fault always theirs that they got very few breaks in life and have had to struggle with problems that have finally destroyed their hope? Is it because they grew up in families that shouldn't have had children; Is it because society has slapped them around because they were poor and uneducated?

Does Jesus say "Be just like me", or does he say "Follow me". Who are we to judge anybody?

Finally, I have known many people who were maybe not perfect, but they still lived a life of helping others, encouraging others, giving to the poor and spreading kindness and goodwill. Now, even though I say this, how can I prove it? Some things have to be accepted by faith. I would never say that I was one bit better than anyone else in this world, but I will tell you this, I may be an Evangelical but I do not and never have hated the Jesus I love.

20110316-07 17:30 SteveB Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"

Dear Larry,

Yes, the writer of this piece went too far. Let me say, first, that I have never considered you to be an evangelical nor a fundamentalist. You appear to me to be the opposite. It's maybe as wrong to classify or try to over-classify people as it is to judge them, but in general terms, these words, as you know, are used in the political arena—right or wrong—to describe the, often Baptist, often Southern, Christians who vote Republican as a block, oppose Roe vs. Wade, oppose gay union, interpret the Bible literally (the world is 6000 years old), oppose the theory of evolution, oppose welfare and other entitlement programs, increasingly oppose unions, do not believe in the separation of church and state, etc., etc. These views seem almost anti-Christian to me.

These people have become a powerful political force. Perhaps they are a powerful spiritual force, but I think not. They also seem to be characterized by huge congregations, huge homes for ministers, TV and radio evangelism, and scandal after scandal involving the very things they vehemently preach against...adultery, stealing, lying, homosexuality, cavorting with prostitutes, to name a few. So many have gone down in my lifetime that I've lost count. There seems to be a large element of hypocrisy.

I believe these people, as a political group, are dangerous and counter to my principles, at least.

That being said, I have known many members of this ostensible group who are among the most perfect people possible. Angels, as we say. But the angels don't seem to be political activists of a dark nature like Newt Gingrich and Sarah Palin.

You are very right to ask, who are any of us to judge? That's been one of the hardest lessons of my life that I'm still trying to learn and live. It's also something I believe Jesus tried to teach us. We/I are/am so thick! Yet there are political realities which sometimes mandate generalizations and these (below) are from a poll of evangelicals themselves. They just don't seem to be as Christian in reality as they claim to be, at least as applied to political situations.

20110316-08	17:45	SteveB	Re: "Why Evangelicals Hate Jesus"
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Dear Charis,

All very true. And, as I've struggled to learn and live, and as Jesus and Buddha have tried and tried to teach me, who am I to judge anyway?

It's just, for me, the political realities are important, especially at this time in history, and they involve groups of people with similar views (as the below polls show)...some of these views seemingly dangerous and hypocritical.

But, hey, in my book, Christians are OK too, especially as individuals. :-)

20110317-01	15:30	SteveB	" <i>Get Up, Stand Up</i> : Do Americans Have What It Takes to Stand Up to Corporate Power and Does Wisconsin Offer Hope?"
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I keep finding myself getting more and more radical... Oh, well, I love the stuff here about Bob Marley, and all the rest seems true to me too.

"*Get Up, Stand Up*: Do Americans Have What It Takes to Stand Up to Corporate Power and Does Wisconsin Offer Hope?"
by Susan Warner and Bruce E. Levine, AlterNet

Mar. 15, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/150260/>)

(Bruce Levine discusses his upcoming book, *Get Up, Stand Up*, which analyzes why Americans have been crushed into inaction and how recent events in Wisconsin offer hope for change.)

In Dec., 2009, Bruce Levine penned a provocative article on AlterNet entitled "Are Americans a Broken People?" The piece touched a nerve among those who identify themselves as progressive, libertarian, or populist and quickly went viral across the Web. Many respondents and media members who later interviewed Levine wondered why so many Americans have remained passive in the face of attacks on their liberties and their economic well-being. In his latest book, *Get Up, Stand Up: Uniting Populists, Energizing the Defeated, and Battling the Corporate Elite* (Chelsea Green, 2011), Levine has delved deeper into the cultural forces that have created a politically passive U.S. population. He questions whether "learned helplessness" has taken hold, keeping many Americans locked into an abuse syndrome of sorts. And most importantly, he suggests what can be done to turn this demoralization around. We chatted about his book and some recent efforts by Americans to in fact "get up and stand up."

Susan Warner: If the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are so unpopular, why aren't people protesting more?

Bruce Levine: Most Americans feel they have no power over whether or not the U.S. invades another nation or for how long it will be occupied. Many Americans know that their government is run by "corporate collaborators" who don't pay attention to their opinions on wars and other big-money issues that large corporations care about. So although polls show the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have become increasingly unpopular—a clear majority of Americans now oppose them—fewer people are protesting against them.

Actually, more protests occurred against these wars when they were more popular. Remember back in Feb., 2003, when many Americans still believed the U.S. government's "weapons of mass destruction" rationale for the invasion of Iraq? Even though the invasion was a more popular idea back then, there were many large demonstrations against the then-imminent war, including 500,000 protesting in New York City. Even larger protests took place in Europe, with a London protest of more than 2 million, the largest demonstration ever there. But Americans' voices and the voices of the people of Great Britain, our junior partner in the Iraq invasion, were of little concern to politicians.

Americans got the message. Their opinion may matter on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage or other issues that the corporate-government partnership—or the “corporatocracy”—doesn’t care about, but their opinion is ignored when it comes to issues where real money is involved, such as wars and the Wall Street bailout.

SW: What can you say to frustrated anti-war activists?

BL: Anti-war activists—and other activists—routinely become frustrated when truths about lies, victimization, and oppression don’t set people free to take action. But as a psychologist who has worked with abused people for more than 25 years, it does not surprise me to see that when we as individuals or a society eat cr*p for too long, we gradually lose our self-respect to the point that we become psychologically too weak to take action.

Other observers of subjugated societies have recognized this phenomenon. Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator and author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, understood this reality, and so did Bob Marley, who is sort of the poet laureate of oppressed people of the world. Many Americans are embarrassed to accept that we, too, after years of domestic corporatocracy subjugation, have developed what Marley calls “mental slavery.” But unless we acknowledge that reality, we won’t begin to heal from what I call “battered people’s syndrome” and “corporatocracy abuse.” In *Get Up, Stand Up*, I explain how this can be done, including how people let go of the fear of resistance.

SW: You note in your book that even within this widespread passivity, there are instances of Americans “getting up and standing up.” What’s your take on recent events in Wisconsin?

BL: As I make clear in the book, especially for critically thinking pessimists who have given up hope, history teaches us that you never know—until the moment it happens—when the right historical variables will come together to encourage people to let go of their fear and gain the energy to resist.

So in Wisconsin occurred, if not a perfect storm, about as good of a storm as I’ve seen in many years. State employees had actually agreed to eat considerable cr*p, agreeing to accept a major increase in what they pay toward their pensions and healthcare benefits, but even those major concessions were not good enough for Governor Walker, who continued to demand the elimination of collective bargaining in key areas. Telling a union that they have no collective bargaining rights on health insurance, pension, and work safety is a blatant effort to try to completely crush it. By this “union death threat,” Walker put workers and union leaders in a position of having virtually nothing left to lose in terms of having a union—and when people lose their fear, watch out!

Arrogance by oppressive authorities makes them miscalculate the fear and greed variables, important ones in keeping people passive. In the case of Mubarak, his greed and arrogance resulted in him not spreading enough of his loot around with enough thugs, so not enough of them cared about his fall from power. Once Egyptians lost fear and took action, they found even more courage. And, as I discuss in *Get Up, Stand Up*, the arrogance of oppressive forces makes them a lot more fragile than they appear.

SW: Tell us more about the “corporatocracy,” a term you use in *Get Up, Stand Up*. What is its role in keeping Americans quiescent?

BL: The corporatocracy is a corporate-government partnership that governs society. In a corporatocracy, while there are elections, the reality is that corporations and the wealthy elite rule in a way to satisfy their own self-interest. Most Americans “get it” that they are not living in a democracy where they have direct power, or in a republic where they have representatives who actually represent them. Most Americans understand that giant corporations and the wealthy rule, and so people feel powerless. And this sense of powerless ultimately results in passivity.

The corporatocracy, through its huge financial resources and control of the corporate media, ensures that only Democratic or Republican candidates have a chance of winning elections. It then buys off those candidates in both parties via campaign contributions, revolving doors of employment, and other bribes in the various industrial complexes. So, people have a sort of “learned helplessness” when it comes to elections—no matter who they vote for they get unnecessary wars, Wall Street bailouts, and so forth. And those few who continue to rebel against the corporatocracy become politically and/or economically marginalized, and that further frightens people into compliance and passivity.

SW: What are other forces that you think are keeping Americans downcast?

BL: As Ralph Waldo Emerson pointed out, “The wave of evil washes all our institutions alike.”

Increasingly, much of our culture and major institutions are only about making money and controlling the population, not about creating critically thinking people who reject authoritarianism. In *Get Up, Stand Up*, I have a large section called "Understanding How the People Learned Powerlessness," in which I describe how people are broken by a culture and institutions created by the corporatocracy. Besides a pseudo-democratic election system that creates helplessness, Americans are broken by increasing domination of "fundamentalist consumerism" and "money-centrism" at the expense of all other aspects of their humanity—this breaks our integrity and weakens us. We are also broken by increasing social isolation, bureaucratization, surveillance, the corporate media, and by other public institutions.

SW: What about young people, who are traditionally quick to protest against authority. Why aren't they out on the streets?

BL: They're much less apt to protest because the primary socialization forces for young people pacify, zombify, and weaken them. For example, our standard schools teach compliance and following orders far more than how to think critically and resist authoritarianism. And television is such a superb pacifying force that America's for-profit prisons uses more TVs instead of hiring more prison guards, and nowadays, kids are actually watching more television than ever, with more screens than just a television set. And for many kids I talk to, their only experience of potency is a virtual one, for example, winning a video game.

For those kids who do rebel cognitively or behaviorally, and who don't mindlessly comply with any and all authorities, there is an increasing presence of my business—the mental health profession—in their lives, with increasing medication for so-called disruptive disorders such as "oppositional defiance disorder." And it is getting even worse for young people. Nowadays student-loan debt—more than two thirds of college graduates are carrying student-loan debt, often huge amounts—crushes their ability to even consider resisting unjust authority.

SW: What do you think has led to the rise of the Tea Party movement and its subsequent power?

BL: Certainly, a sense of powerlessness and anger has fueled the Tea Party movement, which is made up of many different kinds of people, and has now been exploited and co-opted by the Republican party. It is a mistake to focus only on the bigots in this movement and to focus only on the fat-cat financiers such as the Koch brothers and to focus only on Republican politician opportunists such as Sarah Palin who are exploiting this anger.

The Tea Party movement includes many grassroots members who have a genuine belief in liberty and freedom but, as with any movement, it also includes bigots and opportunists. Following the financial crisis of 2008 and losses—sometimes catastrophic—of homes, savings, or jobs for many, and following the controversial Republican-Democratic bipartisan Wall Street bailout, it would be expected that some kind of angry political movement would form. The corporate elite on Wall Street must have breathed a sigh of relief upon seeing how timid American reaction has been. The corporate elite must be especially delighted that of all the very tame reactions that have occurred, the largest—the Tea Party movement—has not been directed against Wall Street but at its junior partner, the federal government.

SW: How would you compare Tea Party activists and those movements on the Left?

BL: When it comes to cultural issues, there are major differences between those who attend Tea Party demonstrations and those who identify themselves as leftist populists; however, many people in both groups believe that elite forces who rule them do not care about ordinary people. Both left populists and Tea Partiers opposed the Wall Street bailout, and many grassroots Tea Partiers, like left populists, are opposed to the kind of corporate globalization measures—such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—that have resulted in the outsourcing of U.S. jobs overseas. Like left populists, many grassroots Tea Partiers actually oppose America's recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and its longtime war against drugs. Many in both groups oppose the civil liberties abuses of the Patriot Act. At the grass roots, many Tea Partiers hold anger for both Democrats and Republicans, with some grassroots Tea Partiers having even more contempt for Republicans, whom they view as more hypocritical.

SW: What are some of the major activist movements you examine in your book?

BL: In *Get Up, Stand Up*, I describe all kinds of modern examples, such as the worker and producer cooperatives, as well as historical examples, such as the successes of the agrarian rebels in the Great Populist revolt, successful labor strikes even in the midst of the Great Depression, such as the General Motors sit-down strike in Flint, the Abolitionist movement, and so forth.

However—and this is a big however—a major point of *Get Up, Stand Up* is that many people today lack the morale and energy to enact time-honored solutions, strategies, and tactics of defeating the elite. And so we must acknowledge this. That's why I spend a large section in *Get Up, Stand Up* describing how we regain the "energy to do battle." We must first regain self-respect and collective confidence that we can succeed.

SW: Can you give some details of successful recent activism that you detail in *Get Up, Stand Up*, and how progressives of all stripes can use these examples to re-energize themselves?

BL: First off, I don't particularly like the term "progressive." The corporate media routinely divides Americans as "liberals," "conservatives," and "moderates"—a useful division for the corporatocracy because no matter which of these groups is the current electoral winner, the corporatocracy retains power. In order to defeat the corporatocracy, it's more useful to divide people in terms of "elitism" and "anti-authoritarianism," or to divide them as "pro-corporatists" and "anti-corporatists."

There are many kinds of successful activism against corporations. City Life/Vida Urbana, for example, has won victories over some of America's largest banks, including the Bank of America, and prevented many foreclosures and evictions. I detail this and other successful anti-corporatist efforts in *Get Up, Stand Up*. But I am realistic enough to know these are a drop in the societal bucket, and I totally understand why people can move into hopelessness and defeatism.

SW: You mentioned worker and producer cooperatives. What exactly are they, and can you give me modern examples of them?

BL: While certainly a strong union gives workers more power than if workers have no union, real worker power only comes when they own and control the business they work in. A worker cooperative is a business entity that is owned and controlled by the people who work in it. A worker coop is the opposite of what occurs in the corporatocracy, since worker coops empower people to have actual control over their economic lives. One current example is Union Cab Cooperative in Madison, Wisconsin, founded in 1979 by a group of drivers, dispatchers, and mechanics. It operates as a truly democratic workplace with one member/one vote. In these worker coops, workers collectively own the business. Worker owned and controlled businesses—whether the business is a mom-and-pop independent, or Union Cab, or even larger worker coops such as Alvarado Street Bakery (with over a 100 workers and over \$20 million in annual revenue)—are the antithesis of the corporatocracy.

There also continues to be producer cooperatives in the spirit of the late nineteenth-century Populist agrarian revolt. By banding together, producer cooperatives are not at the mercy of giant corporations. One modern example is the organic farming cooperative called the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool, or CROPP. In 1988, with increasing numbers of family farms folding and others being threatened with extinction because of the low prices farmers were receiving for their goods, seven Wisconsin farmers created CROPP. It started with organic vegetables but soon moved into organic dairy products. Eventually, the CROPP cooperative developed its own brand name, Organic Valley, and has become the largest source of organic milk in the United States. CROPP has grown to approximately fourteen hundred farmers.

SW: Earlier you mentioned "battered People's syndrome" and "corporatocracy abuse"—how do individuals begin healing from these, and how can we find the courage to stand up and fight in their own lives (such as within schools and in the workplace)?

BL: Many battlefields for democracy occur in the normal course of our daily lives, and many paths can lead to regaining morale, energy, and strength. History tells us that we can extricate ourselves from fatalistic vicious cycles in which the less we do, the more we are oppressed, and the more defeatist we become.

To start, we must maintain our sense of humor. Historically, people caught up in these syndromes have learned that humor can turn pain into energy. But we must be honest with ourselves and forgive ourselves—and each other—for succumbing to this corporatocracy abuse syndrome. Beating ourselves up for having succumbed is a waste of our precious energy that would be better spent redefining ourselves as human beings who have beliefs and values that define us more than our fears and greed. And we need to redefine ourselves as worthy of respect and capable of effecting change. And then we can use our energy to provide respect and create confidence in others, which will produce even more energy for ourselves in battling the corporatocracy.

In other subjugated societies, people have learned to develop what's been called "critical consciousness" to identify both external and self-imposed forms of oppression and then begin to free themselves. By making changes in our self-imposed slavery, we can start to take actions to change our external world, and we replace a vicious cycle with an empowering

one. This is part of "liberation psychology," in which critically thinking people can regain morale, discover the various ways people are energized, learn how to combat social isolation and build community, and understand how we can forge alliances among populists—Get Up, Stand Up talks about how to accomplish this. There's a lot more to "liberation psychology" and a lot more to the book, but hopefully this gives you a taste of it.

20110322-01 08:49 SteveB "Meet the Boy Who Says He Visited Heaven and Saw Jesus"
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"Meet the Boy Who Says He Visited Heaven and Saw Jesus" by Michael Inbar, TODAY

Mar. 21, 21011, (http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/42191453/ns/today-today_people/?gt1=43001)

(11-year-old also describes meeting his unborn sister, great-grandfather with 'huge wings'.)

After a burst appendix nearly cost 4-year-old Colton Burpo his life in 2003, his parents were thankful just to have him alive and well. But when he opened up about his brush with death a few months later, they were shocked when he described a very vivid trip to heaven, and spoke of matters about which he had no apparent way of knowing.

During an automobile trip, when Sonja Burpo asked him about his memories of being in the hospital, little Colton replied: "Yes, Mommy, I remember — that's where the angels sang to me." A sweet answer, to be sure — but then Colton made his parents' jaws drop when he told them about sitting in Jesus' lap, watching his parents while he lay seemingly near death, and meeting his great-grandfather.

But most poignantly, Colton described meeting a sibling in heaven — even though he had no way of knowing that his mother had miscarried two years before he was born, since his parents had never told him.

Jesus and John the Baptist

Todd Burpo began telling of his son's heaven-sent visions from the pulpit of the Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Imperial, Neb., where he serves as pastor. Word of mouth spread, and the family landed a book deal. The book — *Heaven Is for Real*, written by Todd with co-writer Lynn Vincent — has become a best-seller, with some 1.5 million copies in print since its release in November.

Read an excerpt from 'Heaven Is for Real': <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/42154263/ns/today-books/t/heaven-real-one-boys-astonishing-account/?ns=today-books>.

Appearing live on TODAY Monday with Sonja and Colton, who's now 11, Todd told Matt Lauer he understands that naysayers may believe Colton's story is a little too heavenly to be true — initially, so did he and Sonja. "At first we were surprised; we never anticipated to talk to our son about these things," Todd told Matt Lauer.

"We didn't share at first, and then once we started sharing, people were amazed," Sonja Burpo added. "They were encouraged by what we were sharing with them."

Colton was stricken with appendicitis shortly before his fourth birthday. Family guilt was heavy — for five days he lay getting sicker and sicker with what the family believed was stomach flu, which had previously hit Colton's older sister Cassie.

Little Colton nearly didn't make it: He lay in a hospital bed for 17 days. When he finally rallied, the family rejoiced — but they were floored when, months later, the boy began matter-of-factly describing what he had experienced when he was in between life and death: seeing Jesus dressed in royal purple, meeting John the Baptist, having angels sing to him to ease his anxiety.

The Burpos believed these were things Colton could have gleaned from his Bible studies. But he also told his mother he saw her talking on the phone in another room while he was having surgery, and saw his father praying in a small room, all while he was seated in Jesus' lap.

"What caught my attention was he could tell me where I was while he was in surgery," Todd told Lauer. "The surgeon couldn't tell me that, the nurses couldn't, my wife couldn't tell me where I was praying. But he could tell me."

Shocking revelation

Colton also spoke of meeting a long-departed relative in heaven, telling NBC News: "I was just sitting by the Holy Spirit and then this guy comes up to me and says, 'Are you Todd's son?' I say yes, and he says, 'Well, I'm his grandfather.'"

Colton said that everyone in heaven has wings. On Monday, he described his great-grandfather "Pops" as being "very big, huge wings, curly hair, a big smile, and he was very nice."

But the real shocker came when Colton told his mother, "Mommy, I have two sisters." Sonja told her son that he had to be referring to his oldest sister, Cassie, and his cousin Traci, but he responded: "No — I have two sisters. You had a baby die in your tummy, didn't you?"

Sonja told Lauer the family had never uttered a word about the miscarriage to Colton — and what's more, they never even learned the sex of their miscarried child. "It was a private hurt that we didn't even share with our friends," Sonja said, adding Colton's revelation was at first "shocking, but then a relief that she's OK, which we didn't know she was a she."

In a subsequent TODAY segment Monday, Sonja filled in Colton's description of his meeting with his sister: "He told us what she looked like, and she wouldn't stop hugging him. And she doesn't have a name."

"When he told us about his sister in heaven, that we hadn't told him about, [it was] another one of those 'holy cow' moments — OK, he can't make this stuff up, he can't invent this; no memory was planted," Todd told Lauer. "But the peace that came over us, and the healing, like, 'Wow, I have a daughter in heaven waiting for me' — I think a lot of people need that type of hope and healing, too. And I think that's what a lot of people are finding when they hear Colton's testimony, to know what they have to look forward to."

When Lauer asked Colton what heaven looked like, the 11-year-old replied, "Well, there's a lot of color. There are a lot of people and a lot of angels."

In his second segment later on Monday, Colton gave Kathie Lee Gifford and Hoda Kotb some additional details — such as the fact that there are no old people in heaven. "Nobody wears glasses, [and] you're in like your 20s, 30s."

Todd Burpo told The New York Times that the family is donating much of the money they make from the book sales. As for Colton, he's mostly happy his story is helping people.

"People are getting blessed, and they're going to have healing from their hurts," the boy told the *New York Times*. "I'm happy for that."

20110322-02	15:54	SteveB	Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride
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Now THIS Is A Great Commercial:

http://joshspecter.com/2011/02/13/now-this-is-a-great-commercial/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+JoshSpector+%28JoshSpector.com%29

20110322-03	16:47	GaryC	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride
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Dear SteveB,

Very nice and so true. much better than your socialist bullsh*t.

20110322-04	16:51	SteveB	Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride
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Dear GaryC,

And much better than your elitist fascist bullsh*t! :-)

[Wow! This Republican stuff is kinda fun. LOL! —SteveB]

20110322-05 17:40 SteveB Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride

Dear GaryC,

[More seriously, now... —SteveB]

I am not a socialist, but I do believe in a true democracy, not this corrupt sham we have now which has bankrupted the country and destroyed the middle class. I believe in our people and politicians acting in the best interest of the whole country and its future, not foreign countries or a select few, and I believe this is where we've lost our way and gone wrong.

20110322-06 17:59 GaryC Re: Great Commercial: One Farewell Ride

Dear SteveB,

Amen, brother

20110322-07 18:14 SteveB To: Ron Paul: Impeachable, Imschmeechable! [defense]

Mr. Paul,

You are a blatant liar, sir, and you know it, when you say that Obama's actions in Libya constitute an "impeachable offense". You know better. If not, read the Constitution and the War Powers Act. You should be ashamed!

That being said, if you believe the President's actions are unconstitutional, then it is incumbent upon you to take a suit to the Supreme Court, where you will be told that neither Obama's, nor Eisenhower's, nor LBJ's, nor Nixon's, nor Reagan's (well, not Reagan's), nor Clinton's, nor the Bushs' wars were unconstitutional, even where wrong.

I am neither a Republican, nor a Democrat, nor a person who favors war. This "action" in Libya can be paid for with some of the \$30 billion in Khadafi assets frozen in the U.S. You need to further study the realities of Mid-East politics and understand that a failure to act would have created grave future dangers with regard to Iran, at least, both for its own freedom fighters, for the U.S., and for the world. It is very much in our national interest to help get this Khadafi piece of cr*p out of power rather than sit on our cowardly hands and do nothing.

Please be a man and take your false words back, even if you cannot support our President. At least, please support our nation in its grave danger caused by free trade, lobbyists, lack of government oversight and regulation of industry, a formerly democratic political system corrupted by unfettered campaign contributions, and the grave errors of your own party.

20110322-08 18:26 SteveB "What People Earn—2011"

The have-nots and the haves...to my mind, the vast disparities are not necessarily earned (Dr. Phil truly amazed me! I always thought the guy was a loser!).

"What People Earn—2011" Parade

Oct. 6, 2011, (http://msn.careerbuilder.com/Article/MSN-2576-Salaries-Promotions-PARADEs-What-people-earn-2011/?SiteId=cbmsnhp42576&sc_extcmp=JS_2576_home>1=23000)

Ever dream of running for mayor? Curious how much a tattoo artist makes? How about a hot air balloon pilot in New Mexico? The answers may surprise you—and may inspire you to rethink your career. Here's what real people from across the country earn in industries far and wide. See how your paycheck matches up, or maybe get some ideas for your dream job.

Allison Coia, 46, Personal Chef, Aston, PA, \$55,000

Ed Smith, 50, Owner/Pilot of a Hot Air Balloon Ride Business, Taos, NM, \$92,000

Graham Parker, 25, Lifeguard, Ocean City, NJ, \$7,000

Michael Cangelosi, 24, Tattoo Artist, New Orleans, LA, \$40,000

Steve Cascione, 57, Meteorologist, Warwick, RI, \$90,000

Juliette Goodwin, 35, Fashion Designer, Traverse City, MI, \$65,000

Jay Wood, 40, Exterminator, Eldon, MO, \$66,000

Joe Denning, 65, Mayor, Bowling Green, KY, \$16,361

Yolanda Karas, 35, Massage Therapist, Bismarck, ND, \$50,000

Michael Edwards, 49, Professional Bowler, Tulsa, OK, \$24,700

What People Earn: See Hundreds of Real Americans' Salaries: <http://www.parade.com/what-people-earn/slideshows/real-people.html>.

It's no secret that most celebs can't complain when it comes to their yearly earnings. How much do they actually make? Take a peek inside the paychecks of some of your favorite stars. [Sources Include: Forbes, TV Guide and Vanity Fair]

Charlie Sheen—The Two and a Half Men star may have had a few bumps in the road this year, but his bank account is still intact. The actor earned \$30 million in 2010. How's that for winning?

Sandra Bullock—Although Bullock has had a tough personal year, the Oscar-winning actress has most definitely come out on top financially, pulling in \$56 million from her box office hits.

Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart—Twilight's dreamy Robert Pattinson earned \$27.5 million, while his co-star and rumored off-screen love Kristen Stewart raked in an impressive \$28.5 million. That should make for one memorable date night!

Oprah Winfrey—Talk isn't cheap, after all! Talk show queen Oprah Winfrey earned \$315 million.

Lady Gaga—The "Born This Way" singer entertained the world last year, earning a \$62 million nest egg.

Dr. Phil McGraw—Just what the doctor ordered! Dr. Phil McGraw took home \$80 million from his day job.

Chelsea Handler—The talk-show host makes audiences laugh daily, but she's laughing all the way to the bank with \$19 million in her pocket.

Ryan Seacrest and Donald Trump—A few years ago, would you ever have guessed that Ryan Seacrest would out-earn The Donald? It's close, but Seacrest brought home \$51 million, while Donald Trump earned "just" \$50 million.

Beyonce and Jay-Z—Wonder if there's any salary competition in Beyonce and Jay Z's house? Beyonce out-earned her hubby last year, with \$87 million, while Jay brought home a cool \$63 million.

Dear SteveB,

I am not a fascist.

[20110323-01](#) 08:57 Bill Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster

Dear SteveB,

Duct tape, rubber bands, wire coat hangers, pliers and screwdrivers, and ingenuity. These are the things that keep the world running.

[20110323-02](#) 09:04 SteveB Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster

Dear Bill,

Yes, too bad those a*s-hole engineers who mis-designed the Japanese nuclear plant didn't have any of those things, especially the "ingenuity".

[20110323-03](#) 09:19 Bill Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster

Dear SteveB,

Why, hell, it costs too much to design to a 9.0 earthquake, although that kind of thinking is definitely under review now.

[20110323-04](#) 10:58 SteveB Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster

Dear Bill,

But the earthquake was not 9.0 at the plant! You notice that it was the tsunami that did the damage...to the plant and everywhere else. The quake was no big deal for Japan. But Tsunami is a Japanese word...all over the world, in almost every language now...and it is the east coast of Japan that gets them. Why not build the plant on the west coast? Why not expect a tsunami? Why not place the emergency back-up generators on the roof? Why not place reactors where they can have an emergency gravity fed or horse powered cooling water system? Why didn't they have an emergency generator and pumps on a truck, waiting on a hill to be wheeled into place and plugged-in in an emergency instead of taking weeks to run wire? Why not get rid of the spent rods before they cause a problem? Why not have fail-safe spring-loaded rods in the reactors which can at least pull back the rods in an emergency so they aren't so hot? Why not use the electricity being generated at the plant to run the pumps? (Though this is what they tried at Chernobyl that backfired.) Why not foresee, before you build these monsters, that if something goes wrong, there is hell to pay! Why build them if they are not perfect (as they must be to exist on the planet)?

Stupid, stupid, stupid...it pi*sses me off!

[20110323-05](#) 11:17 Dennis "May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"

Dear SteveB,

History repeats...abolishing unions...

This is not to insinuate that Hitler was a tea bagger...or that Republican governors are proto-fascists or anything....

"May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions" by Ole Ole Olson, News Junkie Post

Feb 20, 2011, (<http://newsjunkiepost.com/2011/02/20/may-1933-hitler-abolishes-unions/>)

On May 2nd, 1933, the day after Labor day, Nazi groups occupied union halls and labor leaders were arrested. Trade Unions were outlawed by Adolf Hitler, while collective bargaining and the right to strike was abolished. This was the beginning of a consolidation of power by the fascist regime which systematically wiped out all opposition groups, starting with unions, liberals, socialists, and communists using Himmler's state police.

Fast forward to America today, particularly Wisconsin. Governor Walker and the Republican/Tea Party members of the state legislature are attempting to pass a bill that would not only severely punish public unions (with exception for the police, fire, and state trooper unions that supported his campaign), but it would effectively end 50 years to the right of these workers to collectively bargain.

Collective bargaining is a process of voluntary negotiations between employers and trade unions aimed at reaching agreements which regulate working conditions. Collective agreements usually set out wage scales, working hours, training, health and safety, overtime, grievance mechanisms and rights to participate in workplace or company affairs. —Wikipedia

First of all, assaulting the rights of workers to collectively bargain has absolutely nothing to do with any immediate budgetary issues. It does however have everything to do with ending one of the basic rights of labor to organize.

Second, and more importantly, the budget "crisis" in Wisconsin is both exaggerated and created in part by the new Republican power base as a tool to attack political opponents. Walker decreased state revenue when he enacted tax cuts for the rich and big corporations, who are not surprisingly large campaign donors for his political campaign.

To the extent that there is an imbalance — Walker claims there is a \$137 million deficit — it is not because of a drop in revenues or increases in the cost of state employee contracts, benefits or pensions. It is because Walker and his allies pushed through \$140 million in new spending for special-interest groups in January. If the Legislature were simply to rescind Walker's new spending schemes — or delay their implementation until they are offset by fresh revenues — the "crisis" would not exist. — *The Cap Times*

(http://host.madison.com/ct/news/opinion/editorial/article_61064e9a-27b0-5f28-b6d1-a57c8b2aaaf6.html)

Decimating unions has long been an objective of the rich and powerful. Growing out of trade guilds in Medieval Europe, they were banned starting with the Ordinance of Labourers 1349 and Statute of Labourers in England. It was not until the Industrial Revolution that labor began to organize again.

Every little gain for the rights of workers was hard fought and bitterly resisted by the rich and powerful. The photo above shows the Lawrence Textile Strike (also known as the Bread and Roses strike) where mostly immigrant workers rebelled against increasingly harsh work conditions and lowered pay caused by mechanization. Specifically, state law mandated a reduction in working hours for women and children from 56 to 54 hours, and factory owners responded by cutting salaries, something the poor workers could not afford.

Over time, organized labor managed to abolish child labor all together, as well as institute an 8 hour work day, 40 hour work week, mandatory breaks, safety guidelines, grievance procedures, a minimum wage, the concept of a work free weekend, workers comp, pensions, health safeguards, and paid sick days, vacation days, and holidays. If you enjoy any of these things, thank a union member and support the passage of a strong Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA).

Collective Bargaining in the U.S. was finally legalized for the private sector on a countrywide scale in 1935 with the National Labor Relations Act signed by FDR. JFK signed an executive order extending this right to the public sector in 1962.

Governor Walker's bill being sped through the Wisconsin legislature would mandate health insurance contributions by public employees, force them to pay more for their promised pensions, and remove bargaining rights. When public employees started protesting, Walker instructed the state National Guard to be "prepared" if any "problems" should arise, in what could be described as a thinly veiled intimidation tactic.

Although this draconian bill will not outlaw unions, it will effectively neuter them, as their CPI adjusted wages will be frozen and all other means cannot be improved as a whole. Public sector unions will lose their freedom to negotiate

against the state together. This is a deliberate tactic to punish political opponents and to effectively lessen the rights of working Americans everywhere for the benefit of the rich and multinational corporations.

Walker's plan to eviscerate collective bargaining rights for public employees is right out of the Koch brothers' playbook. Koch-backed groups like Americans for Prosperity, the Cato Institute, the Competitive Enterprise Institute, and the Reason Foundation have long taken a very antagonistic view toward public-sector unions. Several of these groups have urged the eradication of these unions. In Wisconsin, this conservative, anti-union view is being placed into action by lawmakers in sync with the deep-pocketed donors who helped them obtain power. (Walker also opposes the state's Clean Energy Job Act, which would compel the state to increase its use of alternative energy.) At this moment — even with the Wisconsin uprising unresolved — the Koch brothers' investment in Walker appears to be paying off. —*Mother Jones*

<http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/02/wisconsin-scott-walker-koch-brothers>

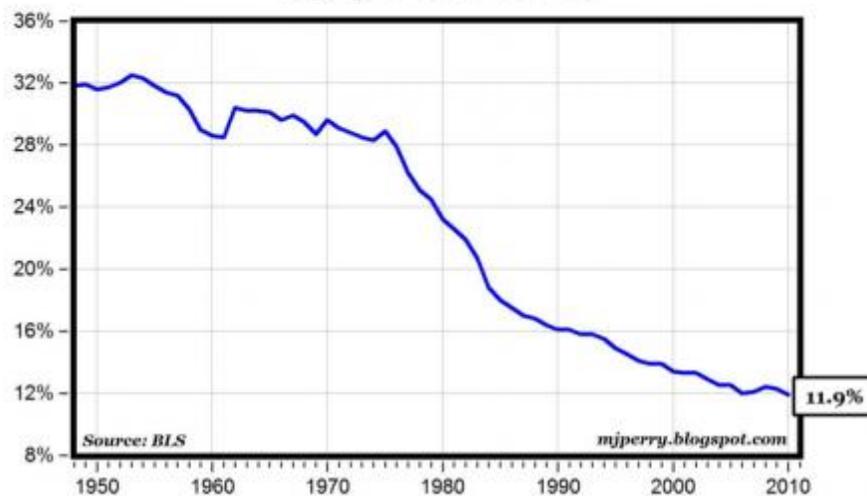
In response to this open revolt on at the Wisconsin state capitol, which saw crowds initially in the hundreds quickly swell to tens of thousands, a Tea Party group hastily organized a counter rally on Sunday. Dozens of free buses were mysteriously available from both inside and outside the state for Tea Partiers, with no mention of who paid for them, leading to speculation that this is blatant corporate astroturfing. At publishing time no camels were being charged into the estimated 70,000 pro-worker/anti-Walker demonstrators [*creative humor license*].

The Americans for Prosperity group, a Tea Party group that is a Koch Brothers front, has put up a website [for the Tea Party Rally that] attacks all collective bargaining — not just for public employees' unions. —*Forbes*

Wisconsin is ground zero in the fight for worker's rights in America. Following the ultra-conservative sweep of many state legislatures and governorships in the 2010 midterms, most Republicans are salivating at the opportunity to destroy the last stronghold of organized labor in America: the public sector.

Last year, more working people belonged to a union in the public sector (7.9 million) than in the private (7.4 million), despite the fact that corporate America employs five times the number of wage-earners. 37 percent of government workers belong to a union, compared with just 7 percent of private-sector employees. —*Alternet*

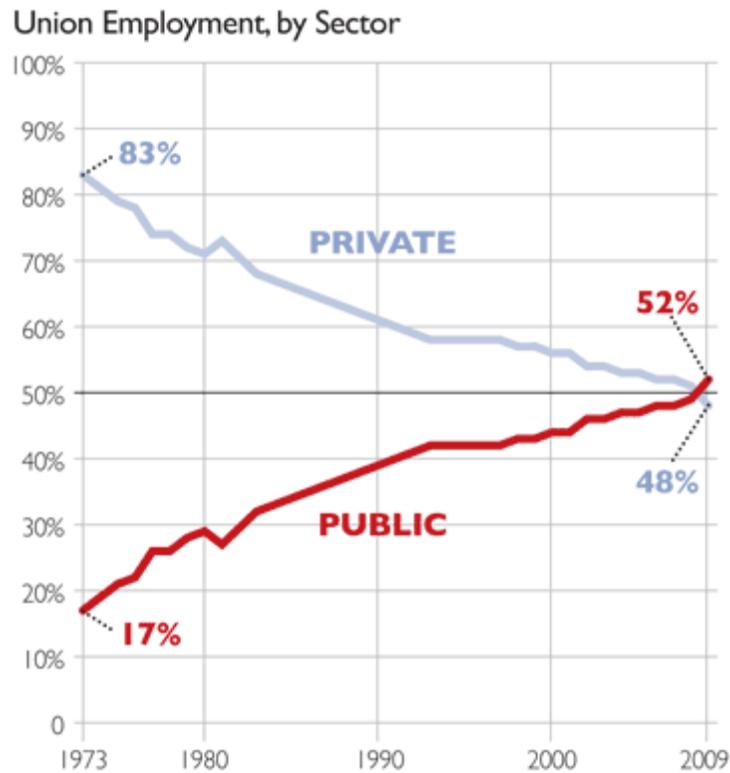
Union Membership Percent of All U.S. Workers 1948 to 2010



The percentage of the work force that have been organized has been declining (along with many other things) since Reagan and the conservatives took power, ending the Great Compression and starting an epoch in American history known as the Great Divergence (which culminated in the Great Recession, which we are in today). Pro-corporate, fiscally conservative policies (such as deregulation and underfunding) have severely damaged private sector unions, unions that

set the bar for standards and pay for all workers (thus, contributing towards the huge wealth concentration that is taking place).

The one point where this anti-union trend has not taken place is in the public sector:



This is precisely why the conservatives (mostly in the Republican Party) and their corporate masters are now planning the next phase in their strategy: to destroy public sector unions across the country. Right now, their assault has triggered a massive and growing revolt by not only public sector unions, but students, progressives, and working men and women across the Upper Midwest region of the U.S.

The corporate front groups are desperately trying to play catch-up and unleash their Tea Party legions, who need little convincing as apparent from the We Stand With Walker Facebook page. The fear and hate caused by disinformation and Fox Propaganda is palpable, and they are only too eager to "fight back" against supposed union transgressions both in the workplace and in demonstrations.

Which brings us back full circle. Union busting measures by Republicans in Wisconsin this week have brought up some disturbing historical parallels to another sad chapter from human history. This writer is not trying to say that Republicans are Nazis and the Tea Party are their Brown shirts, only that the union busting, corporate control over the government is part of the definition of fascism (along with authoritarian nationalism).

The attacks on unions that are taking place in American society today echoes a very sad chapter in Western history where unions were smashed for the benefit of a far right authoritarian corporate regime. When Hitler abolished unions in 1933, it was followed by a 25% drop in real wages, and ended the ability of workers to protect living standards, and this is one of those times where history should not be allowed to repeat itself.

20110323-06	11:20	Bill	Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster
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Dear SteveB,

You're quite right about the magnitude not being 9.0 at the plant. As to other questions, the economics of building such plants is probably the largest cause of inadequacy. Stupidity and feeble foresight are probably the second and third. Moreover, human beings will, sooner or later, probably trash the planet completely.

[20110323-07](#) 11:49 SteveB Re: Japanese Nuclear Disaster

Dear Bill.

I share your optimism! :-)

If the reality is that these plants must be built inadequately, maybe they shouldn't be built at all. Or away from tsunamis.

[20110323-08](#) 11:54 SteveB Fw: "May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"

Dear GaryC,

Not that there could possibly be any parallels, but some good stuff here later in the article. Check out this link:

Abolishing Unions: (<http://newsjunkiepost.com/2011/02/20/may-1933-hitler-abolishes-unions/>)

[20110323-09](#) 12:06 SteveB Re: "May 1933: Hitler Abolishes Unions"

Dear Dennis,

Thank you for an excellent summary of the price paid with the lives of innocents to achieve a little unionization in America, see SteveG's excellent "Did They Die in Vain?" email.

It's so amazing to me the way these Republicans are out to destroy our great nation and have been for a long time. Unfortunately, the Democrats aren't very far behind. I just have one question, when Khadafy makes a public speech that goes on and on, from a 2nd story balcony no less, why doesn't he get a missile up his a*s, so this whole thing can be put to rest sooner rather than later? War is hell, but if war must be waged, it must be waged with all means necessary! How could all our wars not have taught us this truth?

[20110323-10](#) 12:09 Dennis "3/4ths of Senate GOP Doesn't Believe in Science—When Did Republicans Go Completely Off the Deep End?"

Science: not profitable or good politics?

"3/4ths of Senate GOP Doesn't Believe in Science—When Did Republicans Go Completely Off the Deep End?" by Robert Benson, Miller-McCune.com

Mar. 22, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/150340/>)

You've got to go back to the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925 for a precedent to the anti-science mania that is currently sweeping the GOP. Then, the issue was teaching Darwin's work on evolution in the schools. Today, the issue is global warming. Then, as now, large numbers of politicians tapped into the stratum of popular culture that simply rejects science as the basis for public or personal decisions. The chief prosecutor of high school teacher John Scopes, William Jennings Bryan, gloated that literal interpretation of the Bible trumped scientific knowledge. This resonated with large masses of ordinary folks, the ones H. L. Mencken and the liberal press were calling "yokels" and "morons."

Turns out the yokels and morons won, at least for a generation. Scopes was found guilty of violating the Tennessee law that prohibited teaching evolution, and his conviction (though later overturned on a technicality) galvanized the anti-evolution movement for years. Politicians came pouring in. Scores of resolutions were introduced in state legislatures and

school boards all over the country, setting back the teaching of evolution for decades until logic and reason and the scientific method gradually reasserted themselves in the culture.

Today, Republicans are falling over themselves in a rush to ridicule the science that shows our use of fossil fuels is producing greenhouse gases that are warming the planet to disastrous levels. These findings were confirmed even by the Bush administration before it left office, as well as by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and every other significant scientific academy around the world, not to mention the unpaid global work of hundreds of volunteer scientists for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

But anti-scientists are undaunted by facts. More than half of the incoming Republican caucus denies the validity of climate change science. Some 74 percent of Republicans in the U.S. Senate now take that stance, as do 53 percent of GOP in the House. Here's a sampler of what some of their leading illuminati have to say about it:

"I personally believe that the solar flares are more responsible for climatic cycles than anything that human beings do. ..."—Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, Wisconsin

"Nobody really knows the cause. The earth cools, the earth warms ... It could be caused by carbon dioxide or methane. Maybe we should kill the cows to stop the methane, or stop breathing to stop the CO₂ ... Thousands of people die every year of cold, so if we had global warming it would save lives ... We ought to look out for people. The earth can take care of itself."—Rep. Duncan Hunter, California

"There was a report a couple of weeks ago that in fact you look at this last year, it was the warmest year in the last decade, I think was the numbers that came out. I don't accept that. I do not say that it is man-made."—Rep. Fred Upton, Michigan

"The greatest hoax ever perpetuated on the American people."—Sen. James Inhofe, Oklahoma

Rep. John Shimkus of Illinois says we need not worry about the planet being destroyed because, citing chapter 8, verse 22 of the Book of Genesis, God promised Noah it wouldn't happen again after the great flood.

Sen. John McCain co-authored a good global warming bill when running for president in 2008. But he did a 180-degree turnabout when running for re-election to Arizona's Senate seat two years later, suddenly saying, "There's great questions about it that need to be resolved."

What happened?

The Tea Party and its allies had made it unacceptable to the GOP base to be anywhere except pandering to the anti-science crowd.

None of this would have surprised historian Richard Hofstadter, who won a Pulitzer in 1964 for his book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Starting with the colonies, Hofstadter shows how the vast underlying stratum of anti-elite, anti-reason, anti-science Americans has frequently erupted into political and cultural action. These are folks who never heard of the Enlightenment of the 18th century, and do not experience a lot of reason, logic or the empirical method in their daily lives. They live by "common sense," personal relationships and superstition. They have always been with us, and there are a lot of them. Their outburst into today's anti-science global warming mania would just be the latest chapter in Hofstadter's book.

You might think that the revolution of Internet-blogging-networking technology would work to spread sound scientific knowledge more broadly, but you would be wrong. The new technology spreads a cacophony of voices in which the pre-Enlightenment folks are not only equal but more numerous and dominant than the voices of reason. Journalist Charles Pierce not long ago wrote an essay on "Idiot America," followed by a book of that name, in which he argued that "the rise of Idiot America today represents—for profit mainly, but also, and more cynically, for political advantage and in the pursuit of power—the breakdown of a consensus that the pursuit of knowledge is a good. It also represents the ascendancy of the notion that the people whom we should trust the least are the people who best know what they're talking about. In the new media age, everybody is a historian, or a preacher, or a scientist, or a sage. And if everyone is an expert, then nobody is, and the worst thing you can be in a society where everybody is an expert is, well, an actual expert."

Moreover, the new technology is not working alone. You have the likes of oil interests such as Koch Industries and Exxon Mobil funding a phalanx of anti-science spokesmen, think tanks and lobbyists. They put their money into sowing doubt about the scientific consensus, as many of these same people did on tobacco, ozone and acid rain, playing on the fact that the way science works is to set up repeated challenges of the evidence by peers but ignoring that scientific consensus do indeed exist—otherwise, we would not have made the progress we did on tobacco, ozone and acid rain.

Sheltered by the technological cacophony and the big money available, politicians feel unashamed to stand in front of the National Academy of Sciences and virtually every climate scientist in the world and utter irrational things like “God promised Noah...,” or “solar flares,” or “nobody really knows,” “not man-made” or “hoax.”

“[The deniers’] goal is to create the perception that fundamental aspects of climate science are controversial,” write several scientists connected to the National Academy. “They are not. All their claims, all the studies cited and all the evidence they have presented has been thoroughly reviewed by climate scientists. There is no scientific basis for contesting the academy’s finding.”

We are in Tennessee again, 1925, in the grip of the anti-scientists and their politicians. We will lose a generation in dealing with greenhouse gases. Yet the science says we have only a few years.

20110323-11	12:20	Dennis	“Kochs Profit from Canadian Eco-Nightmare”
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Clean air is bad business for Republicans...

“Kochs Profit from Canadian Eco-Nightmare” by Geoff Dembicki, *The Tyee*

Mar. 22, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/150336/>)

What do Tea Party rallies, Republican victories, climate-change deniers, Wisconsin's anti-union push, and attacks on a cap-and-trade market for carbon emissions have in common?

They're all fueled in part by profits derived from Alberta, Canada's oil sands. Those profits, flowing to a single company, are helping bankroll a libertarian offensive many observers think is shifting America's political culture profoundly to the right. One of the central tenets of that campaign is a disbelief not only in the pressing risks of climate change, but that humans are even causing it.

That article of faith is now being embraced by the American public, with only 51 percent concerned about global warming, compared to 66 percent three years ago.

And it's no exaggeration to say the roots of this campaign can largely be traced back to two powerful businessmen: Charles and David Koch. Together, America's fifth richest citizens—each worth \$21.5 billion—own Koch Industries, a refining, pipeline, chemical and paper conglomerate that manufactures common household products such as Brawny paper towels and Stainmaster carpets. They're also one of the biggest refiners of Alberta oil sands crude, handling an estimated 25 percent of all imports entering the U.S.

Anytime a clean energy law threatens to impact those operations, the Kochs fight back hard. Not content anymore to wage war from the sidelines, the brothers and their allies have now installed themselves at the heart of Republican power in Washington, D.C.

Never before in the U.S. has the oil sands industry enjoyed such direct political influence.

Kochs pulled out of shadows

Despite being America's second-largest privately run company, Koch Industries was virtually unknown to the wider public until last spring.

That was when Greenpeace released a report detailing how the conglomerate had funneled tens of millions of dollars between 2005 and 2008 to groups skeptical that climate change exists.

Such activism is central to the Koch brothers' hard-line libertarian ideology, which espouses a general distrust of government control.

As more reports surfaced about Koch Industries—notably a lengthy New Yorker expose in August—the company's growing political influence gained national attention.

The brothers are now widely thought to be one of the driving forces behind the Tea Party movement, founding an advocacy group called Americans for Prosperity, which has provided critical funding and logistical support. Americans for Prosperity played a lead role in the Republican takeover of congress in last December's midterm elections. Budgeting \$45 million for political advocacy, the group ran hard-hitting radio and TV ads throughout the year extremely critical of Democrat congressmen, especially those who'd endorsed national climate-change laws.

In one, average-looking Coloradans filmed in front of rancher's fields lambast Betsy Markey, their representative, because she "voted for cap and trade, the new energy taxes that would cost Colorado thousands of jobs."

Putting together a Tea Party

At the same time Americans for Prosperity helped coordinate and organize Tea Party rallies from coast to coast. Drawing upon an often confusing mix of grassroots idealism, government distrust and oil company mandates, the movement endorsed right-wing candidates across America, many of whom were elected to the House and Senate last year.

Though David Koch denies any links to the Tea Party movement, an unnamed Republican insider quoted by the New Yorker thought otherwise.

"The Koch brothers gave the money that founded [the Tea Party]," he said. "It's like they put the seeds in the ground. Then the rainstorm comes, and the frogs come out of the mud—and they're our candidates."

It's highly probable that at least some of that money came from Koch Industries' major investments in Alberta's oil sands industry.

Flint Hills Resources, a fully owned Koch subsidiary, operates a Minnesota refinery capable of processing 320,000 barrels of crude a day, about four-fifths of which is sourced from Alberta.

To put that in context, SolveClimate News recently estimated that this single refinery handles one quarter of all oil sands crude entering the U.S. That would make Koch Industries one of the top players in the industry. (It's not clear exactly how much revenue that refinery brings in, because the company is privately held and doesn't make those figures publicly available.)

Kochs target global warming laws

Oil sands crude requires more energy to produce and refine than conventional oil, generally resulting in much higher greenhouse gas emissions. Refineries that depend on it are especially vulnerable to the types of clean energy legislation proposed in growing force over the past few years.

Koch Industries appears to be particularly attuned to global warming laws that could hurt its bottom line. The company was one of the first oil firms to lobby directly against a national low carbon fuel standard in 2007, filing records that state: "Oppose restraints on production and use of energy."

Since then, fuel standards have become one of the fiercest battlegrounds in Washington's war over the oil sands. Those laws, if ever enacted, could be equivalent to taking 30 million cars off the road by 2020, according to research cited by Barack Obama during his presidential election campaign.

They would do this in part by discouraging American suppliers from using road fuels derived from Alberta's oil sands and other high-carbon sources—precisely the type of fuels that Koch-owned Flint Hills Resources produces.

As Koch Industries notes on its Web site: "[This legislation] would be particularly devastating for refiners that use heavy Canadian crude oil because the policy seeks to discourage or even prevent the U.S. from benefiting from this essential, reliable resource."

Republican friends elected

For the time being, it appears the Koch brothers have little to worry about. Every attempt so far to enact a national low carbon fuel standard has been scuttled by intense fossil fuel lobbying, sometimes with the "support" of the Canadian and Alberta governments.

And the last midterm elections produced a Republican stronghold generally hostile to the very idea that climate change is even a problem, much less one that should be addressed.

Koch Industries wields considerable influence in this new political environment, especially on the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee, where it contributed \$279,500 to 22 of the panel's 31 Republicans, the largest donation of any oil and gas player.

Already, the Republican majority in the House voted to cut all American funding for the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, one of the lead organizations studying global warming.

And the House Energy Committee continues to push legislation that would eliminate the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's authority to regulate greenhouse gases. The rationale for such an attack was laid out in a Wall Street Journal op-ed last December, co-authored by Energy Committee head Fred Upton (a Michigan Republican), and Americans for Prosperity leader Tim Phillips.

They called the EPA's plans to reduce America's carbon emissions "an unconstitutional power grab that will kill millions of jobs—unless Congress steps in." Last week, Democrats on the energy panel introduced amendments that would have forced their Republican colleagues to acknowledge that global warming poses major environmental threats.

All 31 Republican members declined to vote in favor of the amendments, claiming instead that the science around climate change "is not settled."

Kochs backed Wisconsin's anti-labor governor

Koch Industries has not restricted its growing political activism to Washington. In Wisconsin, early versions of the state's Clean Energy Jobs Act contained a low carbon fuel standard. But state policymakers dropped that provision last May, possibly a result of nearly \$400,000 in Koch lobbying (not to mention pressure from the Alberta and Canadian governments).

The Koch brothers appear to have also played an instigating role in the Wisconsin labor protests. Their company was one of the biggest funders of Republican governor Scott Walker's election campaign. Walker, once in office, proposed spending cuts targeting union benefits and bargaining rights, causing a massive public backlash. Americans for Prosperity executives reportedly encouraged the labor showdown even before Walker was sworn in. The group is now working with policymakers and activists in Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania to slash their union spending.

While all this was happening, Americans for Prosperity was coordinating a public relations campaign to kill cap and trade in New Hampshire. The Republican dominated legislature had proposed a bill ejecting New Hampshire from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a 10-state coalition attempting to combat climate change.

During the lead-up to the vote, Americans for Prosperity paid for automated phone calls to citizens across the state, urging them to support the bill. It passed recently with a wide margin, effectively terminating New Hampshire's long-term climate change plan.

And that's not all, wrote AFP's Phil Kerpen afterward. "In the process, it could deal the death blow to cap and trade both regionally and nationally." That'd be a huge win for Koch Industries, which wouldn't have to worry about the high emissions caused by refining Alberta oil sands crude, at least until the next clean energy law was proposed.

In the meantime, the Koch brothers hope to consolidate political control not just over Congress, but the White House too. Watch for their hand in the next presidential election.

Don't you just love it when America's financial press exposes the latest corporate tax rip-off scheme? Happy Tax Holiday!

[Here's just one reason why the effective corporate tax rate is much lower than the ostensible 35%. —SteveB]

"Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets" by David Zeiler, Money Morning

Mar. 23, 2011, (<http://moneymorning.com/2011/03/23/corporate-tax-holiday-could-put-1.2-trillion-in-shareholders-pockets/>)

Lawmakers in Washington are mulling a one-time corporate tax holiday on foreign earnings that could provide a bonanza to many U.S. multinational corporations. If enacted, the holiday would allow U.S. corporations to bring home \$1.2 trillion in profits they have stashed overseas at a much lower rate—about 5% as compared to the usual 35%.

Many large multinationals, particularly those in the health and tech sectors, say the tax holiday would be the equivalent of a "free" stimulus package: the government would recover tax revenue while the companies would have more money to invest in job creation, factories, equipment, and research and development.

Of course, corporations fed most of the booty from a 2004 tax holiday back to shareholders in the form of dividends and stock buybacks. But that's not what the multinationals want Washington to hear. They've formed a coalition to lobby the job creation/investment angle on Capitol Hill while using the weak economy as an ally.

"The simple truth is there are few policy options left that will inject this amount of money into the economy and cost taxpayers next to nothing," Doug Thornell of SKDKnickerbocker, a public relations firm advising the coalition, told the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

To understand why this is so important to the big multinationals, one need only examine how foreign earnings are taxed. Each U.S. corporation initially pays a tax to the country in which it made a profit. The difference between the foreign nation's tax (usually far below the U.S. rate) and the 35% U.S. tax is what a company owes the Internal Revenue Service. So if a company makes \$1,000 in a country that has a tax of 10%, it owes that country \$100 and the IRS \$250. But the IRS can't collect its share until the company brings that money back to the United States.

So the obvious tax dodge is to let the profits pile up in foreign bank accounts—though the catch is that the money can't be spent in the United States until it's repatriated. No wonder the coalition includes so many corporate heavyweights: Oracle Corporation (Nasdaq: ORCL), Cisco Systems Inc. (Nasdaq: CSCO), Apple Inc. (Nasdaq: AAPL), Duke Energy Corporation (NYSE: DUK), Qualcomm Inc. (Nasdaq: QCOM), Google Inc. (Nasdaq: GOOG), Microsoft Corporation (Nasdaq: MSFT), and Pfizer Inc. (NYSE: PFE).

A Taxing Issue

In Congress the tax holiday not only has the support of many Republicans, but also some key Democrats, including Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-CA. Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney has gone so far as to make the one-time tax break a staple in his speeches, promising a recent New Hampshire audience that it would generate "hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of good, permanent, private sector jobs."

Not everyone's enthused about granting the multinationals a tax holiday, however. Sen. Kent Conrad, D-ND, of the Senate Finance Committee told *Businessweek* that to enact a tax holiday without reforming the overall corporate tax code "makes a farce out of the whole system." Likewise, U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has indicated that U.S. President Barack Obama might be open to considering the tax holiday only if it were part of a comprehensive tax reform package.

But comprehensive tax reform could become very complicated. U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, R-MI, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, supports the tax holiday and also has proposed reducing the corporate tax rate from 35% to 25%. The Obama administration has said it might consider both, but only if coupled with the elimination of certain deductions and loopholes—something corporate America is sure to resist.

Many Republicans, however, favor treating the tax holiday as a separate issue. "Forging consensus on this type of fundamental tax reform will take time, so in the meantime I propose that we allow U.S. multi-national companies to bring

back almost \$1.2 trillion in overseas profits at a lower tax so they can invest in our economy here at home," House Majority Leader Eric Cantor said Monday in a speech at Stanford University.

Whether or not the tax holiday ends up as part of a comprehensive reform plan will likely determine its fate—when it happens or if it happens at all. It's not a shoo-in by any means. The most recent attempt to grant a one-time break on foreign profits, an amendment cosponsored in 2009 by Sen. Boxer and Sen. John Ensign, R-NV, was defeated 42-55 on the Senate floor.

History Lessons

Proponents will need to overcome an arsenal of negative data from the 2004 tax holiday. Then, as now, the big multinational corporations dangled promises of new jobs and investment if given a tax break.

But that's not what happened. Nominally a success—843 companies brought back \$362 billion in profits in 2004—the exercise mostly resulted in a bonanza for shareholders, with little spent on job creation or other investments.

One recent joint study by economists C. Fritz Foley of Harvard University, Kristin Forbes of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Dhammika Dharmapala of the University of Illinois estimated that each \$1 in repatriated profit in 2004 translated to a \$0.60-\$0.92 increase in payouts to shareholders—even though the law granting the holiday specified the repatriated money not be used for dividend payments or stock buybacks.

Because money is fungible, companies were able to work around the restrictions. The repatriated profits were used to pay for already budgeted expenses, thus freeing up money—unhindered by those restrictions—for stock buybacks and distribution to shareholders.

That history has even some business leaders questioning the wisdom of a second tax holiday.

"A one-time repatriation of profits is a bad idea," United Technologies Corporation (NYSE: UTX) Chief Financial Officer Gregory J. Hayes told *Businessweek*. "My fear is that we'll have a repeat of 2004. If companies repatriate these profits and spend it on things like share buybacks, that will create such negative connotations around tax reform with the public."

Others worry that a second tax holiday will send corporations the message they should continue to stash profits overseas, counting on yet another break in the future.

In fact, a 2009 Congressional Research Service study shows several companies that repatriated large sums in 2004 accumulated much larger amounts of foreign profit in the years that followed.

Pfizer brought back \$37 billion in 2004 but then went on to accumulate \$101 billion in new foreign earnings; Citigroup Inc. (NYSE: C) repatriated \$3.2 billion then added \$35.8 billion; PepsiCo Inc. (NYSE: PEP) returned \$7.5 billion then accumulated \$25.5 billion more.

Worse still, the CRS study shows several corporations that brought back significant profits also shed workers. Pfizer cut 10,000 jobs between 2005 and 2006. Hewlett-Packard Company (NYSE: HPQ) brought back \$14.5 billion and cut 14,500 jobs. Merck & Co. Inc. (NYSE: MRK) repatriated \$15.9 billion and eliminated 7,000 jobs.

Members of the corporate coalition argue that whatever companies do with the money will boost the still-anemic U.S. economy.

In a guest editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* last October, Oracle CEO Safra Catz and Cisco CEO John Chambers wrote that a tax holiday could "provide needed stability for the equity markets because companies would expand their activity in mergers and acquisitions, and would pay dividends or buy back stock. And when markets go up, confidence increases and businesses and consumers begin to spend."

Critics remain skeptical. "A tax holiday would bring a substantial amount of cash back to the United States and paying that out to shareholders is good for the economy," *Forbes*, one of the authors of the economists' study on the previous tax holiday, *told Fortune*. "But if you're a politician claiming this will create a lot of jobs or new investment, it isn't supported by the data."

Related Links:

- *San Diego Union-Tribune*: Tapping into Offshore Cash, (<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2011/mar/18/tapping-into-offshore-cash/>)
- Joint Study: Watch What I Do, Not What I Say: The Unintended Consequences of the Homeland Investment Act, (<http://www.people.hbs.edu/ffoley/HIA.pdf>)
- *Fortune*: Apple, Cisco, Others Organize for a Tax Holiday Lobby, (http://money.cnn.com/2011/02/16/news/companies/repatriation_lobby.fortune/index.htm)
- *Boston Globe*: Romney's Plan for Tax Breaks Stirs Debate, (http://articles.boston.com/2011-03-11/news/29339648_1_corporate-tax-rate-tax-code-new-jobs)
- *The Wall Street Journal*: The Overseas Profits Elephant in the Room, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704469004575533880328930598.html>)
- Bloomberg Businessweek: Apple, Google May Profit on a Tax Holiday, (http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/11_13/b4221064108107.htm)
- Nasdaq: Majority Leader Cantor: U.S. Corporate Taxes Must Be Lowered To At Least 25%, (<http://ericcantor.us/2011/03/majority-leader-cantorus-corporate-taxes-must-be-lowered-to-at-least-25/>)
- Bloomberg: Tax Holiday for \$1 Trillion May Lure Back Profits Without Growth, (<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-17/tax-holiday-for-1-trillion-may-lure-profits-without-spurring-u-s-growth.html>)
- Congressional Research Service: Tax Cuts on Repatriation Earnings as Economic Stimulus: An Economic Analysis, (<http://openocrs.com/document/R40178/>)
- *Wealth Daily*: The 10 Year \$1.5 Trillion Tax Hike, (<http://www.wealthdaily.com/articles/obamabudget/2974>)
- Top Foreign Stocks: U.S. Has One of the Lowest Taxes Among OECD Countries, (<http://topforeignstocks.com/2011/10/10/usa-has-one-of-the-lowest-taxes-among-oecd-countries/>)

20110325-01 08:31 SteveB Fw: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"

Dear GaryC,

Here's just one reason why the effective corporate tax rate is much lower than the ostensible 35%.

"Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets" by David Zeiler, Money Morning

Mar. 23, 2011, (<http://moneymorning.com/2011/03/23/corporate-tax-holiday-could-put-1.2-trillion-in-shareholders-pockets/>)

20110325-02 09:34 GaryC Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"

Dear SteveB,

YES, FOR SELECTED INDUSTRIES. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN POLITICIANS USE THE TAX CODE TO FAVOR SOCIAL INITIATIVES OR FAVORED INDUSTRIES LIKE SOLAR, WIND ETC. IT WOULD BE BEST TO ELIMINATE ALL CREDITS AND OTHER BONUSES SO ALL COMPANIES HAVE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD. THIS IS ALSO TRUE WITH INDIVIDUAL RATES. TOO MUCH MESSING WITH BASIC CONCEPTS.

[But a level playing field is not always the best thing for a nation, which wants to encourage certain kinds of beneficial economic activity and discourage detrimental activity, as should have been done while our manufacturing base was allowed to be dismantled. —SteveB]

[20110325-03](#) 11:32 SteveB Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"

Dear GaryC,

I think we need just the reverse of this proposed amnesty...tax law that rewards investment in this country and penalizes investment abroad. We're in deep sh*t and need to find a way out or we're history. Later, maybe something simpler could work.

[20110325-04](#) 11:39 GaryC Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"

Dear SteveB,

The Law of Unintended Consequences would be at play under your theory. If Wal Mart cannot buy from companies in China, then the price of all of their goods in U.S. stores are going to go way up. This hurts the poor the most. If Lilly and other drug companies can't make drugs overseas, then the cost of drugs goes up and the poor suffer the most. What you need is a policy that encourages U.S. production in such a way that U.S. companies can afford to do business in the U.S. Regulations, taxes and higher U.S. wages make this difficult for us entrepreneurs in the U.S. I don't have an easy answer to this mess but I do know that China will not always be a cheap source of labor for the U.S. Of course, Brazil, Turkey, Vietnam or Portugal may be the next cheap labor source.

[20110325-05](#) 13:57 SteveB Re: "Corporate Tax Holiday Could Put \$1.2 Trillion in Shareholders' Pockets"

Dear GaryC,

I am completely for higher prices and more American jobs. F*ck Wal-Mart! Wages need to rise too and haven't for a long time. American taxes are low, low, low already and it doesn't seem to be helping us, does it? According to the Republican dogma (and that's exactly what it is), all this free trade and low taxes and deregulation should have helped us, but those things have all hurt us and increased the debt, all debt. Look at our slide backwards during your lifetime. Something drastic needs to be done. I know this represents an argument for your flat tax too, but GE made like \$8 billion last year and paid no taxes. The effective tax rate is way too low. There are no incentives for investment in America and that has to change!

But instead of thinking in this direction, all the Republicans can come up with is union busting, illegal immigration, no affordable health care, attacks on education and abortion, and more free trade. Damn!

[20110326-01](#) 18:08 Larry Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear SteveB,

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

[20110327-01](#) 10:37 SteveB Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear Larry,

Thank you for the passage above. I am always happy to hear your views and to try to understand them, in my spiritually crippled way. And I truly mean that. I am not being sarcastic or insincere.

You know, in the Church of Steve, we worry or concern ourselves more with God than with Jesus. I'm not sure, especially if Jesus is God, why God gets left out of Christianity so much. You don't hear much about God in many churches unless the Old Testament is being quoted. Maybe this is because Jesus was one of us. He's more accessible. Like Mary to the Catholics. They go all the way down to her in the hierarchy because of some humility or shyness on their part. Yet we know so little of Jesus, in reality, and almost nothing of Mary.

But I guess we know even less of God. God is some titanic, alien thing that we can't possibly comprehend, so Christianity mostly leaves Him out, except through the lip service of the Trinity, another great mystery. I know Christianity is about Christ, that's why it exists. But what about the one true God? If He is anything like the Old Testament God, He must be hurt and angry, right? This bothers me.

Once my wife, Marci, was talking with a fundamentalist minister to whose church a dear friend belongs. She told him that she prays to God and that He sometimes answers her, sometimes speaks to her. He told her that was impossible. No one could do that. She must go through Jesus. How could she even think of such a thing? To me, in a word, the ideas of fundamentalism in this regard are weird, despite the fact that Jesus allegedly said that you couldn't get to God except through Jesus, whatever that means.

And speaking of that old, vindictive, pi*sed-off God...it bothers me that the only thing Christianity seems to know about God is what is in the collection of wild, discredited myths in the holy book of a completely different religion—the Old Testament of the Jews. To me, except for possible, tenuous predictions about Jesus, the OT has nothing to do with the Christian God. It is an alien religion just like Islam, and we don't include the Koran in the Bible, do we? Or the Babylonian and Sumerian holy books which are the sources of the OT myths. We don't even include all the texts concerning Jesus, like the ones from the Dead Sea scrolls. Exceedingly strange! The bureaucracy of even the very early Church seems to distort everything.

In Buddhism, God is the center of all things and, strangely, so is Man. God is known as something that is part of us, that we are part of. He is everything and everyone and every star, not something alien, aside, ignored. He is rarely studied or even talked about in isolation. I guess you would say that it is only through His manifestations in this life—as people, as animals, as plants, as the Earth and universe, as life and love—that we can know Him. Yet we can know Him, at least as much as is possible, even within the confines of our own minds, if we will just be still enough to listen, if we will just truly pray.

To me this would not be an alien concept to Christ, and should not be to Christians. I think Jesus would want us to know God and concentrate less on His worldly servant, messenger, son.

But that's just me and, as you say, who are we to judge...anything. The Church of Steve has only one member, so far, and we don't—in all honesty—really know who Jesus was, but we do believe in the one true God.

20110327-02	10:51	Charis	Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)
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Dear SteveB,

a) An interesting fact: Did you know that initially CS Lewis was a raging atheist for most of his life?

b) I'm not sure what kind of Christians you hang out with Steve. Most of the ones I know do not separate God from Christianity at all. In our minds God and Christ cannot exist separately. Once cannot exist without the other because they are one and the same.

Maybe it would help you to think of it in LESS human terms (and by this I mean try NOT to think of it like there is God and he's one guy, the dad, and then there's Jesus and he's another, the son) like they're on different hierarchical levels

Maybe visualize it this way instead: there is only one God. God makes man. God knows man won't understand him if he appears to man in his "un-human" form so he manifests himself to humans in a "human" form so we'll be able to relate to him. But it's the same guy.

[20110327-03](#) 10:57 SteveB Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear Charis,

Very Buddhist, and He also manifests himself to all of us, who will listen, directly, without son, without minister, without priest, without church...

[20110327-04](#) 11:09 Charis Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear SteveB,

I think what I'm trying to say is that God used language and "visuals" he knew humans would be able to relate to.

I was never taught that the Bible was written by God himself. I was taught the Bible was written by men inspired by God to spread a message he wanted humans to have.

There are similarities between Christianity and a lot of other religions or belief systems in terms of the lessons, morals and values they teach us.

There are differences, however. Some religious preach that God is within us therefore humans ARE god and we just have to tap into a sufficiently high sphere to become godlike or reach the same level as God (scientology, the Moonies, metaphysicists, etc.). Others preach similar values but don't claim their prophets were the son of God or God himself. Just prophets. (Bahai, etc.) Some do claim their prophets were actual manifestations of God himself. Those ones claim Jesus wasn't the son of God - only a prophet himself. (Islam, etc.)

[20110327-05](#) 16:13 SteveB Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear Charis,

Well, it's always a pleasure to discuss things with you. I hope we can all do a lot of that together when we return to Santa Cruz soon. And religion and spirituality have always been fascinating to me.

I don't exactly claim to be an actual Christian, but I know the dogma. I have read the whole Bible word-for word twice in my life, and parts many more times. Though that hardly makes me an expert, I don't think most people have done that. I have read every word of the Koran and many, many Buddhist texts and commentaries, the "missing books" of the Bible, and studied all the Western philosophers. I have always wanted to know and searched for answers.

When I was a boy, we went to church. My father was a Quaker (as is my cousin, Larry, who is a minister and a great one), but my Dad never went to church with us. My Mom would take us to a church until someone would do something to pi*s her off, then we would go to a different church. I know this wasn't very Christian of her, but that's the way she was. So I became acquainted with all the divisions of Protestantism. Later, my first wife was a Lutheran, so I ostensibly became a Lutheran and that became the church of our three children. Later still, my second wife is a Catholic, so I ostensibly became a Catholic. I love the good of the traditions of both of these churches and feel closer to God, somehow, in Church (as though I believe the fallacy of Him being "other"). So I know the dogma.

And, right now, I am finishing up my longest poem ever, "Dark Matter", which will conclude my book of poems from the last fifteen years—Sun and Moon. This poem is largely about my spiritual quest and God, whoever or whatever He may be. So this subject is near and dear to my heart right now.

Please allow me to tell you a small story. I have always worked. I worked around our little "farm" for my father from the age of about ten. He paid me by the hour rather than giving me an allowance. When I was thirteen, I set pins at the local

university's bowling alley (non-automated) for ten cents a line (game). I started my first real business (Baker Electronics) when I was still in high school. We must be a lot alike in our entrepreneurial spirits.

In high school I played in rock bands, so I was able to get a better (than the bowling alley) part-time job at a music instrument store. My boss was a very great, very good man named Ken Kersey. He taught me so much...how to repair musical instruments, how a piano is tuned, how to sell, how the customer is always right but may need to be educated a little, how to deliver giant upright pianos with just one other guy. I was lucky to have known him, and his son, a musician himself, is still a friend of mine.

Anyway, in those days, tape recorders were fairly rare and expensive. They were one of the things we sold, very good ones. One three day weekend, I was hired by a local Baptist church to use one of our best models to record a three day debate between two ministers. The subject was whether God was one or three. The event was held in a large building on the local fair grounds. There were hundreds of people in attendance. I was right there in front with my equipment and microphones. The ministers went on for three solid days, plus time for questions. Neither side actually won, but both sides presented interesting arguments. I can't pretend that, at that age, I understood everything that was said, but I paid close attention. I decided then and in later years that if these two learned, devout men couldn't really figure this out, except as a matter of differing faith, then I certainly wasn't going to. Who am I to judge anyway?

So I can't ever be a member of any church or faith or system of faith which pretends to know the answers to questions such as these. If other people can find their way to faith in such matters, to some certainty that they know the mind and nature of the mysterious God, then more power to them. I am happy for them and for you, if you are one of them. I choose to stand back a little. Actually, I don't exactly choose that position. It is the only one possible for me.

20110327-06	17:02	SteveB	Re: Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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Dear Robert,

I think an amendment to totally stop all campaign contributions of more than \$100, and to severely limit lobbying and revolving regulatory doors are much more important than term limits, etc. I also think we need amendments forcing balancing the federal budget except for dire emergencies, guaranteeing the right to collective bargaining, separation of church and state, and the right to innocence until proven guilty are just as important as term limits.

But I have no arguments against the amendment as presented. Let's do it!

from Robert, Mar. 27, 2011, 4:49 pm

My vote is for two six year terms!!!

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why?

Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971...before computers, before e-mail, before cell phones, etc. Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took 1 year or less to become the law of the land...all because of public pressure.

I'm asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011

1. Term Limits. 12 years only, one of the possible options below:

- A. Two Six-year Senate terms
- B. Six Two-year House terms

C. One Six-year Senate term and three Two-Year House terms

2. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.
3. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people.
4. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.
5. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
6. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
7. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
8. All contracts with past and present Congressmen are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen. Congressmen made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Maybe it is time. THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS!!!! If you agree with the above, pass it on. If not, just delete

[20110327-07](#) 21:09 Larry Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear SteveB,

Actually, I am more a part of "the Church of Larry" than I am a part of the Quaker Church. I don't believe things just because Quaker's believe them and I am free to make God central and I am free to make Christ central. I am also free to keep my feelings about deity totally to myself, and I never barge into sensitive religious issues that might offend others. I have even criticized the Quaker Church publicly when I felt like they deserved it, and this has made me more friends than not.

I never tell people that they are wrong about religious issues, and I am ashamed of the preacher who was unkind to Marci.

When my children were growing up I would tell them, "There is absolutely nothing in this world that you can do to keep me from loving you". And our kids were as close to being perfect as any kid could be.

Cousin, I have always treasured you as a dear friend and there is nothing in this world that you could do to make me feel differently. So never worry about "offending" me about religion or anything else. You can't do it. It can't be done.

Tell your wife that she looks truly lovely in those pictures that you sent us the other day.

[20110328-01](#) 21:36 SteveB Re: Mere Christianity (On a Spring Sunday)

Dear Larry,

Thank you. I feel the same way about you, cuz. You know I'm always trying to figure this stuff out. I have questions and mysteries instead of answers, especially for anyone else...but I know I get a little preachy sometimes. I get frustrated sometimes when so many people seem to know the mind of God, yet they all disagree, and I can never figure out how they managed to crack the nut to begin with.

For myself, I prefer "retirement" in Santa Cruz, Bolivia (very, very low cost of living)—2 million people, a taxi ride costs \$1-\$2, a bus is 20 cents, a full time maid is about \$120/month. Climate is semi-tropical, but not as cold, hot, or humid as Florida. Incredible fruits and vegetables, even the old-style, real tomatoes, are available year-round. The women are among the most beautiful in the world.

But for those of you stuck with retirement in the U.S., see below

from "The Best Retirement Places" by William P. Barrett, *Forbes*

Mar. 27, 2011. (http://www.forbes.com/2011/03/23/best-retirement-places-cities-living-costs-doctors-crime_slide.html?partner=yahoo)

Lists of best places to retire are a popular mainstay of personal finance journalism. Here at *Forbes* we've published our share, producing rosters focusing on favored locations for retirees seeking an active lifestyle, a foreign residence and even, in the U.S., an urban neighborhood.

As part of the new *Forbes* "2011 Retirement Guide," our latest offering — "The Best Retirement Places" — considers a wide range of factors but focuses especially on two bottom-line issues: tax burden and cost of living. That's why you won't see any locations in the highest-tax, highest-cost states like California, New Jersey, New York and Connecticut.

Still, in canvassing cities with populations starting at around 100,000, we look at a lot of issues besides costs. They include weather, availability of doctors, driving environment, crime rates and opportunities for an active retirement, which we defined by the extent of volunteering and outdoor paths for bicycling and walking. The roster of cities skews toward more temperate climates but not completely: It contains Fargo, N.D., Pittsburgh and some other chilly-in-the-winter places like Indianapolis, Colorado Springs, Kansas City and Salt Lake City.

Evaluating jurisdictions for taxes can be deceptive. Texas, for instance, lacks a state income tax, an omission it touts far and wide in its economic development efforts. But the Lone Star State more than makes up for that with a hefty sales tax and the nation's third-highest property tax (measured as a percent of fair market value). These taxes are not touted far and wide. Result: Texas ranks only in the middle on tax burden. Nevertheless, San Antonio makes our list, largely on the basis of low living costs and availability of doctors.

Washington State is another place without an income tax, making it a bit of a bug light for people seeking jobs at companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Boeing, and Google have large facilities in the Evergreen State. But sales tax burden per capita is the nation's second highest (after Wyoming, another income tax-less state), and the property tax hit is also above average. Accordingly, despite a temperate climate and a big cultural scene, *Forbes* is sleepless in Seattle, as well as, at the state's other end, in Spokane, which we once called the "scam capital of America."

Eleven states give special tax breaks to retirees, and we weigh that in our evaluations. This helps to earn spots for Lexington, Pittsburgh and Charleston, S.C. As we see it, the states with the best tax climates for retirees are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah and West Virginia.

Every city on the list has a low cost of living as measured by government statistics. Five — Charlotte, Colorado Springs, Indianapolis, Kansas City and Tucson — also made our recent Best Places for Bargain Retirement list.

This list is displayed alphabetically. So New Mexicans should not be unduly excited that Albuquerque comes first, nor residents of Tucson upset their city sits at the end. In our judgment, all are meritorious from a retirement perspective.

The Best Retirement Places:

1. Albuquerque. N.M.

Fast Fact: Home of world's largest hot-air balloon event.

Pros: Terrific weather, low taxes, lot of doctors, modest cost of living.
Cons: Crime, difficult environment for driving.

2. Charleston, S.C.

Fast Fact: U.S. Civil War began in harbor.
Pros: Lowest tax bite of all, low cost of living, agreeable climate, plenty of physicians.
Con: Hurricane threats.

3. Charlotte, N.C.

Fast Fact: Nation's largest banking center after New York.
Pros: Cheap housing and living, temperate climate, good place for drivers, abundant physicians
Cons: Crime, tax climate only so-so.

4. Colorado Springs, Colo.

Fast Fact: Unofficial nonprofit capital of America.
Pros: Affordable housing, low cost of living, safe streets, lots of volunteer opportunities.
Cons: Cold winters, a bit light on doctors.

5. Fargo, N.D.

Fast Fact: Named for a Wells Fargo co-founder.
Pros: Lowest crime rate on list, inexpensive living, numerous doctors, opportunities for staying active.
Cons: Cold, snowy winters, floods

6. Indianapolis, Ind.

Fast Fact: Hometown of writer Kurt Vonnegut.
Pros: Very affordable housing, encouragement for active seniors, robust medical establishment.
Cons: Cold winters, crime.

7. Jacksonville, Fla.

Fast Fact: Florida's largest city.
Pros: Fine climate, low living costs, no state income or estate tax, plenty of doctors.
Con: Other taxes high.

Article continues...

20110328-03	11:14	GaryC	"The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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"The Price of Taxing the Rich" by Robert Frank, *The Wall Street Journal*

Mar. 26, 2011 (http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424052748704604704576220491592684626-1MyQjAxMTAxMDIwODEyNDgyWj.html#project%3DWealthReport_0311%26articleTabs%3Darticle)

(The top 1% of earners fill the coffers of states like California and New York during a boom and leave them starved for revenue in a bust.)

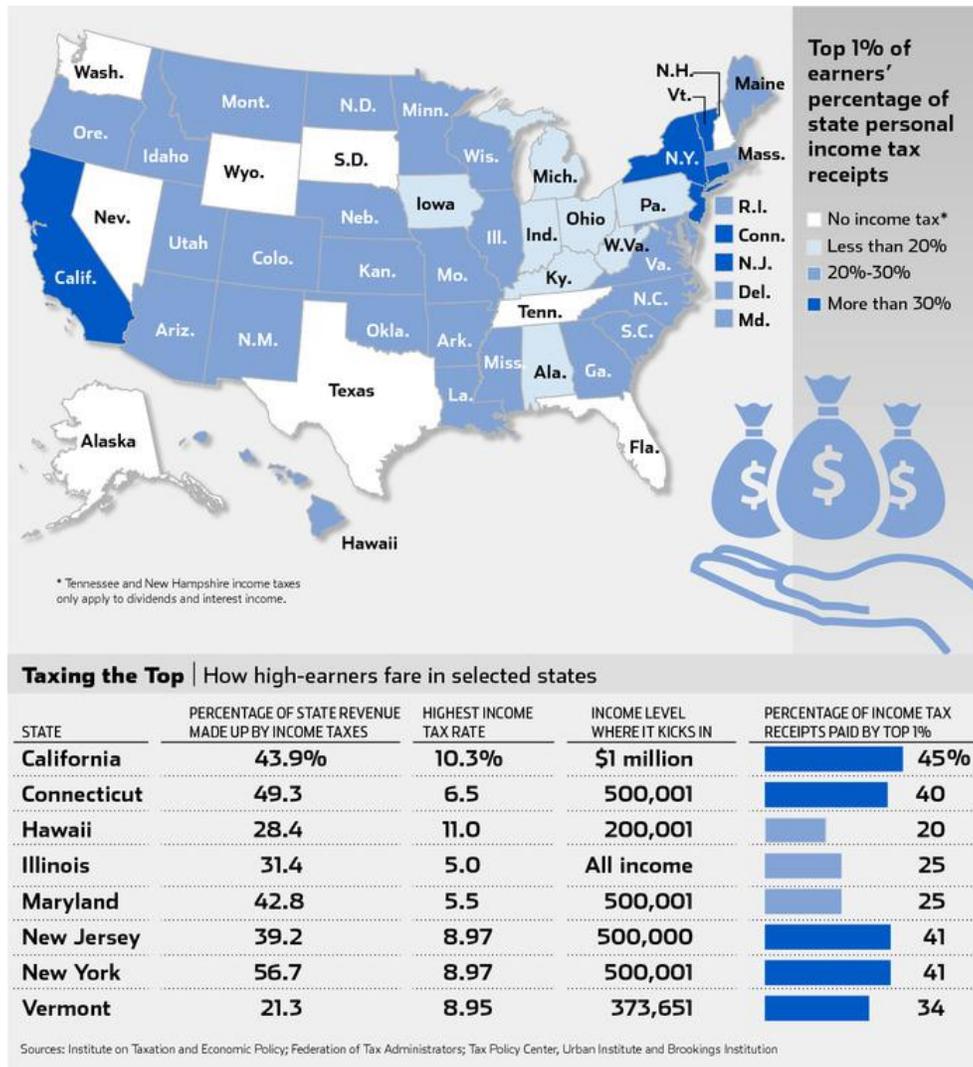
As Brad Williams walked the halls of the California state capitol in Sacramento on a recent afternoon, he spotted a small crowd of protesters battling state spending cuts. They wore shiny white buttons that said "We Love Jobs!" and argued that looming budget reductions will hurt the Golden State's working class.

Mr. Williams shook his head. "They're missing the real problem," he said.

The working class may be taking a beating from spending cuts used to close a cavernous deficit, Mr. Williams said, but the root of California's woes is its reliance on taxing the wealthy.

Nearly half of California's income taxes before the recession came from the top 1% of earners: households that took in more than \$490,000 a year. High earners, it turns out, have especially volatile incomes. Their earnings fell by more than twice as much as the rest of the population's during the recession. When they crashed, they took California's finances down with them.

Mr. Williams, a former economic forecaster for the state, spent more than a decade warning state leaders about California's over-dependence on the rich. "We created a revenue cliff," he said. "We built a large part of our government on the state's most unstable income group."



New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Illinois, states that are the most heavily reliant on the taxes of the wealthy, are now among those with the biggest budget holes. A large population of rich residents was a blessing during the boom, showering states with billions in tax revenue. But it became a curse as their incomes collapsed with financial markets.

Arriving at a time of greatly increased public spending, this reversal highlights the dependence of the states on the outside incomes of the wealthy. The result for state finances and budgets has been extreme volatility.

Falling Fortunes:



Interactive Map: (http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424052748704604704576220491592684626-1MyQjAxMTAxMDIwODEyNDgyWj.html#project%3DWealthReport_0311%26articleTabs%3Dinteractive)

Many states are drawing in less money, partly due to lower incomes among high earners. Compare income tax receipts state by state and see the change from 2007 to 2009.

In New York before the recession, the top 1% of earners, who made more than \$580,000 a year, paid 41% of the state's income taxes in 2007, up from 25% in 1994, according to state tax data. The top 1% of taxpayers paid 40% or more of state income taxes in New Jersey and Connecticut. In Illinois, which has a flat income-tax rate of 5%, the top 15% paid more than half the state's income taxes.

This growing dependence on wealthy taxpayers is being driven by soaring salaries at the top of the income ladder and by the nation's progressive income taxes, which levy the highest rates on the highest taxable incomes. The top federal income-tax rate has fallen dramatically over the past century, from more than 90% during World War II to 35% today. But the top tax rate, which applies to joint filers reporting \$379,000 in taxable income, is still twice as high as the rate for joint filers reporting income of \$69,000 or less.

The future of federal income taxes on the wealthy remains in flux. The top tax rate is 35%, following the Congressional tax battle last year. But in 2013, the rate is scheduled to go back to 39.6% unless Congress takes further action.

State income taxes are generally less progressive than federal income taxes, and more than a half-dozen states have no income tax. Yet a number of states have recently hiked taxes on the top earners to raise revenue during the recession. New York, for instance, imposed a "millionaire's tax" in 2009 on those earning \$500,000 or more, although the tax is expected to expire at the end of 2011. Connecticut's top income-tax rate has crept up to 6.5% from 4.5% in 2002, while Oregon raised the top tax rate to 11% from 9% for filers with income of more than \$500,000.

As they've grown, the incomes of the wealthy have become more unstable. Between 2007 and 2008, the incomes of the top-earning 1% fell 16%, compared to a decline of 4% for U.S. earners as a whole, according to the IRS. Because today's highest salaries are usually linked to financial markets through stock-based pay or investments, they are more prone to sudden shocks.

The income swings have created more extreme booms and busts for state governments. In New York, the top 1% of taxpayers contribute more to the state's year-to-year tax swings than all the other taxpayers combined, according to a study by the Rockefeller Institute of Government. In its January report downgrading New Jersey's credit rating, Standard & Poor's stated that New Jersey's wealth "translates into a high ability to pay taxes but might also contribute to potential revenue volatility."

State budget shortfalls have other causes, of course, from high unemployment and weak retail sales to falling real-estate values and the rising costs of health-care and pensions. State spending has expanded rapidly over the past decade. California's total spending grew from \$99.2 billion in 2000-01 to a projected \$136 billion in 2010-11, not including federal funds, according to the state Department of Finance. Though California's spending slipped by 15% during the recession, it has since returned to near prerecession levels.

Some states may get a lifeline this year from the financial markets. Starting late last year, California, New Jersey and others began seeing higher-than-expected income-tax revenues and capital-gains revenues, suggesting the start of the next boom cycle. Still, because many states based their spending plans on the assumption that the windfalls from the wealthy would return every year, they are now grappling with multibillion-dollar shortfalls.

A recent study by the Pew Center on the States and the Rockefeller Institute found that in 2009, states overestimated their revenues by more than \$50 billion, due largely to the unexpected fall-off in personal-income taxes. Sales and corporate taxes have also fallen, but they account for a much smaller share of tax revenue in many states.

Tax experts say the problems at the state level could spread to Washington, as the highest earners gain a larger share of both national income and the tax burden. The top 1% paid 38% of federal income taxes in 2008, up from 25% in 1991, and they earned 20% of all national income in 2008, up from 13% in 1991, according to the Tax Foundation.

"These revenues have a narcotic effect on legislatures," said Greg Torres, president of MassINC, a nonpartisan think tank. "They become numb to the trend and think the revenue picture is improving, but they don't realize the money is ephemeral."

Kicking the addiction has proven difficult, since it's so fraught with partisan politics. Republicans advocate lowering taxes on the wealthy to broaden state tax bases and reduce volatility. Democrats oppose the move, saying a less progressive tax system would only add to growing income inequality.

College students and faculty protest budget cuts in Sacramento on Mar. 14. Income taxes account for more than half of California's general revenue.

In a blog post called "The Volatility Monster," California Democratic State Sen. Noreen Evans wrote that "the true response to solving the volatility problem is to make sure Californians are fully employed and decently paid. Preserving the state's progressive tax system is fundamental to combating the rising riches at the top and rising poverty at the bottom. Flattening our tax system would simply increase this already historic income inequality," she wrote.

U.S. Rep. Tom McClintock (R., Calif.) has for years advocated a flat tax in California to reduce volatility and keep high-earners from leaving the state. "California has one of the most steeply disproportionate income taxes in the nation," he said. "A flatter, broader tax rate would help stabilize the most volatile of California's revenues."

Rainy-day funds, which can help bail out governments during recessions, have also run into political opposition or proven too small to save state budgets. A study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that effective rainy day funds should be 15% of state operating expenditures more than three times the state average before the crisis. Massachusetts, which saw a 75% drop in capital-gains collections during the recession, won plaudits from ratings firms and economists for creating a rainy-day fund in 2010 using future capital-gains revenues.

Economists and state budget chiefs say the best hedge is better planning. Budget staffers in New York, for instance, now spend more time studying Wall Street pay and bonuses to more accurately predict state revenues. The state's budget director avoids overly optimistic forecasts based on a previous year's strong growth.

"We're glad we have the revenue from the wealthy, and we want to encourage these people to stay and prosper," said Robert L. Megna, budget director for New York state. "But we have to recognize that because you have them, you'll have this big volatility."

The story of Mr. Williams, the former chief economist and forecaster for the California Legislative Analyst's Office, shows just how vulnerable states have become to the income shocks among the rich, and why reform has proven difficult.

In the mid-1990s, shortly after taking the job, Mr. Williams discovered he had a problem. Part of his job was to help state politicians plan their budgets and tax projections.

A lanky, 6-foot-4-inch 58-year-old, with piercing blue eyes and a fondness for cycling, Mr. Williams prided himself on his deep data dives. The Wall Street Journal named him California's most accurate forecaster in 1998 for his work the prior decade. He and his team placed a special focus on employment and age data and developed their own econometric models to make improvements.

Historically, California's tax revenues tracked the broader state economy. Yet in the mid-1990s, Mr. Williams noticed that they had started to diverge. Employment was barely growing while income-tax revenue was soaring.

"It was like we suddenly had two different economies," Mr. Williams said. "There was the California economy and then there were personal income taxes."

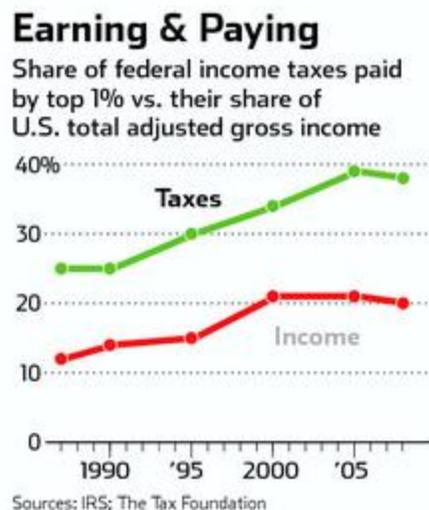
In all his years of forecasting, he had rarely encountered such a puzzle. He did some economic sleuthing and discovered that most of the growth was coming from a small group of high earners. The average incomes of the top 20% of Californian earners (households making \$95,000 in 1998) jumped by an inflation-adjusted 75% between 1980 and 1998, while incomes for the rest of the state grew by less than 3% over the same period. Capital-gains realizations, largely stock sales, quadrupled between 1994 and 1999, to nearly \$80 billion.

Mr. Williams reported his findings in early 2000, in a report called "California's Changing Income Distribution," which was widely circulated in the state capital. He wrote that state tax collections would be "subject to more volatility than in the past."

Mr. Williams wasn't the only one noticing the state's dependence on the wealthy. Economists and governors had for years lamented the state's high tax rates on the rich, and in 2009 a bipartisan commission set up by then Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recommended an across-the-board reduction in income-tax rates and a broader sales tax to reduce the state's dependence on the wealthy. The income-tax rate on Californians making more than \$1 million a year is 10.3%, compared to less than 6% for those making under \$26,600. Combined with the rising share of income going to the top, the state's progressive rates amplify the impact of the income gains or losses of the wealthy.

California's dependence on income taxes has also grown because of its shifting economy. Income taxes now account for more than half of its general revenue, up from about a third in 1981. Because the state's sales and use tax applies mainly to goods, rather than faster-growing services, it has declined in importance. The state's corporate tax has also shrunk relative to income taxes because of tax credits and other changes.

By the late 1990s, Mr. Williams realized that his job had changed. California's future was no longer tied to the broader economy, but to a small group of ultra-earners. To predict the state's revenue, he had to start forecasting the fortunes of the rich. That meant forecasting the performance of stocks, specifically, a handful of high-tech stocks.



He pored over SEC filings for Apple, Oracle and other California tech giants. He met with the financial advisers to the rich, asking them about the investment plans of their clients. He watched daily stock movements and stock sales reported by the state's tax collectors.

Working with the state's tax collectors, he did a geographic breakdown of capital gains. The vast majority were in Silicon Valley.

"We knew there was a bubble," he said, "We just didn't know when it would fall, or by how much."

After the dot-com bust, the state's revenues from capital gains fell by more than two-thirds, to \$5 billion in 2003 from \$17 billion in 2001, while personal-income taxes fell 15% over the same period. The recession created a mirror image of the boom, with the wealthy leading the crash and dragging tax revenues down with them. By 2002, California had a budget shortfall of more than \$20 billion.

The deficit lingered for years, but its lessons seemed to be quickly forgotten in the state capital. By 2005, California was enjoying another surge in spending fed by the incomes of the wealthy.

Mr. Williams started warning of another government crisis. In 2005, he released a report stating that the state's tax revenues could vary by as much as \$6 billion in a single year, and that such swings were "more likely than not." He recommended several potential reforms, including flatter income-tax rates, "income averaging," which allows the wealthy to spread their tax payments for unusual windfalls over a longer period of time, and a rainy-day fund.

His proposals failed to gain any traction with the legislature. Many Democrats refused to consider tax hikes on the middle class and lower rates for the rich. In 2009, voters rejected a proposed spending cap, which among other things, would have helped to create a rainy-day fund.

One of the leading advocates for such a fund is Roger Niello, a former Republican assemblyman who has long been among the top 1% of state earners. He and his family own a chain of luxury car dealerships, and during the recession, his income fell by more than half because of the decline of auto sales. Though he's still "fine financially," he said, his personal experience taught him that "people in this income group have the most variable incomes."

Darrell Steinberg, the Democratic leader of the state senate, agrees that the dependence on the wealthy is "one of our most fundamental problems." Yet he concedes that his own spending priorities, including a large expansion of mental-health programs funded by a millionaire's tax, have added to the current mismatch between revenues and spending.

"I have no regrets given the number of people we've helped," he said. "But I guess you could say I did my part with spending."

As time went by, Mr. Williams became increasingly frustrated. To do his job properly, he had to predict the stock market. "And that's impossible," he said. He also felt that all of his research and warnings fell on deaf ears. In 2007, he decided to retire, and he now he works for a consulting firm.

"I was a broken record," he said. "I just kept saying the same thing over and over. And with my job, there was no real pleasure in being right."

(Vauhini Vara contributed to this article.)

20110328-04	16:30	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear GaryC,

Rupert Murdoch!

All these numbers also show the rich getting richer. They are paying a higher share of the taxes with less income because everyone else is so much worse off. And, yes, all government has spent too much. This also further corroborates my view that tax rates on the rich are shockingly, embarrassingly low.

So what's the solution? Make the damned poor pay their fair share, because their incomes are more dependable? Haha.

20110328-05	16:33	GaryC	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear SteveB,

BTW You never have responded to my query regarding the responsibility of the poor. Apparently the responsibility of the rich is to work their a*s off to support the poor and the government. What is the poor's responsibility?

20110328-06 17:14 SteveB Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"

Dear GaryC,

I did reply! Even this article stated how unprogressive state income taxes are. The sales taxes are totally unprogressive. The poor pay their share. The obligation of the poor, as I said, is to work their a*s'es off too. And they are, to the degree that is possible. What do you expect them to do? Starve? So Rupert Murdoch can pay less taxes?

The future does not look bright. I was struck, during the revolt in Egypt, how similar were the conditions of the people seeking change to the conditions of the poor and lower middle classes in the U.S. The unemployment rate was similar. The degree of hopelessness was similar. The hatred and suspicion of the government were higher in Egypt, but not at impossible levels for the U.S.

I suppose people would say that American pu*sies would never have the balls to do what the Egyptians did and what the Libyans are doing, but how low do you think people can be pushed before they rise up? I, for one, do not wish to find out, but I'll tell you, things had better improve sooner rather than later, and not on the backs of the poor.

20110328-07 17:14 SteveB Alternative Vehicle Fuels, Hydrogen

Dear GaryC,

Say, did you know that almost all the taxis and many of the cars in Santa Cruz, Bolivia run on natural gas?

They often use a tank in the trunk just like your BBQ uses, and all the gas stations sell gas, as well as gasoline. I wonder, with gasoline costing what it does, and with our plentiful supplies of natural gas, why we aren't doing that here?

Last night, I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of a way the new, cheap hydrogen could also be used to do the same thing without fuel cells, which aren't really ready yet. One way—hydrogen might be to be used to power existing internal combustion engines (modified a little) just as natural gas can.

The hydrogen would be diluted to about the energy level of natural gas, or a little higher, using CO₂ or N₂.

It's kind of an invention needing a patent. Any interest?

20110328-08 21:02 Dick Fw: What Has America Become?

Dear SteveB,

What the hell has happened to our great country?

What has America become?

(<http://www.examiner.com/christianity-culture-in-fort-worth/what-has-america-become-by-ken-huber-of-tawas-city>)

Editor,

Has America become the land of special interest and home of the double standard?

Let's see: if we lie to the Congress, it's a felony and if the Congress lies to us, it's just politics; if we dislike a black person, we're racist and if a black person dislikes whites, it's their 1st Amendment right; the government spends millions to rehabilitate criminals and they do almost nothing for the victims; in public schools you can teach that homosexuality is OK, but you better not use the word God in the process; you can kill an unborn child, but it is wrong to execute a mass murderer; we don't burn books in America, we now rewrite them; we got rid of communist and socialist threats by renaming them progressive; we are unable to close our border with Mexico, but have no problem protecting the 38th

parallel in Korea; if you protest against President Obama's policies you're a terrorist, but if you burned an American flag or George Bush in effigy it was your 1st Amendment right.

You can have pornography on TV or the internet, but you better not put a nativity scene in a public park during Christmas; we have eliminated all criminals in America, they are now called sick people; we can use a human fetus for medical research, but it is wrong to use an animal.

We take money from those who work hard for it and give it to those who don't want to work; we all support the Constitution, but only when it supports our political ideology; we still have freedom of speech, but only if we are being politically correct; parenting has been replaced with Ritalin and video games; the land of opportunity is now the land of hand outs; the similarity between Hurricane Katrina and the gulf oil spill is that neither president did anything to help.

And how do we handle a major crisis today? The government appoints a committee to determine who's at fault, then threatens them, passes a law, raises our taxes; tells us the problem is solved so they can get back to their reelection campaign.

What has happened to the land of the free and home of the brave?

—Ken Huber, Tawas City

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— Ken Huber
Tawas City

20110329-01	15:15	Pam	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear SteveB,

Most people who can work are on welfare for only a year or two and go on to jobs, having been given a boost. The rest are children, the aged, and the disabled. There is nothing those people can do, work ethic or no. My daughter works with families with disabled children (some of them adults) and sees first hand, every day, what these families have to cope with. Where is your friend's compassion? Why does he focus on what he believes to be the poor's laziness and ignore those who are falling off the cliff? I just had my house painted—by a crew of partly employed, desperate for work fellows who did a beautiful, professional job. I paid them more than they asked, because I thought they were asking too little. Most people identify strongly with their work. It's demoralizing not to have a job. Pride comes with working. No one who isn't damaged volunteers to be disconnected from the mainstream, i.e. working.

20110329-02	15:57	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear GaryC,

Actually, I prefer the answer I gave before, that the responsibility of the poor and middle-class in America in the 21st century is to CONSUME! Without that, the whole house of cards comes crashing down. All they want to fulfill that obligation is jobs.

Surely it is the obligation of the movers and shakers in industry and government to make sure these people have money, have jobs, so they can CONSUME. I won't even talk about the pursuit of dreams and happiness.

Look at all the numbers you want, it seems like the fat cats have done a much worse job of creating the necessary wealth and distributed money than the "lower classes" have done working, consuming, trying to work, or trying to consume. In the end, this works more against the rich than the poor, but it is guaranteed pain for both eventually. But, "Let them eat cake!"...

20110329-03 16:14 GaryC Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"

Dear SteveB,

I agree but with certain caveats. I grew up poor in a factory town—Anderson. There were 4 kids and my mom did not work. Dad worked for Guide Lamp. I didn't know we were poor but we were. We got a few new clothes once a year. Never went out to eat. Only took two vacations while I was home—both to northern Indiana lakes to cottages rented by my aunts. I started working when I was 14.

However, here is what my parents did. They taught me a work ethic to be on time and do my best. They taught me the value of education. They taught me to save and be frugal. They taught me to be respectful and polite. They taught me to strive for a better standard of life than they experienced. They taught me to be generous when I did make money and was successful.

Now, I don't see these same principles being taught by the poor in most cases. While I am generous I want to make sure that the recipient does something with the gift and not expect more without effort on their part. How many of the poor value education? How many of the poor appreciate the opportunities they have in the U.S.? Unfortunately, Congress has developed a welfare state that rewards those who do not want to be better off with a little effort.

Your points are all well taken and I agree with many of them. I just think the approach is different. I want the poor to be successful and be able to upgrade their standard of living. But, I want them to learn a skill so that they can be self sufficient and not rely or expect hand outs. If you look at most income surveys, most poor people (myself included) over time improve their standard of living but the % that stay at the bottom and never move up seems to be increasing. Is that their fault, Congress' fault or the fault of society. I think it is a little of the first two.

In my businesses, I am constantly appalled at how little effort we get from young people (educated or not) even when big opportunities are offered to them for a little effort. Recently, we are seeing people quit or turn down jobs after a few weeks as they prefer to go back on unemployment and work part time without reporting the income.

It is a sad state of affairs, but I am convinced that many of the government social programs of the past 40 years have created more harm to the underclass than these programs have helped the poor.

20110329-04 16:55 SteveB "Genius at Work: 12-Year-Old is Studying at IUPUI"

"Genius at Work: 12-Year-Old is Studying at IUPUI" by Dan McFeely, *Indianapolis Star*

Mar. 20, 2011, (<http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2011103200369>)

When Jacob Barnett first learned about the Schrödinger equation for quantum mechanics, he could hardly contain himself.

For three straight days, his little brain buzzed with mathematical functions.

From within his 12-year-old, mildly autistic mind, there gradually flowed long strings of pluses, minuses, funky letters and upside-down triangles — a tapestry of complicated symbols that few can understand.

He grabbed his pencil and filled every sheet of paper before grabbing a marker and filling up a dry erase board that hangs in his bedroom. With a single-minded obsession, he kept on, eventually marking up every window in the home.

Strange, say some.

Genius, say others.

But entirely normal for Jacob, a child prodigy who used to crunch his cereal while calculating the volume of the cereal box in his head.

"Whenever I try talking about math with anyone in my family," he said, "they just stare blankly."

So do many of his older classmates at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, who marvel at seeing this scrawny little kid in the front row of the calculus-based physics class he has been taking this semester.

"When I first walked in and saw him, I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm going to school with Doogie Howser,' " said Wanda Anderson, a biochemistry major, referring to a television show that featured a 16-year-old boy-genius physician.

Elementary school couldn't keep Jacob interested. And courses at IUPUI have only served to awaken a sleeping giant.

Just a few weeks shy of his 13th birthday, Jake, as he's often called, is starting to move beyond the level of what his professors can teach.

In fact, his work is so strong and his ideas so original that he's being courted by a top-notch East Coast research center. IUPUI is interested in him moving from the classroom into a funded researcher's position.

"We have told him that after this semester . . . enough of the book work. You are here to do some science," said IUPUI physics Professor John Ross, who vows to help find some grant funding to support Jake and his work.

"If we can get all of those creative juices in a certain direction, we might be able to see some really amazing stuff down the road."

"My fear was that he would never be in our world"

Teenage college student?

Developer of his own original theory on quantum physics?

Paid researcher at 13?

This is not what Jake's parents expected from a child whose first few years were spent in silence.

"Oh my gosh, when he was 2, my fear was that he would never be in our world at all," said Kristine Barnett, 36, Jake's mother.

"He would not talk to anyone. He would not even look at us."

Child psychologists assessed Jake at the time and diagnosed behavioral characteristics of a borderline autistic child. He was impaired, they said, and had a lack of "spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment," difficulty showing emotion and interacting with others.

Diagnosis: mildly autistic.

"My biggest fear," his mom said last week, with tears welling up in her eyes, "was that he had lost the ability to say, 'I love you' to us."

By age 3, Jake was the focus of a more intense evaluation from a team of psychologists, therapists and a diagnostic teacher.

Their report indicated that while Jake continued to struggle with social activities and physical development, he was showing signs of academic skills that were above his age level.

Diagnosis: Asperger's syndrome, a somewhat milder condition related to autism.

After hearing this, Jake's parents decided to pay closer attention to the things their first-born son was doing — rather than the things he was not.

For example, Jake often recited the alphabet — forward and then backward. He used Q-tips to create vivid geometrical shapes on the living room floor. He solved 5,000-piece puzzles (rather quickly). And he once soaked in a state road map and ended up memorizing every highway and license plate prefix.

And perhaps most amazingly, he could recite the mathematical constant pi out to 70 digits.

"I'm at 98 now," Jake said, interrupting his mom during an interview.

And then, a week later, he was up to 200 digits after the decimal point — forward and backward.

At 3, his head was in the stars

The Barnetts decided it was time to follow Jake's lead, adopting a method that some parents of children with autism use — floor-time therapy — to help foster developmental growth. They let their children focus intently on subjects they like, rather than trying to conform them to "normal" things.

For Jake, that meant astronomy. As a 3-year-old, he loved looking at a book about stars, over and over again.

So off they went on a tour of the Holcomb Observatory and Planetarium at Butler University.

Kristine Barnett will never forget the day.

"We were in the crowd, just sitting, listening to this guy ask the crowd if anyone knew why the moons going around Mars were potato-shaped and not round," she recalls. "Jacob raised his hand and said, 'Excuse me, but what are the sizes of the moons around Mars?'"

The lecturer answered, and "Jacob looked at him and said the gravity of the planet...is so large that (the moons') gravity would not be able to pull them into a round shape."

Silence.

"That entire building...everyone was just looking at him, like, 'Who is this 3-year-old?'"

After that, the Barnetts began to feed Jake's hunger for knowledge, through more books and more visits to the planetarium. By the time he was 8, he got permission to sit in on an advanced astronomy class at IUPUI.

Meanwhile, his math skills were reaching astronomical levels.

By the time he was in fifth grade, Jake had become bored with elementary math. He was a student, first at Carey Ridge Elementary School and then at Westfield Intermediate School, an experience he now says he enjoyed for a while.

"The first couple of years were great, but then eventually the math started being, like, OK, we've been discussing this for a while, and it really isn't that hard," Jake said. "Can I move on to calculus now? Can I move on to algebra now?"

The boredom did not go unnoticed at home. Jake was coming home from school quiet, huddling in a safe space in the house and starting to show signs of withdrawing.

"I was really afraid we were going to lose him back into the world he was in when he was 2," his mom said.

Frank Lawlis, a Texas-based psychologist who serves as a testing supervisor for the American Mensa organization — a society for geniuses — said it would not have been unusual for a child with symptoms of autism to regress backward after a brief time of growth.

"One of the aspects of autism is that these kids' brains grow at an accelerated rate and then, generally speaking, there is kind of a reversal that happens," said Lawlis, who last year wrote *The Autism Answer*, a book for parents of children with autism.

"The theory is that the brain reaches a certain capacity, can't grow, becomes inflamed, and then a reversal effect occurs. It's just a theory, but it's very common."

That did not happen to Jake, thanks in part to a third psychological evaluation done nearly two years ago. It showed that this fifth-grader was not regressing but was simply bored and needed to be stimulated — in a very big way.

As in dropping out of school.

"Indeed, it would not be in Jacob's best interest to force him to complete academic work that he has already mastered," clinical neurophysiologist Carl S. Hale, Merrillville, said in a report provided by the Bernetts.

"He needs work at an instructional level, which currently is a post college graduate level in mathematics, i.e., a post master's degree. In essence, his math skills are at the level found in someone who is working on a doctorate in math, physics, astronomy and astrophysics."

The Bernetts were blown away. They knew Jake was smart, but doctorate-level smart?

"I flunked math," Kristine said with a laugh. "I know this did not come from me."

Off to college, where he tutors classmates

Encouraged by this new assessment, the Bernetts made the tough decision to pull Jake out of Westfield Washington Schools and enroll him in IUPUI's early college entrance program that caters to gifted and talented kids — although typically they are advanced high school students, not 12-year-old whiz kids.

As he prepared for the more rigorous work of a college class, Jake decided he ought to make sure he could master all high school-level math that would be required in college.

"In one two-week period, he sat on our front porch and learned all of his high school math," Kristine said. "He tested out of algebra 1 and 2, geometry, trigonometry and calculus."

At this point, Jake's math IQ — which has been measured at 170 (top of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) — could not get any higher.

"You could tell right off the bat, his performance has been outstanding," said Ross, who, at age 46 with a Ph.D. from Boston University, has never seen a kid as smart as Jake.

"When he asks a question, he is always two steps ahead of the lecture," Ross said. "Everyone in the class gets quiet. Poor kid... He sits right in the front row, and they all just look at him.

"He will come to see me during office hours and ask even more detailed questions. And you can tell he's been thinking these things through."

Jake is driven by Mom or Dad from his home in Hamilton County to IUPUI's campus, where he attends classes a few days each week. In between classes, he spends time at the Honors College lounge, where he has become a go-to guy for much older classmates needing tutoring.

"A lot of people come to him for help when they don't understand a physics problem," said Anderson, his class partner. "People come up to him all the time and say, 'Hey Jake, can you help me?'"

"A lot of people think a genius is hard to talk to, but Jake explains things that would still be over their head."

His professor has noticed.

"Is he a genius? Well, yeah," Ross said. "Kids his age would normally have problems adding fractions, and he is helping out some of his fellow students."

If Jake stays on track, Ross could see him working someday at a government lab or an observatory. Maybe he'll be a professor or a highly respected researcher.

"He can do anything he wants."

A normal boy, except for the numbers

Despite this new experience, his parents insist that Jake remain close with his friends in Westfield. Social activity is important, they know.

For Jake, life is not all centered on math and astrophysics.

He also likes playing video games. ("Guitar Hero" and "Halo: Reach" are his current favorites.) He plays basketball with friends, has a girlfriend and recently attended his first dance.

He likes music — classical, which he plays by memory on a piano, but he also plays some contemporary songs he hears on the radio. He loves sci-fi movies and the Disney Channel. He watches documentaries on the History Channel.

A normal kid.

But then, late at night, when the TV is off, the homework is done and everyone in the house is sleeping, the numbers start to percolate again.

They percolate so much that he has trouble sleeping. His parents got so worried a few years ago that they took him for medical tests, but no malady was diagnosed. He just can't fall asleep easily.

"A lot keeps me awake," Jake said. "I scare people."

The numbers that keep him from snoozing are the same that led him to develop his own theory of physics — an original work that proposed a "new expanded theory of relativity" and takes what Einstein developed even further.

His mom, still not sure whether her son was truly a genius at work or a kid at play, decided to send a video of Jake explaining his theory to the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study near Princeton University, one of the world's leading centers for theoretical research and intellectual inquiry.

That's where astrophysics Professor Scott Tremaine does his work. Tremaine is one of the world's leading scientists and is an expert in the evolution of planetary systems, comets, black holes, galaxies — all the stuff Jake really likes.

In a letter to the Barnetts, Tremaine confirmed the brilliance.

"I'm impressed by his interest in physics and the amount that he has learned so far," Tremaine wrote in an email, provided by the family. "The theory that he's working on involves several of the toughest problems in astrophysics and theoretical physics.

"Anyone who solves these will be in line for a Nobel Prize."

He then encouraged Jake to spend as much time as possible to learn more and to further develop his theory.

Contacted by The Indianapolis Star, Tremaine confirmed the exchange of notes.

"I have seen a YouTube video in which Jake describes his theory, and I have spoken with his mother and corresponded with both her and Jake by email," Tremaine said. "I hope that Jake continues his interest in physics and mathematics."

Thinking big is what he does

Meanwhile, Jake is moving on to his next challenge: proving that the big-bang theory, the event some think led to the formation of the universe, is, well, wrong.

Wrong?

He explains.

"There are two different types of when stars end. When the little stars die, it's just like a small poof. They just turn into a planetary nebula. But the big ones, above 1.4 solar masses, blow up in one giant explosion, a supernova," Jake said. "What it does, is, in larger stars there is a larger mass, and it can fuse higher elements because it's more dense."

OK...trying to follow you.

"So you get all the elements, all the different materials, from those bigger stars. The little stars, they just make hydrogen and helium, and when they blow up, all the carbon that remains in them is just in the white dwarf; it never really comes off.

"So, um, in the big-bang theory, what they do is, there is this big explosion and there is all this temperature going off and the temperature decreases really rapidly because it's really big. The other day I calculated, they have this period where they suppose the hydrogen and helium were created, and, um, I don't care about the hydrogen and helium, but I thought, wouldn't there have to be some sort of carbon?"

He could go on and on.

And he did.

"Otherwise, the carbon would have to be coming out of the stars and hence the Earth, made mostly of carbon, we wouldn't be here. So I calculated, the time it would take to create 2 percent of the carbon in the universe, it would actually have to be several micro-seconds. Or a couple of nanoseconds, or something like that. An extremely small period of time. Like faster than a snap. That isn't gonna happen."

"Because of that," he continued, "that means that the world would have never been created because none of the carbon would have been given 7 billion years to fuse together. We'd have to be 21 billion years old . . . and that would just screw everything up."

So, we had to ask.

If not the big bang, then how did the universe come about?

"I'm still working on that," he said. "I have an idea, but...I'm still working out the details."

20110329-05	19:03	GaryC	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear SteveB,

In Anderson, the jobs are gone because the unions got greedy and reckless.

20110329-06	20:14	SteveB	Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"
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Dear GaryC,

I believe that, just as in Wisconsin, both sides of the negotiations screwed up. I guarantee you, no union has ever asked for more than it would take me to do that work. But in a climate of nurture and protectionism, all parties could have benefited.

Besides, I believe your argument is beyond the scope of our current Boreas!

Additionally, I think even your example of the auto industry in Anderson is suspect. I don't see how the U.S. auto industry problems can be laid only at the feet of the unions. The politics of free trade helped. The fact that profits were distributed excessively to investors for years rather than being reinvested is partly at fault.

You see, my father worked for GM all his life. He taught me everything I know about the stock market, from a very young age. The third factor that hurt the U.S. auto makers was, that for years, they made largely sh*t cars. My father would buy a new Chevy and it would never run right, despite repeated trips to the dealer.

Friends would buy Jeeps or other cars and have the transmissions fall out after a few thousand miles. One friend's big new Jeep SUV I remember well, was after 1000 miles! Bodies would rust out after two or three years, or less. Paint would fade and/or peel. Chrome would rust after a year. Meanwhile, the Japanese, then the Germans were investing and applying American statistical quality control and making better cars. They were allowed to flood the American market with these cars by our friendly politicians. At that time, Japanese wages were less than half American wages, and I maintain that American wages have never been too high for the realities of the American cost of living. And, yes, I agree the unions were probably partly at fault, but, as I've said, management sat across the table and agreed to everything. Yet you blame nothing on precious management?

But, seriously, none of this union stuff has anything to do with our current problems. We've been sold down the river by our free-trading politicians, paid-off with huge campaign contributions from large corporations, banks, and rich investors. Illegal immigration comes from the same cause. The American worker can never compete against the slave labor and polluters in China, for instance, which I have seen firsthand. We don't need China and India demanding the world's limited oil supplies. We should have stayed isolationist and let the world be, for the good of American jobs and prosperity.

We had it all and gave it away. For what? Cheap cr*p that doesn't work or last from fricking Wal-Mart? Our generation took the richest country ever seen, handed to us by the Greatest Generation (our parents) and squandered it into joblessness and debt. And you want to blame it on the powerless poor? Come on!

[20110329-07](#) 20:20 SteveB Re: "The Price of Taxing the Rich"

Dear Pam,

I wonder why I continue to think everyone can see the light when I know that can't be true?

[20110329-08](#) 19:35 SteveB Re: What Has America Become?

Dear Dick,

I believe many of these issues are red herrings. They are lies told by our politicians to pit citizens against each other. We're supposed to believe black people are the problem, or immigrants are the problem, or criminals are the problem, or poor people are the problem, or unions are the problem, or abortion or guns are the problem. BS! Diversionary tactics!

As I have said many times, all of our problems result from a totally corrupt political system. The uber rich (as my friend, Dennis, likes to call them) people and corporations and even foreign governments get everything they want, or think they want, because they "bribe" political candidates of both parties with huge, unfettered campaign contributions. This creates debts for politicians greedy for power. The entire system is as corrupt as the worst Mexican policeman.

No problems will be solved until real campaign finance reform can be forced on these crooks. But that's just my opinion. Notice that you will never hear any living politician saying this, but Eisenhower did.

[20110330-01](#) 17:46 SteveB "5 Can-Do Companies Made in America"

Wall Street and the government may not be alive and well, but American ingenuity, entrepreneurship, education, and—thank God—some government assistance for start-ups are more than alive and well. Let's just don't let the Republican ideologues kill them all off. We need to protect and nurture what we have, not give it all to our economic enemies for big campaign contributions.

"5 Can-Do Companies Made in America" by Michael Brush, MSN Money

Mar. 15, 2011, (<http://money.msn.com/stock-broker-guided/5-great-young-companies-made-in-america-brush.aspx>)

Think the U.S. economy no longer has what it takes to lead the world? Consider these five examples of American entrepreneurship and innovation, and you might have to think again.

Despite obvious improvements in the economy, we still hear a refrain that's all too common on the way out of a recession: America has lost its edge, so its economy is never coming back.

It sounds like former President Jimmy Carter, but this pessimistic whine now regularly emanates from conservatives, who apparently don't mind bashing America as long as it means they can take a shot at President Barack Obama.

I'll respond with one word: poppycock.

Despite the impressive growth in emerging markets, the U.S. still ranks consistently high for the kind of moxie and can-do attitude it takes to invent breakthrough technologies and products, and in creating fast-growing, job-producing companies, say academics at Babson College in Massachusetts who study these things.

A recent count, by a Babson College professor, of the most entrepreneurial companies in the world shows that 60% of them are based in the U.S., even though the U.S. accounts for only 23% of the global economy.

So take a deep breath. We're not losing our edge, and entrepreneurs here are going to keep on thinking up the next big idea, to the envy of much of the world. Don't take just my word for it. Some of our best entrepreneurs, the consummate optimists who know more about these things than I do, say exactly the same thing.

"What I don't understand is where the fright comes from," says Andy Ory, the co-founder and CEO of the tech company Acme Packet (APKT, news), which plans to expand its workforce by more than 40% this year. "I think this country has an enormous opportunity."

"We definitely have challenges ahead of us, but I think people are too pessimistic," agrees Colin Angle, the co-founder and CEO of iRobot (IRBT, news). "The U.S. is the best entrepreneur incubator in the world. This is our lifeblood, and this is how we are going to win. People should get out and pursue some ideas."

There's money to be made

For investors, there's money to be made in all this, on two levels.

First, the unfounded pessimism confirms to me that not all of the expected good developments in the economy are priced in to stocks. People are still too negative. Indeed, the price-earnings ratio of the S&P 500 is at 13.7, or almost exactly where it was during the Armageddon lows of Mar., 2009, notes James Paulsen, the chief investment strategist at Wells Capital Management. Sure-stocks are up 100%, but earnings are up a lot, too. The takeaway: You can buy stocks now for further gains this year, though a 10% correction at some point is likely.

Second, if you invest in entrepreneurial companies, you are likely to do better than the market. I base this conclusion on research by Joel Shulman, a mutual-fund manager who teaches at Babson, which consistently ranks high for its entrepreneur training programs.

Shulman, an expert on entrepreneurs, concedes that there's no way to truly identify the entrepreneurial spark in managers without talking to them in person. Since it would be tough to interview so many managers, he instead hunts for the fingerprints of entrepreneurs in company financials, by looking for the key attributes that he says show up when you have a real entrepreneur at the helm.

These include measures such as a preponderance of sales from internal growth instead of acquisitions, low costs, big ownership stakes by key managers, low executive turnover and superior return on invested capital, among others. For the past six years, Shulman has used this approach to find entrepreneurial companies and invest in them, and the results are impressive.

From Aug., 2005 through the end of last year, his managed accounts are up an average of 12% a year, compared with a gain of 0.7% for the Russell 3000. Shulman recently launched a mutual fund that invests on this basis, called EntrepreneurShares Global Fund.

5 that exemplify

Together with Shulman, I've identified five relatively young companies whose stocks should outperform over the next several years because they are among the most dynamic entrepreneurial companies in the U.S.

The names: Chipotle Mexican Grill (CMG, news); Acme Packet, which makes gear that help phones and other devices work better on the Internet; iRobot, the robotics company; Intuitive Surgical (ISRG, news), which makes consoles that help doctors perform surgery; and Zoltek (ZOLT, news), which makes carbon fibers used in wind-turbine blades, cars, planes and other applications.

Their stories also illustrate four key factors that successful entrepreneurs and experts say set the good ol' American can-do spirit apart.

1. Entrepreneurs in the U.S. have vast support systems.

This will sound a little too "Kumbaya" for hard-nosed conservatives, but a major reason for our entrepreneurial success is the vast support network of family and friends that the budding entrepreneur can draw upon.

One of my favorite examples here is Chipotle, the popular and rapidly growing Mexican-food chain, if only because it has grown into a huge company from the humble beginnings of a father's loan to his son to launch a startup. The restaurant has its origins in founder Steve Ells' early jobs in restaurants after culinary school.

While working as a line cook in San Francisco, Ells noticed the popularity of Mexican food. That inspired him to open the first Chipotle in Denver, with help from his father's \$85,000 loan. The two calculated they would need to sell about 100 burritos a day to turn a profit; a month later, the restaurant was selling 1,000 per day. Now the chain has more than 1,000 restaurants, and its stock is up more than fivefold since its 2006 initial public offering, trading above \$250. But it can probably go higher, as it is growing its store base by about 13% a year.

Angle of iRobot cites this same factor as key in bringing his company through the lean years for a decade before 2002, when his robots finally started to bring in real money. "Without a lot of support and encouragement, things would have fallen apart," Angle says.

2. Failure is acceptable, as long as you get up again.

In many cultures, if you fail in your business "you will be socially outcast and friends and family will look down on you," says Abdul Ali, who teaches entrepreneurship at Babson. "In the U.S., if you fail you feel bad, but you move on. You are not ostracized or castigated."

Ory, who co-founded Acme Packet with Patrick McLampy, says that "serial entrepreneurs" who try and try again are "incredibly important because they have made a lot of mistakes and learned a lot." In the early days of Acme Packet about 10 years ago, Ory learned a lot about what would work because he persistently presented product ideas to potential customers and got feedback.

Now his company sells gear that helps establish set traffic pathways along the Internet, allowing applications in phone, video and multimedia work better. Sales reached \$231.2 million last year, from almost nothing a decade ago. Aside from that kind of impressive organic sales growth, the fact that its core management team is still in place marks Acme Packet as an entrepreneurial company, Shulman says.

3. Our education system fosters entrepreneurship.

It's popular these days to bash our education system, but actually it's still one of our best assets. Angle says iRobot never would have taken shape without the experiences and contacts he got at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. One key factor was that MIT lets undergraduates work closely with professors early on. "As opposed to graduating with a degree, I graduated with a relationship with professor Rodney Brooks, who became a co-founder of iRobot. Without that, iRobot would not have happened."

MIT also exposed him to other entrepreneurs, including several members of his fraternity who had founded companies. "These were not godlike folks I could never aspire to be like," Angle says. "They were guys I could beat at beer pong, and I thought, why couldn't I be like them and create a company, too?" Today, his company sells popular household robots such as the Roomba floor vacuum and Verro pool cleaner, as well as robots used by the military and police.

Angle says the use of robots will grow steadily over the next two decades to help with tasks like folding laundry, preparing food, cleaning bathrooms and providing home health care for the elderly. He sees more business applications in industrial cleaning and energy development. His company's sales have increased from \$13 million in 2002 to a projected \$440 million or more this year.

You may think MIT is the exception, but lots of universities regularly develop and transfer know-how and technology to private startups. One of Shulman's favorite companies here is Intuitive Surgical, which sells high-tech consoles with robotic arms that help doctors perform minimally invasive surgery. Known as the da Vinci Surgical System, these devices were developed with help from SRI

International and Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of California at Santa Barbara and MIT. Intuitive Surgical has sold about 1,750 of these systems, and last year they were used in about 278,000 surgical procedures. Sales reached \$1.4 billion last year, almost double from 2008.

4. We are a nation of immigrants.

Immigrants get a bad rap these days, but in terms of entrepreneurship, new ideas and job growth, they are one of our best assets. "We attract the best and the brightest from around the world, people who come here and want to stay and that's how we build our economy," Shulman says.

A great example of this is Zoltek, which makes carbon fibers used in wind-turbine blades, the bodies of cars made by Tesla Motors (TSLA, news), Corvettes, planes and sports equipment. The company was shaped by Hungarian immigrant Zolt Rumy, who came here in 1957. Frustrated by challenges in getting military contracts for carbon fiber used in planes at a company he ran in the late 1980s, Rumy figured out a way to make carbon fibers more cheaply so they could be used in the private sector.

"That was a brand-new concept, and it changed the whole carbon-fiber industry," Rumy says. He sees more uses ahead in areas like automobiles, deep-sea drilling and aerospace to reduce the weight of things like floors, luggage bins and seats.

Rumy says many immigrants are keener to take advantage of the opportunities to start a business in the U.S., because they often come from cultures where it's impossible to do this. "In a lot of other systems, people may be entrepreneurial, but the system takes it out of them," he says.

This is just another way of saying that innovators and mavericks are looked up to here. While in many cultures, people with long-term family wealth get the most respect, "here in America if you've created wealth, people think you are smart and they look up to you," Ory says.

There's one more lesson here for conservatives out to dramatically cut the size of government: Loans and grants from the government can make all the difference for a startup.

Angle says iRobot succeeded in part because of substantial research funding from the government early on. The company hired 150 people last year and now has 650 employees. And Chipotle's Eells launched an early restaurant with the help of a Small Business Administration loan. Last year, Chipotle sales more than doubled to \$1.8 billion since 2006, and the chain employs about 26,500 people.

(At the time of publication, Michael Brush did not own shares of any company mentioned in this column.)

"Will Republican Voters Believe Anything? The Right's Hyperbolic, Dysfunctional World" by Gary Younge

Mar. 28, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/150409/>)

(To have credibility within the Republican party is to have none outside it. They act as if all their Kool-Aid has been spiked.)

Polls suggest there are between one in three and one in four Americans who would believe anything. More than a third thought President George Bush did a good job during Hurricane Katrina; half of those thought he was excellent.

Throughout most of 2008, as the economy careered into depression, just over one in four believed Bush was handling the economy well. As Bush prepared to leave office in Jan., 2009, bequeathing bank bailouts, rampant unemployment, and Iraq and Afghanistan in tatters, a quarter of the country approved of his presidency.

These are national polls that span the political spectrum. So you can imagine how concentrated the distortions become when filtered through the tainted lens of the right. A poll earlier this month revealed that a quarter of Republicans believe a community rights organisation called Acorn will try to steal the election for Barack Obama next year, while 31% aren't sure whether it will or not. It won't. Because Acorn does not exist. It was defunded and disbanded after a successful sting operation by conservatives a couple of years ago.

Meanwhile, a poll last month showed that a majority of Republicans likely to vote in the primaries still believe Obama was not born in the United States. He was. But no number of verified birth certificates will convince them.

Such is the nature of the electorate that will select Obama's principal opponent for the 2012 election. And such is the reason why a viable Republican contender has yet to emerge despite trough-loads of money and the Republican successes of the midterms. Among Republicans the latest polls suggest a crowded, splintered field of possibles with Mike Huckabee leading on 19%, followed by Mitt Romney on 15%, Sarah Palin on 12% and Newt Gingrich on 10%.

And if Republicans are unconvinced, Democrats are untroubled. When Obama is pitted against any of them in six states he took from Republicans in 2008, polls suggest he would win all but one—he would lose to Huckabee in North Carolina by 1%. He fares best against Palin, trouncing her by double figures everywhere but Ohio. Despite his favourability ratings suggesting the nation is evenly divided on his job performance, a national Pew poll suggests 47% would back Obama's re-election against 37% who would prefer a Republican and 16% who did not know.

The challenge for the primaries is neither new nor unique to the right. The tension between appealing to the base and to moderates is the perennial test of any successful candidate in national United States politics. To win the party nomination you must appeal to your motivated base. To take the country as a whole you generally must engage the wavering centre.

What is relatively new, however, is the level of logical dysfunction and hyperbole within the American right, trapped in a fetid media ecosystem where all the Kool-Aid has been spiked. In short, what you need to say and do to be credible within the Republican party essentially deprives you of credibility outside it. The Republicans seem to realise this, but like an obese glutton at an all-you-can-eat buffet, they just can't seem to help themselves.

When asked which of their possible contenders they believe to be qualified for the job they can think of one, Mitt Romney, and even then barely 50% believe so. The person they say they like the most, Sarah Palin, is also the one they believe is least qualified: only 29% believe she can actually do the job.

This was evident in Iowa, the state that holds the first caucuses in the primary process next year, where many of the possible candidates converged over the weekend. On Friday, at a forum for Iowa pastors called "Rediscovering God in America", Mississippi governor Haley Barbour, an outsider, vowed to do "everything that we can to stop abortion". The next day at the Conservative Principles Conference, where Barbour spoke, abortion didn't come up. "It is absolutely critical that we elect a new president," he said. "I think the best way, perhaps the only way, is for us to make sure the 2012 campaign is focused on policy." He added: "The American people agree with us on policy."

When it comes to Libya, Newt Gingrich has vacillated from "Exercise a no-fly zone this evening", on Fox News 12 days before bombing started, to "I would not have intervened" four days afterwards. Meanwhile, congresswoman Michele Bachmann, who once called for an investigation of "anti-American" lawmakers, told the conference: "It can't just be a Republican. Do you hear me? It can't just be a Republican." She urged Iowa conservatives to set the tone for the nation, saying: "We need to have people who have guts, who you won't see melt like wax when they get there."

Some feared that Iowa, which holds such a crucial role in the nomination process, could be too extreme to pick a competitive candidate. "We look like Camp Christian out here," Doug Gross, a Republican activist and former nominee for governor, told the *New York Times*. "If Iowa becomes some extraneous rightwing outpost, you have to question whether it is going to be a good place to vet your presidential candidates."

Strategically the division between social and fiscal conservatism has largely been settled. With just a few exceptions only social conservatives (anti-abortion, anti-gay marriage, pro-gun) can get elected within the Republican party, so it has ceased to be much of an issue in primaries. Once nominated, candidates stress only fiscal conservatism for fear of scaring away centrists. Once elected they emphasize both, evidenced by the growing efforts to restrict access to abortion by legislators who barely raised the issue of abortion on the stump.

When I saw Rand Paul speak before 35 people in Leitchfield, Kentucky, just over a year ago, he never mentioned abortion, and nor did anyone else. "I'm not running for preacher," he told me. "I'm running for office." Now he's a senator who supports slashing aid to planned parenthood. Meanwhile, the Kentucky legislature has recently passed a bill requiring a woman to view an ultrasound before she has an abortion. But the strategic question of where and how to strike a balance between principle and pragmatism, or even whether such a balance is desirable, still eludes them. So too does any consensus on the kind of facts—Obama's religion and place of birth being just the two most obvious—that would enable others to take them seriously.

With little more than 18 months to go before the election there is still time for a candidate to emerge who can fudge the difference and straddle the divide. An event like the Arizona shootings might also force a reckoning between the right and reality. But generally speaking, incumbent presidents lose elections; challengers don't win them. Obama is vulnerable on many fronts. With unemployment still high, poverty and home repossessions growing, Guantánamo still open, two old wars not yet over and a new one just begun, he deserves more than token opposition. There is just over a third of the country who think that Republicans are providing it. But then they believe anything.

(Gary Younge is a feature writer and columnist for the *Guardian* based in the U.S.)

20110331-02	18:51	Robert	Fw: Obamacare
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[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com pretty much blows this out of the water because the points made concern an earlier version of the bill, not the final bill as passed. Big difference. Below is really a condensed list of all the mainly inaccurate points listed in the Snopes.com article: <http://www.snopes.com/politics/medical/kithil.asp>.—SteveB]

YOU ARE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS: Obama Care Highlighted by Page Number

THE CARE BILL HB3200

THIS IS THE 2ND OFFICIAL WHO HAS OUTLINED THESE PARTS OF THE CARE BILL

Judge Kithil of Marble Falls , TX—HB3200 highlighted pages most egregious. Please read this..... especially the reference to pages 58 & 59

JUDGE KITHIL wrote:

** Page 50/section 152: The bill will provide insurance to all non-U.S. residents, even if they are here illegally.

** Page 58 and 59: The government will have real-time access to an individual's bank account and will have the authority to make electronic fund transfers from those accounts.

** Page 65/section 164: The plan will be subsidized (by the government) for all union members, union retirees and for community organizations (such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now—ACORN).

** Page 203/line 14-15: The tax imposed under this section will not be treated as a tax. (How could anybody in their right mind come up with that?)

** Page 241 and 253: Doctors will all be paid the same regardless of specialty, and the government will set all doctors' fees.

** Page 272. section 1145: Cancer hospital will ration care according to the patient's age.

** Page 317 and 321: The government will impose a prohibition on hospital expansion; however, communities may petition for an exception.

** Page 425, line 4-12: The government mandates advance-care planning consultations. Those on Social Security will be required to attend an "end-of-life planning" seminar every five years. (Death counseling..)

** Page 429, line 13-25: The government will specify which doctors can write an end-of-life order.

HAD ENOUGH???? Judge Kithil then goes on:

"Finally, it is specifically stated that this bill will not apply to members of Congress. Members of Congress are already exempt from the Social Security system, and have a well-funded private plan that covers their retirement needs. If they were on our Social Security plan, I believe they would find a very quick 'fix' to make the plan financially sound for their future."

Honorable David Kithil, Marble Falls, Texas

All of the above should give you the point blank ammo you need to support your opposition to Obamacare. Please send this information on to all of your email contacts.

20110401-01	12:43	Dennis	"What's Behind the Oil Spike to \$107 (and Counting...)"
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Before the overheated political rhetoric starts up again about escalating gas prices, read the following from an expert on the subject:

Why oil costs what it does...

"What's Behind the Oil Spike to \$107 (and Counting...)" by Kent Moors, *Oil and Energy Investor*

Apr. 1, 2011, (<http://oilandenergyinvestor.com/2011/04/whats-behind-oil-spike-to-107-and-counting/>)

Crude oil prices continue to rise, increasing significantly to close yesterday at \$106.62 a barrel for West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures in New York and \$117.36 a barrel for Brent in London. Already this morning, WTI hit a new two-and-a-half-year high of \$107.83.

The latest rise is not a result of new geopolitical developments — although they do continue to weigh on the market.

Nor is it a result of any short-term inventory problems in either the U.S. or western Europe. In fact, available supply of both crude oil and finished products continues to run considerably above five-year averages. American stockpiles are now at multi-year highs.

This spike is our introduction to a very quickly changing oil sector... one in which demand is coming from new quarters, and concerns are increasing over sufficient balance among regions.

It has been some time since the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries — essentially Europe, North America, Australia, Korea, and Japan — have actually controlled this market. Demand now comes from developing, not developed, economies.

And that is prompting a new oil dynamic.

What occurs on a day-to-day basis in the U.S. — still the largest end-user market in the world — has a declining impact on price. This affects both crude oil and finished products such as gasoline, diesel, high-end kerosene (jet fuel), and low-sulfur heating oil.

There is an important point to remember from all of this.

The Global Oil Market Is An Integrated One

Regardless of how much surplus inventory may exist in an individual national economy, prices for gasoline (or diesel or heating oil or jet fuel) are still fundamentally driven by what occurs elsewhere.

Neither "Drill, baby, drill" nor "Fortress America" will have the impact their proponents anticipate. In fact, the idea that domestic crude can reduce gasoline prices is fundamentally incorrect.

Domestic crude is considerably more expensive to extract than oil exported from elsewhere. And since the cost of crude is the single largest component in the cost of refining, having the source closer to home does not translate into less expensive refined products.

Now, if this is a national security argument, pricing considerations take a secondary seat.

Security deals with having supply under control; it does not address price.

If Americans were to accept paying more at the pump (and we are talking way more here — well over \$5 a gallon, as we will see in a moment) as a necessary cost of weaning ourselves from Middle East sourcing, then the solution would be simple.

Unfortunately, it is the pricing side that captures the attention.

And if we are concerned with the price of oil and gasoline, diesel, etc., with the net impact of rising oil prices on the U.S. economy and recovery, of jobs, tax base, and industrial infrastructure at risk, then importing from abroad becomes the cheaper option.

The security/pricing tradeoff is both the most all-encompassing and the most politically misused element in the entire energy debate.

Yet it does bring the real issue into focus.

Domestic Production Is Unrealistic

Each one-dollar rise in the price of a barrel of crude oil translates, on average, into a 2.5-cent increase at the pump for a gallon of regular gasoline, and closer to a 3.2-cent increase for a gallon of diesel.

Let me put what this means for American domestic production into perspective.

During the second week of July 2008, when oil prices hit \$147.27 a barrel, with gasoline nationwide on average over \$4.20 and diesel over \$4.60 per gallon, there were more than 360,000 capped wells in west Texas holding, in aggregate, millions of barrels of crude oil.

But even at with oil at \$147.27, it was too expensive to open them up. These are "stripper wells," the source of over 60% of the crude pumped daily in the U.S. Each well provides less than 10 barrels of oil a day but upwards to 200 barrels of water.

And that disproportionately increases the cost of extraction.

At the time, I estimated it would take a price of \$183 a barrel to make these wells profitable enough to allow an oil flow. That \$35.73 price difference (between the actual \$147.27 and the required \$183) would have catapulted gasoline prices to an average of \$5.09 and diesel to \$5.74 per gallon. And that was almost three years ago.

It is little wonder, then, that we are experiencing a rise in imported gasoline and other oil products into the U.S. It is becoming cheaper to refine them abroad.

This is the real reason we will not see new refineries built in the American market.

The actual barriers to new refineries are not environmental regulations or NIMBY (not in my back yard) sentiment. Rather — even forgetting about the billions in expense involved — it would take about a decade to bring a new refinery on-line from scratch. Well before that period expires, the more cost-effective approach is simply to import what additional oil product is needed.

So the current spike in oil prices is not an aberration. It is not because of events in Libya, or Syria or Bahrain or Egypt. It results from the built-in pricing problems of the market itself.

This will guarantee higher oil product prices, supported by a number of the other elements we have been discussing here over the past 15 months.

As another presidential election cycle begins, you need to keep this in mind. Political rhetoric aside, the gasoline pricing issue and the cost of crude are not a result of Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Vegetarians, Reformed Druids, or any other political party or movement. They come from the oil market itself.

We will continue to bounce from crisis to crisis until we recognize this fact... and begin the genuine, difficult, exasperating, long, and incredibly expensive process of moving from a crude-based economy to a more balanced energy model.

20110403-01	10:28	SteveB	Alternative Vehicle Fuels, Hydrogen
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Dear Jim,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying spring. I had an idea the other night that I wanted to get your thoughts on.

Almost all the taxis and many of the cars in Santa Cruz run on natural gas. They often use a tank in the trunk just like your BBQ uses, and all the gas stations sell gas as well as gasoline. I wonder, with gasoline costing what it does, and with our plentiful supplies of natural gas, why we aren't doing that here?

Last night, I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of a way the new, cheap hydrogen could be used to do the same thing without fuel cells, which aren't really ready yet—a way hydrogen might be able to be used in existing internal combustion engines just as natural gas can. It's kind of an invention needing a patent and development.

<http://www.technologyreview.com/Energy/20134/?a=f>

I know hydrogen is a dangerous substance. I once was consulting for a company in Massachusetts where they used hydrogen as a reducing agent. They had a giant tank of liquid hydrogen outside the plant. One day, there was a huge explosion. My office window looked out at the parking lot and hydrogen storage tank. A big hydrogen truck was parked there and I saw the driver, in his special suit, running around beating the flames on his suit. There was an immediate evacuation siren. I happened to have a guy from an outside company working near the explosion. I was sure he didn't know what to do. I got on a golf cart (the place was big) and started heading toward the explosion as fast as I could go, even though everyone else was going in the other direction and yelling at me to turn around. Well, I got him OK, put him aboard and got out of there, the whole time thinking we were about to die. Fortunately, there were no more explosions and the delivery truck and storage tank did not explode. The problem had been a leaky valve on the truck. I was told later that if the big tank had exploded, the entire plant would have been just a giant crater. Because of this experience, I've always thought battery-powered electric cars to be superior to hydrogen powered cars because of the dangers of distributing hydrogen.

But I wonder if hydrogen could be rendered less explosive? The way this might work is like this: air is about 20% oxygen. Let's say the gas tank on the car were filled with 20% hydrogen and 80% nitrogen. A pressure-regulated fuel injector system would supply the hydrogen mix and air to the cylinders in the proper proportions (approx, 2:1) to burn all the hydrogen and produce water vapor exhaust.

Do you think this hydrogen mixture would be suitably less explosive than hydrogen alone, and less dangerous? Maybe feasible?

20110403-02	17:38	SteveB	"Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%"
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Income inequality...

This article is as clear as the streams in Montana.

It is a must read! It explains and proves pretty much everything I have been saying since before the last Presidential election. I hope you will read it carefully. If you think these premises are wrong, you might want to re-examine which side you are on—the side of how we became the greatest nation on Earth, or the side of our present decline and fall. I don't believe I put that in terms too strong. The future of America hangs in the balance.

"Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" by Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Vanity Fair*

May, 2011, (<http://www.vanityfair.com/society/features/2011/05/top-one-percent-201105>)

Americans have been watching protests against oppressive regimes that concentrate massive wealth in the hands of an elite few. Yet in our own democracy, 1 percent of the people take nearly a quarter of the nation's income—an inequality even the wealthy will come to regret.

The top 1 percent may have the best houses, educations, and lifestyles, says the author, but "their fate is bound up with how the other 99 percent live."

It's no use pretending that what has obviously happened has not in fact happened. The upper 1 percent of Americans are now taking in nearly a quarter of the nation's income every year. In terms of wealth rather than income, the top 1 percent control 40 percent. Their lot in life has improved considerably. Twenty-five years ago, the corresponding figures were 12 percent and 33 percent. One response might be to celebrate the ingenuity and drive that brought good fortune to these people, and to contend that a rising tide lifts all boats.

That response would be misguided. While the top 1 percent have seen their incomes rise 18 percent over the past decade, those in the middle have actually seen their incomes fall. For men with only high school degrees, the decline has been precipitous—12 percent in the last quarter century alone. All the growth in recent decades—and more—has gone to those at the top. In terms of income equality, America lags behind any country in the old, ossified Europe that President George W. Bush used to deride. Among our closest counterparts are Russia with its oligarchs and Iran. While many of the old centers of inequality in Latin America, such as Brazil, have been striving in recent years, rather successfully, to improve the plight of the poor and reduce gaps in income, America has allowed inequality to grow.

Economists long ago tried to justify the vast inequalities that seemed so troubling in the mid-19th century—inequalities that are but a pale shadow of what we are seeing in America today. The justification they came up with was called "marginal productivity theory." In a nutshell, this theory associated higher incomes with higher productivity and a greater contribution to society. It is a theory that has always been cherished by the rich. Evidence for its validity, however, remains thin. The corporate executives who helped bring on the recession of the past three years—whose contribution to our society, and to their own companies, has been massively negative—went on to receive large bonuses. In some cases, companies were so embarrassed about calling such rewards "performance bonuses" that they felt compelled to change the name to "retention bonuses" (even if the only thing being retained was bad performance). Those who have contributed great positive innovations to our society, from the pioneers of genetic understanding to the pioneers of the Information Age, have received a pittance compared with those responsible for the financial innovations that brought our global economy to the brink of ruin.

Some people look at income inequality and shrug their shoulders. So what if this person gains and that person loses? What matters, they argue, is not how the pie is divided but the size of the pie. That argument is fundamentally wrong. An economy in which most citizens are doing worse year after year—an economy like America's—is not likely to do well over the long haul. There are several reasons for this.

First, growing inequality is the flip side of something else: shrinking opportunity.

Whenever we diminish equality of opportunity, it means that we are not using some of our most valuable assets—our people—in the most productive way possible. Second, many of the distortions that lead to inequality—such as those associated with monopoly power and preferential tax treatment for special interests—undermine the efficiency of the economy. This new inequality goes on to create new distortions, undermining efficiency even further. To give just one example, far too many of our most talented young people, seeing the astronomical rewards, have gone into finance rather than into fields that would lead to a more productive and healthy economy.

Third, and perhaps most important, a modern economy requires “collective action”—it needs government to invest in infrastructure, education, and technology. The United States and the world have benefited greatly from government-sponsored research that led to the Internet, to advances in public health, and so on. But America has long suffered from an under-investment in infrastructure (look at the condition of our highways and bridges, our railroads and airports), in basic research, and in education at all levels. Further cutbacks in these areas lie ahead.

None of this should come as a surprise—it is simply what happens when a society’s wealth distribution becomes lopsided. The more divided a society becomes in terms of wealth, the more reluctant the wealthy become to spend money on common needs. The rich don’t need to rely on government for parks or education or medical care or personal security—they can buy all these things for themselves. In the process, they become more distant from ordinary people, losing whatever empathy they may once have had. They also worry about strong government—one that could use its powers to adjust the balance, take some of their wealth, and invest it for the common good. The top 1 percent may complain about the kind of government we have in America, but in truth they like it just fine: too gridlocked to re-distribute, too divided to do anything but lower taxes.

Economists are not sure how to fully explain the growing inequality in America. The ordinary dynamics of supply and demand have certainly played a role: laborsaving technologies have reduced the demand for many “good” middle-class, blue-collar jobs. Globalization has created a worldwide marketplace, pitting expensive unskilled workers in America against cheap unskilled workers overseas. Social changes have also played a role—for instance, the decline of unions, which once represented a third of American workers and now represent about 12 percent.

But one big part of the reason we have so much inequality is that the top 1 percent want it that way. The most obvious example involves tax policy. Lowering tax rates on capital gains, which is how the rich receive a large portion of their income, has given the wealthiest Americans close to a free ride. Monopolies and near monopolies have always been a source of economic power—from John D. Rockefeller at the beginning of the last century to Bill Gates at the end. Lax enforcement of anti-trust laws, especially during Republican administrations, has been a godsend to the top 1 percent. Much of today’s inequality is due to manipulation of the financial system, enabled by changes in the rules that have been bought and paid for by the financial industry itself—one of its best investments ever. The government lent money to financial institutions at close to 0 percent interest and provided generous bailouts on favorable terms when all else failed. Regulators turned a blind eye to a lack of transparency and to conflicts of interest.

When you look at the sheer volume of wealth controlled by the top 1 percent in this country, it’s tempting to see our growing inequality as a quintessentially American achievement—we started way behind the pack, but now we’re doing inequality on a world-class level. And it looks as if we’ll be building on this achievement for years to come, because what made it possible is self-reinforcing. Wealth begets power, which begets more wealth. During the savings-and-loan scandal of the 1980s—a scandal whose dimensions, by today’s standards, seem almost quaint—the banker Charles Keating was asked by a congressional committee whether the \$1.5 million he had spread among a few key elected officials could actually buy influence. “I certainly hope so,” he replied. The Supreme Court, in its recent Citizens United case, has enshrined the right of corporations to buy government, by removing limitations on campaign spending.

The personal and the political are today in perfect alignment. Virtually all U.S. senators, and most of the representatives in the House, are members of the top 1 percent when they arrive, are kept in office by money from the top 1 percent, and know that if they serve the top 1 percent well they will be rewarded by the top 1 percent when they leave office. By and large, the key executive-branch policymakers on trade and economic policy also come from the top 1 percent. When pharmaceutical companies receive a trillion-dollar gift—through legislation prohibiting the government, the largest buyer of drugs, from bargaining over price—it should not come as cause for wonder. It should not make jaws drop that a tax bill cannot emerge from Congress unless big tax cuts are put in place for the wealthy. Given the power of the top 1 percent, this is the way you would expect the system to work.

America's inequality distorts our society in every conceivable way. There is, for one thing, a well-documented lifestyle effect—people outside the top 1 percent increasingly live beyond their means. Trickle-down economics may be a chimera, but trickle-down behaviorism is very real. Inequality massively distorts our foreign policy.

The top 1 percent rarely serve in the military—the reality is that the “all-volunteer” army does not pay enough to attract their sons and daughters, and patriotism goes only so far. Plus, the wealthiest class feels no pinch from higher taxes when the nation goes to war: borrowed money will pay for all that. Foreign policy, by definition, is about the balancing of national interests and national resources. With the top 1 percent in charge, and paying no price, the notion of balance and restraint goes out the window. There is no limit to the adventures we can undertake; corporations and contractors stand only to gain. The rules of economic globalization are likewise designed to benefit the rich: they encourage competition among countries for business, which drives down taxes on corporations, weakens health and environmental protections, and undermines what used to be viewed as the “core” labor rights, which include the right to collective bargaining. Imagine what the world might look like if the rules were designed instead to encourage competition among countries for workers. Governments would compete in providing economic security, low taxes on ordinary wage earners, good education, and a clean environment—things workers care about. But the top 1 percent don't need to care.

Or, more accurately, they think they don't. Of all the costs imposed on our society by the top 1 percent, perhaps the greatest is this: the erosion of our sense of identity, in which fair play, equality of opportunity, and a sense of community are so important. America has long prided itself on being a fair society, where everyone has an equal chance of getting ahead, but the statistics suggest otherwise: the chances of a poor citizen, or even a middle-class citizen, making it to the top in America are smaller than in many countries of Europe. The cards are stacked against them. It is this sense of an unjust system without opportunity that has given rise to the conflagrations in the Middle East: rising food prices and growing and persistent youth unemployment simply served as kindling. With youth unemployment in America at around 20 percent (and in some locations, and among some sociodemographic groups, at twice that); with one out of six Americans desiring a fulltime job not able to get one; with one out of seven Americans on food stamps (and about the same number suffering from “food insecurity”)—given all this, there is ample evidence that something has blocked the vaunted “trickling down” from the top 1 percent to everyone else. All of this is having the predictable effect of creating alienation—voter turnout among those in their 20s in the last election stood at 21 percent, comparable to the unemployment rate.

In recent weeks we have watched people taking to the streets by the millions to protest political, economic, and social conditions in the oppressive societies they inhabit. Governments have been toppled in Egypt and Tunisia. Protests have erupted in Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain. The ruling families elsewhere in the region look on nervously from their air-conditioned penthouses—will they be next? They are right to worry. These are societies where a minuscule fraction of the population—less than 1 percent—controls the lion's share of the wealth; where wealth is a main determinant of power; where entrenched corruption of one sort or another is a way of life; and where the wealthiest often stand actively in the way of policies that would improve life for people in general.

As we gaze out at the popular fervor in the streets, one question to ask ourselves is this: When will it come to America? In important ways, our own country has become like one of these distant, troubled places.

Alexis de Tocqueville once described what he saw as a chief part of the peculiar genius of American society—something he called “self-interest properly understood.”

The last two words were the key. Everyone possesses self-interest in a narrow sense: I want what's good for me right now! Self-interest “properly understood” is different. It means appreciating that paying attention to everyone else's self-interest—in other words, the common welfare—is in fact a precondition for one's own ultimate well-being. Tocqueville was not suggesting that there was anything noble or idealistic about this outlook—in fact, he was suggesting the opposite. It was a mark of American pragmatism. Those canny Americans understood a basic fact: looking out for the other guy isn't just good for the soul—it's good for business.

The top 1 percent have the best houses, the best educations, the best doctors, and the best lifestyles, but there is one thing that money doesn't seem to have bought: an understanding that their fate is bound up with how the other 99 percent live. Throughout history, this is something that the top 1 percent eventually do learn. Too late.

20110403-03	18:10	Charis	Re: “Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%”
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Dear SteveB,

I'm not disagreeing, but this study doesn't seem to have taken into account the hundreds of millions of dollars that the upper 1% actually DO donate.

[OK. The rich give to charity. If it were enough, why hasn't poverty been wiped off the map? Look how many people are homeless in any given American city. What the rich 1% or even 2% or even 100% give is clearly not enough to solve the problem, even with governmental help. —SteveB]

20110403-04 18:32 SteveB Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%"

Dear Charis,

It may seem like a lot, and I'm sure some good works get done for some needy folks, but it doesn't seem to be enough to stop the decline and fall of America, does it? All that giving is really just a tiny drop in a gigantic bucket.

That's because the rich, as a group, actually contribute less of their income to needy causes than does the middle class. Look it up.

You may have a little experience with people on welfare or food stamps or unemployment or (anymore) social security. And, remember, people basically pay for unemployment and social security themselves. In my experience, these people lead very marginal existences on meagre funds. And, over the years, the proportion of people making so little money as to get these benefits, given mainly for their children, has been drastically reduced. I'm not saying any of that is good or bad. But let me ask you this, how many people have you ever known who lived on the largess of the rich? None, in my case.

Also, most people aren't looking for hand-outs. They're looking for good jobs, which are very hard to find anymore.

There is no arguing the dire straits we are in, only how we pull ourselves out of it, and the rich don't seem to be helping anyone but themselves, while the greatest country on Earth caves in around their ears.

20110404-01 08:24 SteveB Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America

Dear Charis,

Everyone's individual experience is different. In my life, I have not seen any deterioration in the American people's work ethic or drive. To me, that is just basic human nature. It has always been what it has always been and will always be until our genes change, which they have not. I think you have been unlucky in the people you have known.

In my life, I have been lucky to travel to at least 25 foreign countries, many of which I lived and worked in. I have been to all 48 lower states, again living and working in many. I have known many people from India, running hotels and convenience stores, all hard-working. I have known the maids at my hotels, many illegal, like Mariana, our current maid. Honest and hard-working. I have worked with very many American factory and restaurant workers of all races. I am proud to say I have known almost all of them. Good people. All these good folks, though, are struggling. This didn't use to be the case when I was growing up in Indiana.

What I have seen, though, is a growing sense of hopelessness and even despair starting to creep into the American psyche.

This didn't come from welfare or hand-outs, which have been drastically reduced in our lifetimes and, frankly, goes mainly to a small minority of unfortunate people. All public assistance in America makes up less than a minuscule 1% of the GDP.

What is wrong with America has, in my opinion, been created by greed, corruption, and abrogation of responsibility at the top, not by laziness at the bottom. Surely you would have to agree that is much more consistent with human nature as we know it than the converse.

The problems created by this group (with the help of our politicians) include the recent Great Recession (still in progress), the huge federal and state debts, the wars, the loss of our manufacturing base, our dependence on China and foreign oil, our lack of adequate health care, our deteriorating infrastructure and educational system, and our apparently dismal future.

Common people are the exact same as they've always been. As they were when they built the greatest economy with their sweat. Unfortunately, greed and exploitation are also the same as they have always been.

Where are the jobs? Where is opportunity? Where is a living wage? Where is the life shared by my parents and your parents and my old barber in Greencastle and the guy who worked at the shoe store, all of whom were humble people, yet able to drive OK if not new cars, live in OK if not big, new houses, send their kids to college, and dream of a better life for the future? Where has all that gone?

13% of the houses in America lay empty. 20% in Florida. 23% in Sarasota. The housing bubble was not created by common people going into debt to provide housing for their families. It was caused by the big banks, by the fat cats. It didn't happen in Canada (which I am very familiar with), where people seem to me to be exactly like us. Yet, in America, people are without work, many without shelter, many—believe it or not—hungry, and many, many without adequate health care...in the richest country the world has ever seen, in the "land of opportunity". And this is the fault of the common man, who seeks only to work and provide for his/her family? With what it costs to live in the U.S., how can anyone except the rich live without going into debt? Where's the cheap housing (even now), where's the public transportation, where are anything but part-time jobs at Wal-Mart for slave wages?

Believe me, America's problems cannot be laid on the backs of the struggling poor! I believe this is a myth created by those who would control and exploit us.

20110404-02	08:52	Charis	Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America
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Dear SteveB,

Like I said, I don't disagree with much of what you're saying. The problem is I've worked with the welfare system (WIC) and the United Way, Crisis Intervention, Mental Health Association, and various police organizations (I know, I'm a trained officer, weird right?) in states like Minnesota (among migrant workers), California (Fresno, poorest city in the U.S. in 2008), Houston (40% of the population is illegal Mexicans) and Miami (a little of everything) and what made me bitter was that you see over and over again hundreds of people (homeless, suicidal, domestic abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, or just plain unemployed, etc.) who are desperately poor, who have more options in the U.S. than in any other country (free food, free housing, free utility bills, free medical care, free schooling, free interpreters, free job training, free counseling, free childcare, etc.) and who do not WANT to work. They want hand-outs. We even saw this at homeless shelters. The men and women are asked to help clean the kitchen or sweep the floors or clear the tables and they walk out! They say they'd rather be on the streets where people don't make them work! This is one point (the poor wanting to work point). And of course I'm not saying this is everyone. Just that I can cite, literally, hundreds of cases for you of women who called us to rescue them from domestic abuse only to drop the charges and return to the guy over and over again, homeless people who don't want the help they could take advantage of, people who could receive job training but insist they don't need or want it—and let's not even begin with the hundreds of illegals who are looking for ways to bilk the system for all they can get—free.

Secondly, I still believe Americans are living in lala-land and have not gotten a grip on reality. People spend in excess on things they don't need or can't afford knowing in advance they can't afford them, then blame it on the system. Yes, banks should not have offered credit so easily, but where were people's morals when they applied for those loans knowing full well they would not be able to pay them off for example? (not everyone, of course) but let's be truthful—hundreds of thousands of people applied for loans knowing full well they wouldn't pay them off.

I'm not justifying the wealthy, the government or the system. I'm just saying it's too easy to blame them for all of the country's problems. I fully believe everyone involved is to blame. All too many people know how the system is and take advantage of it and there although there are real "victims", I think the whole "I'm a victim" mentality is really wrong. We are a product of our decisions and therefore we must pay the consequences. Really, is no one responsible for their actions anymore?

20110404-03 10:19 SteveB Re: "Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%" America

Dear Charis,

I guess it's just, then, that I've known the working people and you've known the non-working people.

20110407-01 11:20 Dennis "New American Socialism" & "An American Tragedy Brewing" & "One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People"

The following essay is by an investment advisor with a decidedly libertarian conservative perspective. I think you'll find it interesting in its analysis as a political observer and concerned investor. While Stansberry chooses to call the current American political and economic system a variant of state socialism, "New American Socialism," it seems to me to be a variant of old fashioned corporate fascism or nationalist socialism. But whatever he wants to call it, I won't quibble with his conclusion about who's getting all the profits and benefits and who's getting the short end of the stick from the gaming of the system.

"New American Socialism" by Porter Stansberry

No one knows what to call it...

That's part of the problem. It's difficult to criticize something that doesn't yet have a proper name.

You can't just call our economic system "socialism." It's not. There's a profit motive and private ownership of nearly all assets. Socialism has neither of these. Besides, far too many people have become far too rich in our system to simply label it "socialism."

If you have ever traveled to an actual socialist country — with a power grid that never works, little public sanitation, petty graft at every turn, and endemic, horrifying poverty — you realize our system and real socialism aren't the same at all.

But our system isn't truly capitalism, either. The State intervenes in almost every industry, often in a big and expensive way. With government at all levels making up more than 40% of GDP, it's fair to say we live in a State dominated society.

And as with all socialist experiments, it is the poor who suffer the worst economic outcomes. It is their cash savings that get wiped out by inflation. It is their jobs that disappear when regulations reduce capital investment or government debt crowds out private capital in the markets.

If the poor knew the first thing about economics, they wouldn't keep voting for socialist politicians and their programs. Alas, they don't even know the basics.

The poor in America, like the poor everywhere, still believe you can rob Peter to pay Paul. They still believe their "leaders" are trying to serve their best interests. It is a sad hoax. What has really happened is clear: Bamboozling the poor has become a way of life for American politicians. And the poor's willingness — even eagerness — to embrace the resulting economic slavery is the linchpin of our system.

But it's not only the poor who have become addicted to the system.

Businessmen like Warren Buffett embrace it, too — despite its limitations and taxes. Buffett calls it the "American System." He says it's the greatest system for creating wealth the world has ever seen.

We're not so sure.

Yes, it certainly makes it easy for big businessmen like Buffett to become wealthy. But those same benefits don't accrue to the society at large. For example... even though the value of America's production has soared over the last 40 years and asset prices have risen considerably, our debts have grown even more.

When you adjust for debt and inflation, you discover America hasn't gotten richer at all. Yes, we have become more affluent. And yes, some individuals have gotten vastly richer. But as a whole, when you add back the debts we've racked up, the country hasn't gotten richer at all.

Since the end of the gold standard in 1971, real after-tax wages, per capita, stagnated. On average, we haven't gotten any richer at all in 40 years. What happened over the last 40 years?

Why did so many people rush so eagerly into debt? Why did they borrow more and more to buy the same things at ever-higher prices — again and again and again? And why do people in America continue to work, day after day, for jobs that offer no opportunity and declining real wages? Most important, how did a few people end up getting so rich from this merry-go-round economic system that never takes us anywhere?

To answer this question, we need only answer one core question: Who benefits?

Whose wealth and power increases with inflation? Whose stature in society grows alongside the government? Who profits from increased spending on wars, prisons, and social programs that are doomed to fail? And most of all... who profits from an explosion in debt?

A certain class of people has the power to not only protect itself from these policies but to profit as well. These people have used the last 40 years to produce massive amounts of paper wealth. And they are now desperately trying to convert those paper accounts into real wealth, which explains the exploding price of farmland and precious metals.

This explosion of wealth at the top of the "food chain" is the main feature of what I call New American Socialism. It's a system fueled by paper money, the constant expansion of debt, and a kind of corruption that's hard to police because it occurs within the boundaries of the law.

Like the European and totalitarian socialism of the last 100 years, New American Socialism harnesses the power of the State to grow and maintain production. Like in traditional socialism, the poor pay the costs of New American Socialism. But unlike socialist systems of the past, this new American version has one critical improvement...

In the New American Socialism, the power of the system produces private profits.

In this way, it provides a huge incentive to entrepreneurs and politicians to work together on behalf of the system. This is what keeps the system going. This is what keeps it from collapsing upon itself. And this, unfortunately, is why the imbalances in the world economy will continue to grow until the entire global monetary system itself implodes.

"An American Tragedy Brewing" by Porter Stansberry

As I explained, in "New American Socialism," the power of the system produces private profits. It began when Nixon took us off the gold standard. Without the tie to gold, the amount of economic mischief our government could engineer became practically limitless.

Today, I'll show you an example of how New American Socialism works and how thoroughly corrupted the system has become, and I'll begin to set up our challenge as investors today...

While you're reading today's essay, I want you to think about whether you're willing to make a profit on a business that couldn't survive without government protection... whose products aren't saleable in a real market. In other words: How mercenary are you?

To answer that question, we're going to take a look at a tragedy that's brewing right now...

For many decades, the government has supported higher education in America. Does the government give money to actual students based on their achievement? Yes... but that's a small part of the program. Most of the government money spent comes via access to student loans — so-called Title IV funding.

A host of rules apply to these loans, but knowing just a few of them is instructive. The most important rule relates to a college's total revenue mix.

To access Title IV funding, a college cannot receive more than 90% of its revenue from government-related sources. The government is allowing the market to determine whether or not a college is useful and legitimate by requiring it to earn only 10% of its revenues from private sources. (Does this sound smart to you? It's tantamount to requiring only a tiny down payment to buy a house. It's dangerous because the student — and the college — doesn't have much skin in the game.)

There's another important rule. Colleges can lose access to government backed funds if loans made to previous students experience default rates in excess of 25% for three consecutive years. (Naturally, the rule has a key loophole, which I'll discuss in a moment.)

These two key rules, which leave the government on the hook for 90% of the risk of the student loans, led to the creation and massive growth of the for-profit education industry.

Clever entrepreneurs realized a traditional college education wasn't practical for many students who lacked either the cognitive ability to succeed at a traditional college or the desire to acquire a liberal arts education. What many students wanted, could master, and could afford were essentially trade schools that taught skills in demand from local employers. For-profit education grew up competing with poorly funded community colleges. And they had a major advantage: huge marketing budgets.

Let me show you what this means in terms of how these for-profit schools spend the Title IV money they receive.

Apollo is the largest company in the for-profit education space. In 2009, Apollo grew its total revenues by \$833 million. Yes, you read that correctly — \$833 million in revenue growth during a severe recession. Its Title IV funding rose by \$1.1 billion. That is, the amount of government-related loans and grants it received increased by more than its total revenue growth. The company became even more dependent on the government.

Where did the money go? Not toward education. In 2009, Apollo increased its spending on faculty and other instructional costs by \$99 million. That is, out of every \$1 it got extra from the government, it spent roughly \$0.09 on actual education.

Instead, a lot of money went to shareholders. Since 2008, Apollo has spent more than \$1 billion buying back its own stock. But most of the money went to its executives. Apollo currently spends almost \$1.5 billion annually on compensation for its administrators and salesmen.

In one way, you can argue for-profit education executives have earned their paychecks. Enrollment is booming, with the public showing a clear preference for the curriculum offered by the for-profit schools. Since 1986, enrollment in the sector has grown six fold. The U.S. now has 2,800 for-profit institutions of higher learning. About 10% of all college students are now enrolled in for-profit schools.

And you can make a good case these firms are providing a valuable service at a reasonable price. Supporters of the industry note that average revenue per student is the lowest at for-profit colleges: \$11,130, while public universities average \$18,922 per student and private not-for-profit colleges received \$37,869 per student.

So are these students (and our society) getting a bargain? Does foisting 90% of the risk on government lead to positive outcomes? No, not really. Instead, much like Fannie Mae did to housing, these government guarantees create huge incentives for selling college to students who can't afford it. It also makes college more expensive and less affordable.

The most recent examination of student-loan repayment shows for-profit education students have much higher default rates. In 2008, the national default rate on student loans was 7%. The default rate for private not-for-profit schools (the most expensive) was 4%. The default rate for public not-for-profit school loans was 6%. The default rate for private for-profit schools was 11.6%. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said of the numbers:

The data tells us that students attending for-profit schools are the most likely to default... Far too many for-profit schools are saddling students with debt that they cannot afford in exchange for degrees and certificates they cannot use.

When you look at the default figures in aggregate, the problem jumps out at you. Students at for-profit schools represent 26% of the borrower population. They make up 43% of all defaults.

When I saw that number, the first thing that occurred to me was... "Wait a minute... I thought schools get kicked out of the program if default rates reach 25% for three consecutive years? How can for-profit schools represent so much of the default rate when they make up so few of the students borrowing?"

The answer is — borrowers who default after the first two years of repayment aren't counted.

What?!

That's right. To count as a default, you have to stop repaying your student loans in the first two years after graduation. The repayments required during this time are extremely low — much like the teaser rate on a subprime mortgage. The real extent of the problem can't be understood until you see the actual default rate on all loans. After all, the real default rate isn't the percentage of students who default in the first two years. It's the percentage of borrowers who never repay their debts. What is the real number? Well, we don't know. The Department of Education won't make that data public.

What we do know is the companies themselves write off between 50% and 60% of the private loans they make to their students.

The companies use these private loans to make sure they stay within the 90% rule that governs access to the government's backing. That's tantamount to the many second mortgages that were made on the side to homebuyers, so they could afford their down payments. And not surprisingly, when folks buy a home using 100% borrowed money or when they get a college degree using 100% borrowed money, they frequently won't (or can't) pay the loan back.

I have no objection to a private lender who decides to lend to poor credit risks — even for things like an expensive home or degree. But let that lender bear the risk. Don't pass those risks to me via government protection.

Obviously, with 50% to 60% of these loans defaulting, the only real profit in the system comes from the government's protection. And the scary part is the amount of government money flooding into these schools is soaring. Historically, little government money was available to these schools — only \$2 billion to \$4 billion a year. But then... with the right kind of legal corruption... the floodgates opened.

Sally Stroup was the head lobbyist for Apollo. In 2002, she became the assistant secretary of the Department of Education under President Bush. Guess what happened next?

Stroup gutted the rules that governed which students these schools could recruit. Government funding for for-profit college education is now more than \$20 billion a year. And at current growth rates, within 10 years, 40% of all government-backed college funding will go to for-profit education.

Call it socialism. Call it New American Socialism. Call it compassionate conservatism. It doesn't matter what you call it, the rules of the game are clear: The government takes all of the risk while investors and executives keep all of the profits.

This brings me back to the challenge I outlined above. After reading today's essay, would you buy shares of Apollo? They're cheap, trading at about 3.5 times cash earnings, and the U.S. Treasury has essentially guaranteed its future revenues.

That's certainly attractive. But knowing what you now know about the for-profit education business, do you want to own this company?

"One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People" by Porter Stansberry

Yesterday, I left you with a question...

Over the past few days, I've described what I call New American Socialism. As I've shown you, it's a kind of legal corruption whereby the risks of doing business are assumed by the taxpayers... but the profits still accrue to private enterprise.

The corruption has infected one industry after another. And it's weighing down our economy... But I've actually preferred having it in many of the stocks I've recommended over the years. It tends to be good for investors.

So the question now is, am I still interested in buying into New American Socialism? It's a difficult question... and the answer is complicated. So bear with me...

In yesterday's essay, I described a tragedy unfolding in the education sector. If you missed the essay, I suggest you go back and give it a read. You'll find the numbers disturbing. Essentially, the for-profit education industry is selling a product its customers cannot afford.

This industry games the rules of the government and spends a fortune on lobbying — more than \$12 million in the last year. This industry would literally not exist without government-guarantees standing behind 90% of its revenues.

And Wall Street experts estimate this industry will rack up around \$250 billion in credit losses over the next decade — an amount of money that exceeds the losses from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac so far.

All these risks will eventually cost the U.S. Treasury billions of dollars. You see, this industry overwhelmingly targets women and minorities — people who are often up against a wall financially. These students will never be able to repay these debts.

While these students have no financial skin in the game (many borrow 100% of their tuition), they face enormous consequences down the road from this scheme... Student loans are notoriously difficult to discharge, and many borrowers will be crippled financially by the obligations they cannot afford.

The facts of this situation are incontrovertible and well known — even inside the current president's administration. And yet... even when all of these facts were studied and reviewed... what did the president do?

Critics had demanded so-called "gainful employment" regulations that would limit how much a student could borrow to an amount of money he would likely be able to repay based on the current employment and income track record of other alumni. Obviously, such sensible regulation was never likely to be implemented by Washington... especially not by a minority president when the funding in question goes overwhelmingly to poor, minority students.

Instead, in early June, Obama's administration promulgated a new set of rules that were supposed to address the abuses and the risks of the government's generous funding rules for for-profit education.

The new rules actually loosen the funding requirements — substantially. Colleges will be eligible for federal support as long as at least 35% of their students are repaying their loans over the first three years. Now, up to 65% of the students can default. And what about limiting loan amounts to ability to repay? Loan amounts may not exceed 30% of anticipated discretionary income.

How will students pay for food, housing, transportation, insurance, etc. if they're spending 30% of their incomes on student loans?

Rather than tightening the standards, the new rules actually loosen the standards. They also go further in guaranteeing continued federal support. Under the new rules, no schools will lose funding until 2015 at the soonest, to give them time to adapt to the new "standards," which were trumpeted as a major reform.

Only in Washington D.C.

The for-profit education "business" is one of the most obvious frauds ever foisted on the American people. The industry has been structured to take advantage of the least sophisticated members of society. It promises benefits the average student is unlikely to achieve: a better job and a better life. Instead, these students are saddled with unpayable debts and enjoy no corresponding increase in wages.

Assuming the government should not do anything to protect the students from this fraud, shouldn't the risks of perpetrating this fraud be left with the companies themselves? Let for-profit education companies guarantee these loans. Let them take the risk that these debts will never be repaid. But that's not how New American Socialism works. What happens is, all the profits of this scam go to the executives and the shareholders. The risk goes to the government.

Our leaders are now so corrupted by New American Socialism they can't even stop the for-profit education scheme I describe above.

The facts, by the way, aren't even in dispute. This is the obvious stuff — the stuff no one can really dispute. If our leaders let this industry rack up \$250 billion in bad debts over the next decade, how can we expect them to do anything to stop our massive annual deficits and our runaway federal debt?

If the administration can't stop the for-profit education industry from getting its hands into the U.S. Treasury, whom will it stop? Nobody. So the only real question is: Do I want to be buying stocks — any stocks — right now?

When I consider the unsustainable debts and unfunded liabilities the government has taken on... and the upcoming credit crisis New American Socialism has created... I arrive at the answer: "No."

20110407-02	11:20	SteveB	"Sailor, 85, Crosses Atlantic on Raft with Friends" Let's Go!
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So...what are you guys waiting for? Let's go!

"Sailor, 85, Crosses Atlantic on Raft with Friends" by MSNBC

Apr. 7, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42467925/ns/world_news-americas/?GT1=43001)

('What else do you do when you get on in years?' he says.)



(PHILIPSBURG, St. Maarten) An 85-year-old British sailor who dreamed of crossing the Atlantic on a raft as a young boy has completed the journey in 66 days with three friends.

The 2,800-mile crossing to this Caribbean island, led by Anthony Smith of London, took about two months and was generally smooth except for damage to two rudders on the large, sail-powered raft.

"Some people say it was mad," he told The Associated Press when he arrived in St. Maarten Wednesday. "But it wasn't mad. What else do you do when you get on in years?"

The jovial crew said they wanted to raise awareness about the environment and to prove the elderly are capable of embarking on adventures that are mistakenly considered dangerous.

They also aimed to raise money for the British nonprofit group WaterAid, which provides potable water to impoverished communities.



The crew of the *An-Tiki* included John Russell, David Hildred, captain Anthony Smith and Andrew Bainbridge.

A stroke of bad luck paid for the trip, courtesy of Smith, who was hit by a van and broke his hip.

"I got some compensation money," he said. "So what do you blow the compensation money on? You blow it on a raft."

The crew departed from the Canary Islands after bad weather delayed their trip for about a month. Smith delivered a farewell speech — in nearly impeccable Spanish — to a crowd gathered on the dock and then waved goodbye.

The raft, named *An-Tiki* after Thor Heyerdahl's famous *Kon-Tiki* raft, was loaded with food including oranges, avocados, potatoes, cabbages and a pumpkin. Once the store-bought bread was consumed, sailing master David Hildred began making it from scratch in a small oven.

Hildred, a civil engineer who lives in the British Virgin Islands, also was summoned to help fix the rudders that broke three days into the trip.

The raft was built with four water supply pipes nearly 40 feet long, and 14 cross pipes. Seven pipes held the crew's fresh water supply.

"Water strikes at the very heart of need," Smith told the U.K.'s Press Association news agency. "To voyage almost 3,000 miles upon the salty kind makes us intensely aware of places in the world that are without adequate supplies."

The raft also had a nearly 40-foot long mast and a 400-square-foot sail. Twin rudders provided the steering, along with centerboards and two oars.

The raft traveled at an average speed of 4 knots, with the crew taking turns to keep watch when they were not reading or playing cards.

"I think all of us enjoyed our night watches when it was just oneself for company," Smith said. "Not an awful lot to see, but it was great."

A whale played alongside the raft one day, and a school of mahi-mahi followed the raft almost the entire journey, said crew member John Russell, 61, of Britain.

"The wildlife was just fantastic," he said. "There is nothing to be scared of. We were all old men."

Halfway across the Atlantic, Smith celebrated his 85th birthday with a chocolate cake that his doctor, Andrew Bainbridge, cooked on board.

The crew intended to end their trip in the Bahamas, but strong winds and currents forced them to the Dutch Caribbean island of St. Maarten.

"Yes, of course it's a success," Smith said with a smile. "How many people do you know who have rafted across the Atlantic? ... The word mutiny was only spoken about two or three times a day."

(The Associated Press contributed to this report.)



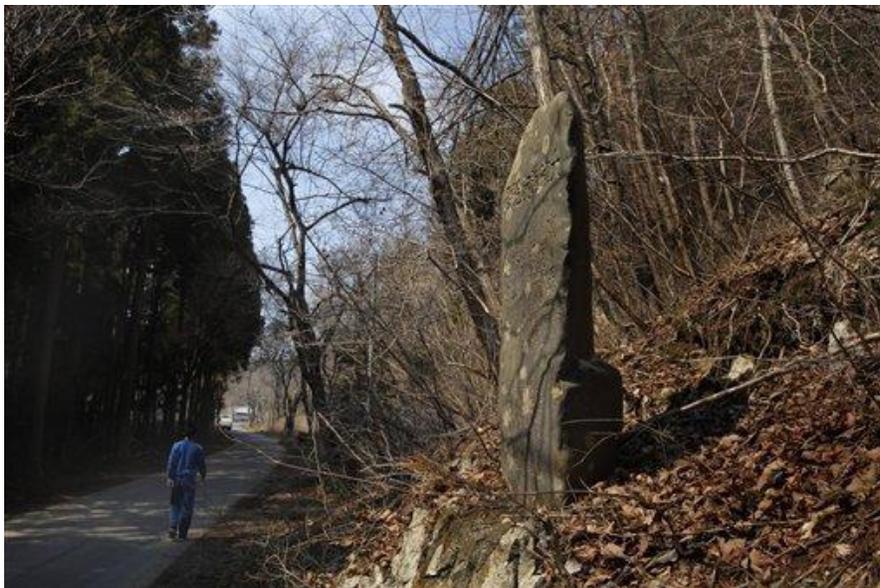
Sometimes it pays to heed history's warnings...

I guess the idiot engineers of the nuclear plant and coastal cities thought their ancestors were the idiots. Beware the sins of arrogance and pride. Our modern structures—even civilization itself—is oh so fragile and precariously balanced...

"Tsunami-Hit Towns Forgot Warnings from Ancestors" by Jay Alabaster, AP

Apr. 6, 2011, (http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/04/japans_tsunami-hit_towns_forgo.html)

Modern sea walls failed to protect coastal towns from Japan's destructive tsunami last month. But in the hamlet of Aneyoshi, a single centuries-old tablet saved the day.



"High dwellings are the peace and harmony of our descendants," the stone slab reads. "Remember the calamity of the great tsunamis. Do not build any homes below this point."

It was advice the dozen or so households of Aneyoshi heeded, and their homes emerged unscathed from a disaster that flattened low-lying communities elsewhere and killed thousands along Japan's northeastern shore.

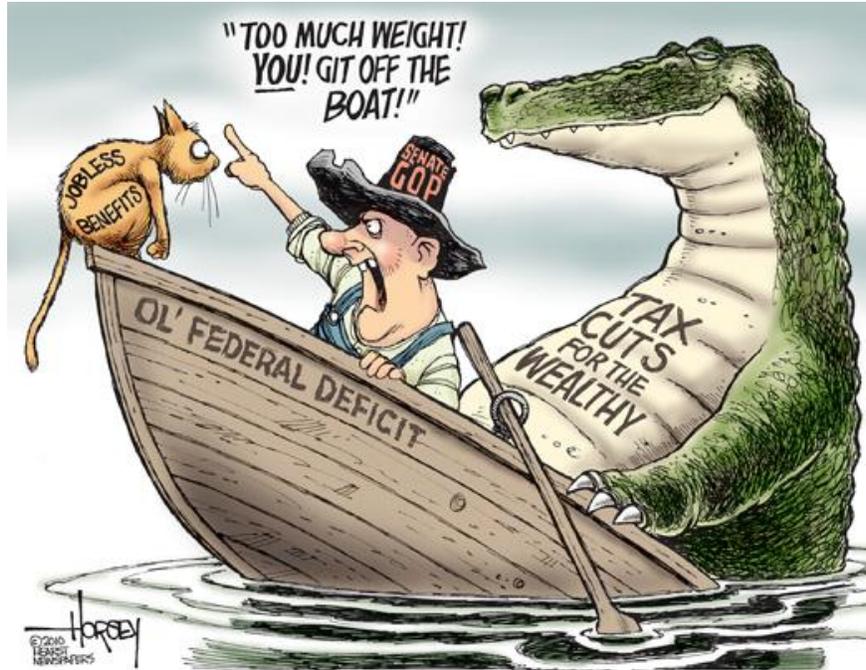
Hundreds of such markers dot the coastline, some more than 600 years old. Collectively they form a crude warning system for Japan, whose long coasts along major fault lines have made it a repeated target of earthquakes and tsunamis over the centuries.

[How strange they didn't heed the warning. —SteveB]

20110413-01 18:44 SteveB from the "Economic Crisis" topic at Spengler's Forum

Some good stuff from the "Economic Crisis" topic at Spengler's Forum, posted by Endovelico

Aug. 15, 2010, (<http://spengler.atimes.net/viewtopic.php?t=16215&sid=bb3274b17d8c9f1d5f35622ac8409129>)



I think it worthwhile to start a thread in which the various aspects of the present economic crisis may be discussed, and articles by reputed economists may be brought to your attention.

Joseph Stiglitz is fast becoming my favourite economist, and I am enjoying every page I read from his latest book *Freefall*. For starters I'm posting here one of his latest comments on the crisis, hoping it will help all of you becoming more aware of what is going on. I especially dedicate it to Cassowary...

from *Taming Finance in an Age of Austerity*, by Joseph E. Stiglitz

July 8, 2010, (<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/stiglitz127/English>)

(NEW YORK) It was not long ago that we could say, "We are all Keynesians now." The financial sector and its free-market ideology had brought the world to the brink of ruin. Markets clearly were not self-correcting. Deregulation had proven to be a dismal failure.

The "innovations" unleashed by modern finance did not lead to higher long-term efficiency, faster growth, or more prosperity for all. Instead, they were designed to circumvent accounting standards and to evade and avoid taxes that are required to finance the public investments in infrastructure and technology—like the Internet—that underlie real growth, not the phantom growth promoted by the financial sector.

The financial sector pontificated not only about how to create a dynamic economy, but also about what to do in the event of a recession (which, according to their ideology, could be caused only by a failure of government, not of markets). Whenever an economy enters recession, revenues fall, and expenditures—say, for unemployment benefits—increase. So deficits grow.

Financial-sector deficit hawks said that governments should focus on eliminating deficits, preferably by cutting back on expenditures. The reduced deficits would restore confidence, which would restore investment—and thus growth. But, as plausible as this line of reasoning may sound, the historical evidence repeatedly refutes it.

When U.S. President Herbert Hoover tried that recipe, it helped transform the 1929 stock-market crash into the Great Depression. When the International Monetary Fund tried the same formula in East Asia in 1997, downturns became recessions, and recessions became depressions.

The reasoning behind such episodes is based on a flawed analogy. A household that owes more money than it can easily repay needs to cut back on spending. But when a government does that, output and incomes decline, unemployment increases, and the ability to repay may actually decrease. What is true for a family is not true for a country.

More sophisticated advocates warn that government spending will drive up interest rates, thus “crowding out” private investment. When the economy is at full employment, this is a legitimate concern. But not now: given extraordinarily low long-term interest rates, no serious economist raises the “crowding out” issue nowadays.

In Europe, especially Germany, and in some quarters in the U.S., as government deficits and debt grow, so, too, do calls for increased austerity. If heeded, as appears to be the case in many countries, the results will be disastrous, especially given the fragility of the recovery. Growth will slow, with Europe and/or America possibly even slipping back into recession.

Stimulus spending, the deficit hawks’ favorite bogeyman, did not cause most of the increased deficits and debt, which are the result of “automatic stabilizers”—the tax cuts and spending increases that automatically accompany economic fluctuations. So, as austerity undermines growth, debt reduction will be marginal at best.

Keynesian economics worked: if not for stimulus measures and automatic stabilizers, the recession would have been far deeper and longer, and unemployment much higher. This does not mean that we should ignore the level of debt. But what matters is long-term debt.

There is a simple Keynesian recipe: First, shift spending away from unproductive uses—such as wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, or unconditional bank bailouts that do not revive lending—toward high-return investments. Second, encourage spending and promote equity and efficiency by raising taxes on corporations that don’t reinvest, for example, and lowering them on those that do, or by raising taxes on speculative capital gains (say, in real estate) and on carbon- and pollution-intensive energy, while cutting taxes for lower-income payers.

There are other measures that might help. For example, governments should help banks that lend to small- and medium-size enterprises, which are the main source of job creation—or establish new financial institutions that would do so—rather than supporting big banks that make their money from derivatives and abusive credit card practices.

Financial markets have worked hard to create a system that enforces their views: with free and open capital markets, a small country can be flooded with funds one moment, only to be charged high interest rates—or cut off completely—soon thereafter. In such circumstances, small countries seemingly have no choice: financial markets’ diktat on austerity, lest they be punished by withdrawal of financing.

But financial markets are a harsh and fickle taskmaster. The day after Spain announced its austerity package, its bonds were downgraded. The problem was not a lack of confidence that the Spanish government would fulfill its promises, but too much confidence that it would, and that this would reduce growth and increase unemployment from its already intolerable level of 20%. In short, having gotten the world into its current economic mess, financial markets are now saying to countries like Greece and Spain: damned if you don’t cut back on spending, but damned if you do as well.

Finance is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is supposed to serve the interests of the rest of society, not the other way around. Taming financial markets will not be easy, but it can and must be done, through a combination of taxation and regulation—and, if necessary, government stepping in to fill some of the breaches (as it already does in the case of lending to small- and medium-size enterprises.)

Unsurprisingly, financial markets do not want to be tamed. They like the way things have been working, and why shouldn’t they? In countries with corrupt and imperfect democracies, they have the wherewithal to resist change. Fortunately, citizens in Europe and America have lost patience. The process of tempering and taming has begun. But there is far more yet to do.

Posted by Endovelico:

Another delightful article by Stiglitz, too long to post here, but of which I quote a paragraph (<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n08/joseph-stiglitz/the-non-existent-hand>):

We should be clear about this: economic theory never provided much support for these free-market views. Theories of imperfect and asymmetric information in markets had undermined every one of the 'efficient market' doctrines, even before they became fashionable in the Reagan-Thatcher era. Bruce Greenwald and I had explained that Adam Smith's hand was not in fact invisible: it wasn't there. Sanford Grossman and I had explained that if markets were as efficient in transmitting information as the free marketeers claimed, no one would have any incentive to gather and process it. Free marketeers, and the special interests that benefited from their doctrines, paid little attention to these inconvenient truths.

Posted by Booklady's Ghost:

Here's a list that should dampen any hopeful for Obama's Hope & Change:

"40 Bizarre Statistics That Reveal The Horrifying Truth About The Collapse Of The U.S. Economy" from The Truth

July 20,2010, (<http://thetruthwins.com/archives/40-bizarre-statistics-that-reveal-the-horrifying-truth-about-the-collapse-of-the-u-s-economy>)

There's no use sugar-coating it. The U.S. economy is collapsing. The following are 40 bizarre statistics that reveal the truth about the collapse of the U.S. economy...

1. According to one shocking new survey, 28% of U.S. households have at least one member that is looking for a full-time job.
2. A recent Pew Research survey found that 55 percent of the U.S. labor force has experienced either unemployment, a pay decrease, a reduction in hours or an involuntary move to part-time work since the recession began.
3. There are 9.2 million Americans that are unemployed but that are not receiving an unemployment insurance check.
4. In America today, the average time needed to find a job has risen to a record 35.2 weeks.
5. According to one analysis, the United States has lost 10.5 million jobs since 2007.
6. China's trade surplus (much of it with the United States) climbed 140 percent in June compared to a year earlier.
7. This is what American workers now must compete against: in China a garment worker makes approximately 86 cents an hour and in Cambodia a garment worker makes approximately 22 cents an hour.
8. According to a poll taken in 2009, 61 percent of Americans "always or usually" live paycheck to paycheck. That was up significantly from 49 percent in 2008 and 43 percent in 2007.
9. According to a recent poll conducted by Bloomberg, 71% of Americans say that it still feels like the economy is in a recession.
10. Banks repossessed 269,962 U.S. homes during the second quarter of 2010, which was a new all-time record.
11. Banks repossessed an average of 4,000 South Florida properties a month in the first half of 2010, up 83 percent from the first half of 2009.

12. According to RealtyTrac, a total of 1.65 million U.S. properties received foreclosure filings during the first half of 2010.
13. The Mortgage Bankers Association recently announced that demand for loans to purchase U.S. homes has sunk to a 13-year low.
14. Only the top 5 percent of U.S. households have earned enough additional income to match the rise in housing costs since 1975.
15. 1.41 million Americans filed for personal bankruptcy in 2009, a 32 percent increase over 2008.
16. Back in 1950 each retiree's Social Security benefit was paid for by 16 workers. Today, each retiree's Social Security benefit is paid for by approximately 3.3 workers. By 2025 it is projected that there will be approximately two workers for each retiree.
17. According to a new poll, six of 10 non-retirees believe that Social Security won't be able to pay them benefits when they stop working.
18. 43 percent of Americans have less than \$10,000 saved for retirement.
19. According to one survey, 36 percent of Americans say that they don't contribute anything to retirement savings.
20. According to one recent survey, 24% of American workers say that they have postponed their planned retirement age in the past year.
21. The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence Index declined sharply to 52.9 in June. Most economists had expected that the figure for June would be somewhere around 62.
22. Retail sales in the U.S. fell in June for a second month in a row.
23. Vacancies and lease rates at U.S. shopping centers continued to get worse during the second quarter of 2010.
24. Consumer credit in the United States has contracted during 15 of the past 16 months.
25. During the first quarter of 2010, the total number of loans that are at least three months past due in the United States increased for the 16th consecutive quarter.
26. Things are now so bad in California that in the region around the state capitol, Sacramento, there is now one closed business for every six that are still open.
27. The state of Illinois now ranks eighth in the world in possible bond-holder default. The state of California is ninth.
28. More than 25 percent of Americans now have a credit score below 599, which means that they are a very bad credit risk.
29. On Friday, U.S. regulators closed down three banks in Florida, two in South Carolina and one in Michigan, bringing to 96 the number of U.S. banks to be shut down so far in 2010.
30. The FDIC's deposit insurance fund now has negative 20.7 billion dollars in it, which represents a slight improvement from the end of 2009.
31. The U.S. federal budget deficit has topped \$1 trillion with three months still to go in the current budget year.
32. According to a U.S. Treasury Department report to Congress, the U.S. national debt will top \$13.6 trillion this year and climb to an estimated \$19.6 trillion by 2015.

33. The M3 money supply plunged at a 9.6 percent annual rate during the first quarter of 2010.
34. According to a new poll of Americans between the ages of 44 and 75, 61% said that running out money was their biggest fear. The remaining 39% thought death was scarier.
35. One study found that as of 2007, the bottom 80 percent of American households held about 7% of the liquid financial assets.
36. The bottom 40 percent of all income earners in the United States now collectively own less than 1 percent of the nation's wealth.
37. The number of Americans with incomes below the official poverty line rose by about 15% between 2000 and 2006, and by 2008 over 30 million U.S. workers were earning less than \$10 per hour.
38. According to one recent study, approximately 21 percent of all children in the United States are living below the poverty line in 2010. the highest rate in 20 years.
39. For the first time in U.S. history, more than 40 million Americans are on food stamps, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture projects that number will go up to 43 million Americans in 2011.
40. A new Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey has found that just 23% of American voters nationwide believe the federal government today has the consent of the governed.

Posted by Endovelico:

This is very much what Stiglitz is writing about. What surprises me is the inability of voters, in the U.S. and in Europe, to rebel against their mainstream parties and vote for more radical alternatives. When will people wake up and realize that banks must be strictly controlled / nationalized?

20110416-01	09:51	SteveB	"Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
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America's problems don't come from the bottom of the "economic ladder". They come from the top!

"Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud" by Bill Lindner, Digital Journal

Apr. 15, 2011, (<http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/305680#ixzz1Jh4BbdKN>)

(A report released by the U.S. Senate paints a scathing picture of mortgage fraud on Wall Street enabled by the malfeasance and blatant disregard for oversight by Federal agencies that regulated them.)

A 650-page report (PDF), titled *Wall Street and the Financial Crisis: Anatomy of a Financial Collapse*, released by the U.S. Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations chaired by Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich) cites 5,800 internal documents and the private communications of bank executives, credit rating agencies, investors and regulators and details Wall Street's fraudulent business practices and conflicts of interest that fueled the mortgage meltdown, undermined public trust in the U.S. markets in the months leading to the financial crisis, and reveals reckless activities that were ignored by the banks and their federal regulators.

As Washington has tried to ignore the massive Wall Street fraud—for which no one on Wall Street or their enablers has been put behind bars—responsible for the latest economic crisis in the hopes that it would go away, Senator Carl Levin, and Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla) blasted Wall Street after 2-year bipartisan investigation on the main culprits responsible for the crisis. As noted by Common Dreams, the report (PDF) comes at a time when much of the feeling from Washington lawmakers is that Wall Street is being over-regulated by the new Dodd-Frank rules.

The Senate Committee's report names several institutions that played a central role in the mortgage crisis, including Washington Mutual, the Office of Thrift Supervision, credit ratings agencies Standard & Poor's and Moody's Investors Service, Goldman Sachs and Deutsche Bank.

Four key areas of causes of the financial crisis were cited by the Senate panel:

1. Risky mortgage lending as exemplified by Washington Mutual, which became the biggest U.S. bank ever to fail in Sept., 2008.
2. The failure of regulators to clamp down on lending abuses and risky conduct at banks in the years leading up to the housing bust and financial crisis.
3. The AAA ratings given by big credit rating agencies to high-risk subprime mortgages that later went bad and helped cause the housing bust.
4. The role of investment banks like Goldman Sachs and the finance deals they put together, which flooded the markets with risky securities

Pulling Back the Curtain on Shoddy, Risky, Deceptive Practices

In an interview, Senator Levin reportedly said "The report pulls back the curtain on shoddy, risky, deceptive practices"—often referred to as 'sh*tty deals' by Senator Levin—"on the part of a lot of major financial institutions. The overwhelming evidence is that those institutions deceived their clients and deceived the public, and they were aided and abetted by deferential regulators and credit ratings agencies who had conflicts of interest."

Included in the bipartisan Senate report (PDF) were 19 recommendations for changes to regulatory and industry practices such as creating strong conflict-of-interest policies at the country's banks and requiring banks to hold higher reserves against risky mortgages. It also suggests that federal regulators examine its findings for violations of laws and recommends that criminal charges be brought. In fact Sen. Levin believes that Goldman executives weren't being truthful about its activity, and said he would refer their testimony to the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for criminal investigations. "In my judgment, Goldman clearly misled their clients and they misled the Congress," Sen. Levin said.

The report reveals more information on the way Goldman Sachs touted investments to clients on one hand and bet against them on the other. Similar accusations against Goldman by the SEC led to a \$550 million dollar settlement—of which \$250 million was returned to investors, \$300 million went to the U.S. Treasury, and zero went to the defrauded homeowners—last year, but Levin and his committee don't think that punishment fit the crime. From the report (PDF):

When Goldman Sachs realized the mortgage market was in decline, it took actions to profit from that decline at the expense of its clients. New documents detail how, in 2007, Goldman's Structured Products Group twice amassed and profited from large net short positions in mortgage related securities. At the same time the firm was betting against the mortgage market as a whole, Goldman assembled and aggressively marketed to its client's poor quality CDOs that it actively bet against by taking large short positions in those transactions.

New documents and information detail how Goldman recommended four CDOs, Hudson, Anderson, Timberwolf, and Abacus, to its clients without fully disclosing key information about those products, Goldman's own market views, or its adverse economic interests. For example, in Hudson, Goldman told investors that its interests were "aligned" with theirs when, in fact, Goldman held 100% of the short side of the CDO and had adverse interests to the investors, and described Hudson's assets were "sourced from the Street," when in fact, Goldman had selected and priced the assets without any third party involvement.

New documents also reveal that, at one point in May 2007, Goldman Sachs unsuccessfully tried to execute a "short squeeze" in the mortgage market so that Goldman could scoop up short positions at artificially depressed prices and profit as the mortgage market declined.

Financial Industry Chose Profits over Propriety

The Senate report adds volumes of new evidence to previously disclosed information showing that much of the financial industry chose profits over propriety during the mortgage lending spree and more evidence on regulatory failures that helped deepen the financial crisis. Senator Levin and his committee found 3,400 places in Goldman documents where its officials used the phrase "net short," a reference to negative bets. Goldman profited greatly at the expense of their clients by using abusive practices.

A new aspect of Goldman's mortgage malfeasance during 2007 was uncovered by the Senate's investigation. That year, as Goldman tried building its bet against housing, it drove down the cost of shorting the mortgage market by squeezing those who had made negative bets, including Deutsche Bank. Goldman tried to put on the squeeze so that it could add to its negative bets more cheaply and protect itself against the housing collapse. Due to being so large, Goldman had the power to drive prices in whatever direction it wanted. Goldman reportedly abandoned its plans in June 2007 when two Bear Stearns hedge funds collapsed due to bad mortgage bets.

The Senate report (PDF) reveals that Deutsche Bank, which has not been accused of wrongdoing by Government investigators, by shedding light on a trader named Greg Lippmann, who has since left the bank and joined a hedge fund. As early as 2005, Lippmann was negative about housing and pitched his idea of shorting the market to professional investors on Wall Street. Lippmann referred to risky mortgage securities as "pigs" and responded that he "would take it and try to dupe someone" according to the report. Lippmann's fraudulent activities helped reduce Deutsche's overall losses.

In 2006 and 2007, banks reportedly created about a trillion dollars worth of Collateralized Debt Obligation (CDO) deals—fraudulently complex practices that helped destroy the economy in 2008. Emails provided to the Senate committee revealed that Lippmann called the bank's operation "CDO machines" and characterized such securities as a "Ponzi scheme." When interviewed by the committee, Lippmann quickly changed course, saying that his descriptions were used to defend his negative view of the market.

Goldman denies any wrongdoing. A Goldman spokesman said in a recent statement: "While we disagree with many of the conclusions of the report, we take seriously the issues explored by the subcommittee. We recently issued the results of a comprehensive examination of our business standards and practices and committed to making significant changes that will strengthen relationships with clients, improve transparency and disclosure and enhance standards for the review, approval and suitability of complex instruments." As Wall Street's nefariously fraudulent history has repeatedly proved, nothing will change. Think Wall Street execs and its enablers will face jail time? Don't bet on it.

20110416-02	11:49	Dale	Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"
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Dear SteveB,

Come on man. It seems laughingly hypocritical for you of all people to cite a Senate report as your source of wisdom. The Senate never misses an opportunity to pander for votes and this report is a prime example of making the mysterious and anonymous "Wall Street" out as THE bogeyman, while carefully not blaming anyone who might actually be a voting constituent. It's politicking 101.

[I see nothing wrong with the facts presented, Senate or no Senate. And how would it be "hypocritical" in any way? They were paid to try to get to the truth, however imperfectly. To be completely cynical is a defense mechanism. —SteveB]

As for where problems come from, specifically the Mortgage/Housing bubble, Wall Street didn't create the catastrophe, but they did a lot to support it. If it were just Wall Street's creation of financial instruments and knowing manipulation of the law and lack of oversight, it would have been a "problem." To get "bubbles" it takes a lot of levels: greedy land/property speculators, greedy real estate sales people, greedy local mortgage brokers who facilitated fraudulent applications, greedy mortgage companies (management and all other levels) who looked the other way while pocketed their bonuses, and.....finally.....Wall Street geniuses who do what they always do, + stay one step ahead of regulation by creating innovative financial "products" and processes that are so complex the government can't understand them. In this case Wall Street didn't understand them either.

I've worked in the financial industry for almost 20 years and I can assure you, Congress (both houses) and the SEC are about the last people to catch on to anything happening in the markets. They are lawyers, by and large, not educated or experienced in financial markets, even in the SEC. Their first job is to keep their job, or set up their next job as a lobbyist/consultant. Using their postmortem reports as some kind of "proof" of a thesis is ridiculous.

Now we can add greedy Senators to the cast of culprits. [Consider them added many years ago. So...in reality, Dale, you are the biggest conspiracy theorist of all? —SteveB]

20110416-03 12:01 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Dale and SteveB,

Well said Dale. I think SteveB forgets the role of Clinton, Dodd and Frank in this mess. The report is mostly correct but does not explain the role of politicians to make it happen.

20110416-04 12:22 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Dale,

You argue my case from a knowledgeable position. Thank you.

No one ever said any of these folks were without culpability. The entire system is corrupt. Total rats. Congress and the regulators most of all. I expect greed from capitalists. Yet here is at least one honorable man showing the world the truth, if they will listen.

But, of course, Wall Street got their bailouts and huge bonuses. Now the budget has to be balanced on the backs of the middle class, the old, college students needing Pell Grants...medical care and research, and education. Sure...makes perfect sense...to the billionaires who know so much more than the rest of us...

20110416-05 13:26 Dale Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

To a hammer, everything looks like a nail. To a dedicated conspiracy theorist, every person with wealth is greedy, corrupt, unethical, etc.

This will fall on deaf ears, but I'll "say" it anyway. There are intelligent, hard working, inventive risk takers willing to put their savings, small and large, on the line to build businesses. They create jobs for their own employees and for suppliers; they fund retirement accounts and support health insurance programs; they provide useful products/services, which all of us are more than happy to buy; they pay large \$\$ in taxes (whether you like the %'s or not) and last, but not least, they give huge amounts to charities.

The ENTIRE system is NOT corrupt, but it is not perfect either. To hammer away indiscriminately and always blame the "hidden hand" is a loser's game. [That's not what we do here. We find the "hidden hand". —SteveB]

20110416-06 14:18 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Dale,

Have been there and done that myself. I've owned one business or another since I was in high school. I have no problem at all with people being rich, even filthy rich. But I have shown time and time again that the numbers prove that these good folks are not, at this moment in history, carrying their fair share of the weight.

Do you really think everything is OK? Look around you! Where is the manufacturing? Where is the middle class? Where are the jobs? What is the status of the federal budget and the national debt with our workers not able to work? Where is the investment in America that low taxes for the rich were supposed to generate? Why is the system of legal immigration so broken? Why can't the wars be stopped and the military budget shrunk? What good does free trade do us?

Why has the standard of living of average people we've known all our lives declined so far? Why is everyone you meet so worried? Where are the answers to these questions? Do you have them? If so, please spill the beans to the rest of us.

If things were OK, we wouldn't need to be having this discussion. Perhaps you think things are fine or have some other theory? If I'm wrong about the causes of our problems, have at it and prove it. You think the unwashed poor are trying to drag us down to their level? Why can't those bastards just be happy with nothing? Maybe they should move to China where they can work as slaves? Maybe they should just "eat cake"?

The system is literally bankrupt and so are these outdated philosophies. It's time all Americans shared the pain, or we're all sunk, especially our children and grandchildren. The growing ranks of the poor and the unemployed, the average people going bankrupt because of medical problems, the millions working at part-time jobs at Wal-Mart, etc., not making a living wage, all these folks are bearing their part of the suffering. Why not the rich too? Why is it such anathema to even say that?

And, no, not all rich folks and corporations are corrupt...only the politicians, the big financial institutions, many of the largest corporations, and, yes, even—amazingly—some of the rich folks. Are you so innocent as to believe that unbridled greed for money and power simply do not exist? Do you really think the way campaigns are financed in America constitutes anything but corruption of the grossest kind? That, sir, is no conspiracy theory! The "hand" is not so "hidden" as you would like me to believe.

[20110416-07](#) 14:22 SteveB Friends of the Middle

Dear Dale,

She's a former teacher and sailing buddy who is on my side and doesn't want to hear the Republican party line.

I, on the other hand, really welcome your communications and hope that we can delve deeper into all this mess the country is currently in.

Just hoping to make things better for all of us, (even though I'm more than OK myself).

[20110416-08](#) 15:27 Bill Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB et al.,

I'll suggest that it was those who originate mortgages who are the prime movers here. The experienced ones knew there was a high percentage of people who could not maintain mortgage payments, particularly among what is known as "sub-prime." Yet these people continued to make those mortgages, because they knew they could send this toxic waste downstream via structured securities facilitated by the Wall Street crowd, who just wanted to do deals and take a slice, rather than carefully underwrite what they were doing and selling. In the middle period of the bubble the Wall Street underwriting crows knew exactly what they were doing but did not stop or moderate in any fashion. The ratings firms were then collaterally negligent or even complicit in giving high ratings to those structured securities backed by the dirty paper from the mortgage originators. I heard several of these ratings people being grilled, and they could not defend what they did. Finally, in this train of greed and negligence, were the writers of CDOs, AIG Financial Products being the big boy, that supposedly protected the creditworthiness of the toxic mortgage securities.

These derivatives were the final, ultra-volatile element that kicked the house of cards and greed and set it tumbling.

Should someone, e. g. government regulators, have blown the whistle? Hell yes, although responsibility—here Congress failed—was unfortunately diffuse, and the Bush administration wasn't disposed to do a damn thing. It was another tulip-bulb fest with some securities that too few people understood thrown in to aggravate the tumult and tumble.

[20110416-09](#) 16:49 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Bill,

Yes, I agree with everything you said. Once again, our politicians of both parties sold us down the river by not doing their jobs. Gee...now why would they do that? Maybe...money!!!!

[20110416-10](#) 16:51 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

No, votes which lead to power which leads to money.

[20110416-11](#) 16:54 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear GaryC,

No, money...which leads to votes...which leads to power...which leads to more money, etc.! This is the current cycle of corruption in our government.

[200110416-12](#) 16:56 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

Please admit it was not Republicans this time. The evidence is overwhelming the other way.

[20110416-13](#) 17:08 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear GaryC,

I'll give Democrats blame for their part, sure. They didn't blow the whistle either. But, as my friend Bill said, the Bush administration looked the other way. They served their buddies on Wall St. All the worst results happened under Bush's watch, including the Great Recession. It is all so obvious to any nonpartisan who believes neither party line nor the Republican dogma, no matter how many times it is repeated. For instance:

Low taxes mean jobs, low taxes mean jobs, low taxes mean jobs...substitute growth or opportunity for jobs if you wish.

Well, we've had low effective taxes, especially for the rich and big corporations like GE for a long time now. Yet, where are the jobs? Where is the growth? Where is the opportunity? Where is the middle class? Where is balancing the budget? Oh, ya, that was Clinton!

[20110416-14](#) 18:07 Charis Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

This goes back to what I was saying to you the other day. Yes, corporate giants, govt., etc are all to blame. But every citizen who ever took out a loan knowing they weren't qualified to pay them back, every citizen who over drafted their bank account buying that second or third car, and every citizen who maxed out their credit card (and you cannot deny there are millions who have done that) are also to blame. The vast majority of Americans live on money they haven't yet earned, buy with plastic, and live beyond their means and that cannot be denied.

Not clicking on "reply all" lest I get nitpicked jajaja.

[20110416-15](#) 18:45 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Charis,

I believe people carry balances on their credit cards because they have no choice. They can't make enough money to live. I've been there. None of these balances has ever brought the country to its knees. That's a fact.

I believe very few people took out loans "knowing" they couldn't repay. They lost their jobs and/or they didn't understand Wall Street and the banks and the government were creating a giant bubble that would burst, leaving them totally unable to sell their houses after values plummeted . They were told real estate values would always rise. You and I have both heard that nearly all our lives. You can't blame people for believing it. I know many smart people here in Florida, where 23% of the homes and condos sit vacant, who were caught in this trap. None of them were trying to get something for nothing. Very many of the mortgage foreclosures have proven to be fraudulent. That's not the fault of the people either.

I have faith in people who struggle. I know them. I have contempt for the greedy who take advantage of them. People and human nature are exactly the same as they were in Biblical days, and the greedy are still figuring out new ways to

fleece their neighbors, then get bailed-out by their cronies. No one bails-out the little people, many of whom are now homeless. Same old, same old.

20110416-16 20:50 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

No, votes which lead to power which leads to money.

20110417-01 11:37 SteveB "Governor Walker: Collective-Bargaining Law Doesn't Save Money"

Finally! A Republican tells the truth!

It was all just another attempt at union busting for dogmatic political reasons!

Shame on you, Gov. Walker!

"Walker: Collective-Bargaining Law Doesn't Save Money" by Zachary Roth, *The Lookout*

Apr 15, 2011, (<http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/lookout/walker-collective-bargaining-law-doesn-t-save-money-20110415-125743-597.html>)

Remember how Gov. Scott Walker of Wisconsin was insisting that his controversial law to end collective bargaining for most public employees was needed to help save money and balance the budget?

Well, he's now acknowledging that's not exactly true.

During testimony before the House Oversight and Government Affairs committee in Washington, Walker, a Republican, was badgered by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) about how much money his law would actually save, reports the Capitol Times of Madison. The topic of the hearing, after all, was state and municipal debt, so Kucinich wondered how the collective bargaining law was relevant.

After some hemming and hawing by Walker, Kucinich asked flat out: "How much money does it save Gov. Walker? Just answer the question."

"It doesn't save any," Walker responded.

Last month, the effort by Walker and Wisconsin Republican legislators to pass the collective bargaining measure brought thousands of protesters to the state Capitol for weeks. The bill ultimately passed, but is on hold after Democrats challenged the procedure used for passing it.

Walker and Republicans have said that the law is needed to help reduce public-sector pensions and benefits that they see as lavish, and balance the budget. Democrats and unions have said they're willing to negotiate on those issues, and see the law as an effort to curb the political power of the labor movement.

And it looks Walker just bolstered their case.

20110417-02 16:50 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

If you want to read an unbiased book about the cause and consequences of the housing boom and bust, read Thomas Sowell's book *The Housing Boom and Bust*. He is a BLACK economics professor. I doubt it changes your mind as it places the blame on mostly Democrats (and some Republicans) but it does trace the origins and results of bad housing policies which created bad lending standards which led to collateralization of worthless loans and Wall Street firms playing both

sides. My opinion is that without the pressure of the Clinton administration to create "affordable" housing, the lending policies of Fannie and Freddie would not have been corrupted. Wall Street reacts to fill a void. When the politicians create an opportunity, Wall Street finds a way to make money off of it.

20110418-01 08:35 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear GaryC,

"When the politicians create an opportunity, Wall Street finds a way to make money off of it." ... and destroy the economy. As I have said, greed rules.

I have stated: there is plenty of blame for both parties. Do the two of you agree with that?

Both parties are corrupted by our method campaign financing. Neither party acts in the interest of the country as a whole and its long term future. I find this very sad. It is also why I feel fervent partisanship and toeing the party line of either party is so wrong, especially that of the lying Republicans, whose tax cuts and wars are destroying us. I say this not as a Democrat, but as a Republicrat!

20110418-02 08:59 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

I don't think Dale or I see it is as a Democratic problem. It is both parties but you tend to always blame the Republicans first and then admit that the Democrats may have had a very little hand in the mess. Again, term limits and primary election changes would make for better candidates and better government.

20110418-03 11:19 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear GaryC,

Nope. I reject your characterization. I was a Republican first, but a Goldwater Republican. I believe in government being as small as possible and staying as much as possible out of my life, my pocket, and, especially, my bedroom, my science, and my religious life. But government has very important functions or the rich and powerful control us all. I feel completely sold-out by these Republican jerks, starting even before the idiot George W. and the senile John McCain.

I believe that nothing is as simple as current Republican ideology states, including me and my views. I believe the same is true of your views, which is why it sort of amazes me the vehemence with which you guys defend the party line talking points.

I think you knee-jerk associate my concern for the common man with Democrats and liberalism. You flatter the Democrats, in my opinion. Anything that goes against the Republican party line must be Democratic and liberal, right? Or socialist? I reject those terms and those arguments. I believe a country, any country, must think of the general good—the U.S., Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Bolivia, Cuba, etc. included. I believe that is the just and fair point of view, but also the most practical view overall. Prosperity must be prosperity for all, or there will be hell to pay in the long run, mark my words. What is good for the middle class is good for all. That is certainly no welfare state.

Here's a great example of Republican lies: Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are "entitlements". Something for nothing. Right? Yet these programs are almost entirely paid for by the people. It is only the stealing scoundrels in Washington who have ensured they don't pay for themselves, and they easily could and should. I know for sure that you and I will never get out of these programs what we have paid in, therefore the word "entitlements" is a blatant lie told for political purposes. I guess they want to steal the rest of the money. In reality, Social Security, for instance, is really just retirement insurance, paid for by the retiree while he works.

Republicans...I don't think I really need to say more about this bunch of incompetents and hypocrites than to simply name the people who appear to be Republican Presidential hopefuls: senile John McCain (not this time around, thank God!), Sarah Palin (hahaha, quitter, a complete laughing stock), Donald Trump (get serious! nearly a complete laughing

stock), Ron Paul (dangerous), Mike Huckabee (this fundamentalist will never stay out of anyone's bedroom), Newt Gingrich (evil), Haley Barbour (Mississippi, need I say more?), Michele Bachmann (no idea how government works, way radical, stupid), Mitt Romney (maybe the best of the bunch, but a Mormon pu*sy. Have you ever read the book of Mormon? Laughable...written on gold plates by Jesus, but they managed to lose them! He would be controlled by the church. Besides, I don't think he's radically fundamentalist enough to get the nomination.) There are other rascals, but they all seem to be claiming they don't want the job. Need I say more? Bobby Jindal? LOL

Unfortunately for you and me and everyone else, the Republican party has lost its way, is morally bankrupt, totally the slave of special interests, and is more and more irrelevant to mainstream voters. I would bet good money that they will be crushed in the 2012 election, on both federal and state levels.

I won't even mention that all of our current problems, from all I can see, have been caused by this totally discredited (to thoughtful people) Republican ideology, blindly applied by George W., Newt, and other idiots. Barry G. and Dwight D.E., where are you when we really need you?

[20110419-01](#) 07:56 Dale Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

Yipes! Steve, this rant is a little scary. Get a grip, please. I don't want to see my friend linked to a shopping mall shooting.

[What is he talking about? The only rant here is GaryC's. —SteveB]

[20110419-02](#) 08:24 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear Dale,

Geez! I'm the calm, happy one!

Remember, I'm the guy who is retired (except for my books, stocks, cattle, and future restaurant), lives in paradise, and is married to a beautiful, young lawyer. Life is indeed good for me.

Excuse me for being concerned about people other than myself, who are so obviously being given the shaft.

Again, if you really think things are hunky-dory in the good ole' U.S. of A., well...you must be the only person in the entire world with that opinion. Since I don't believe you really have that opinion (though you won't admit to that), let's do something to help!

[20110419-03](#) 09:17 GaryC Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear SteveB,

Believe me, Dale is very philanthropic. The issue is really do we take from the hard working people and give to the less fortunate (or lazy) or do we teach the less fortunate skills to help themselves. I believe in the latter. Most successful people feel this way. I am successful due to hard work and education.

[Then where is the help for the poor? Why haven't you taught them the skills they need? Why wait for the government you don't need? 100,000 U.S. Veterans are homeless. Why? Where's the 1% when we really need them? Anything the government does is irrelevant to what you say the 1% will do out of the kindness of their hearts. Well, why haven't they done it already, then? What's stopping them? Competition from the government? Not enough free enterprise there, that helping the poor? —SteveB]

Never in the history of the earth has stealing from the rich worked for the betterment of the poor. Did Russia, Cuba, East Germany, China (before capitalism) work for the betterment of the poor. Please tell me one example in history where the wealthy were taxed into oblivion that the poor were better off.

[None of these cases is proven, nor are any of them relevant. These characterizations of simple progressive taxes are inflammatory and ridiculous, and you know it. —SteveB]

The most recent example I can think of was in the early 70's in England where the top tax rate was over 90% (95% I think). The result was that the high income people (actors, musicians, etc.) mostly left the country and the per capita income of the poor went down. If 100% of all of the income of everyone in the U.S. who makes over \$135,000 was taxed, do you know how much it would reduce the deficit? Very very little.

[Yet Great Britain is doing at least as well as the U.S., while providing healthcare and retirement for its people. How do they do that? Socialism? —SteveB]

I am curious about one thing though, what turned you into a socialist? If you are a businessman as you seem to be, why are you so against capitalism? If you are so pi*sed about the way things are going in the U.S., why are you living in Bolivia? Are you drawing social security from the U.S. and living in Bolivia? If so, good for you that you have gotten the benefits of your hard work and can live a better life in Bolivia.

[Nothing I have ever said is anti-capitalist in any way, shape, or form. In fact, I recently proposed eliminating all income taxes on all businesses in the U.S. If someone disagrees with you, GaryC, about simple governmental strategies, you immediately start the name calling. —SteveB]

20110419-04 10:47 SteveB Re: "Senate Report Details Elaborate Wall Street Mortgage Fraud"

Dear GaryC,

I will assume a lot of this is joking instead of Republican dogma.

Surely even a capitalist like me can see that:

1. The country is in trouble.
2. People are going to have to sacrifice.
3. Taxes on the richest Americans are certifiably the lowest in 50 years and the biggest corporations aren't paying their fair share.
4. These folks need to pay a little more and suffer a little too.
5. The theory that low corporate and personal tax rates equate to investment and jobs in America has been proven by the last many years to be totally bogus.
6. You're right about parts of Europe having higher tax rates, but these rates have led to too much immigration, not any exodus. No one is "being taxed into oblivion". What a joke. You are wrong about your "facts", especially the one about taxing income over \$135,000. I'm just saying, if everyone has to give up something, why not include the richest? Especially since doing otherwise has not been good for the country.

I have sent out emails that prove these facts. If the Republican party line works, where is the prosperity? People largely pay for "entitlements". The military and lack of regulation and revenue are what's killing us, not the "lazy" poor. And very close to all the "poor" people I've ever known work like dogs. They are certainly not "lazy". What an elitist idea!

You're right. We need to put more resources into education, not less. The Republicans want to destroy the entire educational system, based on all I've seen. Jeez! That's the first thing they always want to cut. Can't possibly touch the military! None of this makes me a socialist. Or even radical. Just fed up with the lies and America being sold down the river.

I live in Bolivia because it's a better place to live in so many ways. It's where most of my friends and family live. It's got so much more opportunity than the U.S. right now. But that doesn't mean I don't love and mourn for my homeland.

I think you must know in your heart that I'm right. Otherwise, please tell me how things are so great in the U.S. and we have no problems. Please stop the knee-jerking and get serious.

20110420-01 08:59 SteveB "The Donald Trumped on Abortion Question?"

Dear Pam,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

This article (below) is a little long (online), but worthwhile. The article itself is short and amazing, but it is the world of comments following that I find so fascinating. One thing they tend to verify (though many were written, perhaps, very quickly) is that the American educational system ain't workin' too well. (All the more reason to cut funding, right?)

First, Trump proves himself to be another incompetent Republican(?) idiot. This is important whether you like him or not.

And, for sure, abortion isn't the most crucial issue on the table this election cycle (I hope!), but I find it telling in this instance. Call it, as it was with Palin, a litmus test for stupidity. (Republicans love that idea of a Right to Privacy, but don't understand *Roe v. Wade*. In the case of these two idiots, they don't even know about it, apparently.)

If you can wade through the comments (and I hope you will, they are truly entertaining and enlightening), you might get an idea of how truly stupid the rank and file Republicans can be.

Republicans...I don't think I really need to say more about this bunch of incompetents and hypocrites than to simply name the people who appear to be Republican Presidential hopefuls: senile John McCain (not this time around, thank God!), Sarah Palin (hahaha, quitter, a complete laughing stock), Donald Trump (get serious! nearly a complete laughing stock), Ron Paul (dangerous), Mike Huckabee (this fundamentalist will never stay out of anyone's bedroom), Newt Gingrich (evil), Haley Barbour (Mississippi, need I say more?), Michele Bachmann (no idea how government works, way radical, stupid), Mitt Romney (maybe the best of the bunch, but a Mormon pu*sy. Have you ever read the book of Mormon? Laughable...written on gold plates by Jesus, but they managed to lose them! He would be controlled by the church. Besides, I don't think he's radically fundamentalist enough to get the nomination.) There are other rascals, but they all seem to be claiming they don't want the job. Need I say more? Bobby Jindal?

Unfortunately for you and me and everyone else, the Republican party has lost its way, is morally bankrupt, totally the slave of special interests, and is more and more irrelevant to mainstream voters. I would bet good money that they will be crushed in the 2012 election, on both federal and state levels.

I won't even mention that all of our current problems, from all I can see, have been caused by this totally discredited (to thoughtful people) Republican ideology, blindly applied by George W., Newt, and other idiots. Barry G. and Dwight D.E., where are you when we really need you?

"The Donald Trumped on Abortion Question?" by Vaughn Ververs, MSNBC

Apr. 19, 2011, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/04/19/6495853-the-donald-trumped-on-abortion-question>)

In his lengthy interview with NBC's Savannah Guthrie, Donald Trump appeared stumped when asked about the legal principle that served as the cornerstone for the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion. Here's the key part of the interview:

Guthrie: Is there a right to privacy in the Constitution?

Trump: I guess there is, I guess there is. And why, just out of curiosity, why do you ask that question?

When pressed to explain how his position on the right to privacy "squares" with his anti-abortion position, Trump responded: "Well, that's a pretty strange way of getting to pro-life. I mean, it's a very unique way of asking about pro-life. What does that have to do with privacy? How are you equating pro-life with privacy?"

Guthrie asked, "Well, you know about the *Roe v. Wade* decision." Trump responded, "Yes, right, sure. Look, I am pro-life. I've said it. I'm very strong there."

The exchange was reminiscent of former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin's response to a similar question during the 2008 presidential campaign. In one of a series of interviews with CBS News' Katie Couric that were widely seen as damaging to Palin's image, the vice presidential nominee was asked: "Do you think there's an inherent right to privacy in the Constitution?" Palin responded, "I do. Yeah, I do."

Given that the Supreme Court used the "right to privacy" reasoning as the foundation for the *Roe* ruling, anti-abortion activists and candidates have long insisted no such right exists.

20110422-01 08:51 SteveB To: Ali Velshi; Market Speculation

Dear Ali Velshi (@CNN.com):

Let me first say that I think you're doing a great job on CNN and it's good to have you there every morning.

Today you were talking about speculation in commodity markets, particularly the crude oil markets. You said that speculation is core to our capitalist system and marketplaces.

You are right when it comes to stock markets, but in commodity markets, this speculation (for the purpose of making money only) creates artificial demand and bubbles. People buy oil futures who don't want oil, running up the price. I believe a change should be made. Anyone who buys commodity futures must take delivery of what they buy, or face a hefty fine.

This simple rule change would immediately stop greedy speculation from artificially raising commodity prices for all of us.

Thank you and keep up the good work.

20110422-02 17:16 SteveB "Why Glenn Beck Lost It"

Dear SteveM,

And as I predicted, none of Glenn Beck's predictions have come true. He has been proven to be nothing more than a hate monger.

"Why Glenn Beck Lost It" by Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 6, 2011, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2011/04/06/AFNEgnqC_story.html)

(The popular host will end his controversial daily program on the Fox News Channel later this year.)

On Friday, the unemployment rate dropped to 8.8 percent, as businesses added jobs for the 13th straight month. On Wednesday, Fox News announced that it was ending Glenn Beck's daily cable-TV show. These are not unrelated events.

When Beck's show made its debut on Fox News Channel in Jan., 2009, the nation was in the throes of an economic collapse the likes of which had not been seen since the 1930s. Beck's angry broadcasts about the nation's imminent doom perfectly rode the wave of fear that had washed across the nation, and the relatively unknown entertainer suddenly had 3 million viewers a night—and tens of thousands answering his call to rally at the Lincoln Memorial.

But as the recession began to ease, Beck's apocalyptic forecasts and ominous conspiracies became less persuasive, and his audience began to drift away. Beck responded with a doubling-down that ultimately brought about his demise on Fox.

He pushed further into dark conspiracies, urging his viewers to hoard food in their homes and to buy freeze-dried meals for sustenance when civilization breaks down. He spun a conspiracy theory in which the American left was in cahoots with an emerging caliphate in the Middle East. And, most ominously, he began to traffic regularly in anti-Semitic themes.

This vile turn for Beck reached its logical extreme two weeks ago, when he devoted his entire show to a conspiracy theory about various bankers, including the Rothschilds, to create the Federal Reserve. To make this case, Beck hosted the conspiracy theorist G. Edward Griffin, who has publicly argued that the anti-Semitic tract "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" "accurately describes much of what is happening in our world today."

Griffin's Web site dabbles in a variety of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, including his view that "present-day political Zionists are promoting the New World Order."

A month earlier, Beck, on his radio program, had described Reform rabbis as "generally political in nature," adding: "It's almost like Islam, radicalized Islam in a way."

A few months before that, he had attacked the Jewish billionaire George Soros, a Holocaust survivor, as a "puppet master" and read descriptions of him as an "unscrupulous profiteer" who "sucks the blood from people." Beck falsely called Soros "a collaborator" with Nazis who "saw people into the gas chambers."

Fox deserves credit for finally putting an end to this. Its joint statement with Beck's production company, claiming that they will "work together to develop and produce a variety of television projects," is almost certainly window-dressing; you can be confident Fox won't have Beck reopening what his Fox News colleague Shepard Smith dubbed the "fear chamber."

In banishing Beck, about whom I wrote a critical book last year, Fox has made an important distinction: It's one thing to promote partisan journalism, but it's entirely different to engage in race baiting and fringe conspiracy claims. Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity may have their excesses, but their mainstream conservatism is in an entirely different category from Beck.

Fox has rightly, if belatedly, declared that there is no place for Beck's messages on its airwaves, and Beck will return to the fringes, where such ideas have always existed. Because his end-of-the-world themes will no longer be broadcast by a mainstream outlet, there will be less of a chance for him to inspire off-balance characters to violence.

There are, happily, signs that the influences that undermined Beck are doing the same to other purveyors of fear. The March Washington Post-ABC News poll found that Sarah Palin's favorability rating among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents had dropped to 58 percent from 70 percent in October and 88 percent in 2008. Her negative ratings among Republicans are higher than those of other prospective Republican presidential candidates.

In another indication of abating anger, a CNN poll released last week found that the percentage of the public viewing the Tea Party unfavorably had increased to 47 percent, from 26 percent in Jan., 2010. Thirty-two percent have a favorable view.

Beck, in losing his mass-media perch, is repeating the history of Father Charles Coughlin, the radio priest of the Great Depression. Economic hardship gave him an audience even greater than Beck's, but as his calls to drive "the money changers from the temple" became more vitriolic, his broadcast sponsors dropped him. He gradually faded from relevance as his angry themes lost their hold on Americans and his anti-Semitism became more pronounced.

It is a sign of the nation's health and resilience that Beck, after 27 months at Fox, is meeting a similar end.

20110425-01	11:37	SteveB	Fw: Photo: Congressmen Playing on the Job
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In case you don't believe it, see: <http://www.snopes.com/photos/politics/solitaire.asp>.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

All these a-holes should be fired in the next election...every single one of them (435 + 100/3) from both parties!



This picture is worth a trillion \$\$\$

House Minority Leader pictured standing, far right, speaks while colleagues play solitaire Monday night as the House convened to vote on a new budget. (AP)

The guy sitting in the row in front of these two....he's on Facebook, and the guy behind Hennessy is checking out the baseball scores.

These are the folks that couldn't get the budget out by Oct. 1, and are about to control your health care, cap and trade, and the list goes on and on..

Should we buy them larger screen computers—or—a ticket home, permanently?

This is one of their 3-DAY WORK WEEKS that we all pay for (salary is about \$179,000 per year).

KEEP THIS GOING! DON'T LET IT STOP WITH YOU!

20110425-02	19:10	SteveB	"Five Myths About Planned Parenthood"
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"Five Myths About Planned Parenthood" by Clare Coleman, *The Washington Post*

Apr. 15, 2011, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/five-myths-about-planned-parenthood/2011/04/14/AFogj1iD_story.html)

I was a Planned Parenthood affiliate chief executive, supervising a network of clinics in New York State, during the early days of this terrible recession. We ran deficits, cut hours, closed centers and laid off staff members. In a recession, things get very difficult—more and more people are in need, while government funds lag and donations dwindle. But still we did not turn patients away, even if they could not pay. At the same time, we had to fight political battles to preserve women's rights to basic care and information about their sexual health. Those battles continue: Thursday, the House voted to defund Planned Parenthood permanently; the Senate opposed that measure. Amid the debate, let's address some of the misperceptions about this nearly 100-year-old health-care organization.

1. Planned Parenthood's federal funding frees up other money to pay for abortions.

Opponents of Planned Parenthood insist that giving the organization federal dollars allows it to spend other money in its budget to provide abortions. That is not possible—there is no other money.

Title X is a federal grant program that exists solely to help low-income and uninsured people access contraceptives and sexual health care; 5.2 million people use the program annually. But Congress has never appropriated enough money to take care of the estimated 17 million Americans who need publicly funded family-planning care. There always are more patients than subsidies.

Further, a Title X grant is designed to help with costs, not to fully cover them. So, family-planning programs are required to find other money to support the Title X project—not the other way around. For patients who qualify for Medicaid, reimbursement rates for reproductive health services are lower than the cost of the care. A typical family-planning visit might cost upward of \$200, including the exam, lab tests and contraceptive method, but the Medicaid reimbursement rate may be as low as \$20.

2. Ninety percent of what Planned Parenthood does is provide abortions.

That is what Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.) said this month in a speech against federal support for Planned Parenthood; his staff later said his assertion was “not intended to be a factual statement.”

Here is a factual statement: Planned Parenthood’s abortion care represents 3 percent of its medical services—332,000 terminations out of a total of 11.4 million services provided in 2009. Nearly all the care offered at Planned Parenthood health centers is preventive services and screenings, including contraception, testing for sexually transmitted infections, pap smears and breast exams. Title X funds cannot be used for abortion care at any time, for any reason. Federal Medicaid funds can be used to reimburse a provider for an abortion when the pregnancy would endanger the life of the woman or resulted from rape or incest.

States can use their local tax dollars to support abortion care for low-income women, and 17 states do so under Medicaid. The capital city did, too—until last week, when Congress overturned the District’s Medicaid abortion coverage.

3. Defunding Planned Parenthood will reduce abortions.

Contraception prevents the need for abortions, but most politicians who oppose abortion do not support birth control, either. Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), the chief House sponsor of a bill to bar abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood from Title X, has praised a few elements of the program: pregnancy tests, breast cancer screening and HIV testing. He never mentions Title X’s essential work for 41 years—to provide information about and access to birth control, which 99 percent of Americans will use in their lifetime.

Women spend about five years either being pregnant or trying to get pregnant, and about 30 years trying not to get pregnant; the Guttmacher Institute estimates that half of the country’s unintended pregnancies end in abortion. If Pence wants to prevent abortions, he should lead the charge to triple Title X funding.

Instead, Pence has voted to eliminate Title X, and he has no answer for where the 5.2 million people served by that program would get care. Planned Parenthood centers offer contraception to nearly 2.5 million patients a year and serves 36 percent of all Title X patients.

Barring Planned Parenthood from participating in federal programs would lead to less access to birth control, more unintended pregnancies and more abortions.

4. Planned Parenthood serves only teenagers and prostitutes.

I’ve never had a chance to talk to Glenn Beck, who implied recently on his Fox radio show that only “hookers” use Planned Parenthood. But when I worked for the organization, I would ask our supporters to picture this: You’re a 22-year-old woman with a job you don’t love, a toddler you’d die for and no health insurance. You live paycheck to paycheck, and you always know to the penny how much cash you’ve got until the end of the month. You’re rushing home on Route 9 to relieve your mom, who’s with the kid, and the engine light on the car comes on. You feel a wave of panic. You know you’re always one emergency away from everything falling apart. That’s our patient—I always have her in my mind.

Inside the Beltway, it is easy to forget that millions live on that edge. Our typical patient is a working woman between 20 and 24, maybe in school, often with children. But our centers nationwide see women and men of all ages, races, income levels, and marital and social statuses. The number of men seen in Title X-funded centers has tripled in the past 10 years, and the fastest-growing group of women served by Title X is those over 44.

5. People don’t really need Planned Parenthood.

Three million patients each year visit Planned Parenthood's more than 800 health centers in every state, in big cities and small towns. In some areas, Planned Parenthood and the Title X-funded system are the only sexual health providers for hundreds of miles.

We screen people for high blood pressure, anemia and diabetes; we counsel them about smoking cessation and obesity; we connect them to other primary-care providers and social services. The huge response to the attack on family planning and on Planned Parenthood—hundreds of thousands of Americans signing petitions, showing up at rallies, calling Congress—is extraordinary. But it doesn't surprise me. One in five American women has gone to Planned Parenthood at some point in her life, for respectful, compassionate, quality care. And now those Americans are going to have our back.

(Clare Coleman is the president and chief executive officer of the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association. She headed a Planned Parenthood network in New York's Hudson Valley, and worked in the U.S. House and as a lobbyist for Planned Parenthood.)

20110426-01	10:56	SteveB	"Henry Ford, Charles Kettering and the 'Fuel of the Future'" Alcohol
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A long read, but a good historical view of our current energy problems. If we would have made good decisions instead of political decisions 100 years ago.

"Henry Ford, Charles Kettering and the 'Fuel of the Future'" by Bill Kovarik

1998, (<http://www.radford.edu/~wkovarik/papers/fuel.html>)

Introduction

When Henry Ford told a *New York Times* reporter that ethyl alcohol was "the fuel of the future" in 1925, he was expressing an opinion that was widely shared in the automotive industry. "The fuel of the future is going to come from fruit like that sumac out by the road, or from apples, weeds, sawdust — almost anything," he said. "There is fuel in every bit of vegetable matter that can be fermented. There's enough alcohol in one year's yield of an acre of potatoes to drive the machinery necessary to cultivate the fields for a hundred years."

Ford's optimistic appraisal of cellulose and crop based ethyl alcohol fuel can be read in several ways. First, it can be seen as an oblique jab at a competitor. General Motors (and Charles Kettering) had come to considerable grief that summer of 1925 over another octane boosting fuel called tetraethyl lead, and government officials had been quietly in touch with Ford engineers about alternatives to leaded gasoline additives.

More importantly to Ford, in 1925 the American farms that Ford loved were facing an economic crisis that would later intensify with the depression. Although the causes of the crisis were complex, one possible solution was seen in creating new markets for farm products. With Ford's financial and political backing, the idea of opening up industrial markets for farmers would be translated into a broad movement for scientific research in agriculture that would be labeled "Farm Chemurgy."

Historiographic Notes

The history of ethyl alcohol fuel has been partially explored by Giebelhaus, Bernton and this author, but the historical focus of all three works tended to be on the U.S. Farm Chemurgy Movement in the 1930s. The context of Ford's support has not been well understood. And the ideas of Charles F. Kettering, in particular, have been grossly misrepresented.

American farmers embraced the vision of new markets for farm products, especially alcohol fuel, three times in the 20th century: around 1906, again in the 1930s with Ford's blessing, and most recently, during the oil crisis of the 1970s. By the mid-1980s over one hundred corn alcohol production plants had been built and over a billion gallons of ethyl alcohol were sold per year in the fuel market. In the late 1980s and 1990s, with an apparently permanent world oil glut and rock bottom fuel prices, most of the alcohol plants shut down. Some observers joked that ethyl alcohol was the fuel of the future — and always would be. "Gasohol" had become passe.

Why, then, delve so deeply into this history?

Even if infinite amounts of petroleum were available, the history of alternative energy sources is worthy of study from many points of view, not the least of which is the pragmatic need to understand alternatives to oil supply from politically unstable regions of the world. Francis Garvan noted the problem in a speech promoting alcohol fuel at the Dearborn, Mich. "Chemurgy" Conference on Agriculture, Industry and Science in 1936.

They say we have foreign oil. It is ... in Persia, and it is in Russia. Do you think that is much defense for your children?

Another pragmatic reason to consider the history of alternative fuels involves the risk of continued reliance on oil relative to global climate change — a problem more recently appreciated.

Aside from pragmatic justifications, historians of technology have long noted a general preoccupation with "success stories" to an extent that might be called "whiggish." Research into some of the "roads not taken" would provide history with better focus and broader perspective, according to historian John Staudenmier. The direction a technology takes is too often seen as a result of pre-determined or inevitable conditions that arise from intrinsic properties of a technology, rather than from industry preference or policy choice.

Ethyl alcohol has long been used as an automotive fuel in two ways: First, it replaces gasoline outright in a somewhat modified internal combustion engine; and secondly, it is an effective "octane booster" when mixed with gasoline in blends of 10 to 30 percent and requires no engine modification. These blends achieve the same octane boosting (or anti-knock) effects as petroleum-derived aromatics like benzene or metallic additives like tetraethyl lead.

Many people are familiar with "Gasohol," a popular fuel blend in the American Midwest in the late 1970s, which was a blend of ten percent ethyl alcohol and gasoline. (Fuel pumps are now simply labeled "with 10 percent ethanol.") Most people are not familiar with the other fuel blends using alcohol. "Gasonol" (with an "n") was a blend of 20 percent sugar cane alcohol with gasoline and kerosene used in the Philippines in the 1930s. Koolmotor, Benzalcohol, Moltaco, Lattybentyl, Natelite, Alcool and Agrol are some of the other obscure but interesting blends of fuels once found in Britain, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, South Africa, Brazil and the U.S. (respectively) in the 1920s and 1930s.

Economic issues have generally worked against the use of alcohol in favor of petroleum, but it is simplistic to view the problem simply in terms of relative consumer expense. Prices for ethyl alcohol blends and high octane gasoline are in the same relative range, and alcohol has been cheaper at times in various countries, depending on international politics and national tariff and incentive program.

In the cultural and political context, alternative fuels — especially ethyl alcohol — have held a symbolic and politically strategic significance among advocates and opponents alike that goes far beyond the simple substitution of one product for another. Opponents have seen ethyl alcohol fuel as a scheme for robbing taxpayers to enrich farmers, as turning food for the poor into fuel for the rich, as compounding soil erosion problems, and as a marginally useful enhancement or replacement fuel for a transportation system that is poorly designed in the first place.

Advocates have seen in alcohol fuels the potential for revolutionizing agricultural economics, for dispelling city smog, and for curbing the power of the petroleum industry over the economy. In addition, the idea that agriculture and biological resources could be primary sources of energy, the idea that humankind could live on solar "income" rather than fossil fuel "capital," has held a fascination for several generations of automotive and agricultural engineers. Proponents could see in ethyl alcohol the potential to help strike balance between city and farm and the prospect of civilizing and humanizing industrial machinery.

For example, this hope is graphically depicted in the symbolism used at the 1902 Paris alcohol fuel exposition. On the cover of the exposition's proceedings, a muse with an overflowing bouquet of roses looks down over the steering wheel with a confident smile. She is a portrait of wisdom and beauty, firmly in control of a gentle machine which seems appropriately located in some lush flower garden.

Rhetoric of the technological sublime, as it has been called, frequently attends the birth of any new technology, and of course there is nothing surprising about the high hopes of French automobile enthusiasts for alcohol fuel in 1902. While the spirit of the marriage was not always as artfully depicted, many of the great scientific minds of the 20th century expressed their support and interest specifically in alcohol as a high quality fuel and the general idea of opening vast new industrial markets for farm products. These included Henry Ford, Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison and Charles F. Kettering.

Bell called alcohol "a wonderfully clean-burning fuel ... that can be produced from farm crops, agricultural wastes, and even garbage." Henry Ford, who idealized country life despite his contribution to the urbanization of America, hoped that alcohol could help power a rural renaissance. Thomas Edison backed the idea of industrial uses for farm products, and respected Ford's vision of the fuel of the future. Charles Kettering and protégés Thomas Midgely and T.A. Boyd noted that the "most direct route which we now know for converting energy from its source, the sun, into a material suitable for use as a fuel is through vegetation to alcohol..." Kettering's interest is particularly important because, as we will see, he was enthusiastic about alcohol fuel even after the discovery of tetraethyl lead. In fact, Kettering originally planned that the octane boosting power of leaded gasoline would pave the way for the fuel of the future — ethyl alcohol from cellulosic biomass.

The broad ranging competition between gasoline and alcohol fuels around the turn of the century is not today as well known today as a similar competition between steam and electric automobiles with gasoline powered automobiles. Nevertheless, the competition from alcohol fuel was a well recognized fact at the time. Hundreds of magazine articles, reports, books and technical papers were written about alcohol fuel from the 1900 - 1926 period before and during the "Ethyl" leaded gasoline controversy, and hundreds more were published in the 1926-1960 period.

Ethyl Alcohol Fuel before the Discovery of Petroleum

The history of energy is loaded with inaccuracies and myths. One myth is that Edwin Drake's first oil well, drilled in Pennsylvania in 1859, arrived in the nick of time to replace a rapidly dwindling supply of whale oil. Actually, as we will see, a variety of lamp fuels were common in the U.S. and Europe through the 19th and early 20th centuries. These fuels offered the most logical starting point in the search for portable liquid fuels which inventors would use in the internal combustion engine.

Lamp fuels included all kinds of vegetable oils (castor, rapeseed, peanut); animal oils (especially whale oil and tallow from beef or pork,); refined turpentine from pine trees; and alcohols, especially wood alcohol (methanol or methyl alcohol) and grain alcohol (ethanol or ethyl alcohol). The most popular fuel in the U.S. before petroleum was a blend of alcohol and turpentine called "camphene" or simply "burning fluid."

The "whale oil myth," appears in many places, most recently in the history of the oil industry, *The Prize*, which hailed kerosene as "the new light which pushed back the night and extended the working day." It was a "marvel to eyes that had strained to see by means of a lighted rag," A recent Smithsonian exhibit provided a similar perspective: "It was the discovery of petroleum in 1859 that kindled the revolution in artificial lighting," the exhibit said. "Kerosene ...was cheap and relatively clean. Lamp companies had sprung up immediately and by the 1870s virtually everyone could enjoy indoor lighting." This traditional error is found in many other accounts of the history of energy. According to a 1960 history, "petroleum arrived on the scene in answer to a world-wide quest for a new source of artificial light." In an Ethyl Corp. magazine of 1943, for example, we find the following:

During the first half of the 19th century, scientists eagerly sought to develop better lighting fuels ... At that time, rural America for the most part depended on whale oil and sperm oil lamps to light its homes, and upon beeswax and tallow candles. Supplies, however, were limited and were becoming insufficient to meet a constantly growing demand.

These accounts seem to be inspired examples of rhetoric of the technological sublime. They are also fiction. In fact, kerosene came into an already well-established liquid fuel system with full scale production, distribution and end-use technology well in place. In other words, kerosene replaced other fuels; it did not emerge to light up a previously dark world.

In the 30 or 40 years before petroleum was discovered in Pennsylvania, the leading fuel was "camphene" (sometimes simply called "burning fluid"). It was a blend of high-proof ethyl alcohol with 20 to 50 percent turpentine to color the flame and a few drops of camphor oil to mask the turpentine smell. Alcohol for camphene was an important mainstay for distilleries, and many sold between one third and 80 percent of their product on the fuel market.¹⁸ The first U.S. patent for alcohol as a lamp fuel was awarded in 1834 to S. Casey, of Lebanon, Maine but it is clear that alcohol was routinely used a fuel beforehand. Samuel Morey used the readily available alcohol in the first American prototype internal combustion engine at the surprisingly early date of 1826. We should note that Morey's work was lost in the enthusiasm for the steam engine and a lack of funding. No other internal combustion engine would be developed until Nicholas Otto began his experiments 35 years later.

By the late 1830s, alcohol blends had replaced increasingly expensive whale oil in most parts of the country. It "easily took the lead as the illuminant" because it was "a decided improvement on other oils then in use," (especially lard oils) according to a lamp manufacturer's "History of Light." By 1860, thousands of distilleries churned out at least 90 million gallons of alcohol per year for lighting. In the 1850s, camphene (at \$.50 per gallon) was cheaper than whale oil (\$1.30 to \$2.50 per gallon) and lard oil (90 cents per gallon). It was about the same price as coal oil, which was the product first marketed as "kerosene" (literally "sun fuel").

Kerosene from petroleum was a good fuel when it arrived in the 1860s: it was usually not too volatile, it burned brightly and it was fairly cheap. A gradual shift from camphene to kerosene might have occurred, but instead, a \$2.08 per gallon tax on alcohol was imposed in stages between 1862 and 1864 as part of the Internal Revenue Act to pay for the Civil War. The tax was meant to apply to beverage alcohol, but without any specific exemption, it was also applied to fuel and industrial uses for alcohol. "The imposition of the internal-revenue tax on distilled spirits ... increased the cost of this 'burning fluid' beyond the possibility of using it in competition with kerosene..," said Rufus F. Herrick, an engineer with the Edison Electric Testing Laboratory who wrote one of the first books on the use of alcohol fuel.

While a gradual shift from burning fluid (or spirit lamps) to kerosene did occur in Europe during the last half of the 19th century, the American alcohol tax meant that kerosene became the primary fuel virtually overnight, and the distilleries making lamp fuel lost their markets. The tax "had the effect of upsetting [the distilleries] and in some cases destroying them," said IRS commissioner David A. Wells in 1872. "The manufacture of burning fluid for lighting suddenly ceased; happily, it was replaced by petroleum, which was about to be discovered." Similarly, C.J. Zintheo, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said that 90 million gallons of alcohol per year were used for lighting, cooking, and industry before the tax was imposed. Meanwhile, use of oil shot up from almost nothing in 1860 to over 200 million gallons in 1870. "The effect was disastrous to great industries, which, if [they were to be] saved from ruin, had to be rapidly revolutionized," according to Irish engineer Robert N. Tweedy.

The distress in the alcohol industry may be reflected in the number of patents for various combinations of burning fluids. Between 1861 and 1867, the patent office issued 32 different patents for burning fluids, alcohol or camphene blends; only five had been awarded in the previous 33 years. After 1867, no patents for "burning fluids" are listed. The dramatic increase in numbers of patents, as alcohol became prohibitively expensive, may reflect desperate attempts to find new combinations of inflammable liquids to replace the product of the rapidly dying alcohol fuel industry .

Thus, the growth of the petroleum industry in the 1860s was greatly aided by the heavy federal tax on its primary competitor .The myth that petroleum was at first a dramatic deliverance from the darkness, and then the only important fuel for the horseless carriage, indicates the extent to which oil industry historians have been influenced by the rhetoric of the technological sublime. In fact, early automotive inventors resorted to both petroleum and alcohol spirit lamp fuels as readily available energy sources.

Fodder for the Horseless Carriage

The idea of replacing the external combustion steam engine with an internal combustion liquid fuel engine seized the world's imagination in the late 19th century, but the origins of internal combustion engines can be traced back to early experiments with gunpowder in the late 1600s. Historian Lyle Cummins has noted that at least a dozen inventors tried to develop some form of internal combustion engine by the early 19th century.

The first authentic internal combustion engine in America, developed by Samuel Morey around 1826, ran on ethyl alcohol and turpentine. It powered an experimental wagon and a small boat at eight miles per hour up the Connecticut river. Morey, like many other inventors, was never able to attract financing for his idea and only the prototype was built.

Another early developer of the internal combustion engine was German inventor Nicholas August Otto. In 1860, Otto used ethyl alcohol as a fuel in an early engine because it was widely available for spirit lamps throughout Europe. He devised a carburetor which, like Morey's, heated the alcohol to help it vaporize as the engine was being started. But a January 1861 patent application with the Kingdom of Prussia was turned down, probably because heated alcohol carburetion was already being widely used in spirit lamps. It is interesting to note that Otto's initial financing came from Eugen Langen, who owned a sugar refining company that probably had links to the alcohol markets of Europe. Of course, the Otto & Langen company went on to success in the 1870s by producing stationary gas engines (usually powered by coal gas) and the later "Otto-cycle" engine was fueled primarily with gasoline but was still adaptable to alcohol or benzene from coal.

Numerous other engine prototypes were developed using alcohol or turpentine, including U.S. inventor George Brayton's engine developed in the 1870s. However, at the dawn of the automotive age, kerosene was widely available and gasoline, although volatile and dangerous for lamps, was cheap and very much in surplus.

Promoting Alcohol Fuel in Europe 1890 — 1914

During the 1890 — 1914 time period, German, French and British scientists and government officials were worried about the longevity of oil reserves and the unpredictable nature of oil supplies from Russia and America. "The oil trust battles between Rockefeller, the Rothschilds, the Nobels and Marcus Samuel's Shell kept prices in a state of flux, and engines often had to be adaptable to the fuel that was available," said Cummins. Manufacturing companies in Germany, England and France sold engines equipped to handle a variety of fuels. In tropical nations where oil supplies were quite irregular, and in closed environments such as mines and factories, alcohol engines were often preferred.

With few domestic oil reserves, France and Germany especially were eager to encourage widespread development of a fuel that could be readily distilled from domestic farm products. Research at the Experimental Mechanical Laboratory of Paris and at the Deutsche Landwirtschaftliche Gesellschaft in Berlin in the 1890s helped pave the way for expanded use of alcohol fuel. By 1896, horseless carriages were showing up on roads in Europe and the United States, and internal combustion engines were also beginning to replace steam engines in light machinery and farm equipment. The question of whether gasoline or alcohol was the better fuel often provoked spirited debate, and numerous races between cars with different fuels were held in Europe.

One of these races took place in 1899 with four alcohol fueled vehicles racing from Paris to Chantilly. Only one made the entire distance. Two years later, 50 vehicles ranging from light quadracycles to heavy trucks made the 167 mile trek from Paris to Roubaix. The rallies were sponsored by the Automobile Club of Paris and fuels varying from pure alcohol to 50 percent alcohol and 50 percent gasoline were measured for each vehicle before and after the 1902 rally. Most drivers apparently preferred the 50-50 blend.

Exhibits of automobiles held every year contained large proportions of alcohol fueled cars, and the growing enthusiasm was reflected in the 1902 Paris exhibit (mentioned above in the introduction). The exhibit was devoted to alcohol powered automobiles, farm machinery and a wide variety of lamps, stoves, heaters, laundry irons, hair curlers, coffee roasters and every conceivable household appliance and agricultural engine powered by alcohol. Many of these were not experimental items but represented a well established industry. By one estimate, some 95,000 alcohol fueled stoves and 37,000 spirit lamps were made in Germany in 1902. The exhibit published a set of papers and speeches, and was reported in many newspapers and technical journals of the day. Eight other exhibitions and congresses on alcohol fuels took place — in Germany, France, Italy and Spain between 1901 and 1904. Meanwhile, French fuel alcohol production rose from 2.7 million gallons in 1900 to 5.7 million gallons in 1903 and 8.3 million in 1905. Enthusiasm over the marriage of agriculture and industry in alcohol fuel was not the only motivation for French interest. A very practical problem was the decline in French sugar beet exports and rising surplus of many crops. Another concern was the increase in oil imports from the U.S. and the lack of domestic oil reserves.

Germans were also concerned about a domestic fuel supply that would also provide farmers with new markets for crops. In 1899, the German government organized the Centrale für Spiritus Verwertung (office of alcohol sales) which maintained alcohol prices at an equilibrium with petroleum at around the equivalent of 27 cents per gallon through subsidies to alcohol producers and a tariff on imported oil. Other incentives included scientific prizes, including a medallion from the emperor offered for the best alcohol engines. As a result, alcohol production rose from 10 million gallons to about 26 million gallons between 1887 and 1904. "To Kaiser William II, it seems, we are indebted for the great, new industry," said a New York Times magazine writer in 1906. "Not that he discovered the fuel, but that he forced its use on Germany. The Kaiser was enraged at the Oil Trust of his country, and offered prizes to his subjects and cash assistance ... to adapt [alcohol] to use in the industries."

According to a representative of the Otto Gas Engine Works of Philadelphia, by 1906 ten percent of the engines being produced by the firm's parent company in Germany were designed to run on pure ethyl alcohol, while one third of the heavy locomotives produced at the Deutz Gas engine works of Germany ran on pure ethyl alcohol. Alcohol engines were advertised as safer than steam engines (as they did not give off sparks from smokestacks) and far cleaner than kerosene or gasoline engines. In a survey conducted around 1903, some 87 percent of German farmers considered alcohol engines to be equal or superior to steam engines in performance. Conflicting reports on the number of German distilleries at least give some idea of the scale of the enterprise. By one 1906 account, some 72,000 distilleries operated, of which 57,000 were small farm "Materialbrennereien" stills producing a total of 27 million gallons. Another account, from 1914, put the number at 6,000 distilleries producing 66 million gallons of alcohol per year.

These alcohol stills may have had the effect of prolonging World War I. According to Irish engineer Robert Tweedy, when oil shortages seemed likely to paralyze Germany's transportation system in 1915, thousands of engines were quickly modified. "Every motor car in the empire was adapted to run on alcohol. It is possible that Germany would have been beaten already [by 1917] if production of alcohol had not formed an important part of the agricultural economy."

U.S. Congress Lifts Alcohol Tax in 1906

American farmers watched the growing use of alcohol fuel in Europe with great interest. Their markets were glutted with grain surpluses created when vast new tracts of virgin prairie were plowed under to produce bumper crops. To absorb these surpluses, many looked to the market for liquid fuels created by the widespread acceptance of the automobile. It seemed logical to replace their declining market for horses by growing fuel for the horseless carriage.

Several attempts had already been made to remove the \$2.08 federal tax placed on alcohol during the Civil War.. In 1894 the Wilson tariff bill allowed a rebate of taxes on alcohol for industrial uses, but the Treasury Dept. refused to issue regulations. Manufacturers tried to claim the rebate but lost in court. In 1896 a joint committee studied the issue, and minutes show opposition from wood alcohol (methyl) producers.

In 1906, the farm lobby found an ally in President Theodore Roosevelt, a bitter foe of the oil industry. Although embroiled in other disputes at the time, Roosevelt sent a message of support for the repeal of the alcohol tax to the House of Representatives, saying it provided a possible check to the depredations of the oil trust. In April, 1906, a bill to repeal the alcohol sales tax sailed through the House on a 224 to 7 vote with widespread support from farm-belt representatives. Additional support came from the Temperance Party, which saw in alcohol fuel a beneficial use for a pernicious commodity.

When the Senate Finance Committee attempted to table the "Free Alcohol" bill, the president of the Automobile Club of America said that he was considerably surprised and disappointed at the Senate committee, although he did not think Standard Oil would oppose the bill. "Gasoline is growing scarcer, and therefore dearer, all the time... Automobiles cannot use gasoline for all time, of that I am sure, and alcohol seems to be the best substitute that has yet appeared." U.S. Senator Champ Clark of Missouri, however, placed "the Rockefellers" squarely in the opposing camp as attempting to retain the tax on a potential competitor.

By mid-May, 1906, the Senate committee relented and the *New York Times* reported the bill was likely to be approved. "It is only the heavy tax imposed by the United States that has prevented the use of a large number of vegetable products for the manufacture of exceedingly cheap and available alcohol," a Times editorial said. These sources included potatoes in the West, sugar beets in Michigan, and cheap imported molasses in the east. A report from the U.S. ambassador to Cuba noted alcohol made their cost 10 cents per gallon, and with improved methods in the U.S. it could cost even less when made from imported molasses. "The chief opponents, at least the open opponents, have been the manufacturers of wood alcohol," the Times said.

Auto manufacturers supported the bill wholeheartedly. A representative of the Detroit Board of Commerce, James S. Capen, told the Senate Finance Committee that alcohol was "preferable" to gasoline because it was safer, "absolutely clean and sanitary," and because "artificial shortages" could not raise the price in the future. The biggest problem for auto makers, Capen said, was not so much cost as the question of long term supply.

The Senate passed the bill May 24, 1906, and the *New York Times* again noted the low cost of alcohol (14 cents from corn, nine and a half cents from molasses) as compared to the high price of kerosene and gasoline (18 and 22 cents, respectively). "The new fuel and illuminant will utilize completely an important class of agricultural crops and byproducts thus benefiting in a double sense the farms and villages throughout the country," an editorial said. Roosevelt signed the bill June 8, 1906.

Additional bills specifically exempting farm stills from government controls passed shortly afterwards, and triumphant farm belt senators, like North Dakota's Hansbrough, proclaimed that "every farmer could have a still" to supply heat, light and power at low prices. "Advocates look forward with hope to a big change in the farmers life," the *New York Times* reported. "If the law accomplishes what is hoped it will... make a revolution on the farm."

Experts noted that while alcohol would probably not drive out gasoline entirely, "it will find its field as every other fuel energy has." More typical was the statement of a National Grange master who predicted an immediate market for 100

million gallons of alcohol. Along with a large additional market for farm crops, alcohol would serve as a "balance wheel to maintain an equilibrium" in commodity prices.

The lofty farm rhetoric obscured a difficult economic picture, but the bill kindled interest in alcohol fuels among farmers who wanted new markets and automakers who wanted to continue to have a market if oil were to run out. Pure alcohol fuel went on sale in Peoria, Illinois at 32 cents per gallon in January, 1907 as the tax took effect, and prices elsewhere hovered around 25 to 30 cents. At the same time, gasoline prices at 18 to 22 cents per gallon were beginning to drop as new Texas oil fields came on line and found markets on the East Coast. These new fields were brought in by independent oil companies, especially Gulf and the Texas Co. (Texaco). Suddenly, the future for alcohol fuel seemed more remote than anticipated.

"Of all the chimerical projects ever foisted upon Congress, the free denatured alcohol scheme has proved the greatest disappointment," said a news column in the *New York Times* in 1907. With only ten alcohol plants built under the new law, "gasoline, kerosene and electricity are still being used." One disappointed farm machinery manufacturer said the problem was a lack of frugality among Americans; the manufacturer said German farm stills often used "cull" crops that had been partly damaged or spoiled. Meanwhile, an Internal Revenue commissioner noted that Germany protected farm alcohol with tariffs on petroleum imports, and said that fuel prices there were the equivalent of 15 to 27 cents per gallon. U.S.D.A. set up a demonstration small scale alcohol still in the Bureau of Chemistry with "the aim of creating a body of experts who would return to their districts filled up with enthusiasm and knowledge which would be served out to farmers." In 1908, fourteen experts were trained; in 1909 only four could be trained, and the project was abandoned. The U.S. commissioner of revenue noted in 1910 that no alcohol had been used for fuel, and in 1911 he reported that a new industrial alcohol industry was unlikely.

Attempts to revive the moribund hopes of the alcohol industry proved futile. In 1914 the Free Alcohol bill was amended again to decrease the regulatory burden, but one observer said that the small distillery "is only a myth in this country." In 1915, Congressional hearings on more demonstrations and proposals for an Industrial Alcohol Commission within the Department of Agriculture were held, but the proposals were turned down. "The theater is open, the stage is set, but the play does not begin. There are no actors..." said Tweedy.

Alcohol from grain and potatoes, at about 25 to 30 cents per gallon, was far too expensive to compete with petroleum, but alcohol from Cuban molasses, at 10 cents per gallon, was thought to be competitive. Some observers suspected a conspiracy in the fact that Standard Oil of New Jersey had financial ties to the Caribbean alcohol market. The influence of an oil company over the alcohol industry was "a combination which many will regard as sinister," said Tweedy. In 1942, Senate committees began looking into the extent to which the oil industry had controlled other industries, including the alcohol industry and the rubber industry. Attorney General Thurmond Arnold testified that anti-trust investigations had taken place into the oil industry's influence in the alcohol industry in the 1913-1920 period, in the early 1920s, and between 1927 and 1936. "Renewed complaints in 1939 were brought to the anti-trust division but because of funds no action was taken," Arnold said. Then the investigation of 1941 which exposed a "marriage" between Standard Oil Co. and the German chemical company I.G. Farben also brought new evidence concerning complex price and marketing agreements between du Pont Corp., a major investor in and producer of leaded gasoline, U.S. Industrial Alcohol Co. and their subsidiary, Cuba Distilling Co. The investigation was eventually dropped, like dozens of others in many different kinds of industries, due to the need to enlist industry support in the war effort. However, the top directors of many oil companies agreed to resign and oil industry stocks in molasses companies were sold off as part of a compromise worked out with Arnold.

Scientific Investigations of Alcohol Fuels 1890 - 1920

Scientific journals contain hundreds of references to alcohol fuel at the dawn of the automotive era. Research during the earliest decades tended to focus on pure alcohol as a replacement for petroleum. The focus shifted to the anti-knock ("octane" boosting) properties of alcohol blends in gasoline during the 1915 to 1936 period because of an increasing need for anti-knock gasoline and because of improvements in anhydrous alcohol production techniques.

Studies of alcohol as an internal combustion engine fuel began in the U.S. with the Edison Electric Testing Laboratory and Columbia University in 1906. Elihu Thomson reported that despite a smaller heat or B.T.U. value, "a gallon of alcohol will develop substantially the same power in an internal combustion engine as a gallon of gasoline. This is owing to the superior efficiency of operation..." Other researchers confirmed the same phenomena around the same time.

U.S.D.A. tests in 1906 also demonstrated the efficiency of alcohol in engines and described how gasoline engines could be modified for higher power with pure alcohol fuel or for equivalent fuel consumption, depending on the need. The U.S.

Geological Service and the U.S. Navy performed 2000 tests on alcohol and gasoline engines in 1907 and 1908 in Norfolk, Va. and St. Louis, Mo. They found that much higher engine compression ratios could be achieved with alcohol than with gasoline. When the compression ratios were adjusted for each fuel, fuel economy was virtually equal despite the greater B.T.U. value of gasoline. "In regard to general cleanliness, such as absence of smoke and disagreeable odors, alcohol has many advantages over gasoline or kerosene as a fuel," the report said. "The exhaust from an alcohol engine is never clouded with a black or grayish smoke." U.S.G.S. continued the comparative tests and later noted that alcohol was "a more ideal fuel than gasoline" with better efficiency despite the high cost.

The French War Office tested gasoline, benzene and an alcohol-benzene blend in road tests in 1909, and the results showed that benzene gave higher mileage than gasoline or the alcohol blend in existing French trucks. The British Fuel Research Board also tested alcohol and benzene mixtures around the turn of the century and just before World War I, finding that alcohol blends had better thermal efficiency than gasoline but that engines developed less brake horsepower at low rpm. On the other hand, a British researcher named Watson found that thermal efficiencies for alcohol, benzene and gasoline were very nearly equal.

These experiments are representative of work underway before and during World War I. The conclusions were so definitive that *Scientific American* concluded in 1918: "It is now definitely established that alcohol can be blended with gasoline to produce a suitable motor fuel ..." By 1920, the consensus, *Scientific American* said, was "a universal assumption that [ethyl] alcohol in some form will be a constituent of the motor fuel of the future." Alcohol met all possible technical objections, and although it was more expensive than gasoline, it was not prohibitively expensive in blends with gasoline. "Every chemist knows [alcohol and gasoline] will mix, and every engineer knows [they] will drive an internal combustion engine."

During and after the war, the British Fuel Research Board actively researched military and civilian fuels. W.R. Ormandy in 1918 said that alcohol and coal based fuels could replace oil in the post-war period, and Ormandy noted that only five percent of the American grain crop would meet requirements for a blended fuel. The board's committee on "power alcohol" noted the absence of technical problems a year later, although it concluded that "alcohol cannot compete with gasoline at present prices." Harold B. Dixon, working for the board and other governmental departments, reported in 1920 that higher possible engine compression compensated for alcohol's low caloric value. A mixture of alcohol with 20 percent benzene or gasoline "runs very smoothly, and without knocking." Also, B.R. Tunnison reported in 1920 the anti-knock effects of alcohol blends in gasoline and said mileage was improved.

Another significant set of British experiments was performed by the London General Omnibus Co. in 1919 comparing gasoline with blends of ethyl alcohol and benzene. Mileage was about the same, with gasoline slightly ahead. "In all other respects the [alcohol] fuel compared favorably with petrol [gasoline], and exhibited the characteristics of other alcohol mixtures in respect of flexibility, absence of knocking and cleanliness." The absence of knocking is significant, since London omnibus studies were widely reported and well known two years before leaded gasoline was discovered and six years before oil industry representatives told government officials that alternatives to leaded gasoline did not exist. The bus experiment also showed that a large scale switch from petroleum was technically feasible. "We are fast squandering the oil that has been stored in the fuel beds, and it seems so far as our present knowledge takes us that it is to the fuels experimented with that we must turn for our salvation," said the omnibus company engineer in a technical journal.

Despite the value of demonstrating the flexibility of technology, road tests proved to be an unreliable index of mileage and thermal efficiency. A German road test of benzene alcohol blends found that the 50 /50 alcohol benzene mixture had 30 percent better mileage than gasoline. Because of the unreliability of such road tests, Thomas Midgely in the U.S. and H.R. Ricardo in Britain developed reference engines, indicators, and measuring apparatus for showing the exact extent of knocking. Midgely's system led to the development of iso-octane as a reference fuel, and eventually, the "octane" system of measuring anti-knock. Ricardo's work focused in part on testing fuels at various compression ratios up to the point where they would begin knocking, or what he termed the "highest useful compression ratio." Ethyl alcohol had a 7.5 value, with commercial gasolines then available at 4.5 to 6. Ricardo also developed the Toluene Index, which like "octane" measured anti-knock with a reference fuel. Ricardo concluded that the low burning rate of alcohol lessens the tendency to knock, and that, using toluene as the reference point at 100 anti-knock, alcohol had a 130 rating.

Several difficulties with alcohol fuels were known: cold starting was one, and E.C. Freeland and W.G. Harry noted in a chemical society paper that blends of small amounts of ether in alcohol could solve the problem. Another problem was "phase separation," noted above. But the tendency of alcohol and gasoline to separate at lower temperatures in the presence of water could be easily overcome with "binders," and was noted by Thomas Midgely, among others. These were small amounts of additives such as higher-carbon alcohols (such as propyl or butyl alcohol), ethers and / or benzene. Operating practice was also important in dealing with alcohol fuels. Fuel distributors and chemists used

anhydrous (low water content) alcohol and avoided storing alcohol-gasoline blends in tanks with water "bottoms." Swedish researcher E. Hubendick said that the danger of separation "can be ignored in my estimation" because even if it did occur, it would never stop the motor in the way that a small amount of water in the gas tank would.

In short, technical research into ethyl alcohol as a fuel ranged from neutral to extremely positive, with very few negative findings. By 1925, an American researcher speaking at the same New York Chemists Club told an audience:

Composite fuels made simply by blending anhydrous alcohol with gasoline have been given most comprehensive service tests extending over a period of eight years. Hundreds of thousands of miles have been covered in standard motor car, tractor, motor boat and aeroplane engines with highly satisfactory results... Alcohol blends easily excel gasoline on every point important to the motorist. The superiority of alcohol gasoline fuels is now safely established by actual experience... [Thus] the future of alcohol motor fuels is largely an economic problem.

Yet in the 1930s, oil industry opponents of alcohol blends in the U.S. claimed that technical problems prohibited their use. "Alcohol is much inferior, gallon for gallon, to gasoline as a motor fuel," claimed the American Petroleum Industries Committee. While admitting there was some anti-knock advantage, the committee said the blends would be "unstable in the presence of small amounts of accidental moisture." The American Petroleum Institute's Conger Reynolds, in a 1939 barb aimed at Henry Ford and the Farm Chemurgy conferences of the 1930s, said:

"With all due deference for the dream chemists, armchair farmers and platform orators who have touted alcohol-gasoline as the greatest of all fuels, oil industry technologists know and automotive engineers know that it is not as satisfactory a fuel as straight gasoline of normal quality."

The context of Reynolds speech to fellow oil men was that of fending off (by his count) 19 federal bills and 31 state bills on alcohol gasoline tax incentives and blending programs between 1933 and 1939. To be forced to use alcohol gasoline would mean giving consumers an inferior fuel at an exorbitant cost, Reynolds said. At the time, the API had virtually no technical data to back up claims of inferiority. The vast bulk of scientific research pointed very much in favor of alcohol blended fuels. That soon changed as industry-sponsored tests found phase separation, cold starting and other problems. Ten years later, British researcher S.J.W. Pleeth would observe:

The bias aroused by the use of alcohol as a motor fuel has produced [research] results that are incompatible with each other ... Countries with considerable oil deposits — such as the U.S. — or which control oil deposits of other lands — such as Holland — tend to produce reports antithetical to the use of fuels alternative to petrol; countries with little or no indigenous oil tend to produce favorable reports. The contrast ... is most marked. One can scarcely avoid the conclusion that the results arrived at are those best suited to the political or economic aims of the country concerned or the industry sponsoring the research. We deplore this partisan use of science, while admitting its existence, even in the present writer.

U.S. Automakers, Alcohol Fuels and Ethyl Leaded Gasoline

Before World War I, U.S. automakers were aware of the potential for alcohol fuel, but given the short-term economic picture, stayed with gasoline and low compression engines. Most popular cars, such as the Ford Model T, had low compression engines, an adjustable carburetor and a spark advance that made it possible to switch from gasoline to alcohol to kerosene as needed. Despite Ford's later support for alcohol fuel in the 1920s and 1930s, the only fuel the company actually handled was "Fordsol," benzene from Ford factory coking operations and regular gasoline. Some early auto manufacturers, such as the Olds Gas Power Company, offered a simple mixer attachment for alcohol and found that "under actual operating conditions... the fuel consumption per horsepower is about the same, pound for pound, whether using alcohol or gasoline." The Hart-Parr Company, a tractor manufacturer based in Charles City, Iowa, commented in 1907: "We have watched with great interest, and added our efforts to help bring about the free use of alcohol for power purposes... Our engine is so constructed that alcohol can be used with very little change ..."

Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Co. began making alcohol engines for tractors in 1909, and with increasing demand for alcohol powered farm equipment after World War I, began intensive studies on a more efficient alcohol engine. "In our opinion alcohol is an ideal fuel," said researcher A.W. Scarratt, because it vaporized at a practically constant temperature and it formed no carbon deposits. "We believe the entire automobile industry should get behind this idea and bring it to pass as quickly as possible so as to provide another source of fuel supply and to bring down the operating costs of all equipment depending now on hydrocarbon fuels."

After World War I, the focus of fuel research shifted into two directions. One research direction led to the discovery of a metallic additive called tetra ethyl lead. The story of how General Motors researchers Thomas Midgley and Charles F. Kettering discovered it has often been told. However, the second research direction into the "fuel of the future" is not well known.

Kettering and Midgley's initial research into fuel involved work on DELCO generators and airplane engines in World War I. In a report on the war research, Midgley wrote: "Engineers have heretofore believed knocking to be the unavoidable result of too high a compression, and while the fact that [ethyl] alcohol did not knock at extremely high compressions was well known, it was [erroneously] attributed to its extremely high ignition point .." The point was generally understood by scientists and military technology experts. For example, a naval committee concluded in 1920 that alcohol gasoline blends "withstand high compression without producing knock."

Kettering, who had become General Motors vice president of research and the president of the Society of Automotive Engineers, noted two directions in fuel research in a 1919 speech to the society. There was, he said, a "high percentage" direction, with blends of up to 20 percent or more of benzene or alcohol; the other was a "low percentage" additive, such as iodine, which was too expensive to be practical but pointed to the possibility of other additives. The low percentage research effort would lead to the discovery of leaded gasoline in 1921.

Around 1920 and 1921, Kettering came to believe that alcohol fuel from renewable resources would be the answer to the compression problem and the possibility of an oil shortage. Along with his British counterpart, H.R. Ricardo, Kettering settled on alcohol as the key to unshackling the internal combustion engine from non-renewable fossil fuels," said historian Stuart Leslie. "Ethanol (ethyl alcohol) never knocked, it could be produced by distilling waste vegetable material, and it was almost pollution-free. Ricardo compared alcohol fuel to living within a man's means, implying that fossil fuels were a foolish squandering of capital."

At Kettering's urging, General Motors began to consider just what would be involved in a total switch from petroleum to alcohol fuel. One G.M. researcher reported that some 46 percent of all foodstuffs would have to be converted to alcohol to replace gasoline on a BTU for BTU basis. In another G.M. study, T.A. Boyd surveyed the steep rise in number of new cars and the increasing difficulty of providing new fuel supplies. The solution, Boyd said, would be to use other fuels, and benzene and alcohol "appear to be very promising allies" to petroleum. Alcohol was the "most direct route ... for converting energy from its source, the sun, into a material that is suitable for a fuel..." Boyd said.

Despite advantages of cleanliness and high antiknock rating, there were supply problems. In 1921, about 100 million gallons of industrial alcohol supply was available. Overall, enough corn, sugar cane and other crops were available to produce almost twice the 8.3 billion gallon per year demand for gasoline. But the possibility of using such a large amount of food acreage for fuel "seems very unlikely," he said. In a speech around 1921, Kettering noted that "industrial alcohol can be obtained from vegetable products ... [but] the present total production of industrial alcohol amounts to less than four percent of the fuel demands, and were it to take the place of gasoline, over half of the total farm area of the United States would be needed to grow the vegetable matter from which to produce this alcohol."

Kettering, Midgley and Boyd apparently framed the question in terms of totally replacing gasoline, although a related goal of the research was to create antiknock additives. It stands to reason that if a 20 percent blend of alcohol were to be used in all fuel, then (using Boyd's figure) only about nine percent of grain and sugar crops would be needed. Since grain was in surplus after the war, American farmers probably would have welcomed a new market for their crop, and the kinds of supply problems in the G.M. and du Pont studies would probably not have materialized. Also, with Prohibition, distillers would have welcomed a new use for their services. Another problem with Kettering's analysis demonstrates a lack of understanding of agriculture and the distilling industry. Grain is not "used" for fuel; it is fed to cattle after it is distilled with no loss in food value. This is as true of brewers' grains from beer distilleries as it is of fuel facilities.

Thus, supply of an additive would not have been the problem that G.M. engineers apparently assumed that it would have been. However, since the original studies on fuel alcohol are missing from the archives, and it is difficult to fathom the reason for their narrow frame of reference. One reasonable explanation is that Kettering, Boyd and Midgley were preoccupied with the long-term replacement of petroleum. In 1920 and 1921 they were not technically or politically opposed to ethyl alcohol as a straight fuel or in blends with gasoline. Kettering spoke out against taxes on alcohol as an impediment to fuel research and helped overcome other obstacles. In 1920, K.W. Zimmerschied of G.M.'s New York headquarters wrote Kettering to note that foreign use of alcohol fuel "is getting more serious every day in connection with export cars, and anything we can do toward building our carburetors so they can be easily adapted to alcohol will be appreciated by all." Kettering assured him that the adaptation "is a thing which is very readily taken care of," and said that G.M. could rapidly change the floats in carburetors from lacquered cork to metal. Midgley also filed a patent

application for a blend of alcohol and cracked (olefin) gasoline on February 28, 1920, clearly intending it to be an antiknock fuel.

The problem of the long-term resource base for the fuel of the future continued to worry Kettering and Midgley. At one point they became interested in work on cellulose conversion to fermentable sugar being performed by Prof. Harold Hibbert at Yale University. Hibbert was a visionary, and pointed out that the 1920 U.S.G.S. oil reserve report had serious implications for his work. "Does the average citizen understand what this means?" he asked. "In from 10 to 20 years this country will be dependent entirely upon outside sources for a supply of liquid fuels... paying out vast sums yearly in order to obtain supplies of crude oil from Mexico, Russia and Persia." But chemists might be able to solve the problem, Hibbert said, by converting abundant cellulose waste from farm crops, timber operations and seaweed into ethyl alcohol. In the summer of 1920, Boyd and his family moved to New Haven so that he could study with Hibbert. Boyd found Hibbert impressive but the volume of literature about cellulose hydrolysis and synthesis was overwhelming. When Midgley came east in late July, he was more interested in meeting Standard Oil Co. officials than with Hibbert, and Boyd left without a clear sense of where the cellulose research could go.

Boyd did insist that a source of alcohol "in addition to foodstuffs" must be found, and that the source would undoubtedly be cellulose: "It is readily available, it is easily produced and its supply is renewable." Using it and returning farm crop residues to the soil would not harm soil fertility. But the problem of developing a commercial process for cellulose conversion to alcohol was serious, he had learned in his stay with Hibbert. A ton of wood yielded only 20 gallons of alcohol in the least expensive "weak acid" process, whereas a commercially profitable "weak acid" process would need a yield of at least 50 gallons, and possibly 60 to 65. Such yields had been achieved with the "strong acid" process, but that technology was complex and more expensive. Still, success might be found if the "strong acid" yield could be obtained in a weak acid process, and as a result, "the danger of a serious shortage of motor fuel would disappear," Boyd said. "The great necessity for and the possibilities of such a process justify a large amount of further research."

To promote the idea of alcohol blended fuels among automotive and chemical engineers, Midgley drove a high compression ratio car (7:1) from Dayton to an October, 1921 Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) meeting in Indianapolis using a 30 percent alcohol blend in gasoline. This was only two months before tetraethyl lead was discovered. "Alcohol has tremendous advantages and minor disadvantages," Midgley told fellow SAE members in a discussion. Advantages included "clean burning and freedom from any carbon deposit... [and] tremendously high compression under which alcohol will operate without knocking... Because of the possible high compression, the available horsepower is much greater with alcohol than with gasoline..." Minor disadvantages included low volatility, difficulty starting, and difficulty in blending with gasoline "unless a binder is used." Another unnamed engineer (probably from G.M., possibly Boyd) noted that a seven and a half percent increase in power was found with the alcohol-gasoline blend "...without producing any 'pink' [knock] in the engine. We have recommended the addition of 10 percent of benzyl [benzene] to our customers who have export trade that uses this type of fuel to facilitate the mixing of the alcohol and gasoline." In a formal part of the presentation, Midgley mentioned the cellulose project. "From our cellulose waste products on the farm such as straw, corn-stalks, corn cobs and all similar sorts of material we throw away, we can get, by present known methods, enough alcohol to run our automotive equipment in the United States," he said. The catch was that it would cost \$2 per gallon. However, other alternatives looked even more problematic — oil shale wouldn't work, and coal would only bring in about 20 percent of the total fuel need.

Midgley and Kettering's interest in ethyl alcohol fuel did not fade once tetraethyl lead was discovered as an antiknock in December, 1921. In fact, not only was ethyl alcohol a source of continued interest as an antiknock agent, but more significantly, it was still considered to be the fuel that would eventually replace petroleum. A May, 1922 memo from Midgley to Kettering was a response to a report on alcohol production from the Mexican "century" plant, a desert plant that contains fermentable sugars. Midgley said he was "not impressed" with the process as a way to make motor fuel:

Unquestionably alcohol is the fuel of the future and is playing its part in tropical countries situated similar [sic] to Mexico. Alcohol can be produced in those countries for approximately 7 - 1/2 cents per gallon from many other sources than the century plant, and the quantities which are suggested as possibilities in this report are insignificantly small compared to motor fuel requirements. However, as a distillery for beverage purposes, these gentlemen may have a money making proposition.

Even as chemists tinkered with various processes to produce tetraethyl lead in a nearby lab, Midgley and Boyd continued working on alcohol for fuel. In a June 1922 Society of Automotive Engineers paper, they said:

That the addition of benzene and other aromatic hydrocarbons to paraffin base gasoline greatly reduces the tendency of these fuels to detonate [knock] ... has been known for some time. Also, it is well known that alcohol

... improves the combustion characteristics of the fuel ...The scarcity and high cost of gasoline in countries where sugar is produced and the abundance of raw materials for making alcohol there has resulted in a rather extensive use of alcohol for motor fuel. As the reserves of petroleum in this country become more and more depleted, the use of benzene and particularly of alcohol in commercial motor fuels will probably become greatly extended." (Italics indicate section omitted from printed version).

In September, 1922, Midgley and Boyd wrote that "vegetation offers a source of tremendous quantities of liquid fuel." Cellulose from vegetation would be the primary resource because not enough agricultural grains and other foods were available for conversion into fuel. "Some means must be provided to bridge the threatened gap between petroleum and the commercial production of large quantities of liquid fuels from other sources. The best way to accomplish this is to increase the efficiency with which the energy of gasoline is used and thereby obtain more automotive miles per gallon of fuel." At the time the paper was written, in late spring or early summer 1922, tetraethyl lead was still a secret within the company, but it was about to be announced to fellow scientists and test marketed. The reference to a means to "bridge the threatened gap" and increase in the efficiency of gasoline clearly implies the use of tetraethyl lead or some other additive to pave the way to new fuel sources.

This inference is consistent with an important statement in an unpublished 1936 legal history of Ethyl Gasoline for the du Pont corporation:

It is also of interest to recall that an important special motive for this [tetraethyl lead] research was General Motors' desire to fortify itself against the exhaustion or prohibitive cost of the gasoline supply, which was then believed to be impending in about twenty-five years; the thought being that the high compression motors which should be that time have been brought into general use if knocking could be overcome could more advantageously be switched to [ethyl] alcohol.

Thus, during the time Kettering and Midgley researched anti-knock fuels (1916 to 1925), and especially after tetraethyl lead was discovered in December of 1921, there were two "ethyls" on the horizon for General Motors: Ethyl leaded gasoline, which would serve as a transitional efficiency booster for gasoline, and ethyl alcohol, the "fuel of the future" that would keep America's cars on the roads no matter what happened to domestic or world oil supply. Thus, Kettering's strategy in the post World War I years was to prepare cars for high-octane alternative fuels.

Clearly, G.M. switched gears sometime in 1923 or 1924. When controversy broke out about the public health impacts of leaded gasoline in 1924, Midgley and Kettering told the media, fellow scientists and the government that no alternatives existed. "So far as science knows at the present time," Midgley told a meeting of scientists, "tetraethyl lead is the only material available which can bring about these [antiknock] results, which are of vital importance to the continued economic use by the general public of all automotive equipment, and unless a grave and inescapable hazard exists in the manufacture of tetraethyl lead, its abandonment cannot be justified." And at a Public Health Service conference on leaded gasoline in 1925, Kettering said: "We could produce certain [antiknock] results and with the higher gravity gasolines, the aromatic series of compounds, alcohols, etc... [to] get the high compression without the knock, but in the great volume of fuel of the paraffin series [petroleum] we could not do that." Even though experts like Alice Hamilton of Harvard University insisted that alternatives to leaded gasoline were available, the Public Health Service allowed leaded gasoline to remain on the market in 1926. (Leaded gasoline was banned in 1986 in the U.S. for the same public health concerns that had been expressed 60 years earlier).

Interestingly, Kettering and Midgley came up with another fuel called "Synthol" in the summer of 1925, at a time when the fate of leaded gasoline was in doubt. Synthol was made from alcohol, benzene and a metallic additive — either tetraethyl lead or iron carbonyl. Used in combination with a new high compression engine much smaller than ordinary engines, Synthol would "revolutionize transportation." When Ethyl leaded gasoline was permitted to return to the market in 1926, Kettering and Midgley dropped the Synthol idea.

By the mid-1930s, the alliance between General Motors, DuPont Corp. and Standard Oil to produce Ethyl leaded gasoline succeeded beyond all expectations: 90 percent of all gasoline contained lead. Public health crusaders who found this troubling still spoke out in political forums, but competitors were not allowed to criticize leaded gasoline in the commercial marketplace. In a restraining order forbidding such criticism, the Federal Trade Commission said Ethyl gasoline "is entirely safe to the health of [motorists] and to the public in general when used as a motor fuel, and is not a narcotic in its effect, a poisonous dope, or dangerous to the life or health of a customer, purchaser, user or the general public."

Direct comparison between leaded gasoline and alcohol blends proved so controversial in the 1920s and 1930s that government studies were kept quiet or not published. For instance, a Commerce Department report dated May 15, 1925

detailed dozens of instances of alcohol fuel use worldwide. The report was printed only five days before the Surgeon General's hearing on Ethyl leaded gasoline. Yet it was never mentioned in the news media of the time, or in extensive bibliographies on alcohol fuel by Iowa State University researchers compiled in the 1930s. Another instance of a "buried" government report was that of U.S.D.A. and Navy engine tests, conducted at the engineering experiment station in Annapolis. Researchers found that Ethyl leaded gasoline and 20 percent ethyl alcohol blends in gasoline were almost exactly equivalent in terms of brake horsepower and useful compression ratios. The 1933 report was never published.

International Use of Alcohol Fuels, 1920s and 30s

By the mid-1920s ethyl alcohol was routinely blended with gasoline in every industrialized nation except the United States. Ten to twenty five percent alcohol blends with gasoline were common in Scandinavian countries, where alcohol was made from paper mill wastes; in France, Germany and throughout continental Europe, where alcohol was made from surplus grapes, potatoes and other crops; and in Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Hawaii, the Philippians, South Africa, and other tropical regions, where it was made from sugar cane and molasses. In some countries, especially France, gasoline retailers were required to blend in large volumes of alcohol with all gasoline sold. Germany, Brazil and others also followed the "mandatory blending" model. In other countries, such as Sweden, Ireland and Britain, alcohol blends received tax advantages.

In France, insecure supplies of oil during World War I led to a research program at the Pasteur Institute on sources of alcohol, including marine biomass sources like kelp. Continued research by a national fuels committee appointed in 1921 led to a recommendations of a national fuel consisting of 40 to 50 percent alcohol, and on Feb. 28, 1923, "Article 6" required gasoline importers to buy at alcohol from a state monopoly at a volume of at least 10 percent of their gasoline imports. "Article 7" provided a five-Franc per hectoliter tax on gasoline to help subsidize the alcohol monopoly. The blend, often reaching as much as 50 percent in some fuels, was not well accepted by consumers who were using engines which were specifically adapted to gasoline. At a minimum, carburetor settings needed to be changed to allow a greater fuel volume when the percentage of alcohol in the gasoline rose above 20 to 30 percent, and bitter complaints flowed in from motor clubs and garages. Amendments to the law in 1926 and 1931 helped create a more workable blend, and alcohol fuel use rose from 7.8 million gallons per year in 1925 to 20 million gallons in 1932.

Although the French government was initially one of the most enthusiastic toward alcohol, by 1932 so many other nations had surpassed the French effort that one proponent explained the "slowness" in reviving alcohol fuels use. It "is due in part to the poor results obtained when such fuels were first introduced and also to the casting of discredit upon such fuels by its adversaries who profit in the fuel business," said Charles Schweitzer, a research chemist in the Melle complex. Schweitzer also noted that alcohol was far preferable to leaded gasoline from a public health standpoint.

National initiatives were also under way in Britain, Italy and Germany, and tax incentives were passed in all three nations to encourage the use of alcohol or alcohol blended fuels.

In England, a Departmental Committee on Industrial Alcohol reported in 1905 that alcohol from potatoes would be more expensive than gasoline, even though farmers wanted an alcohol industry built to absorb crop surpluses. In 1915 "agitation" for an alcohol industry was noted. A Fuel Research Board experimented with alcohol production between 1917 and 1924, and reported that while economics of traditional crops were marginal, novel crops like Jerusalem artichokes might be useful. "The most economical source [of alcohol] may be found ultimately in some of the luxuriant tropical growths within the Empire," an article in SAE Journal said. Even so, it continued attention to power alcohol was important. "Looking at the fuel question very broadly, the dominant fact is that almost all the fuel supplies at present used are what lawyers call wasting securities... As mineral fuels grow dearer, the advantage of fuels of vegetable origin must become accentuated." By the 1930s, two major blends of up to 30 percent alcohol — Cleveland Discoll (part owned by Standard Oil of New Jersey) and Cities Service — were widely used. Discoll continued to be used until the 1970s.

German firms such as I.G. Farben had by the early 1920s come up with a process for making synthetic methanol from coal, a development which was widely reported in the popular and technical press. Observing the synthesis of methanol and other fuels, the editor of Industrial and Engineering Chemistry said: "We do not predict that these will necessarily be the fuels to supplement our diminishing petroleum reserves ... But who shall say? The field is new and the opportunities are correspondingly great." The German ethyl alcohol monopoly of the pre-World War I (the Centrale fur Spiritus Verwerthung) had apparently fallen apart in the post-war chaos, but in September, 1926 a commercial fuel called "Monopolin" was introduced and "favorably received due to its anti-knock qualities." The fuel, which included I.G. Farben's octane-boosting iron carbonyl additive, was endorsed by a famous race car driver of the era, Herbert Ernst, and alcohol use in fuel climbed from a quarter million gallons in 1923 to 46 million gallons in 1932. In 1930 gasoline importers were required to buy from 2.5 to 6 percent alcohol relative to their gasoline import volumes, but around 1933, I.G.

Farben and several oil companies acquired 51 percent of Monopolin. Production of alcohol did not diminish, but climbed by 1937 to about 52 million gallons per year as part of Hitler's war preparations.

In Italy, the first Congress of Industrial Chemistry which took place in April 1924 focused strongly on fuel problems, with a large percentage of the papers concerned with alcohol fuels. A strong scientific endorsement of the idea of using surplus crops in the national fuel mix led to a national decree on mandatory use of alcohol fuels in 1925. Several oil companies initially refused to blend alcohol with gasoline, but government pressures prevailed. By the late 1920s blends included Benzalcohol (20% ethanol and 10% benzene) and Robur (30% ethanol, 22% methanol, 40% gasoline and other additives). Other nations, such as Hungary, Poland, and Brazil would follow the French and Italian examples with mandatory alcohol and gasoline blends in national fuels in the 1920s and 30s, while the tax incentive approach was adopted by many other European nations such as Switzerland, Sweden, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The total use of alcohol as a substitute fuel in Europe may have never exceeded five percent, according to the American Petroleum Institute. Synthetic gasoline and benzene created by I.G. Farben from coal substituted for seven percent and 6.5 percent respectively of European petroleum by 1937. Synthetic gasoline was cheaper (at 17 to 19 cents per gallon) than alcohol at around 25 cents per gallon, API said.

In tropical nations where sugarcane was abundant and petroleum sources distant, blends and straight alcohol fuels were common. A tractor operator for American Sugar Co. in Cuba in the 1921-24 period recalled using cheap molasses derived alcohol by the barrel at a time when gasoline was expensive to import. The practice was to start the tractors with gasoline (which cost 40 to 50 cents per gallon) and then run them on alcohol (at 5 cents per gallon) for the rest of the day. When the tractors were to be idled over a weekend or between harvests, a little gasoline was injected into the cylinders to minimize corrosion. In 1931 the Brazilian government followed the French example and required alcohol mixtures in five percent of imported oil; blending continued sporadically through the 1950s. When the oil price shocks hit Brazil in the 1970s, the relatively recent technological expertise with alcohol fuel blends was a factor in that nation's adoption of an extensive alcohol fuels program.

Alcohol use in fuel dropped by 25 percent in 1937 as Europe shifted gears and prepared for war. Crop failures in 1938 and 1939 eliminated surpluses and, temporarily, the need for an alcohol fuels program for farmers. With the outbreak of World War II, virtually all industrial alcohol production shifted to ammunition, and crop surpluses disappeared for a decade.

U.S. Commercial Alcohol Fuels Programs

Alcohol blended fuel was adopted in isolated instances in America during the 1920s and early 1930s. One World War I era American blend was "Alcogas." Little is known about it, although a photo of a service station at an unknown location survives and references to Alcogas are found in the technical literature. Another 1920s blend was made from potatoes. The alcohol was distilled in Spokane and the blended fuel, called "Vegaline," was widely sold in Idaho and Washington state. "There was no apparent difference in the operation of the vehicle whether it was fueled by the Standard Oil pump or the Vegaline pump," said Ralph Curtis, a Washington resident. Curtis' great-grandfather was an enthusiastic investor in Vegaline. "He would tell us that by adding this alcohol to gasoline that the farmers of our area would benefit. His theory was that production of the alcohol would not be limited to cull potatoes but [could include] other unmarketable fruits and vegetables." The Vegaline plant was caught up in the great depression of 1929 and closed its doors.

An apparently formative experience for the oil industry was Standard Oil's attempt to market a 10 percent alcohol blend in Baltimore for a few months in 1923. At the time, industrial alcohol from molasses was selling for less than 20 cents per gallon, while retail gasoline prices had reached an all-time high of 28 cents per gallon. But "difficulties" stopped the experiment, according to a cryptic 1933 internal memo of the American Petroleum Institute's "Special Technical Committee" on alcohol fuels. The memo did not refer to Standard itself, but said that a major company had experienced the difficulties. A 1939 publication would later identify Standard as the company in question. All that is known about the difficulties is that they were "largely were of a marketing and car operating nature and resulted from the instability of the alcohol-gasoline in the presence of water." Standard apparently did not clean out its fuel storage tanks and viewed the resulting "problem" as a difficulty inherent in using the fuel rather than in the fuel handling system. Standard did not document the experiment or publicize its results. No reference to it is found in the Baltimore Sun during this period. However, the American Petroleum Institute used this single incident as a technical justification for opposition to alcohol blended fuels in the 1930s.

Alcogas, Vegaline and other sporadic attempts to market an alcohol blended fuel never caught on in the 1920s, due to primarily to economic disadvantages but also to Prohibition and opposition by the oil industry. By the 1930s, with the

country caught in the depths of the Great Depression, new ideas were welcome. Corn prices had dropped from 45 cents per bushel to 10 cents, it was only natural that people in Midwestern business and science would begin thinking about new uses for farm products, and indeed, alcohol fuel turned out to be the most controversial of these proposals. The battle between U.S. farmers and the oil industry in the 1930s over alcohol fuel has been reviewed by Giebelhaus and Bernton but aspects of this tumultuous debate has yet to be fully explored.

Many scientists, businessmen and farmers believed that to make their own fuel would help put people back to work and ease the severe problems of the Depression. Nearly three dozen bills to subsidize alcohol fuel were taken up in eight states in the 1930s. Most of the subsidy proposals involved forgiveness of state sales taxes. Not surprisingly, the incentives had the most support in the central farm states such as Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois and South Dakota. Legislation did pass in Nebraska and South Dakota, but the tax break passed by the Iowa legislature was struck down by the state supreme court. The Nebraska legislature also petitioned the U.S. Congress for a law making 10 percent ethyl alcohol blending mandatory throughout the U.S. This proposal, along with a national tax incentive and other pro-alcohol bills, were defeated in Congress in the 1930s.

The thinking behind these proposals had little to do with energy substitution. Rather, it was "a form of farm relief and not energy relief," said Ralph Hixon, who along with Leo Christensen and others in Iowa State University's chemistry department, had been testing blends of alcohol and gasoline. "We found that it was one of the very best fuels, it gave a performance greater than Ethyl," Hixon said. The Ames chemists worked with local gasoline retailers to put a 10 percent alcohol blend with gasoline on sale in Ames service stations in 1932. The alcohol-gasoline pump at the Square Deal stations operated until the late 1930s, and the blend sold for 17 cents. It was "in competition with Ethyl," which also sold for 17 cents at the same stations. Some 200,000 gallons of Agricultural Blended Motor Fuel were eventually sold in an Iowa campaign in the early 1930s.

Similar efforts, not as well backed up with research and documentation, broke out all over the Midwest. In Lincoln, Nebraska, the University of Nebraska and the Earle Coryell gasoline company marketed several hundred thousand gallons of "Corn Alcohol Gasoline Blend." In Peoria, Illinois, the Illinois Agricultural Association teamed up with Keystone Steel & Wire Co. and Hiram Walker distillery to produce half a million gallons of "HiBall" and "Alcolene" blended fuels. In Yankton, South Dakota, Gurney Oil Co. marketed 200,000 gallons of blended fuel.

After legislative setbacks in 1933, the movement for alcohol fuels then came to be seen as part of a broader campaign for industrial uses for farm crops to help fight the Depression. It was called "farm chemurgy," and it was, in part, a populist Republican alternative to Democratic President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's agricultural policies. Henry Ford backed the idea by sponsoring a conference at Dearborn, Mich. in 1935. The conference created the National Farm Chemurgic Council, and annual conferences followed.

Another key supporter of the farm chemurgy concept was the Chemical Foundation, quasi-federal agency which administered German patent royalties as part of reparations for World War I. The Chemical Foundation, with Ford's blessing, decided in 1936 to finance an experimental alcohol manufacturing and blending program in the Midwest. The chemurgy movement, with alcohol fuel as a controversial centerpiece, had far outstripping original legislative proposals and had grown into an unprecedented mixture of agronomy, chemistry and Prairie Populism. Many felt that the time had come to compete directly with the oil industry. By 1937 motorists from Indiana to South Dakota were urged to use Agrol, an ethyl alcohol blend with gasoline. Two types were available — Agrol 5, with five to seven percent alcohol, and Agrol 10, with twelve and a half to 17 and a half percent alcohol. "Try a tank full — you'll be thankful," the Agrol brochures said. The blend was sold to high initial enthusiasm at 2,000 service stations. However, Agrol plant managers complained of sabotage and bitter infighting by the oil industry, and market prices were also a major influence. Although Agrol sold for the same price as its "main competitor," leaded gasoline, it cost wholesalers and retailers an extra penny to handle it and cut into their profit "spread," Business Week said. "Novelty appeal plus ballyhoo provided sufficient increase in gallonage to offset the difference in spread. Now jobbers and dealers, having done their share, are again plugging the old house brands with four and a half cent spreads. Agrol is in the last pump — for those who want it."

By 1939, the Atchison Agrol plant closed its doors, not in bankruptcy, but without viable markets to continue. The experiment had failed, but it was not the end of the story. As war broke out two years later, California assembly considered a motion to create an auxiliary fuel from surplus fruits and vegetables. President Franklin Roosevelt wrote the speaker of the assembly and said:

While it is true that a number of foreign countries process agricultural materials for the production of alcohol as a motor fuel, it is equally true that the motor fuel economy of countries possessing no petroleum resources is very different from such economy in the United States. It has never been established in this country that the

conversion of agricultural products into motor fuel is economically feasible or necessary for national defense. On the other hand, it has been recognized for a long time that a real need exists in this country for the development of all the information possible on this very contentious subject..."

Roosevelt's intense political feud with the Republican forces who backed chemurgy, and especially with Sen. Guy Gillette over the Supreme Court issue in the late 1930s, would have led him to oppose virtually anything that the Midwestern Republicans advanced, but Roosevelt's judgment was premature. Several months later, as war industry plans were accelerated, the need for alcohol became apparent. Within two years, chemists and agricultural engineers from Midwestern universities who had tried their alcohol production ideas at the Agrol plant would be mass producing enormous quantities of ethyl alcohol for synthetic "Buna-S" rubber and for aviation fuel. From a pre-war peak production of 100 million gallons of alcohol per year, well over 600 million gallons of new capacity was created. The alcohol based system which in 1942 seemed capable of providing only one-third of the raw materials for the total synthetic rubber demand ended up supplying three quarters and making a significant impact on the war effort. The Agrol experience had clearly helped pave the way for this war effort, in terms of providing trained personnel, novel techniques and a history of mistakes to avoid. The resilience and flexibility of agricultural systems was well demonstrated, the chemists believed, because petroleum based synthetic rubber technologies owned by Standard and the German chemical company I.G. Farben had faltered at the critical moment. Without the previous experience in alcohol fuels production in the 1930s, the war effort might have been considerably delayed.

The Agrol experiences and the mass production of alcohol for war industries were also recalled in the 1970s, when the conventional wisdom recognized only coal and nuclear power as alternatives to embargoed Middle Eastern oil. In contrast, it was clear at the end of World War II that eventually U.S. oil reserves would be depleted. According to the U.S. Tariff Commission in 1944:

When a certain point in costs has been reached, several methods of meeting the situation will be available: These include: increased importation of petroleum; more complete recovery of domestic petroleum from the ground by various so-called secondary methods; conversion of natural gas into gasoline; extraction of oil from shale; synthesis of oil from coal; domestic production of alcohol from vegetable materials; and foreign production of such alcohol.

Oil Industry Opposition to Ethyl Alcohol Fuel

The onset of interest in alcohol fuel in 1933 caught the oil industry off guard, but once alarmed, it reacted swiftly. The American Petroleum Institute urged formation of state level "emergency committees" in the spring of 1933 to oppose proposals for tax incentives. In a set of memos sent under a red cover marked "IMPORTANT," API introduced a "coordinated program to be connected throughout the industry" to combat alcohol gasoline blending. The memo explained the threat: compulsory blend of alcohol and gasoline, as was used in France, Italy and Germany in the 1920s and early 30s, "will harm the petroleum industry and the automobile industry as well as state and national treasuries by reducing [oil] consumption," the memo said. The only ones to benefit would be distillers, railroads (which would transport the alcohol) and bootleggers "to whom would be opened brand new fields of fraud."

API's campaign was waged across many states, especially the Midwest, in the spring of 1933, and at the federal level for most of the 1930s. Technical experts in the oil industry claimed that alcohol fuel blends "are definitely inferior to gasoline alone from every angle of motor performance." Editorials by Lowell Thomas and other radio announcers paid for by oil industry sponsors claimed that alcohol fuel would make "speakeasies" out of gasoline stations because bootleggers could easily separate out the gasoline and sell the alcohol. Thomas said: "The automobile manufacturer resents it [alcohol] because it interferes with the horsepower of the motorists car, requires extensive carburetor changes and presents other difficulties..." (In fact, this might be true of pure alcohol but not alcohol blends with gasoline). Thomas' radio address was recorded in a cable sent from Sun Oil Co.'s J. Howard Pew to H.D. Collier, president of Standard Oil Co. of California, on April 26, 1933. "Confirming telephone conversation reference alcohol blend our radio announcement was as follows quote..." When an apparently large number of critical telegrams poured in, Sun took pains to distance Thomas from "our radio announcement," even writing a "suggested reply to Congressman Dirksen" in which Thomas was to say "This is news and not propaganda, which I myself nor my sponsors would for a moment tolerate over the air." The suggested reply was unsigned but written on stationary clearly showing the Sunoco watermark. It was not clear whether Thomas actually sent the suggested reply.

Other tactics involved private investigations of politicians and businessmen who supported alcohol blends. Sun Oil Co. investigated the private lives of the directors of Keystone Steel and Wire Co. and others.¹⁵³ Then-Congressman Everett Dirksen, who supported Keystone, wrote constituents that he was being investigated by unknown people. "Here you have

the proof of how the insidious oil lobby works in order to defeat any measure or any individual who opposes their interests," Dirksen said.

Officials from Standard Oil of Indiana and the Ethyl Corp. exchanged worried letters about the outbreak of interest in alcohol blends in the winter of 1933. Standard's chief lawyer wrote Ethyl president Earle Webb: "Much publicity has gone through the state to the effect that alcohol mixed with gasoline makes a motor fuel high in anti-knock rating and the move has been to require gasoline to contain a high percentage of alcohol (manufactured locally, of course) or pay a high state tax. Manifestly this would materially interfere with the use of Ethyl in Iowa... Let me know what you are doing or intend to do, and to what extent we can cooperate." Webb wrote back: "I entirely agree that proposed legislation of this character is apt to have a serious termination and that almost anything may happen where there is so much discontent. We would very much appreciate being kept informed as to developments." By April, 1933, Standard was apparently worried about anti-trust laws, and wired Ethyl: "Believe absolutely necessary Ethyl Gasoline Corp. avoid any public opposition or any such direct action."

Also in the 1930s, as Ethyl's marketing power grew, the company began to enforce what it considered to be "business ethics" on the market. Ethyl refused to grant dealer contracts to certain gasoline wholesalers, and often provided no formal explanation for their actions. The exclusion of "unethical" businessmen was especially aimed at those who cut prices, but it was a means of excluding from the entire fuel market any wholesaler who adopted practices which the oil industry disliked. Since wholesalers had to carry a wide range of products to survive, and since advertising had created enormous consumer demand for Ethyl, to be denied an Ethyl contract was in effect to be forced out of business. Most wholesalers could not or would not tell the Federal Bureau of Investigation why Ethyl would consider them unethical, but at least one wholesaler, the Earl Coryell company of Lincoln, Nebraska, blended ethyl alcohol about the same time that it could not get an Ethyl license. Pressure to stick with Ethyl led gasoline exclusively rather than try alcohol fuel blends would have been quite strong with this enforcement mechanism at the oil industry's disposal, but it is difficult to estimate how many gasoline dealers wanted to use alcohol instead of lead. In 1940 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld an anti-trust verdict against Ethyl, but by then, the Midwestern alcohol fuel movement had disintegrated.

Clearly, the tactics used by the oil industry involved more than simple marketplace competition and public relations in response to the prospect of legislative controls. Yet economic issues and assumptions are at the heart of the dispute and deserve careful consideration.

Economics of Alcohol Fuel

Alcohol fuel has never been economically attractive as a straight gallon for gallon substitute for gasoline. When alcohol fuel returned to the American market in 1907 at a retail price of 32 cents per gallon, it was competing with gasoline at 18 to 22 cents per gallon. This roughly one-third advantage has been the rule for most of the 20th century in the U.S. In 1933, grain alcohol cost 25 cents per gallon wholesale as opposed to gasoline at 10 to 13 cents per gallon wholesale. Despite attempts to make alcohol from cheaper materials (such as wood waste and cellulose), the cost differential has been the most serious obstacle to the widespread use of alcohol fuel and, according to some historians, the primary focus of most oil industry resistance to its use.

Modern researchers have noted that the value of alcohol as a fuel depends on whether it is considered a gasoline substitute or an octane enhancer. "If refiners turn to using alcohols as octane enhancers as lead phase down occurs, there may be sufficient demand to warrant the capital outlay required for production facilities, in which case the market value of alcohol fuels would become much greater," according to the Canadian Energy Research Institute.

Although T.A. Boyd and Thomas Midgley of Ethyl found ethyl alcohol to be a good anti-knock additive in 1922, it was not until 1933 that studies at Iowa State University publicly quantified the quality and economic comparisons between ethyl alcohol and Ethyl lead. Hixon and others concluded that it took 15 percent alcohol to create the octane boost of 3 grams of lead, as seen in the table below. Since Ethyl lead sold at a 3 cent premium over regular gasoline, the question was whether ethyl alcohol blends, with the same anti-knock / octane advantage, should not be sold at the same premium price. Proponents of alcohol blended fuels insisted that this — and not the "extender" use of alcohol — was the proper basis of comparison.

Table I: How Agriculture Compared Ethyl Leaded Gasoline and Ethyl Alcohol

<u>Fuel</u>	<u>Octane Number</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Wholesale Price*</u>
Base fuel	56	—	10
Base fuel plus 3 grams lead	68	12	13
Base fuel plus 10 % ethyl alcohol	65	9	11.5**
Base fuel plus 20 % ethyl alcohol	80	24	13**

*Wholesale price; assumes 25 cents per gallon for ethyl alcohol and 10 cents per gallon for gasoline purchased from jobber in Midwest.

**Note substitution of base fuel with 10 percent ethyl alcohol means 9 cents worth of gasoline added to 2.5 cents worth of alcohol. Substitution of 20 percent ethyl alcohol is 8 cents gasoline + 5 cents alcohol = 13.

Also note: Iowa State included a half-cent per gallon blending charge for the two alcohol blended fuels. Data from: Iowa State College, The Use of Alcohol In Motor Fuels, Progress Report Number III, Divs. of Industrial Science, Engineering, Agriculture; Jan. 20, 1933. Also: Rayburn D. Tousley, "The Economics of Industrial Alcohol," Washington State Univ., 1945.

The oil industry did not use the same economic yardsticks in comparing the costs of alcohol fuel blends, although they did incorporate the same half cent per gallon blending charge used by the Iowa State researchers. According to one pamphlet, alcohol cost five to ten times more than gasoline, depending on the price of corn, and had technical problems. "Seeing that alcohol fuels cannot compete with gasoline on a price or quality basis ... huge sums of money [are] now being spent on a nationwide propaganda campaign to convince the American people that alcohol gasoline would bring permanent prosperity to farmers." The "Alky-Gas" scheme "robs Peter to pay Paul," that is, it takes money from motorists to pay for farm relief. It would be cheaper just to pay farmers to burn their corn.

Table II: How the Oil Industry Saw Alcohol Fuel Economics

<u>Fuel</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Total cost gasoline one gallon	13.5 cents
Compared with:	
Base gasoline 9/10 gal.	12.1 cents
Ethyl alcohol 1/10 gal (at 39.3 cents/gallon)	3.9 cents
Total cost 10 % alcohol-gasoline blend	16 cents

Notes: All prices before taxes. Source "Who would Pay for Corn Alcohol?" Iowa Petroleum Commission pamphlet, 1935, American Petroleum Institute library, Washington, D.C.

Perhaps the most extreme example of the oil industry's argument is illustrated by a letter from Joseph Pew of Sun Oil Co. to an alcohol fuels proponent. Pew said that alcohol had 60 percent the BTU value of gasoline, and it would only be worth 60 percent of the value of gasoline. To a refinery, gasoline was worth only 6 cents per gallon. Thus, alcohol would have to cost only 3.6 cents per gallon to compete with gasoline, and even then there would still be the expense of having it transported to the refinery. "I figure it isn't worth more than a cent" per gallon, Pew said.

The differences in these economic assumptions demonstrate that the debate over alcohol fuel that broke out in the Midwest in the 1930s depended greatly on the viewpoint of the company or individual. In essence, political conditions shaped the marketplace and the new competition faced a difficult economic playing field heavily tilted toward established industries.

Conclusion

Alcohol fuels as anti-knock blending agents were well known long before tetraethyl lead was discovered in 1921, and their technical qualities had been well characterized by scientists in the U.S. and in Europe by 1925. The experience in other nations with alcohol blended fuels was usually (although not universally) quite positive. Practical techniques were well

known to overcome most problems with alcohol as a pure fuel or in blends with gasoline. Fuel blends were economically successful in countries where oil was more expensive or where independence in fuel supply was seen as a political or strategic problem.

Alcohol fuels advocacy among American farmers was present in the 1906 - 1908 period and again in the 1930s. Scientists and engineers in the U.S. and Europe ranged from neutral to enthusiastic about the clean burning, high compression characteristics of alcohol fuel, yet the U.S. oil industry claimed it was technically inferior. Charles Kettering and his General Motors researchers were particularly interested in alcohol from cellulose in the 1919 - 1925 time frame, and saw Ethyl leaded gasoline as paving the way for the "fuel of the future" by providing a temporary octane boost and allowing engine compression ratios to increase. In 1924, however, G.M. allied itself with Standard Oil, creating the Ethyl Corp. Shortly afterwards, G.M. researchers contradicted years of their own research and hundreds of other studies by claiming that only tetra ethyl lead could produce anti-knock results.

If there is an historical lesson to learn from the "fuel of the future," it is that technology is often political. In this case, fuel technology developed in a direction that was a matter of policy choice and not predetermined by any clear advantage of one technology over another. For different reasons, Henry Ford and Charles Kettering both saw the fuel of the future as a blend of ethyl alcohol and gasoline leading to pure alcohol from cellulose. A dedicated agrarian, Ford thought new markets for fuel feedstocks would help create a rural renaissance. On the other hand, Kettering, as a scientist, was worried about the long term problem of the automotive industry's need for oil, a resource with rapidly declining domestic reserves. Clearly, the shortage of domestic oil that was feared in the 1920s has occurred in the late 20th century, although it has hardly been noticed because of the abundance of foreign oil. Whether the oil substitute envisioned by the scientists and agrarians of the first half of the century would be appropriate in the latter half remains an open question.

"Many years may be necessary before the actual development of such a [fuel] substitute," Kettering concluded. There was always the possibility, according to Kettering's friend Charles Stewart Mott, "that if a time ever came when the sources of [fossil] heat and energy were ever used up... that there would always be available the capturing of... energy from the sun... through agricultural products..."

20110426-02	11:56	Ben	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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Dear SteveB,

I don't do "Mail this to twenty of your friends" stuff. It's usually cr*p. But I agree this time that having this stuff in one's head is a first step to achieving it, unlikely as it ever may be.

My brother Mike sent me this. I have sanitized the headers by copying and pasting the message into a new mail, and submit it as a pretty sane set of ideas—none new, but a nice collection.

I cannot help but add comments, though.

In answer to his question—"Is this possible?"—sure, it's possible. I give it about a 3% chance. Maybe less. Like it or not, a majority of both houses would have to PASS it before it could become law.

I'd add:

9. Law degree exempts those seeking office from eligibility to server in the Congress of the United States of America but that's probably wishing for too much. I grant that someone who has studied law might have lots to contribute in writing it, but the concentration of lawyers in Congress also institutes a powerful and non-representative lobby, inherently. No occupation or philosophy should dominate Congress intrinsically.

Personally, I'd also be happy to change 6 to read:

6. The congressional health care system shall be made available to all citizens.

or

6. The congressional health care system shall be Medicare, with the same benefits afforded current Medicare-eligible citizens. Medicare will be made available at cost to U.S. citizens as an alternative to private for-profit

carriers. Children (under 21) whose citizen parents do not have insurance are covered by Medicare until they reach majority.

Still wishing for too much. (I'd LOVE to see those congresspersons trying to figure out their prescription drug benefits...) (There is no need to comment on my comments; I leave Mike's list, below, unchanged.)

So we will leave it as it is. If we were to get what's already on the list, it would be huge.

from MikeT, Apr. 26, 2011:

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Please consider forwarding, if you agree. I have cleaned this e-mail of all other names, sending it to you in hopes that you will keep it going and keep it clean. This is something I believe in and I hope you all read it all the way through.

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971...before computers, before e-mail, before cell phones, etc. Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took 1 year or less to become the law of the land...all because of public pressure

I'm asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011

1. Term Limits. 12 years only. One of the following:

- A. Two six-year Senate terms.
- B. Six two-year House terms.
- C. One six-year Senate term and three Two-Year House terms.

[I believe this should apply to the President also. It's only fair. So a President could serve three four-year terms. —SteveB]

2. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.

3. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people.

4. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.

5. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.

6. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.

7. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.

8. All contracts with past and present Congressmen are void effective 1/1/11. The American people did not make these contracts with Congressmen. Congressmen made all these contracts for themselves.

[I guess I have to admit to not knowing [what contracts they're so worried about here that they want to etch them into the bleeding Constitution. Lobbying contracts? Contracts for crony companies? Contracts with the U.S. government? What about Fred Thompson's laxative or whatever-they-are commercials—Scooters? Penn Life? Life Alert? Are they saying he couldn't do that anymore? Why not? —SteveB]

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Maybe it is time. LET'S FIX CONGRESS!!!! If you agree, pass it on. If not, just delete. You are one of my 20+. Please keep it going.

20110426-03	15:28	SteveB	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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Dear Ben,

Well...I'm not against term limits. If it's fair for the President, it should be fair for the legislature, though there is a fairly long learning curve to becoming a good legislator. But, since you're going to have to amend the Constitution, why not get creative?

Maybe the President and all legislators should simply be elected to one and only one seven year term (staggered for Congress). Then no time would be wasted trying to get reelected. There would be less opportunity for "big money" to corrupt the process with huge campaign contributions requiring pay-back.

But, while we're at it, I think there are several more Constitutional amendments that would make me more comfortable and the country better and safer (in no particular order):

1. The Right to Privacy should be spelled out so that it can never be taken away by some future Supreme Court. But there should be a rock-solid national identification card for all citizens and rock-solid green cards for legal immigrants for people to be able to access government services of all kinds, including education, welfare, healthcare, and voting.
2. The separation of church and state should be embedded in an amendment.
3. The right of being "innocent until proven guilty" should be in there.
4. Any and all campaign contributions, given in any way, greater than \$100 (adjusted for inflation) should be illegal.
5. No CEO, chairman, or officer should be able to make more than 100 times what is paid to the lowest-paid employee of the company.
6. Unions need a guarantee of the right to exist, organize and negotiate. Any alternative is a form of slavery. If corporations are people, so are unions, and cannot be aborted.
7. No employer can hire illegal immigrants or they face stiff penalties. And no illegal immigrants or tourists have the right to any government benefits, nor do they have the right to give birth to American citizens.
8. Mary Jane should be decriminalized, regulated, and taxed.
9. Except in the direst of emergencies, (probably only in the cases of declared war or severe, years-long recession or depression) federal budgets must be balanced. The printing press must be shut-down. This would be phased-in over a few years.
10. Free trade must be a thing of the past. All foreign goods produced for a lower labor cost and lower environmental protection cost than American-produced goods must have a sales or value added tax imposed upon them at their Point of Sale equal to the difference in these costs. This will create a level playing field and allow American manufacturing to recover. If they want to do the same thing to our exported goods, so be it.
11. Lobbying and the swinging doors between government regulatory agencies and company work must be made illegal.

12. Spell-out the rights of corporations and how they are different than people. (The wording must be designed to give lower status to corporate entities.)

And, though not possible as a Constitutional amendment, we have to do something NOW about the energy and health care crises.

[20110426-04](#) 17:23 Ben Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear SteveB,

I like all your stuff. However, the list is far less likely even than the one I forwarded to you ever to be passed by Congress. What I forwarded probably has a better chance. Very marginally better, but—better.

You are an idealistic old dog. We bark much alike. By the way... shouldn't that be "most dire"???

[20110426-05](#) 17:30 SteveB How to Stop Oil Market Speculation

Another action needed, though not a Constitutional amendment:

To prevent speculators from driving up the cost of oil, food, and other commodities: Anyone who buys a commodity future contract must actually take delivery of that commodity or pay a stiff fine. This way, only legitimate buyers can realistically make purchases. This rule would need to be implemented in all American, then all foreign commodity futures markets.

All legitimate buyers would be 100% for this measure. Sellers will have to take what they can get. Buyers vastly outnumber sellers.

[20110426-06](#) 17:41 Ben Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

from SteveB:

Term limits won't solve our problems. Only campaign finance reform has any chance at all.

Dear SteveB,

I think both have a role to play, if either ever gets a chance...

[20110427-01](#) 07:49 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Ben,

We and many countries have had good government without term limits. No good government can exist anywhere when it can be bought and sold! Term limits or not.

The difference in the helpfulness of the two is night and day. Why waste time with an amendment that doesn't solve the problem? Our problem is corruption. Nothing else.

When are people going to get it? Why else would the Dems and Repubs be so similar in policies actually implemented? They both are owned by the rich!

[20110427-02](#) 09:54 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Ben,

The subject of term limits is a diversionary tactic to sap energy and keep people from demanding the right actions!

You know, I thought Donald Trump was an idiot...talking about Obama not being born in Hawaii, etc. But, this morning, he gave a press conference espousing almost all of my ideas. At least somebody is finally listening. Maybe he can affect the subjects of the dialogue.

20110427-03 18:01 Paula Re: Photos of Trees

Dear SteveB,

Yes, this is all too sad to see the large trees being cut down. We are trying to do our part, at least. When Brent lived in California, we visited Muir Woods frequently. In their gift shop we purchased two baby sequoias that were said to be able to grow back here in Ohio. So we have them, a year later, still surviving and in fact they have doubled in size. In a few years, they are supposed to grow a foot a year. Perhaps our grandchildren will sit under their shade. Being part of Arbor Day Foundation, I receive trees each year. I have been pretty lucky with their growth and have 8 dogwood (one is now 15 feet tall), two redbud probably almost 20 feet tall, two pear trees, and a chestnut all getting quite big. As part of earth day in 1990, two of our kids planted Douglas fir saplings. These trees are now two stories tall. We have planted trees at church, in local parks, and at a community college near us. (since the twins birthday is also Earth Day, they are extra fond of this) We still have the four pin oaks which were here when we moved in. they are over 200 feet tall, we have them deep root fertilized and trimmed regularly (the last time an Amish family did it and it was quite a sight as they used many ropes) I have 30 saplings in the ground now ready to be transplanted. We gave my sister a beautiful magnolia in memory of her son... Trees have always been very dear to me. As a child we had a great tree fort in our cherry tree, and spent hours in it. Also I once thought there were more people than trees.... hopefully that will not be a reality.

Thanks for reminding us about trees, and we should all respect them. Only using what we really need whenever possible.

20110428-01 19:49 Dick Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says the 3rd paragraph is false.
(<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/studentloans.asp>) —SteveB]

No one has been able to explain to me why young men and women serve in the U.S. Military for 20 years, risking their lives protecting freedom, and only get 50% of their pay. While Politicians hold their political positions in the safe confines of the capital, protected by these same men and women, and receive full pay retirement after serving one term.

It just does not make any sense.

Monday on Fox News, we learned that the staffers of Congress family members are exempt from having to pay back student loans. This will get national attention if other news networks will broadcast it. When you add this to the below, just where will all of it stop? 35 States file lawsuit against the Federal Government Governors of 35 states have filed suit against the Federal Government for imposing unlawful burdens upon them.

It only takes 38 (of the 50) States to convene a Constitutional Convention. [But, below, it's a bill that seems to be proposed and maybe a simple bill would work, at least for most of this. It's just that it could be repealed in the future. — SBaker]

This will take less than thirty seconds to read. If you agree, please pass it on. This is an idea that we should address.

For too long we have been too complacent about the workings of Congress. Many citizens had no idea that members of Congress could retire with the same pay after only one term, that they specifically exempted themselves from many of the laws they have passed (such as being exempt from any fear of prosecution for sexual harassment) while ordinary citizens must live under those laws. The latest is to exempt themselves from the Health care Reform... in all of its forms. Somehow, that doesn't seem logical. We do not have an elite that is above the law.. I truly don't care if they are Democrat, Republican, Independent or whatever. The self-serving must stop.

If each person that receives this will forward it on to 20 people, in three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message.. This is one proposal that really should be passed around.

Proposed 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States."

You are one of my 20+

[20110430-01](#) 11:18 SteveB Re: Photos of Trees

Dear Paula,

So happy to hear you guys still love trees! Bolivia still has many giants, though not as many as it should. There are also so many trees that flower. There are incredible, gaudy flowering trees all year round. Here in Florida, I love the huge southern/live oaks and the odiferous magnolias, now blooming.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20110503-01](#) 10:45 B. Miller Friends of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Blog

Dear SteveB:

Looking for an easy way to make sense of what's coming out of Washington and what it means to you? Since the launch of the new Friends of the U.S. Chamber site, we've been providing daily updates on all of the pressing issues on Capitol Hill and how they relate to one central theme: JOBS.

As part of this effort, we are now rolling out the 'What We're Watching Blog'—with expanded information on top news from Washington, what members of Congress are saying behind closed doors, and how you can be a part of the debate.

<http://www.friendsoftheuschamber.com/blog/>

We know that you're busy in your own community—which is why we're working to deliver the news that you want, when you want it—online. Make the What We're Watching Blog part of your daily routine by adding us to your RSS reader below or stopping by the Friends homepage. If you like what you see—share the news online on Facebook and Twitter.

Thanks for continuing to tune in. We'd love to hear your thoughts on the new features. Submit your comments online or feel free to email us at friends@uschamber.com.

Sincerely, Bill Miller, Sr. VP and National Political Director U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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[20110506-01](#) 06:13 SteveB "U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"

Taxes vs. jobs...

Gee, see the headline today from *USA Today* (below). No one can legitimately complain that tax rates in the U.S. are too high. No one!

Yet, though some jobs continue to be created, "official" unemployment ("real" or "effective" unemployment is much higher) has risen to 9%, after some modest declines.

Where is the job-creating investment in America that low taxes, especially on big corporations and the rich, was supposed to generate?

It may well be the Republican mantra that low taxes create investment and jobs, but that dogma has been disproven completely in the span of time since the Bush tax cuts.

No one likes paying taxes. America has many serious problems.

But excessive taxes is certainly not one of them!

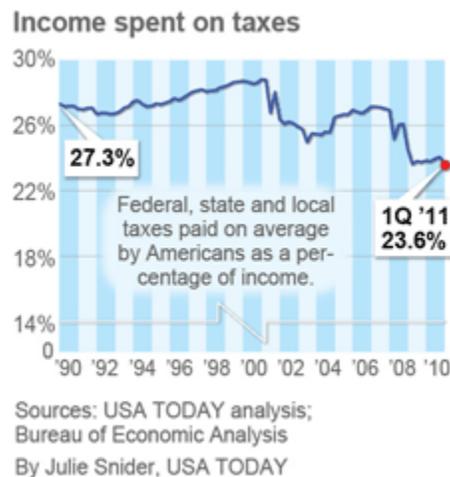
Instead, the current tax structure, combined with free trade (as even the idiot, Donald Trump, knows), and politicians who have sold our great country and its people down the river for huge campaign contributions from the rich and powerful...these are things that are killing us. This should be crystal clear to anyone.

If low taxes created prosperity, then we would be in China's shoes right now, enjoying too much growth...too many jobs. Clearly, we are not!

"U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958" by Dennis Cauchon, USA TODAY

May 6, 2011, (http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/taxes/2011-05-05-tax-cut-record-low_n.htm)

Americans are paying the smallest share of their income for taxes since 1958, a reflection of tax cuts and a weak economy, a USA TODAY analysis finds.



The total tax burden—for all federal, state and local taxes—dropped to 23.6% of income in the first quarter, according to Bureau of Economic Analysis data.

By contrast, individuals spent roughly 27% of income on taxes in the 1970s, 1980s and the 1990s—a rate that would mean \$500 billion of extra taxes annually today, one-third of the estimated \$1.5 trillion federal deficit this year.

The analysis comes as President Obama and Congress debate whether to cut federal spending, raise taxes or both.

The latest dip in the tax burden came from a Social Security tax cut included in a December budget deal between Democrats and Republicans. It will reduce taxes \$100 billion this year.

"We have a 1950's level of taxation and a 21st-century-sized government," says Robert Bixby, executive director of the Concord Coalition, a deficit-reduction advocacy group.

The fall in taxes is almost entirely caused by a weak economy rather than lower rates, says Curtis Dubay of the conservative Heritage Foundation. "It's easy to draw the wrong conclusion," he says.

Federal, state and local government spending hit a \$5.6 trillion annual rate in the first quarter. That's the highest ever but, as a share of the economy, slightly below last year.

USA TODAY examined the full range of taxes that individuals pay to all levels of government. That includes income taxes for Medicare, property taxes for schools and gas taxes for roads.

At the national average, a person with an income of \$100,000 would pay \$23,600 in taxes today vs. \$28,700 in 2000 and \$27,300 in 1990.

The recession of 2001 and tax cuts championed by President Bush started a decade-long trend of taxing less income. The 2007-09 recession and new tax cuts in Obama's stimulus effort accelerated the change.

The one-year Social Security tax cut reduces the worker's rate from 6.2% to 4.2%—or \$2,000 a year on a \$100,000 income.

That has boosted the economy short-term, says Chris Christopher, an economist at the IHS consulting firm. "It's helping absorb the cost of higher gas and food prices," he says.

Other findings:

- Taxes per person: Individuals paid taxes at an annual rate of \$10,549 per person in the first quarter—about the same as individuals have paid since 1990 when adjusted for inflation. Incomes have grown; tax payments haven't.
- Spending per person: Government spent at an annual rate of \$18,086 per person in the first quarter. That's up from \$13,552 in 2001, adjusted for inflation. The difference between individual taxes and spending comes from corporate taxes, user fees and borrowing.

[20110506-02](#) 14:10 SteveG Re: "U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"

Dear SteveB,

I believe that if you compare the size of government, particularly the number of federal employees, versus the national population, the current federal government is smaller than the government of the 1950's.

[20110506-03](#) 17:37 SteveB Re: "U.S. Tax Burden at Lowest Level Since 1958"

Dear SteveG,

I believe you are right!

And, despite a smaller, more efficient government, war and low taxes are what is bankrupting us, not "entitlements"! And people are out of work not because they don't want to work, but because of illegal immigration, free trade, union busting, lack of investment, and, demonstrably, because the jobs simply do not exist anymore.

[20110506-04](#) 19:17 SteveB "CEOs See Pay Rise 24% on Average"

CEO pas vs. jobs...

GREED IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT!

These are the guys creating all those great American jobs...er, I mean...non-existent American jobs:

"CEOs See Pay Rise 24% on Average" by Kim Peterson, MSN Money

May 6, 2011, (<http://money.msn.com/investment-advice/article.aspx?post=fa7d41ef-e781-4192-8769-5575e25f09a6>)

(The top bosses at the nation's largest companies are getting paid more than they were in 2007. Cash bonuses are also increasing.)

The chief executive of CBS (CBS) was paid nearly \$57 million last year. The head of Occidental Petroleum (OXY) made \$76 million. And the top boss at Comcast (CMCSA) took home \$31 million. The recession has clearly faded into ancient history for executives at the largest public companies, who are getting paid more now than in 2007, The Associated Press reports. Using data from a compensation research firm, AP has gathered a list of last year's 50 highest-paid CEOs.

Seven chief executives took home more than \$30 million, including salary, perks, bonuses, stock options and other factors. Viacom (VIA) head Philippe Dauman topped the list, with \$84.5 million in compensation—a 149% gain from the year before. Viacom's stock did well last year, rising 46% to end December at an adjusted close of \$45.72. Viacom owns MTV, Nickelodeon and Paramount Pictures. Not every boss saw that kind of success, however. At Time Warner (TWX), chief executive Jeff Bewkes took home \$26.1 million, a 35% increase, even though the stock price rose only 13% to \$32.03.

A CEO in the Standard & Poor's 500 Index received a \$9 million pay package, on average, last year, AP reported. That's 24% more than in 2009, and much of the gain came in the form of larger cash bonuses.

Executive compensation is tied to a number of factors, such as financial performance. Part of the reason we're seeing CEO pay jump is that profits did as well. In the AP analysis of the companies, profit rose 41% last year.

Another reason pay rose is that the stock market did, too, and CEOs made big money, at least on paper, on the stocks and options they received over the past few years.

These pay levels are almost always set with zero input from many shareholders. That's because some of the biggest shareholders are institutional investors and they generally don't put up much fuss about CEO pay.

New government regulations now require that shareholders vote at least once every three years on CEO pay. The votes aren't binding and don't mean much, but at least pay levels will be a bigger part of the discussion.

Here are the 15 highest-paid CEOs, according to AP:

Philippe Dauman of Viacom	\$84.5 million	up 149%.
Ray Irani of Occidental Petroleum	\$76.1 million	up 142%.
Leslie Moonves of CBS	\$56.9 million	up 32%.
David Zaslav of Discovery Communications (DISCA)	\$42.6 million	up 265%.
Richard Adkerson of Freeport McMoran Copper Gold(FCX)	\$35.3 million	up 76%.
John Lundgren of Stanley Black & Decker (SWK)	\$132.6 million	up 253%.
Brian Roberts of Comcast	\$31 million	up 14%.
Robert Iger of Walt Disney (DIS)	\$28 million	up 30%.
Alan Mulally of Ford Motor (F)	\$26.5 million	up 48%.
Jeff Bewkes of Time Warner	\$26.1 million	up 35%.

20110506-05 22:33 Jim "Too Many Federal Workers?"

There is another factor. Look at the per cent of the total population that is working for the federal government. This adds a column with the U.S. population then your worker figure and then the percent of population working for federal government. It did about double from 1940 to 1970 but has been declining since. This is not the same as percent of total employment, but for many government services the number of clients served per worker appears to be going up in that fewer workers served more people.

"Too Many Federal Workers?" by Allan Holmes, NextGov

Sept. 7, 2010, (http://wiredworkplace.nextgov.com/2010/09/too_many_federal_workers.php)

Over the weekend, Amity Shlaes, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in The Wall Street Journal about the differences between private and public sector workers. She sketches out the history of unions in the federal government and what she concludes as a rather obvious point: If we just had fewer government workers, we would spend less on paying them.

She writes:

Another factor leading to the rise of the public unions is the decade-over-decade increase in the size of government. Not only through the New Deal, but also through the 1950s and onward the number of workers in the public sector grew. By 1962 they represented an eighth of the national work force. If we did not have so many government employees today, the cost of sustaining them would not be so high.

Here is the number of federal employees by decade (in millions and excluding U.S. Postal workers), as listed by the Office of Personnel Management:

<u>Year</u>	<u>U.S. Population</u>	<u>#Fed. Employees</u>	<u>Employees/Population</u>
1940	132 million	0.70 million	0.530%
1950	152 million	1.44 million	0.946%
1960	181 million	1.81 million	1.002%
1970	205 million	2.20 million	1.073%
1980	227 million	2.16 million	0.951%
1990	249 million	2.25 million	0.902%
2000	281 million	1.78 million	0.633%
2010	309 million	2.10 million	0.680%

There were fewer federal workers in 2009 than in 1990, 1980 and 1970. Now take a closer look at the OPM table. Much of the growth, understandably, occurred in Homeland Security agencies, increasing from 70,000 to 180,000—a jump of 110,000. Justice Department jobs went from 98,000 to 113,000—more than 15,000 new jobs added. (Again, crime and more Homeland Security related.) Jobs at the Veterans Department increased from 220,000 to 297,000—that's 77,000 more federal workers. Again, a result of Homeland Security, or rather staffing up to take care of thousands of veterans coming home from two wars. And there's a lot of information technology jobs in there.

So, taking those three areas, the number of new jobs created in the last 10 years, which can be traced back to 9/11, was 202,000. That by itself accounts for nearly two-thirds of the total federal workforce growth from 2000 to 2009, which was 316,000 jobs. Hold those steady since 2002 (or even allow for some growth), and you would have less than 1.9 million workers in 2009, or slightly more. That's about the same number of federal workers in 1962, the year Shlaes chooses as her benchmark to compare the number of government jobs to the number in the private sector (with public sector jobs accounting for an eighth of all jobs). Remember, that was before the Great Society programs geared up, popular programs that needed a slew of federal managers and clerks to oversee.

By the way, the number of jobs at the Interior, Transportation and Treasury departments fell from 2000 to 2009. And those at Health and Human Services, Education and the Social Security Administration grew from 1.26 million to 1.39 million—130,000 jobs over 10 years, or about 13,000 new positions a year as the health industry expanded at a torrid pace.

It helps to understand what tax dollars are paying for so that people have some perspective of what they are buying—as in this case homeland security and wars. After 9/11, the public was demanding the federal government do something. It did—and it took people to manage it. That puts much of the criticism leveled at the federal government into perspective.

20110507-01	03:16	Charis	"We Did Something Wrong"
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Dear SteveB,

Speaking of envy and guilt trips...

These folks are just soooooo illuminating. Even when, maybe especially when, I think I understand some event, I read their analysis and realize that I hadn't really got it, at all... things are so seldom as simple as they appear in the news...

"We Did Something Wrong" by Óscar Arias, President of Costa Rica

Apr. 18, 2009, Speech at the Summit of the Americas, Trinidad and Tobago, (<http://www.boliviabella.com/we-did-something-wrong-speech-by-oscar-arias-president-of-costa-rica.html>)

I'm under the impression that every time Caribbean and Latin American countries meet with the President of the United States of America it's to ask for something or complain about things. Almost always it's to blame the United States for our past, present and future problems. I don't think that's completely fair.

We mustn't forget that Latin America had universities before the United States created Harvard or William & Mary, which were the first universities in that country. We can't forget that on this continent, as well as the world over, at least until 1750 all Americans were more or less equal: all were poor.

When the Industrial Revolution began in England other countries jumped on the bandwagon: Germany, France, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. And the Industrial Revolution passed over Latin America like a comet and we didn't even realize it. We certainly lost our opportunity.

There is a very great difference. If one reads the history of Latin America and compares it to the history of the United States, one understands that Latin America did not have a Spanish or Portuguese John Winthrop who, with Bible in hand, was willing to build "a city on a hill", a city that would shine, as was the objective of the pilgrims who arrived in the United States.

50 years ago Mexico was richer than Portugal. In 1950 a country like Brazil had a higher income per capita than South Korea. 60 years ago Honduras had more wealth per capital than Singapore and today Singapore, over a period of about 35-40 years, has increased its annual income per capita to \$40,000 per inhabitant. Well, Latin Americans did something wrong.

What did we do wrong? I can't count the things we've done wrong. To begin with, we have an average of 7 years of education. That's the average education level in Latin America and that is not the case with most Asian countries. Certainly that is not the case with the United States and Canada, which have the best education in the world, similar to that of Europeans. Of every 10 students who enter high school in Latin America, in some countries only 1 completes high school. There are countries that have an infant mortality rate of 50 per 1000, when the average in more advanced Asian countries is 8, 9, or 10.

In our countries taxes cover about 12% of the gross national product and it isn't anyone's responsibility other than ours that we don't charge more to the wealthiest people in our countries. No one is at fault for that except us.

In 1950 every North American citizen was four times wealthier than a Latin American citizen. Today a North American citizen is 10, 15 or 20 times wealthier than a Latin American. That is not the United States' fault. That is our fault.

During my speech this morning I mentioned something that I find grotesque and that only goes to show that the 20th Century value system, which seems to be the one we are putting into practice in the 21st Century too, is a mistaken value system. Because it can't be possible that the wealthy countries of the world dedicate 100 billion dollars to fight poverty throughout 80% of the world's population on a planet that has 2.5 billion human being who earn \$2 a day, and they spend 13 times that (1 quadrillion, 300 million) on weapons and soldiers.

As I said this morning, it cannot be that Latin America spends 50 billion dollars on weapons and soldiers. I ask myself: who is our enemy? Our enemy, President Correa, is the inequality which you so correctly mention. It is lack of education. It is illiteracy. It is that we don't spend on our population's health. We don't create the necessary infrastructure: roads, highways, ports and airports. It is that we are not dedicating the necessary resources to stop the environmental degradation. It is the inequality we have that is really shameful. It is a product, among other things of course, of the fact that we are not educating our sons and daughters.

One goes to a Latin American university and it seems we are still in the sixties, seventies or eighties. It seems we've forgotten that on 9 November 1989 something very important happened: the Berlin Wall fell and the world changed. We have to accept that this is a different world and as to that, frankly, I think academics and all people of reason, all economists, all historians, almost all will agree that the 21st century belongs to the Asians, not to Latin Americans. And I, unfortunately, agree with them.

Because while we continue arguing about ideologies, while we continue arguing about "isms" (which is better, capitalism, socialism, communism, liberalism, neoliberalism, sociochristianism...) the Asians found a very realistic "ism" for the 21st Century and the end of the 20th Century and it's called pragmatism.

To give you an example, let's recall when Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore and South Korea. After realizing that his own neighbors were becoming wealthy rapidly, he returned to Peking and said to his old Maoist comrades that they had accompanied him along his long march "Well, truthfully dear comrades, I don't really care if the cat is black or white. The only thing that interests me is that it hunts mice". And if Mao had been alive he would have died again when Xiaoping said, "The truth is that getting rich is glorious". And while the Chinese are doing this, and since 1979 they've grown by 11%, 12%, or 13% and have taken 300 million of their inhabitants out of poverty, we continue arguing about ideologies that we should have buried long ago.

The good news is that Deng Xiaoping achieved this when he was 74 years old. Looking around me, dear Presidents, I don't see anyone who is anywhere near 74 years old. So all I ask you is that we don't wait until we're that age to make the changes we need to make.

Thank you.

[20110507-02](#) 07:28 SteveB Re: "We Did Something Wrong"

Dear Charis,

I loved it! Thank you.

It is so interesting to me the way that (I don't know exactly how to say it) Latin American often finds itself stuck in the past. As Arias pointed out, this is not the case so much in Europe, North America, or Asia.

Latin America missed the Industrial Revolution. They largely missed the Democratic Revolution, and still don't seem to have a real commitment to true democracy. They missed the end of the Cold War. How many centuries will they sit on their patios, drinking beer, eating burnt meat, watching the world leave them behind? Brazil, at least, seems to be waking up a little, but we've seen that there before and it didn't last.

Yet...maybe they have the right idea after all. Excuse me, I'm going to go take my siesta.

[20110507-03](#) 10:46 SteveB Re: "Too Many Federal Workers?"

Dear Jim,

Excellent points indeed. Thank you!

Still stuck in Florida (things could be worse :-)

[20110508-01](#) 07:45 SteveB Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

A little simpler version without the possibly stupid term limits...

Ref: Please read

[Source of original email unknown. See Snopes.com. —SteveB]

No one has been able to explain to me why young men and women serve in the U.S. Military for 20 years, risking their lives protecting freedom, and only get 50% of their pay, while Politicians hold their political positions in the safe confines of the capital, protected by these same men and women, and receive full pay retirement after serving one term. It just does not make any sense.

Monday on Fox news they learned that the staffers of Congress family members are exempt from having to pay back student loans. This will get national attention if other news networks will broadcast it. When you add this to the below, just where will all of it stop?

[The other news networks didn't broadcast it because it wasn't true. —SteveB]

35 States file lawsuit against the Federal Government

Governors of 35 states have filed suit against the Federal Government for imposing unlawful burdens upon them. It only takes 38 (of the 50) States to convene a Constitutional Convention.

This will take less than thirty seconds to read. If you agree, please pass it on.

This is an idea that we should address. For too long we have been too complacent about the workings of Congress. Many citizens had no idea that members of Congress could retire with the same pay after only one term, that they specifically exempted themselves from many of the laws they have passed (such as being exempt from any fear of prosecution for sexual harassment) while ordinary citizens must live under those laws.

The latest is to exempt themselves from the Healthcare Reform... in all of its forms. Somehow, that doesn't seem logical. We do not have an elite that is above the law. I truly don't care if they are Democrat, Republican, Independent or whatever. The self-serving must stop.

If each person that receives this will forward it on to 20 people, in three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one proposal that really should be passed around.

Proposed 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution:

Congress shall make no law that applies to the citizens of the United States that does not apply equally to the Senators and/or Representatives; and, Congress shall make no law that applies to the Senators and/or Representatives that does not apply equally to the citizens of the United States.

20110508-02	09:31	SteveB	America is #31, but Happy Day, Moms!
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Happy Mothers' Day to all!

Unfortunately, because of our antiquated health care system and laws, the U.S. ranks #31 on the list of Best of the Developed Countries for Mothers. Thank you so much Democrats and Republicans for fixing our problems and keeping us great! I am on my knees thanking you for not selling your people down the river to please your biggest campaign contributors! Your concern for the family, children, mothers, education, and the future of our great nation is just astounding!

http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SOWM2011_INDEX.PDF

<http://www.savethechildren.org>

20110509-01	10:17	Ben	Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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Dear SteveB,

I couldn't agree more about the military being inadequately compensated for duty and retirement benefits.

Nor could I agree more that Congress gets a deal that isn't fair. (It SHOULD be a service, not a career.)

Nevertheless, this material is inaccurate:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/studentloans.asp>

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/medical/28thamendment.asp>

(Not trying to stir debate here: just surprised to see you falling into this particular hole. This stuff was reverberating through the Web a year or two ago.)

Yep: one set of laws. Give Congress Medicare, and THEN let's see if they want to cut it!

20110509-02 14:26 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Dick,

I couldn't agree more about the military being inadequately compensated for duty and retirement benefits.

Nor could I agree more that Congress gets a deal that isn't fair. (It SHOULD be a service, not a career.)

Nevertheless, some of this material appears to be inaccurate:

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/studentloans.asp>

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/medical/28thamendment.asp>

20110509-03 14:32 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Ben,

Forwarded it to you only for the amendment wording, a subject we had been talking about. That's what I meant by my intro. As for the rest, never thought about it as true or false. It seemed irrelevant to our discussion. I guess I should have deleted it, but my time is limited...

20110510-01 08:54 SteveB Fw: 'Entitlement' My A*s!

This guy (below) is a little "ticked-off", but if the Republicans keep going their dogmatic way, they are going to have so many people ticked-off that they will be crushed in the next election. Are they really too stupid to realize that?

IT'S TIME TO STOP THE WARS, CUT THE MILITARY, STOP ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, END "FREE" TRADE, AND TAX THE RICH!

[Source of original email unknown. Also received this same email from Marci on Aug. 14, 2011, 12:11 pm. —SteveB]

'Entitlement' my a*s, I paid cash for my social security insurance!!!! Just because they borrowed the money, doesn't make my benefits some kind of charity or handout!!

Congressional benefits , aka. free healthcare, outrageous retirement packages, 67 paid holidays, three weeks paid vacation, unlimited paid sick days, now that's welfare, and they have the nerve to call my retirement, an 'entitlement'!!!!!!

What the HELL's wrong with us???

WAKE UP AMERICA !!!!

Tuesday's Daily Bulletin paper, ran two articles on the front page side by side:

1. Calif. 's 20 Billion Dollar Budget Deficit.
2. The Calif. Supreme Court ruling that ILLEGALS can attend college and get benefits.

Why don't they just deport them when they arrive to register?

Last year they ran an article on the yearly costs to Calif. Taxpayers from Illegals using Hospital Emergency Rooms for their general health care—At just one hospital the cost to tax payers totaled over \$25 million a year!

Someone please tell me what the HELL's wrong with all the people that run this country!!!!!!

We're "broke" & can't help our own Seniors, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless etc.!!!!!!

In the last months we have provided aid to Haiti, Chile, and Turkey. And now Pakistanhome of bin Laden. Literally, BILLIONS of DOLLARS!!!

Our retired seniors living on a 'fixed income' receive no aid nor do they get any breaks while our government and religious organizations pour Hundreds of Billions of \$\$\$\$\$\$'s and Tons of Food to Foreign Countries!

They call Social Security and Medicare an entitlement even though most of us have been paying for it all our working lives and now when it's time for us to collect, the government is running out of money.

Why did the government borrow from it in the first place?

We have hundreds of adoptable children who are shoved aside to make room for the adoption of foreign orphans.

AMERICA: a country where we have homeless without shelter, children going to bed hungry, elderly going without 'needed' meds, and mentally ill without treatment—etc, etc.

YET..... They have a 'Benefit' for the people of Haiti on 12 TV stations, ships and planes lining up with food, water, tents, clothes, bedding, doctors, and medical supplies.

Imagine if the *GOVERNMENT* gave 'U.S.' the same support they give to other countries. Sad isn't it?

99% of people won't have the guts to forward this. I'm one of the 1%—I Just did.

20110510-02 9:00 SteveB Fw: Memorial Day
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Keep it moving, please, even if you've seen it before.

MEMORIAL DAY

We all have either been vets, have vets in our families, or know vets.....Let us remember and respect them, not only this month, but always!!

It is the VETERAN, not the preacher, who has given us freedom of religion.

It is the VETERAN, not the reporter, who has given us freedom of the press.

It is the VETERAN, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.

It is the VETERAN, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to assemble.

It is the VETERAN, not the lawyer, who has given us the right to a fair trial.

It is the VETERAN, not the politician, who has given us the right to vote.

It is the VETERAN who salutes the Flag, It is the VETERAN who serves under the Flag, ETERNAL REST GRANT THEM, O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.

I'd be EXTREMELY proud if this email reached as many as possible. We can be very proud of our young men and women in the service no matter where they serve. God Bless them all!!! Makes you proud to be an AMERICAN!!!!

20110510-03 11:34 Charis Path to Citizenship

Dear SteveB,

Is it true Obama is suggesting another round of amnesties for millions of illegals?

20110510-04 18:19 SteveB Re: Path to Citizenship

Dear Charis,

I'm afraid he sort of is. But now they call it a "path to citizenship". There are 11 million illegals now in the country. That's probably a conservative estimate. All they have to do is ensure that you have to be legal to work or go to school. A one-page bill would do it. It's discouraging for people like my wife and I. We had to do everything the hard, expensive way. She will be sworn-in on May 25, then we'll head home about the middle of June. But the life of an illegal is not easy, but why should it be? I guess whole towns in Mexico and Central America are decimated...they're all here.

Sometimes I think the U.S. and Bolivia are the only countries in the world who don't enforce their laws.

20110510-05 18:23 SteveB Great Time for a Water Diversion

Now would be a great time to divert Mississippi River flow to Texas via a big-ass pipeline or two. [this one is serious]

But, no, the U.S. wouldn't want to do anything that might actually solve problems!

Instead of ensuring that people have legal papers before they can get a job or go to school here (a 1-page bill), let's give 11 million illegals a "path to citizenship". Maybe we could put them to work on the pipelines?

20110511-01 18:41 SteveB Fw: CredoAction Petition: Tell John Boehner to Keep His Hands Off Medicare

Dear SteveB:

Thanks for taking action.

Here are some ways you can spread the word to make sure Speaker John Boehner gets the message loud and clear.

Tell John Boehner: Hands off Medicare! — <http://bit.ly/kizYh4>

Republican House Speaker John Boehner is trying to destroy Medicare.

At a recent speech, he threatened to force the government to default on its debt, which would drive us back into a deep recession, unless Congress passed something like Rep. Paul Ryan's extremist and irresponsible budget.

The Ryan budget proposal would destroy Medicare and replace it with a voucher program for seniors who'd be dumped into the private insurance market. And if the vouchers didn't cover the cost of insurance, too bad.

Dear Mr. President:

I received this irritating email from you (below) and saw your speech in Texas. I think you need to simply enforce the law as you are duty-bound by the Constitution. No illegal immigrants. No illegal immigrants should be allowed to work or go to school here, or get government benefits. No amnesty. No "path to citizenship". ENFORCE THE LAW OF THE LAND!

My wife is from Bolivia and is almost finished with her LEGAL immigration and citizenship process. It has been long and expensive and that is OK. But it is not fair to us or to any American if illegals get a shortcut.

If you want to let your heart bleed for someone, let it bleed for Americans who can't find jobs and Mexican and Central American towns decimated by illegal immigration to our country.

If you do the wrong thing with this, we will never vote for you again! Thank you.

from "President Obama":

Dear SteveB:

I went to El Paso, Texas, today to lay out a plan to do something big: fix America's broken immigration system.

It's an issue that affects you, whether you live in a border town like El Paso or not. Our immigration system reflects how we define ourselves as Americans—who we are, who we will be—and continued inaction poses serious costs for everyone.

Those costs are human, felt by millions of people here and abroad who endure years of separation or deferred dreams—and millions more hardworking families whose wages are depressed when employers wrongly exploit a cheap source of labor. That's why immigration reform is also an economic imperative—an essential step needed to strengthen our middle class, create new industries and new jobs, and make sure America remains competitive in the global economy.

Because this is such a tough problem—one that politicians in Washington have been either exploiting or dodging, depending on the politics—this change has to be driven by people like you.

Washington won't act unless you lead. [Maybe you should lead, Mr. President. I guess you thought sending out an email was leadership.]

So if you're willing to do something about this critical issue, join our call for immigration reform now. Those who do will be part of our campaign to educate people on this issue and build the critical mass needed to make Washington act:

<http://my.barackobama.com/Immigration-Reform>

In recent years, concerns about whether border security and enforcement were tough enough were among the greatest impediments to comprehensive reform. They are legitimate issues that needed to be addressed—and over the past two years, we have made great strides in enhancing security and enforcement.

We have more boots on the ground working to secure our southwest border than at any time in our history. We're going after employers who knowingly break the law. And we are deporting those who are here illegally. I know the increase in deportations has been a source of controversy, but I want to emphasize that we are focusing our limited resources on violent offenders and people convicted of crimes—not families or people looking to scrape together an income.

So we've addressed the concerns raised by those who have stood in the way of progress in the past. And now that we have, it's time to build an immigration system that meets our 21st-century economic needs and reflects our values both as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants.

Today, we provide students from around the world with visas to get engineering and computer science degrees at our top universities. But then our laws discourage them from using those skills to start a business or a new industry here in the United States. That just doesn't make sense.

We also need to stop punishing innocent young people for the actions of their parents—and pass the DREAM Act so they can pursue higher education or become military service members in the country they know as home. We already know enormous economic benefits from the steady stream of talented and hardworking people coming to America.

More than a century and a half ago, U.S. Steel's Andrew Carnegie was a 13-year-old brought here from Scotland by his family in search of a better life. And in 1979, a Russian family seeking freedom from Communism brought a young Sergey Brin to America—where he would become a co-founder of Google.

Through immigration, we've become an engine of the global economy and a beacon of hope, ingenuity and entrepreneurship. We should make it easier for the best and brightest not only to study here, but also to start businesses and create jobs here. That's how we'll win the future.

Immigration is a complex issue that raises strong feelings. And as we push for long overdue action, we're going to hear the same sort of ugly rhetoric that has delayed reform for years—despite long and widespread recognition that our current system fails us all and hurts our economy.

So you and I need to be the ones talking about this issue in the language of hope, not fear—in terms of how we are made stronger by our differences, and can be made stronger still.

Thank you, Barack

20110511-03 10:43 Charis Re: To: President Obama; El Paso Speech on Immigration

Dear SteveB,

You forgot to tell him how full of cr*p he is.

20110512-01 09:02 SteveB Re: To: President Obama; El Paso Speech on Immigration

Dear Charis,

LOL. I thought I did? But he is so much less full of cr*p than the Republicans...look at their alleged Presidential candidates. What a joke they all are. Newt? The Donald? Palin? Huckabee? Ron Paul? etc., etc. Scary! And their dogmatic philosophy got us to where we are now...at a dead end.

20110513-01 18:55 SteveB To: Ron Paul: Impeachable, Imschmeechable! Part 2 [defense]

Dear Mr. Paul:

Why don't you whine a little more about the President's indirect killing of Osama bin Laden? It seems to me that you have an uncanny ability to take positions in opposition to the majority of Americans. Do you really think that is ever going to get you elected President? Haven't you ever noticed that the more you whine in public, the lower your ratings go? If you're a man of your word, why haven't you followed through with impeaching the President because of his "unconstitutional" actions in Libya? You seem to think the Commander-in-Chief of, possibly, the most powerful nation on Earth should sit in the White House blindfolded, with his hands tied. If that's how you would run the country, Mr. Whiner, no thanks!

20110515-01 18:06 SteveB To: Fareed Zakaria, CNN; U.S. Corruption

Dear Mr. Zakaria:

I greatly enjoy your GPS program on CNN. You are doing a fine job. Today, I watched your segment about corruption in the world, the harm it does, and how it serves to perpetuate the rich/poor class structure. These are points well taken.

However, though you were mainly focused on the bribery form of corruption, I felt that you were remiss in not spending equal time on the more insidious and important form of corruption—political!

I find the United States to be, unfortunately, among the most corrupt countries on Earth—much more corrupt than any South American country, most of which I know well from having lived and bribed there.

We have permitted our politicians to be bought by big money and big corporations with their unfettered campaign contributions. As a result, the American people, their means of making a living, and their future have been sold down the river.

No one talks about it, but I believe that none of our country's many huge problems will ever be fixed until campaign finance reform fixes the corruption problem. Too bad the fixing would have to be done by the very scoundrels who always have their hands out.

20110515-02 20:34 Jim Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?)

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

AIR POWERED CAR. NEAT!!!!

Tata Motors in India is ready to introduce Air Car—Will it be the next big thing? Tata Motors is taking giant strides and making history for itself. First the Land Rover/Jaguar deal, then the world's cheapest car, and now it is also set to introduce the car that runs on compressed air.

With spiraling fuel prices it is about time we heard some breakthrough! India's largest automaker, Tata Motors, is set to start producing the world's first commercial air-powered vehicle.

The Air Car, developed by ex-Formula One engineer Guy N. For Luxembourg-based MDI, uses compressed air, as opposed to the gas and oxygen explosions of internal-combustion models, to push its engine's pistons. Some 6000 zero-emissions Air Cars are scheduled to hit Indian streets by Aug., 2011.

The Air Car, called the "MiniCAT" could cost around Rs. 3,475,225 (U.S. \$8,177.00) in India and would have a range of around 300 km between refuels.

The cost of a refill would be about Rs. 85 (\$2.00).

The MiniCAT which is a simple, light urban car, with a tubular chassis that is glued, not welded, and a body of fiberglass powered by compressed air. Microcontrollers are used in every device in the car, so one tiny radio transmitter sends instructions to the lights, indicators, etc.

There are no keys—just an access card which can be read by the car from your pocket. According to the designers, it costs less than 50 rupees per 100 Km (about a tenth that of a petrol car). Its mileage is about double that of the most advanced electric car (200 to 300 km or 10 hours of driving), a factor which makes a perfect choice in cities where 80% of motorists drive at less than 60 Km. The car has a top speed of 105 Kmph.

Refilling the car will, once the market develops, take place at adapted petrol stations to administer compressed air. In two or three minutes, and at a cost of approximately 100 rupees, the car will be ready to go another 200-300 kilometers.

As a viable alternative, the car carries a small compressor which can be connected to the mains (220V or 380V) and refill the tank in 3-4 hours. Due to the absence of combustion and, consequently, of residues, changing the oil (1 litre of vegetable oil) is necessary only every 50,000 Km).

The temperature of the clean air expelled by the exhaust pipe is between 0-15 degrees below zero, which makes it suitable for use by the internal air conditioning system with no need for gases or loss of power.

20110516-01 15:24 SteveB Re: Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?)
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Dear Jim,

Although it would be great if a car like this actually existed...but I doubt it exists. The energy density of gasoline is about 45MJ/kg. The energy density of compressed air is only about 180-190 kJ/kg., so the stated range and practicality seem impossible. Practical tanks, heat exchangers, and even engines do not really exist at this time. I wish the rumor were true...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Compressed_air_energy_storage

<http://www.tribology-abc.com/abc/thermodynamics.htm>

20110516-02	15:33	GaryC	Re: Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?); President Obama
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Dear SteveB,

I think Obama has enough compressed gas to power a bus for a week.

20110516-03	15:49	SteveB	Re: Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?); 2012 Primaries
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Dear GaryC,

Apparently, Huckabee and The Donald don't have enough compressed gas to even get off the ground. I don't think Palin is going to run either. Newt made the wrong decision and isn't going to last long. Romney will have to use his own money, though the Massachusetts health care system works pretty well. That leaves maybe Pawlenty who?

Whatever, the Republicans are scared to death of Mr. Obama.

20110516-04	15:53	GaryC	Re: Tata Air-Powered Car (of the Future?) Mitch Daniels Not a Socialist
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Dear SteveB,

Actually, my friend Mitch Daniels may be getting in soon and I think he could be a great candidate and even better President. If he gets in, I am going to be busy helping him raise money and assist in other ways. Could be fun. The good thing about Mitch is that he is not a social conservative. I think you would actually like his stance on many topics.

However, he is not a socialist.

20110516-05	16:01	SteveB	The "Church"—Chpt. 22 (One Chapter Too Many): "Vatican Tells Bishops to Root Out Sexual Abuse"
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The telling part of this news, to me, is the word "even" in the last paragraph...as if the "protection of minors" is something the Church really feels is reaching very, very far (maybe even too far), rather than seeing the protection of minors as an integral part of their calling. Amazing! They never seem to learn.

"Vatican Tells Bishops to Root Out Sexual Abuse" by Philip Pullella, Reuters

May 16, 2011, (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/vatican-tell-bishops-to-root-out-sex-abuse/article2023460/>)

[**Emphasis** mine. —SteveB]

(VATICAN CITY) The Vatican told bishops around the world on Monday that they must make it a global priority to root out sexual abuse of children by priests.

The headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church told bishops in a letter that they should cooperate with civil authorities to end the abuse that has tarnished its image around the world.

"This is telling the world that we mean business. We want to be an example of prevention and care," said one Vatican official, **speaking on condition of anonymity**.

The letter is intended to help every diocese draw up its own tough guidelines, based on a global approach but in line with local criminal law. These must be sent to the Vatican for review within a year.

"The responsibility for dealing with delicts (crimes) of sexual abuse of minors by clerics belongs in the first place to the diocesan bishop," the letter says.

It incorporates sweeping revisions made last year to the Church's laws on sexual abuse, which doubled a statute of limitations for disciplinary action against priests and extended the use of fast-track procedures to defrock them.

The Vatican has for years been struggling to control the damage that sexual abuse scandals in the United States and several European countries, including Pope Benedict's native Germany, have done to the Church's image.

"This goes beyond what was done before," the Vatican official said. "It is setting up a standard of best principles, best policy to be followed globally. It makes protection of minors a paramount principle and takes a long-term view because it talks about the formation of future priests."

The scandal has led to the resignation of bishops in several countries. Last year, Benedict begged forgiveness from God and from abuse victims, and said the Church would do everything in its power to ensure that it never happened again.

The Vatican official said that if local criminal legislation requires that bishops report sex offenders directly to civil authorities, they are obliged to do so and the guidelines will include this.

Victims groups said they were not satisfied.

"There's no "zero tolerance" or "mandatory reporting" requirement. There's no insistence that bishops warn their flock about child molesting clerics. There's nothing that will make a child safer today or tomorrow or next month or next year," said SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

In an exclusive interview with Reuters Television, the Vatican's "Justice Promoter," Monsignor Charles Scicluna, responded to the accusation.

"This is a long-term planning procedure. **It has taken some time for the Church to recognize that there have to be clear guidelines.** It is a good day for people who expect that the Church gives the good example, **even** when it comes to the protection of minors," Scicluna said.

The letter tells bishops they must be prepared to listen to the victims and their families and be committed to their spiritual and psychological assistance. Bishops must be more careful in choosing candidates for the priesthood in order to weed out early those who are or could become sex abusers.

It says that while those accused of being sexual abusers have to be treated fairly and with due process, those who are known to be abusers must be excluded from the public ministry.

In many of the cases of sexual abuse around the world, local bishops allowed known abusers to be moved from parish to parish instead of being defrocked.

20110516-06	16:21	SteveB	Re: 2012 Primaries/Election; Mitch Daniels Not Running
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Dear GaryC,

Not a socialist? Then what's he good for? :-)

Actually, I've read lately that it looks rather doubtful he will run. Maybe better to wait until 2016 rather than beat your head against a Democrat landslide. That's what all the smart ones seem to be thinking (and even some of the dumb ones!). But, then, by 2016, there may not even be a Republican party any more. I believe that what will transpire between now and then will further discredit their ancient elitist dogma.

20110518-01 09:16 SteveB Fw: CredoAction Petition: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies

Dear SteveB:

Hold Sen. Marco Rubio accountable for the vote against ending oil subsidies.



Last night, 48 Senators, including Sen. Marco Rubio, put Big Oil before the American people and helped defeat a bill that would have ended tax breaks for the five biggest oil companies. How could anyone vote against a bill that would have kept \$21 billion of American taxpayers' money out of the pockets of cash-rich oil companies?

One big reason is oil money in our political process. A lot of it. Oil and gas companies spent \$39.5 million lobbying congress in just the first quarter of this year, and have donated tens of millions of dollars directly to the political campaigns of current Senators, including \$196,600 to Sen. Marco Rubio.

Tell Sen. Marco Rubio: Stop putting oil company profits and campaign contributions ahead of the American people.

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/oil_subsidy_vote/?r=7861&id=21121-4050539-yL0NiZx

In all, three Democrats joined all but two Senate Republicans to protect Big Oil tax breaks that even a former Shell CEO said weren't needed. But make no mistake. Even though we didn't get the 60 votes required for passage, our pressure to end oil subsidies is already working. More and more legislators are acting defensive about their support of Big Oil over the American people.

In February, similar legislation to repeal some oil subsidies got only 44 votes. Yesterday, we got 52 votes. That comes after Sen. Marco Rubio took lots of oil money. And then voted to let Big Oil keep taking our money. We say to him:

You should be ashamed of your vote to protect Big Oil's tax breaks at the expense of American taxpayers. You've accepted an astonishing amount of campaign money from oil companies. I urge you to stop putting oil profits and campaign contributions ahead of the American people.

Senate Majority leader Harry Reid said yesterday that despite this defeat, he will continue to push for ending oil subsidies as part of negotiations on the budget and to raise the debt ceiling.

We need to keep the pressure on. And one key to breaking Big Oil's grasp on our legislators is letting Congress know that we know about the millions of dollars that Big Oil has given them—including the \$196,600 to Sen. Marco Rubio.

Let's make sure that voting to protect oil company profits doesn't go unanswered by those of us who actually pay the price. Thank you for taking action.

Elijah Zarlin, Campaign Manager

20110518-02 19:32 SteveB "Horrifying: Newt Gingrich Wants to Make America 'Like Texas'"

I think it is instructive to look at what future the conservative dogma would deliver for America. Cutting spending does not accomplish what most of us wish for our cities, states, country, or lives. Simply cutting spending does not even accomplish the conservative agenda. Texas is the proof.

Without lower and middle class jobs, without fair taxes being paid by employed workers, their bosses, and companies, the whole system goes to sh*t...as it has in Texas.

Funny how Mitt's liberal bastion of Massachusetts is doing so much better in terms of quality of life for its citizens.

And lastly, Newt has proven himself to be another Republican idiot. If the conservative Republican dogma is so smart, why are so many of its proponents so d*mned dumb?

"Horrifying: Newt Gingrich Wants to Make America 'Like Texas'" by Peter Montgomery, Right Wing Watch

May 17, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/150977/>)

In his presidential campaign announcement on Sean Hannity's Fox News Channel show last week, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich praised job creation in Texas and said he'd been talking to Texas Gov. Rick Perry. "**I know how to get the whole country to resemble Texas,**" Gingrich told Hannity. That could go down as the worst campaign promise ever.

"I dearly love the state of Texas," the late Texan and progressive icon Molly Ivins wrote, "but I consider that a harmless perversion on my part, and discuss it only with consenting adults." Noting that Texas was a state that provided relatively few services to its residents, she once wrote, "The only depressing part is that, unlike Mississippi, **we can afford to do better. We just don't.**" Maybe that should be the motto for Newt Gingrich and his fellow anti-government demagogues.

The impact of that governing philosophy is spreading a lot of pain in Texas right now. Nobel Prize-winning economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman wrote earlier this year:

Texas is where the modern conservative theory of budgeting—the belief that you should never raise taxes under any circumstances, that you can always balance the budget by cutting wasteful spending—has been implemented most completely. If the theory can't make it there, it can't make it anywhere.

In fact, Texas lawmakers have been struggling all year to figure out how to deal with a massive budget deficit. An AP story from March, headlined "Texas' economic miracle beginning to tarnish," noted that the state's budget shortfall was "among the worst in the nation." A temporary budget deal in March involving more than \$1 billion in spending cuts still left the state \$23 billion short over the next two years by one estimate. Proposed cuts could result in layoffs for 100,000 school employees and 60,000 nursing home workers and eliminate 9,600 state jobs this year. Just this week lawmakers struggled to reach agreement on a deal to close a \$4 billion deficit in the current year, which ends in August.

It is possible that entire crisis may have been manufactured by Perry and other antigovernment Republicans to give lawmakers a justification for further slashing government and basic human services.

Does Newt think we really want the whole country to look like Texas, which ranks:

- 50th in percentage of population with health insurance (2010)
- 50th in percentage of children insured (2009)
- 50th in percentage of women receiving early prenatal care (2010)
- 45th in rate of infectious diseases (2010)
- 44th in percentage of children in poverty (2010)

42nd in per capita health care funding (2010)
40th in overall health (2010)
36th in high school graduation rate (2010)
35th in percentage of children immunized (2010)
34th in rate of occupational fatalities (2010)
30th in percentage of people with college degree (2008)

Texas also ranks:

1st in amount of recognized carcinogens released into the air (2002)
4th highest in release of toxic chemicals into the environment (2002)
8th highest in percentage of people below poverty level (2008)
13th highest in obesity (2010)
35th in crime (2010) [Law and order. Not a bad statistic to have. —SteveB]

"I know how to get the whole country to resemble Texas." Uh, thanks, Newt, but no thanks.

20110518-03	19:45	SteveB	Thorium Reactor
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Very interesting stuff. But I still think simple natural gas or 20%/80% hydrogen/nitrogen powered cars, using slightly modified existing internal combustion engines, would solve a lot of energy problems, with little or no pollution.

<http://energyfromthorium.com/essay3rs/>

20110518-04	20:06	Ben	Frakking
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Dear SteveB,

Been reading about how natural gas is mined? Seems like it may be dirtier than coal.

"Frakking" has serious consequences...

20110518-05	20:09	SteveB	"How Political Corruption Works in the U.S. of A."
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["How Political Corruption Works in the U.S. of A." CredoAction](#)

May 18, 2011, (<http://womensphilanthropy.typepad.com/stephaniedoty/2011/05/your-senator-voted-against-ending-big-oil-subsidies.html>)

Last night, 48 Senators, including Sen. Marco Rubio, put Big Oil before the American people and helped defeat a bill that would have ended tax breaks for the five biggest oil companies.¹ How could anyone vote against a bill that would have kept \$21 billion of American taxpayers' money out of the pockets of cash-rich oil companies?

One big reason is oil money in our political process. A lot of it. Oil and gas companies spent \$39.5 million lobbying congress in just the first quarter of this year,² and have donated tens of millions of dollars directly to the political campaigns of current Senators, including \$196,600 to Sen. Marco Rubio.³ In all, three Democrats joined all but two Senate Republicans to protect Big Oil tax breaks that even a former Shell CEO said weren't needed.⁴

¹"Senate GOP Votes Down Bill To End Big Oil Subsidies," Huffington Post, May 17, 2011.

²"Senators Opposing End of Oil Subsidies Received Five Times More in Big Oil Campaign Cash," *Oil Change International*, May 17, 2011.

³Dirty Energy Money campaign data.

⁴"Ex-Shell CEO Says Big Oil Can Live Without Subsidies," *National Journal*, Feb. 11, 2011.

20110518-06 21:15 SteveB Re: Frakking

Dear Ben,

Most natural gas, and abundant supplies, comes from drilled wells. Much of it is a waste product from oil wells or trash dumps. That's why you often see the flames to the tops of each.

Bolivia drills for a lot of gas. So much that almost all of the taxis in Santa Cruz use gas. Very cheap and efficient.

The "mined" gas is a new development and is rapidly becoming cleaner, from what I can gather.

20110519-01 01:57 SteveG Boyhood Adventures

Dear SteveB,

Oh yeah, I remember when you and I went into Moore's and ordered a glass of milk each. We were ID'd, served, and asked to move to the family room.

20110519-02 18:42 Pam Re: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies

Dear SteveB,

These subsidies to oil companies are obscene. It looks more and more as if oil owns the world.

20110519-03 21:38 Ben Re: Frakking

Yeah, I know it's clean, easily purified to nearly perfect single-compound fuel, and burns with the completeness that only smaller molecules can achieve. Yes, indeed, a great fuel. (Of course they're drilled: nobody envisions sticking a dome over gas bubbling out of a swamp!) But as I understand it, and increasing proportion of those drilled wells are being frakked. This means that huge slurries of proprietary chemicals are flushed down into the shale and explosives are applied. This literally cracks the shale bed so hugely that gases (and sometimes oil) can flow freely enough to make the well practical. There is very rapidly growing concern about the undisclosed nature of these chemicals — and aquifers.

Kind of like using a giant Mixmaster on the ocean floor, only different. But frakking, as a part of this operation, is very scary. Do they do this in Bolivia...?

20110520-01 13:27 Dennis "South Africa's New 'New World'"

Dear Steve,

I think you'll find this of interest. Byron King is one of the best investment gurus, in my opinion, as he has a good grasp of world economic developments and knows where to put your money. (Buy oil, Buy gold!)

"South Africa's New 'New World'", by Byron King, Agora Financial

May 20, 2011 (<http://outstandinginvestments.agorafinancial.com/2011/05/20/south-africa%E2%80%99s-new-%E2%80%9Cnew-world%E2%80%9D/>)

I've spent the week in South Africa, taking the pulse of the political and business climate and looking for investment opportunities large and small. I have a thick notebook, filled with investment ideas, comments by business leaders, money managers and others. It's all grist for the editorial mill, and I'll get into details in future email alerts and OI issues.

Chinese Trimming

Meanwhile, "China Trims Pile of U.S. Debt," screamed the mid-week headline of the *South Africa Business Report*. I was reading this particular newspaper during a flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town the other night.

"Biggest holder of treasuries fears deficits pose default risk," added the *Business Report* in another headline, referring of course to the government of China. The Chinese may be holding U.S. paper based on past purchases, but they're no fools. The Chinese are trimming down. They'll limit future purchases of U.S. debt, and look for other options.

What Will China Buy?

The South African news article quoted a U.S. government official as asking the (rather snide—and very dumb) question of what the Chinese would buy, if not U.S. treasuries? I believe I can answer that question.

The Chinese will buy Africa.

In fact, the new "Great Game" has already started in this arena. Think it through. China has far more dollars than it wants. Yet China has far fewer resources than it requires. Meanwhile, Africa is resource-rich. And most African governments, industries and people are willing to deal, not the least of them being South Africa.

Not Your Father's World Anymore

So Africa is on sale, with many of its resources headed to China. Already, China imports half its overseas oil from Africa. That number is destined to increase, too. If you're a Westerner—and particularly if you dwell in the U.S.—the good old days are over. We don't live in your father's world anymore. We don't even live in the world of the early 2000s. The future is now, and it has arrived in a hurry. The western-oriented, U.S.-centric, post-World War II era is in its death throes.

First and foremost, the dollar is dying—slowly strangled by American politicians, and their monetary advisers over the past half century or so. The dollar-based gravy train is ending. We had better figure out what to do, because we're coming to the end of this line.

How the West Was Lost

Zambian writer Dambisa Moyo does a creditable job of laying the story out in her recent book, *How the West Was Lost—Fifty years of Economic Folly and the Stark Choices Ahead*. I picked up my copy—prominently displayed—in the Johannesburg airport. This is what the world is reading, by the way.

Ms. Moyo has a straightforward, hard-hitting thesis. Once upon a time, the U.S. was in the world's vanguard. But (short version) the U.S. squandered important relationships and alienated many emerging countries with which the U.S. now competes. Sure, the developing world still trades with the U.S. and other Western nations, but often as not, it's through clenched teeth.

Meanwhile, Western technology has eliminated many traditional barriers to development. It's now easy for almost any competitor to obtain world class technology and "best-practice" levels of operating standards. Thus the foundations for basic wealth creation in the U.S., and across the West, are under assault from all corners of the trading compass.

Finally, the root of the U.S. and Western downfall is the worst form of self-inflicted wound. It's the growth of the modern, Western financialized state. This modern state is possessed by a chronic, hubristic tendency always to opt for a political solution to fight economic and historic trends.

Bottom line is that there's a bipartisan political mind-set in the U.S. that leads to endless inflation and other fundamentally flawed, wealth-destroying economic policies. There are politicians who really believe that issuing government checks is just another way of creating wealth!

As the Mogambo Guru likes to say, "We're screwed."

Looming Financial Disaster

I won't dwell on explaining the details of Ms. Moyo's fascinating, scary book. Suffice to say that we in the U.S. and West face looming financial disaster, and let's not waste time arguing about it. Well, OK. Deny it if you want.

Just understand and accept that the rest of the world sees a particularly unhappy future for the U.S., even if the U.S. collectively happens not to notice or care. (Of course, if you're an Agora Financial reader, you're used to getting this kind of gloomy thinking on a routine basis, and with both barrels.)

Point is, the rest of the world sees an American future of more and more unpayable, unsustainable debt. The rest of the world sees the U.S. government, and its monetary authorities, fighting long-term insolvency with endless tranches of short-term liquidity.

It's undeniable that more and more dollars are regularly entering the global financial system. On the flip side, more and more of the world's people, institutions and foreign nations are working to get away from the sinking Western ship of state, with that crazy captain Uncle Sam up in the wheelhouse.

The New "New World"

Thus it's not just a new world out there. It's a new "New World," a phrase with an interesting origin.

Have you heard of something called IBSAMAR? It's an acronym for a diplomatic and military initiative between the governments of India, Brazil and South Africa, hence the IBSA part of the term.

The effort deals with maritime affairs—hence the MAR—namely sea control in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The naval alliance makes strategic sense, in that South Africa is located between these two of the world's great bodies of water.

Additionally, the geology of three continents dictates that the offshore regions of Brazil, India and South Africa hold immense volumes of hydrocarbons—much of which is yet to be discovered, let alone lifted to the surface.

So what of IBSAMAR? "We are three navies on the rise," said recently-retired South African Navy Admiral "Rusty" Higgs, whom I first interviewed during a trip to Cape Town in 2008. Adm. Higgs is referring to India, Brazil, and South Africa and their brand-new fleets of powerful warships.

In late 2010, ships from India, Brazil and South Africa staged a major international sea exercise, working in combination to perform antisubmarine and air-defense drills. You'd never have seen anything like this, as recently as five years ago. But now, with new ships and new visions of a changing world, this naval combination of three emerging nations is a military reality.

"This is the new, 'New World,'" added Adm. Higgs, incidentally a graduate of the U.S. Naval War College.

Fighting for Africa's Place

In a recent address to a major international conference at the University of Cape Town, Adm. Higgs stated that Africa is "beset with issues of security, and we are fighting for a place in this new 'New World' for South Africa and the rest of the continent." In other words, South Africa must—for its own good and on behalf of the rest of Africa—assert itself as a force not just locally or regionally, but internationally.

In one major effort to assert leadership on behalf of Africa, back when Adm. Higgs was the Flag of the Fleet—operational commander of the South African Navy—he sent one of his nation's newest frigates on a "friendship" visit to China. It was the first-ever visit of a navy warship of any African nation to China.

Establishing Credibility

The South African Navy ship visit to China began as a modest curiosity, and ended with powerful political and strategic overtones.

"I wanted to let the Chinese know," Adm. Higgs told me, "that we in Africa have the capability to navigate to China, just as they can sail to our continent." He continued, "What (our) new frigates and submarines have done is make the South African Navy a credible force."

Credibility is critical, especially in a world where large nations want large volumes of important things from smaller countries.

Following this line of thinking, Adm. Higgs said, "We sent the frigate SAS Spioenkop to Shanghai (in 2008), and she had a big impact in China, as a modern ship with a full rainbow nation crew, receiving national TV coverage. Senior Chinese military and naval commanders confessed that they had not believed that an African country could operate such a ship. Now, leaders from other African navies are coming to us for advice."

My view is to expect more of this kind of thing, in many variants. Expect to see more evidence of more countries of this world acting more independently.

Expect the U.S. to have less influence, and this in a world where important things — energy and minerals, in particular— become more expensive and dollars decline in purchasing power.

On the Oil Front

Along those lines, geopolitical and economic factors should keep the price of oil near \$100 for the foreseeable future. The only break from the \$100 monotony will be occasional, dramatic upward spikes.

According to a recent talk by University of Houston professor Michael Economides, "\$100 oil is here to stay. ... If Algeria goes the way of Libya, it will be \$140. If Saudi Arabia does, \$200. If Israel attacks Iran, it will go to \$300." Prof. Economides pulled no punches as he laid out several key bases for understanding the global energy industry.

First, the world will continue to rely on hydrocarbons far into the future, certainly into the 2050 time frame. Alternative energy sources, such as solar and wind power, are simply not economic, and exist mostly due to massive tax and regulatory subsidies. Second, China's increasing demand for energy will create a "choke point." China has already overtaken the U.S. in fossil fuel use. Chinese demand will define and control the efforts energy industry for many decades to come.

Third, there's an "axis of energy militancy" that includes Russia, Venezuela and Iran. This axis will take advantage of Western policy mistakes, such as we see with current U.S. energy policy offshore, onshore the lower 48 states, and in Alaska.

Expect Venezuela, Iran, and Russia to hold non-producing or low-producing nations hostage. According to Prof. Economides, Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez is a "basket case (and) a Castro wannabe without the charisma," while Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "has Sovietized the Russian energy industry."

Fourth, in the "good news" department, U.S. shale gas and oil production will transform the domestic energy industry, as long as the politicians and regulators don't muck it up too much. Indeed, there's a "shale gale" blowing, based on new technology. If shale gas development continues apace, it'll mark a "full paradigm shift in domestic energy."

20110520-02	17:46	SteveB	Re: "South Africa's New 'New World'"
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Dear Dennis,

Ya, we're sinking fast, but I'm pretty sure Newt, Sarah, Mitt, or Barack will save us and everything will be all better!

20110520-03	18:03	GaryF	Video: "The Scariest Path In The World"
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Video: "The Scariest Path In The World" — <http://zanylol.com/path.html>.

Next time you're in Spain and fancy a bit of exercise...

The entrances for this trail are closed but not policed. It was built in the 1920's for hydro workers. There are no railings. There is a chain to hold onto, but it doesn't hold much weight and several people have fallen to their deaths. This is an

amazing walk and should have you on the edge of your seat possibly feeling slightly dizzy. It's 6 minutes long and should be watched till the very end.

To intensify the experience, click on the full screen button (button that looks like four arrows on the lower right hand side of the screen when the player comes up). It's enough to make you nauseous, especially when you consider that it was filmed by someone who made the hike carrying a video camera.

This walkway now serves as an approach to Makinodromo, the famous climbing sector of El Chorro in Spain's Andalucia. And it is the hairiest path. The area of El Chorro situated in the south of Spain is renowned amongst travelers and mountain hikers for its stunning scenery and climbs, yet this is not the main attraction on offer, El Chorro is host to one of the most dangerous walkways in the world, built by workers to transport materials between the Chorro and Gaitanejo Falls.

[20110521-01](#) 06:36 SteveB Re: Boyhood Adventures

Dear SteveG,

Jeez! I do not remember that...and I hate it when that happens! I have a notebook where I've written down the names and what I can remember of everyone I've ever known. I find it to be a valuable exercise. When I remember someone but their name escapes me, it bothers me. Then, sometimes, weeks later, it will come to me...sometimes not yet... About like my memory has always been...

[20110521-02](#) 09:08 SteveB "Coca-Crazed Concept"

Dear Ben,

Bolivia...no mucho fricking frakking...instead...

"Coca-Crazed Concept" posted by Carl, *National Review*

Apr. 19, 2011, (<http://www.nationalreview.com/planet-gore/264395/bolivia-recognizes-natural-rights-nature-chris-horner>) (<http://nooilforpacifists.blogspot.com/2011/04/coca-crazed-concept.html>)

(First Switzerland, then Ecuador—now, Bolivia's about to become the third country to grant plants "human rights".)

Bolivia is set to pass the world's first [sic] laws granting all nature equal rights to humans. The Law of Mother Earth, now agreed by politicians and grassroots social groups, redefines the country's rich mineral deposits as "blessings" and is expected to lead to radical new conservation and social measures to reduce pollution and control industry.

The country, which has been pilloried by the U.S. and Britain in the UN climate talks for demanding steep carbon emission cuts, will establish 11 new rights for nature. They include: the right to life and to exist; the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration; the right to pure water and clean air; the right to balance; the right not to be polluted; and the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered.

Controversially, it will also enshrine the right of nature "to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities".

"It makes world history. Earth is the mother of all", said Vice-President Alvaro García Linera. "It establishes a new relationship between man and nature, the harmony of which must be preserved as a guarantee of its regeneration." Imagine legislating starvation. But wait, there's more. What's created in Bolivia might become compelled worldwide,

Bolivia is drawing up a draft UN treaty which would give Mother Earth the same rights as humans, including the right to life, to pure water and clean air.

The South American country wants the UN to recognize the Earth as a living entity that humans have sought to 'dominate and exploit'

Bolivia's ambassador to the UN, Pablo Salo, says his country seeks to achieve harmony with nature, and hinted that mining and other companies would come under greater scrutiny.

Crazy or addled, right? Yes—but consistent with the radical environmental agenda says lawyer/blogger Wesley Smith:

I can think of fewer ways to subvert human exceptionalism and destroy human prosperity than to give "nature" co-equal "rights" with humans. And remember, possessing rights implies personhood. So as the story said, this is about personalizing nature and the earth.

It's all part of progressives' plan to return civilization to the stone age—which doomsayers imagine as paradise lost.

[20110521-03](#) 09:30 SteveB Re: End Big Oil Tax Subsidies

Dear Pam,

Yes...the world is a rather nice mess. But, what the hey? The world as we know it is ending at 6:00 pm EST today, so I guess it's all OK. The expensive full-page ads all week in USA Today say so. I took all my money out of the bank in small bills, lugged it to the highest point at Disney World, and cast it to the winds. I almost got arrested because of the ensuing riot, but since they knew the end was near, they understood and let me go. Jeez, I sure hope all that gets me in the right door!

Meanwhile, Marci gets sworn-in on Wednesday, I sold my new Civic in one day with an ad on Craigslist, and turned my frequent flyer miles into first class tickets to Santa Cruz on June 14. It will be good to get back home to a somewhat normal life again. (I have come to realize that my life never gets exactly "normal".) After a mere seven years, Marci and I are getting along great. It can be kinda hard when two doms get together. :-)

The weather is mighty hot, but we're in a good place for walking to nearby restaurants, etc.

Hope your spring, family, and grandpunks are all great. Mine are!

[20110521-04](#) 10:10 Bill Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"

Dear GaryF and SteveB,

Thanks. Loved it. Some trail maintenance needed. Can't imagine the back-breaking toil involved in building this mountain *camino*. Have been on some trails like this one, clinging to the vertical face and tip-toeing along the footing. It's a rush, but you have to stop and think from time to time to keep yourself safe.

[20110521-05](#) 11:00 SteveB Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"

Dear Bill,

I agree...really love this kind of stuff and hope I can do this Spanish trail someday. I guess they're never going to do that maintenance, so it had better be soon.

I have been across a couple of old "Inca" bridges in Bolivia/Peru that scared my pants off. One of the two ladies I was with peed her pants!

Another great trail, after a lot of effort, is the "Knife Edge" along the top of Mt. Katahdin in Maine's Baxter State Park. It's a narrow little natural ledge, up and down, up and down, nothing really to hold on to, with about a 2000' drop, sometimes down both sides of you, other times just one side. Talk about feeling on top of the world! I've done it about six times, I believe, but probably never again. It's a very hard climb just to get there and the entire day, up and down, is 12-14 hours the way I've usually done it, up Roaring Brook Trail. The best was once when I got to stay/camp on top of the mountain overnight and see every star in the universe, but it's tricky because it can snow any time of year up there. Ah, those were the days! That is being alive!

[20110521-06](#) 11:32 Bill Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"

Dear SteveB,

Our best climbing and exploring days may be in the past, but we can be comforted by the fact that we can all still pee in our pants.

[20110521-07](#) 12:10 SteveB Re: "The Scariest Path In The World"

Dear Bill,

Damn! I wish I could find that comforting! I'll let you know how comforting it is the first time I do it...in about 30 years, I hope. (Well...I hope it's a long time, not that I do it.) :-)

[20110521-08](#) 14:05 SteveG Re: Boyhood Adventures

Dear SteveB,

I also remember you and I going to Big Walnut and playing adventurer along the creek bank. Some of the time we got together while you were at Purdue I do not remember.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20110521-09](#) 15:08 SteveB Re: Boyhood Adventures

Dear SteveG,

Ah...the Big Walnut. We had so many good times there...with you and Bastin and Clark (both now gone). As small as it was and strange as it seems, that was the "body of water" that is most responsible for my love of sailing and all things on the water. We always wanted to raft down to New Orleans, remember?

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20110521-10](#) 15:58 SteveB To: President Obama about Israel

Dear Mr. President,

I was astounded by your speech the other day about beginning negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians by returning to the pre-1967 borders. I voted for you and I am not even Jewish, but excuse me, this is ludicrous! Are you trying to "stoke" the Arab world? Why do that without first getting concessions, like getting a lowering of the price of oil? Maybe you've noticed it's rather high?

I was expecting you to talk about how you plan to end the Libyan "problem", or to get tough with Syria, or tell us your plan for Egypt...something other than borrowing \$2 billion more from China to give away at the expense of the American taxpayers. I was expecting something intelligent and creative. I was not expecting you to simply try to suck-up to the Arabs!

You seem to be on the wrong side of this important issue. I'm very disappointed in you again!

--SteveB

[20110521-11](#) 15:58 B. Obama Re: Israel

Dear SteveB:

Thank you for your message. On behalf of President Obama, we appreciate hearing from you. The President has promised the most transparent administration in history, and we are committed to listening to and responding to you.

In order to better handle the millions of electronic messages we are receiving and respond more quickly, we have implemented a new contact form on our website:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Please note that this web form has replaced comments@whitehouse.gov. That email address is no longer monitored, so we encourage you to resubmit your message through the link above. Thank you for using the web form and helping us improve communications with you.

Sincerely, The Presidential Correspondence Team (president@whitehouse.gov)

20110521-12	16:21	GaryF	Re: Israel
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Dear SteveB,

I don't (too) often disagree with you, but, what's wrong with the pre' 1967 borders being a starting point with "Land Swaps" to be considered. For instance, Israel could possibly get the Golan Heights with Palestine getting a corridor to Gaza. Another thing to address is the fact that Israel is controlling 80% of the water in this area, and without water Palestine will remain a dry barren land only being able to grow militants. The other thing is the Arabs don't control the price of oil, thanks to Bush/Cheney and their energy summit, remember that, when Cheney and the heads of the oil companies got together behind closed doors in DC and came out with the plan of allowing oil to trade as a commodity, and then going all the way to the supreme court to fight against making their deliberations public. I also would have like to hear more about Libya and Syria, or how about Saudi Arabia. But let's be realistic, an American president finally had the balls to stand up against Israel and the Jewish lobby (they donate lots of money too) and say what virtually the rest of the world is in favor of. Without a secure Palestine, there will never be a secure Israel.

20110521-13	18:00	SteveG	Re: Boyhood Adventures
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Dear SteveB,

The big walnut was our only connection to water and the outside world. I remember playing there when it was flooding too - really rapid. Bastin and Clark were good ones. It was a good thing Cooper was older so he could buy us beer. Also remember some trips to Indiana Reach. Used your draft card one night to get into the bar - they made me sign a piece of paper and compared signatures. And then there was the night you got us run out of Terre Haute.

20110521-14	18:08	SteveB	Re: Boyhood Adventures
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Dear SteveG,

Haha! Yes...I remember. Two other guys I played on the Big Walnut with a lot were Elmore and Finkbinder. It's funny...all four of those guys are gone now. Really a shame. Also Templeman and Stauch. All great, exceptional people and friends.

I guess I'm getting into a somber mood since the world only has a couple of hours left...

Good luck in the next phase.

20110522-01	09:53	SteveB	Re: Israel
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Dear GaryF,

Good points, but I think as long as Hamas, etc. keep attacking Israel and refuse to even acknowledge Israel's right to exist, you have to play hardball with them. Unfortunately, that's the only thing they seem to understand. Weakness is death with these kind, gentle folks. Obama is a c*ck sucker, just like all these other American politicians. Why has no one been arrested for the Great Recession banking debacle? The only thing he is a little better than are the Republicans.

20110523-01	08:38	SteveB	2012 Republican Candidates
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Mmmm...it seems like, as I've said, any Republicans with any brains (and they are few and far between) are avoiding a 2012 Presidential run like the plague! Let me see...that leaves...LOL!

20110523-02	09:06	SteveB	"AP Exclusive: Former Palin Aide Pens Tell-All"
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I know...she's not worth the trouble...but maybe she's just dumb enough to run (though I think she'd rather just continue trying to get rich). And maybe after this book and the next one (by Joe McGinniss), she will decide it isn't worth the embarrassment.

Again, I particularly love the comments (a few of which are presented, below).

"AP Exclusive: Former Palin Aide Pens Tell-All" by Becky Bohrer, AP

May 23, 2011, (<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=13662873#.TxcGOG9SQhI>)

(JUNEAU, Alaska) A former member of Sarah Palin's inner circle has written a scathing tell-all, saying Palin was ready to quit as governor months before she actually resigned and was eager to leave office when more lucrative opportunities came around.

"In 2009 I had the sense if she made it to the White House and I had stayed silent, I could never forgive myself," Frank Bailey told The Associated Press.

Palin's attorney did not respond to multiple requests for comment for this story.

Blind Allegiance to Sarah Palin: A Memoir of Our Tumultuous Years is due out Tuesday and based on tens of thousands of emails that Bailey said he kept during his time with Palin. It began with working on her 2006 gubernatorial campaign and continued through her failed run for vice president in 2008 and her brief stint as governor.

The Alaska attorney general's office has said it's investigating Bailey's use of the emails. Executive ethics laws bar former public officials from using information acquired during their work for personal gain if the information hasn't been publicly disseminated.

The state has yet to release thousands of emails that Palin sent and received during her 2 1/2 years as governor. Bailey's attorney has said Bailey took "great care" to ensure his writings were consistent with legal requirements.

Billed as the first Palin book by a former aide, "Blind Allegiance" bolsters the perception of Palin as self-serving, while casting Bailey as her enforcer—willing to do the dirty work, no questions asked.

Bailey became a footnote in Alaska political history by getting embroiled in an investigation of Palin's firing of her police commissioner over allegations the commissioner wouldn't fire trooper Mike Wooten, who'd had a bitter divorce with Palin's sister. Bailey was caught on tape questioning a state trooper official about why Wooten was still employed.

Bailey, who was Palin's director of boards and commissions, was put on leave after news of the recording broke, though he claims his actions were with the prodding of Palin's husband, Todd. In spite of this, and what he describes as campaigns by Sarah Palin over the years to tear down others who have crossed or confronted her, he stuck around.

To speak up when he saw things he didn't agree with "went against all that investment of time and energy that I put into her," said Bailey. He said he "shed his family," his wife and two kids, to singularly focus on Palin during her rise to the governor's office and beyond.

When Palin burst onto the statewide political scene, she was seen as a "breath of fresh air" amid the corruption that had seeped into Alaska politics. "We looked at her as ... that queen on a horse that could come in and save the state," he said. "As we started to see that that was not the case, I kept silent and I just kept on working."

Among the claims made in the book: that Palin's 2006 gubernatorial campaign coordinated with the Republican Governors Association, or RGA, in violation of campaign rules. The book describes cameras rolling as Palin strode through the door at an Anchorage hotel "over and over and over," for an RGA ad. At that time, there was a one-year statute of limitations on complaints, and the Alaska Public Offices Commission did not receive any complaints related to Palin and the association during that period. However, the RGA was fined—unrelated to Palin—for late reporting, according to the commission's executive director, Paul Dauphinais.

Bailey said the final straw for him came in the summer of 2009, when Palin didn't attend a rally he believed she'd repeatedly agreed to attend, for supporters of a voter initiative to require minors get parental consent for an abortion. This came after a string of cancellations, including one before a Republican women's group at the Ronald Reagan Library in California. Her aides claimed no one had committed to this well-publicized event..

"Getting Sarah to meetings and events was like nailing Jell-O to a tree," Bailey wrote. On the campaign trail and as governor, Sarah went through at least ten schedulers, with few lasting more than months. Nobody wanted the job because Sarah might fail to honor, at the last minute, the smallest commitments, and making excuses for her became a painful burden."

By the time she cancelled on the parental notification event in Anchorage, Palin had resigned as Alaska's governor and embarked on a new path, one in which she'd become a best-selling author, highly sought-after speaker, political phenom and prospective presidential candidate.

Bailey claims her heart wasn't in governing after she returned to Alaska from her failed run for vice president. At home, she faced a barrage of ethics complaints—nearly all of which were ultimately dismissed—and Bailey said she told him as early as Feb., 2009 that if she could find the right message to tell Alaskans, she'd "quit tomorrow."

She resigned in July 2009.

Bailey confesses to "a ton of mistakes" and speaks of a return to God; he said his church has become a sanctuary and that he's reconnected with his family. He said writing the book—which itself has generated controversy—was cathartic.

In February, the book project also made headlines when a draft manuscript was leaked. An attorney for Bailey and his co-writers accused author Joe McGinniss, who has his own Palin book coming out this year. McGinniss' attorney acknowledged McGinniss selectively shared the manuscript, but said the manuscript included no request for confidentiality.

Bailey dismisses any suggestion he's disgruntled or bitter; he said he got a front-row seat to state and national politics and was able to recommend judges and set up "hundreds" of board positions. "Yeah, there were some tough, tough times but hopefully I've learned from some of that," he said. "Time will tell."

He said he has no ill feelings toward Palin, with whom he says he hasn't spoken since the fall of 2009. If anything, he said, he feels sad for her.

"I'm sad at a lot of wasted potential," said Bailey, who believed she could accomplish more than she did as governor. "I certainly don't hate her but I look at a lot of wasted opportunities on her part."

Comments:

"All of 'em, any of 'em that have been in front of me over all these years." —Sarah Palin, unable to name a single newspaper or magazine she reads, interview with Katie Couric, CBS News, Oct. 1, 2008

"Sarah Palin = the Paris Hilton of politics.

"I think on a national level your Department of Law there in the White House would look at some of the things that we've been charged with and automatically throw them out."—Sarah Palin, referring to a department that does not exist while attempting to explain why as president she wouldn't be subjected to the same ethics investigations that compelled her to resign as governor of Alaska, ABC News interview, July 7, 2009

I wonder if she knows what "separation of church and state" means. But the people best qualified to be our nation's leaders (rather than more useless managers) aren't brain-dead or altruistic enough to run. So we're stuck with Republicans, Democrats, and Palinites pretending to be what our country needs.

This woman is getting far too much attention for someone with so little content.

Should be titled "How I quit my government job and made millions off of mindless fools by selling them books and telling them all how great I am". A little long witted but then isn't she.

As a lifelong Republican, I ask only one thing of Sarah Palin: Go away now!

"They're in charge of the U.S. Senate so if they want to they can really get in there with the senators and make a lot of good policy changes that will make life better for Brandon and his family and his classroom."—Sarah Palin, getting the vice president's constitutional role wrong after being asked by a third grader what the vice president does, interview with NBC affiliate KUSA in Colorado, Oct. 21, 2008

If only I could say I had worked for Sarah—maybe I could make some money from the idiotic Palin feeding frenzy that the media keeps going, and going, and going. Give me a thumbs-up if you can agree with me to stop following dopey Palin gossip coverage!! Then maybe something worth reading will appear? (Don't hold your breath...)

20110524-01	13:04	SteveB	2012 Election & Fw: Alan Grayson
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Here's the way the 2012 election shapes-up: 48% of the vote automatically goes to Obama, because it is black and Hispanic minorities. Add to that many of the other Democrats and Independents. Now, with Paul Ryan's Medicare "plan", the seniors will swing to Obama en masse. Add to that most of the teachers in the country, since Republicans are hell-bent on eliminating a living wage and destroying our schools. And on Obama's landslide coattails will ride a Congressional majority of Democrats. It's a done deal. The Republicans have committed suicide.

This is why no honorable, intelligent Republican candidates want to run for President in 2012.

Now, if we could just convince these Democrats to do the right things to pull the country out of its current quagmire. If we could just end the corruption!

below thanks to Dennis:

Alan Grayson was on national TV on Friday night, attacking the Ryan Plan to end Medicare. The MSNBC host, Cenk Uygur, asked Grayson to explain why every Republican Presidential candidate has lined up in favor of the Ryan Plan. Still telling it like it is, this is what Grayson said:

AG: Listen, only 4 percent of all Americans ever vote in a Republican primary. That's 4 percent. The other 96 percent are the normal Americans. The 4 percent are people who must never get sick, because they don't want to have Medicare. Now think about that. Every other industrialized country in the entire world not only provides health care for its seniors, but health care for everyone. And the Republican right wing is trying to tell us that somehow we can't afford health care for our seniors. We've got 40,000 Americans under the age of 65 who die every year, because they can't afford to see a doctor when they're sick. And now they want to extend that [tragedy] to the most infirmed, most victimized, sickest part of the population, our senior citizens, so that more will die. I honestly believe that if Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck announced one day that they were in favor of the Black Death, you'd see every Republican primary candidate for President go along with it.

CU: (Laughter). You know, it depends. If Obama said, "Hey, I'd like to cure the Black Death," they'd be like, "Oh, I don't know, the Black Death sounds pretty good." So, now look, I think they've done tremendous damage to themselves. The polls are 70 percent and higher. They're on your side, Congressman Grayson. They say, "We don't want you to touch our Medicare." So what are they doing here? Do they have a plan? You know, is Rush Limbaugh or Fox News, are they doing some sort of strategy that we can't understand? Or are they just plain stupid?

AG: They are tools. It's that simple. They are tools. You know, George Carlin said it back in 2005, they have made us ignorant, these people who own the country. They have made us ignorant and they have made us poor. And now the next thing they want to do is to take away our Medicare and our Social Security. He said that in 2005, and it's taken six year to make it obvious that that's true. And God bless them, these Republicans like Ryan, you know, they may be cruel, they may be heartless, but at least they're honest. They've told us exactly what they want to do with the power that they have accumulated. They want to take away Social Security and Medicare from our senior citizens.

CU: You know, I think you nailed it. I think what it is, is corporations that have, you know, run amuck. It's out-of-control greed. Whether it's the banks with all the risks that they're taking, it's gonna crash our economy again. Whether it's the oil companies at the height of being the most profitable companies in the world, they still want to take billions in subsidies from the American taxpayers. And whether it's these guys trying to cut your Medicare so they can cut taxes for the rich. I think they got the note from the, you know, the richest people in the country, from the corporations who said: "Hit the gas pedal. We don't give a damn. We're going to out-raise these guys. We're gonna get more money, and this is the time to put 'em away. Just tell 'em what you're going to do. It doesn't matter; we're just going to outspend them during the elections." I think that's what's happening. Now the problem is they are going to outspend the Democrats in elections, so how do you deal with that problem?

AG: Well, it's apparent now that what these owners want is nothing from the rest of us except for cheap labor. And that makes the senior citizens particularly vulnerable to their plans, because the senior citizens don't work. So from the perspective of the owners of this country, they're useless. Their time in the economy is over and therefore they serve no purpose. But senior citizens still do vote and they voted in huge numbers in the last election, because the Republicans lied to them, and they told them that the Democrats wanted to take away their Medicare. Now they see that the Democrats are the only ones protecting their Medicare, and Republicans are out to destroy it. There's a reason why we call Medicare "an entitlement." It's because you're entitled to it. It's not Medicare any more if you are not entitled to it any more. They want to take away the privilege of Medicare. They want to take away the right to Medicare, and replace it with a piece of paper they know will not be enough to cover the costs of care. And that's how malevolent they really are. So I will say to senior citizens of this country: "Now you see the truth. You see their true colors. And the only thing you can do about it is turn out and vote for the only people in this country who are actually trying to protect you and your interests: the Democratic Party."

CU: Alrighty. Former Democratic Congressman from Florida, Alan Grayson, very clear as always. Thank you so much.

AG: Thank you, Cenk.

20110524-02	19:23	SteveB	"FSC Republicans Vote to Prohibit Implementation of Derivatives Rules Until Late 2012"
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These Republican are devoted, boot-licking slaves to big money! They must and will be stopped before they completely destroy us!

The bill they want to kill doesn't even go nearly far enough. It doesn't, for example, do anything to curb the speculation in the commodity markets which have driven the price of oil sky-high.

"FSC Republicans Vote to Prohibit Implementation of Derivatives Rules Until Late 2012", House Press Release

May 24, 2011, (<http://democrats.financialservices.house.gov/press/PRArticle.aspx?NewsID=1424>)

(WASHINGTON) The House Financial Services Committee today, over the unanimous objection of committee Democrats, passed legislation to prohibit, for more than two years the enactment of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, the implementation of provisions in the law having to do with the regulation of derivatives. The reckless use of

derivatives contributed to the downfall of AIG and fueled the liquidity crisis which imperiled many of the nation's largest financial institutions. Today's action represents a third wave of attack on the financial reform law by House Republicans.

The Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act gives the SEC and CFTC authority to regulate the use derivatives. It also creates transparency in markets for derivatives by requiring that most are traded on exchanges, and that details of these transactions, including price, are reported. In addition, the law is designed to minimize the risk of financial contagion of the sort caused by AIG, by requiring that participants in derivatives markets have sufficient capital to support their trades.

The Republican bill, H.R. 1573, was originally written to prohibit implementation of the derivatives rules until Dec. 31, 2012—after the 2012 elections. After coming under criticism from committee Democrats, Republicans offered and passed an amendment which would push the date up until Sept. 30, 2012, only thirty-seven days before the November election.

The markup process revealed a rift in the Republican caucus when Committee Chairman Spencer Bachus supported an amendment by Massachusetts Congressman Stephen Lynch; the amendment was opposed by other Republican committee Members. The Lynch amendment would restore the ability of the SEC and the CFTC to address issues related to speculative trading, including the establishment of position limits on swaps for commodities like crude oil. Speculation in crude oil markets is thought by many to be responsible for up to 20% of the recent increase in the cost of gasoline. The Lynch amendment passed on a voice vote.

The vote on final passage of the bill fell completely along party lines. The passage of the Republican bill to prohibit implementation of derivatives provisions until late 2012 is a third wave of attack on the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, which Congress passed into law in July 2010 over the almost unanimous opposition of House and Senate Republicans. Earlier this year, House Republicans passed a budget for FY 2012 which includes large cuts in the budgets of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, agencies charged with overseeing key aspects of the financial reform law. If the House budget becomes law, it is likely that both agencies will have difficulty carrying out the increased oversight of the financial services industry mandated by the law. Earlier this month, Republican Members of the House Financial Services Committee also mounted an attack on the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, passing legislation which would create a five-person committee to oversee the Bureau instead of the single Director as designated in the financial reform law. During the same week, Senate Republicans announced that they would not vote to confirm anyone to head the CFPB unless the plans for the Bureau were completely overhauled.

20110525-01	18:36	Dennis	"Ways to Stand Up to Bullying and Corruption"
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Dear SteveB,

["Ways to Stand Up to Bullying and Corruption" from Coffee Party USA email](#)

The Elizabeth Warren/Patrick McHenry confrontation on Capitol Hill yesterday was one of those rare moments in history when a single event symbolizes an enduring struggle. Rep. McHenry's behavior not only brought into focus the sort of hyper-partisan incivility that inspired the birth of the Coffee Party, it connected the tactic of bullying to the corrupting influence of money in politics.

McHenry's known top campaign sponsors include Bank of America, Wells Fargo, the American Bankers Association, JP Morgan & Chase, Goldman Sachs and Mortgage Bankers Association. Unfortunately for America, he is currently serving as the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on TARP, Financial Services and Bailouts of Public and Private Programs.

This is the crux of the problem in Washington. There is an inherent conflict of interest that is structural in nature, not just behavioral. This incident, captured on video and seen by millions in America, provides us with a real opportunity to change our country for the better. Here are four things you can do:

1. Write to President Obama, and demand that he not be bullied. He must nominate Elizabeth Warren to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. He knows that she is the most qualified for the job. In two days, we have already sent over 1,000 letters.

2. Write to Congress, and let them know that we want strong consumer protection. An independent agency with Elizabeth Warren as the director can be the start of a firewall protecting us from abusive banking practices that led to the financial crisis of 2008. In two weeks, we've already sent 14,000 letters.
3. Join the thousands of Americans who have commented on Patrick McHenry's Facebook page to let him know how we feel about bullying and corruption.
4. Register for our RAPID RESPONSE CALL TONIGHT at 6:30 pm PT/9:30 pm ET, join our Elizabeth Warren Facebook page, or, volunteer for this initiative.

Friends, Big Money is winning in Washington. But, the game is not over.

The fact that there are people like Elizabeth Warren still in the fight should tell us something. It's imperative that we support her and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We want and need this agency to become the start of a firewall to protect us from unregulated, risky, criminal behavior of big banks that led the 2008 financial crisis.

This is not about politics. This is about our families and our future. Please take action today. They have money, but we are many.

—Annabel, Eric, Billy, and the Coffee Party team

P.S.—To help grow the movement, please join the Coffee Party as an official member or donate to our actions. Visit us: <http://coffeepartyusa.com>.

20110526-01	18:29	Dennis	Insider Trading by Corrupt Congressmen
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And you thought they were public servants who only got free health care.....

In a new academic study, four university professors examined investment results on more than 16,000 stock transactions made by 300 House delegates from 1985 to 2001. The result was clear: They beat the market by an average of 0.55% per month, around 6.6% a year. The professors note a previous study showed members of the U.S. Senate did so well they outperformed hedge funds.

In fact, if members of Congress didn't beat the market, they'd be bigger morons than you already think they are. Why? Because insider trading laws don't apply to members of Congress... You heard that correctly. The Securities and Exchange Act does not apply to members of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives. Congressional ethics rules say Congressional members aren't allowed to use privileged information for personal gain. But it's just a rule, not a law. It's not legally enforceable. And it's obvious they're taking excess profits out of the stock market...

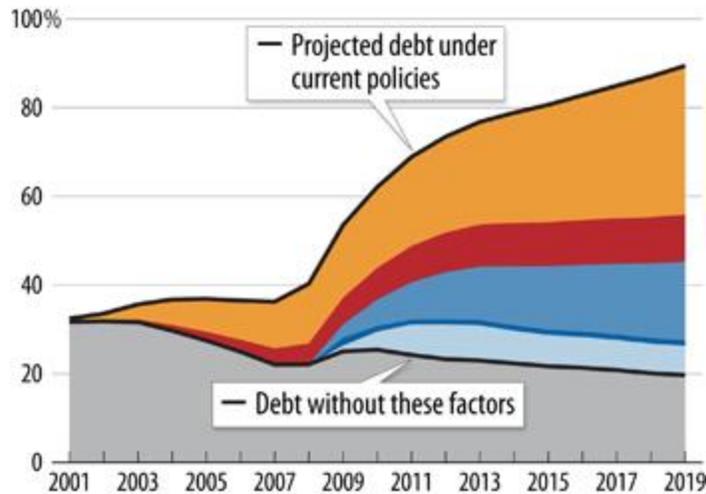
This must be one of the most underreported financial stories of the century. Take one example: The Senate Armed Services Committee forbids staff and presidential appointees requiring Senate confirmation from owning securities in more than 48,000 companies that contract with the Defense Department. But 19 of the 28 senators on that same committee held assets worth between \$3.8 million to \$10.2 million in companies on the prohibited list between 2004 and 2009.

20110527-01	15:34	SteveB	"Tax Cuts, Wars Account for Nearly Half of Public Debt by 2019"
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This chart from MoveOn.org illustrates the side of the problem all Republicans and many Democrats don't seem to want to talk about. The real problem is not education and "entitlements", which really pay for themselves and are necessary. The real problem that imperils our nation is the ridiculous Bush tax cuts and the even more ridiculous wars.

Tax Cuts, Wars Account For Nearly Half Of Public Debt By 2019

Debt held by the public as a share of GDP



Source: CBPP analysis based on Congressional Budget Office estimates.
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities | cbpp.org

Folks in D.C. say that if we want to get serious about our nation's debt, we need to slash essential programs like Medicare, Social Security, and our children's education.

But as we all know, it's just not true. Yes, our public debt has ballooned in the past decade, but no, it's not for the reasons people talk about.

[20110527-02](#) 17:25 Ben Let's Just Call Them 'Fascists'

Dear SteveB,

... Let's just call them "the Fascists". There is nothing "conservative" about them.

Maybe it'll stick.

[20110527-03](#) 18:36 SteveB Re: Let's Just Call Them 'Fascists'

Dear Ben,

Why not? The Republicans keep calling the rest of us socialists and even communists!

[20110528-01](#) 09:00 SteveG Re: "Tax Cuts, Wars Account for Nearly Half of Public Debt by 2019"

The graphs I have looked at indicated that we came through WW II, Korean War, Cold War, Vietnam virtually debt free. The real rise in debt started with Gulf War 1, was controlled and started down under Clinton, and then skyrocketed under George W. Bush. Some of the previous tax rates were 70-90% of what was made over \$500,000—we paid for wars, etc. as we went. We had money for Medicaid, Medicare, SSN. Since we have paid specific taxes for Medicaid, Medicare, and SSN, are they entitlements?

Here, they are going to provide 1/2 day kindergarten—if you want full day that will cost you \$350- 500 per month. Conversely—there is a good community college system and certain high school students could attend at no additional fees receiving their associates degree at the same time as their high school diploma at no additional costs—now they will have to pay 10% of the tuition costs at the community college—not a bad deal. Teachers in public schools are taking a 2% CUT, community colleges a 3% CUT. Education and health care are not the places to cut—\$690 billion defense budget???

[20110528-02](#) 14:42 SteveB Fw: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'

I couldn't agree more and neither could the American people—overwhelmingly! "Entitlement" is just another dirty Republican lie. This subject is suicide for the Republicans! Whoopie!

[Source of original email unknown. Not found anywhere online. —SteveB]

Social Security used to be called SSI on paychecks. That was for Social Security INSURANCE. Just like with any other kind of insurance you may need it and you may not. The idea of getting all you put in back is silly, and was never the intention of the program. Some will withdraw more than they put in, some will die immediately on retirement and withdraw almost nothing. No one wins or loses in either of those scenarios, it was simply insurance, and overall ALL the American people benefit from not having poor rickety seniors having to live under bridges just because they've outlived their savings.

Anyone who calls Social Security an "entitlement" is misrepresenting the facts and trying to re-write history for their own benefit—to steal seniors' benefits. It's a self-financing insurance program. Raising the payroll deduction by one percent would keep it solvent until the current wave of retiring baby boomers has subsided and things are in balance. Then reduce that one percent increase and everyone and everything is fine. But DON'T let those politicians tell you that YOU have to give up what you've been paying for all these years. And DON'T let them turn the program over to those Wall Street bankers, unless you really want to live under a bridge when you retire, because giving them all your retirement benefits will ensure you never see a penny.

[20110529-01](#) 09:36 Pam Re: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'

Dear SteveB,

You should put this on your Facebook page so more people will see it.

[20110529-02](#) 16:29 SteveB Re: Social Security Is Insurance, Not an 'Entitlement'

Dear Pam,

My instincts tell me, maybe wrongly, to keep serious stuff away from Facebook. I'm going to start a blog, like my hero, Pam, when it gets closer to the election.

I sure hope Sarah and Michele get in, so I have more to poke fun of. Newt is great material, though. Mitt might be (was he named after a baseball mitt?). The Donald would have been entertaining. Ron Paul is so radical that, sometimes, we rotates completely around an issue and comes out the other side, right. But more often cockeyed often wrong.

Doing a flurry of seeing friends and family as a preface to finally leaving Florida, or Flor-ee'-dah, as we say in Spanish. The weather's hot. Walked two hours today to try to take off some of these American pounds.

[20110601-01](#) 20:30 SteveB U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011

1. Where are the jobs?

Not here, other countries, why would we need jobs in America of all places?

2. Where is the value we put into our homes, into the American Dream?

Down the tubes.

3. Why the war on unions, taxes, and education?

Well, fighting these evils was also the first priority of the Nazis.

4. When are the real wars, that have now killed 6000 fine, brave Americans, going to end?

You have to be kidding.

5. When will anyone be punished for the excesses of Wall Street that caused the Great Recession?

You have to be kidding.

6. When will we tackle illegal immigration?

You have to be kidding.

7. When will we end our political corruption funded by huge campaign contributions from the rich and powerful?

You have to be kidding.

8. When will our public servants in Congress wake up and stop their efforts to destroy Social Security, Medicare, and every other part of government dedicated to helping American tax payers?

As soon as Newt, Sarah, Ron, Mitt, Michele, or one of the other idiots gets elected...hahahahahaha!

What sad days our glory at its end...
Evil men seek to steal our dreams
And leave us with their nightmares.

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20110602-01 09:59 Ben Re: U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011

Dear SteveB,

Why doesn't anyone ever mention the "collateral" costs of the war? Sure, my biggest concern is the loss of life and many a limb by our brave young soldiers, but—at least as many innocent human lives are lost. Not to mention the short-term and long-term economic impact of carpet-bombing entire nations. It's all from the same source, serving the same minorities only...

20110602-02 11:27 SteveB Re: U.S. Economic Status — June, 1, 2011

Dear Ben,

I guess the other casualties don't count because they're "furiners". And more of them are killed by their own people than by us, not that we're exactly blameless. But don't all the recent events in the Middle East and all the suicide bombings, etc. in Iraq and Afghanistan show us that we are dealing with truly evil m*ther f*ckers who are in power or want to take power in these countries? At least we have some concern for innocents. They don't. Not even for women, children, or fellow countrymen. If they could get to us, we would all be dead by horrible deaths. Don't doubt it for a minute.

Not that that makes continuing the wars any less stupid.

P.S. I don't think you'll find any incidents of carpet bombing in these wars.

[20110604-01](#) 08:08 SteveB "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

The idiocy begins...

I "love" the way her "mind" just riffs, even though it is so darned empty.

"Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride" by Amanda Carey, *The Daily Caller*

June 3, 2011, (<http://dailycaller.com/2011/06/03/sarah-palin-revises-history-of-paul-reveres-ride/>)

Sarah Palin's bus tour took her to Boston, Massachusetts on Thursday. While visiting Paul Revere's home, the potential presidential candidate botched the history of the famous midnight ride.

Of Paul Revere, Palin said, "He who warned the British that they weren't going to be taking away our arms by ringing those bells and making sure as he's riding his horse through town to send those warning shots and bells that we were going to be secure and we were going to be free."

Revere, of course, warned the colonists of Charlestown that the British were approaching on the night of Apr. 18, 1775 using lanterns ("one if by land, two if by sea")—not bells.

[20110605-01](#) 18:08 Lianne Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear SteveB,

I know. Can you believe it!

I hate that these Republican women are failing to represent my gender with grace, smarts and effectiveness. Gotta say, Hillary is doing a good job.

[Think about how President Obama must feel about Herman Cain! LOL! —SteveB]

[20110605-02](#) 19:53 SteveB Fw: Corporate Sponsors

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I think Congressmen should wear uniforms like NASCAR drivers so we could identify their corporate sponsors.

[20110605-03](#) 20:16 SteveB "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

More proof of the decline and fall of the greatest nation on Earth (formerly)...

The U.S. doesn't make the cut for Happiest Nations List. But, hey, we wouldn't want to actually DO anything about it, right? I guess we won't care if our people are prosperous and happy until they take to the streets and have to be shot in the name of "law and order", like in the extremely happy country of Syria!

"U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List" by Michael B. Sauter, Charles B. Stockdale, and Douglas A. McIntyre, 24/7 Wall St.

June 5, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43287918/ns/businessworld_business/t/us-doesnt-make-cut-happiest-nations-list/?qt1=43001#)

(Feel good about yourself and your Life? there's a chance you might be Danish. Danish residents have consistently rated themselves as the happiest in the world for years in several different studies.)

What makes people happy? The question, which has been debated by philosophers for centuries, now is being tackled by international bureaucrats and the results are interesting, to say the least.

24/7 Wall St. analyzed the new Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Better Life Index to objectively determine the happiest countries in the world. The Index is based on 11 measurements of quality of life including housing, income, jobs, community, education, the environment, health, work-life balance, and life satisfaction. We made "life satisfaction" the cornerstone of our index because it is as good a proxy for "happiness" as the survey provides. We then compared "life satisfaction" scores to the other measurements to find those economic and sociopolitical realities that had the highest and lowest correlation to happiness.

The happiest people in the developed world get loads of social services without having to work too hard. Having abundant natural resources, a thriving services sector and a fairly homogeneous population helps as well. The OECD study no doubt would have had different results had it included politically unstable countries in the Middle East or large emerging economies where political unrest threatens to bubble over such as China.

24/7 Wall St. also looked at one critical factor that the OECD study overlooked—economic stability. Our measure of this was total national debt as a percent of GDP. The figure helps determine a country's ability to maintain present tax levels and social services. Odds are that countries with high debt-to-GDP ratios are more likely to need austerity policies to reign-in their government spending. Otherwise, their debt costs will soar.

Nations with long-term economic strength can also afford to support employment, education, and make health care widely available. Happiness viewed in this way means that people are more likely to feel better about themselves in Norway, which has almost no debt and great social services, than in Greece, which must slash entitlement spending or risk defaulting on its debt.

Old, stable nations of northern Europe took five of the top 10 spots on our list. These include Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark. Switzerland is also on the list and has many characteristics in common with the Scandinavian countries. The resource-rich, English-speaking countries of Australia and Canada made the cut as well.

Noticeably absent from the list are any OECD nations in Latin America, southern and eastern Europe and Asia. Many of the southern European nations like Greece, Portugal, and Spain are in economic trouble and have high unemployment. The employment and education opportunities are not as good in Mexico as in Canada, nor is the access to high-quality health care. Japan and South Korea each have stable societies, but the people in both countries tend to work long hours and have limited leisure time.

The happiest countries seem to be places where there is a good balance of work and leisure time. Not all nations can afford to keep unemployment low through government subsidies. Not all countries can afford to provide universal medical coverage. Not all countries can afford to educate almost all of their children, which in turn supports extremely high literacy rates and builds a population of skilled workers.

The ten nations on this list are rich in natural resources or highly developed service sectors. These are assets which are in short supply worldwide, and that bolsters the foundations of the economies in these countries. Money alone doesn't buy happiness, but it sure helps.

This is the 24/7 Wall St list of the Ten Countries With The Happiest People, most of which have bought and paid for prosperity because their economies have allowed them to do so.

10. Austria

Life satisfaction score:	8.39
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	65.7 percent (23rd lowest highest)
Employment Rate:	7.87 (9th best)
Self-reported health:	6.57 (19th best)
Employees working long hours:	8.01 (24th best)
Disposable income:	5.34 (3rd best)
Educational attainment:	8.43 (13th best)

Life expectancy: 7.58 (13th best)

Austria has the one of the highest levels of scores for disposable income (the amount of money the household earns after taxes) in the OECD. Roughly 72 percent of Austrians between the ages of 15 and 64 are working, compared to the OECD average of 65 percent. Only 1.13 percent of working-age Austrians have been unemployed for more than a year, compared to an average of 2.7 percent across the 34 OECD nations, which contributes to the country's long-term employment.

According to the OECD's latest economic outlook report, Austrian businesses have largely avoided having to implement layoffs to offset the effect of the recession, employing practices like "labor hoarding" which reduces working hours and requires workers to work part-time and share job shifts.

9. Israel

Life satisfaction score: 8.71
Debt as a percentage of GDP: 74.7 percent (26th lowest)
Employment Rate: 4.23 (25th best)
Self-reported health: 8.29 (10th best)
Employees working long hours: 5.05 (29th best)
Disposable income: n/a
Educational attainment: 8.46 (12th best)
Life expectancy: 8.24 (8th best)

Israel is an outlier among OECD nations because it has a relatively high life satisfaction score, but performs poorly for many of the 19 quality of life measurements. For example, Israel has the sixth worst scores for student reading and the fourth worst scores for long hours worked, with 0.23 percent of workers maintaining extremely long hours compared to a OECD average of less than .1 percent. However, Israel's score for household wealth (which measures the total worth of a family's income and property after liabilities) is the fifth-highest across all nations on this list. Each household has an average estimated wealth of more than \$62,000, compared to an average of less than \$37,000. Part of the reason is low taxes—the country has an income tax rate of 6.3 percent of GDP, the sixth-lowest in the OECD.

8. Finland

Life satisfaction score: 8.71
Debt as a percentage of GDP: 41.6 percent (15th lowest)
Employment score: 6.77 (14th best)
Self-reported health: 6.25 (21st best)
Employees working long hours: 9.32 (9th best)
Disposable income: 4.38 (15th best)
Educational attainment: 8.43 (13th best)
Life expectancy: 6.92 (18th best)

For many of the metrics considered by the OECD for its "Better Life Initiative," Finland ranks about average. The country stands out in a few categories, however, causing it to rank eighth best for "life satisfaction." The category in which Finland does the best is education. Finnish students have the second best reading skills among students in all OECD countries, behind only South Korea. According to OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, literacy is one of the most reliable predictors of economic and social well-being. In 2009, the average student in Finland scored 536 out of 600 in literacy. The OECD average is 493. The quality of Finland's educational system can be attributed to the high respect the country shows its teachers. Teaching is "one of the most sought-after professions in the country," according to the OECD. Finland also scores very well regarding the work-life balance.

Citizens work almost 100 fewer hours per year than the OECD average. Also, 76 percent of mothers are employed once their children begin school—the fifth highest rate. This implies that mothers in Finland are largely able to balance family life and work.

7. Switzerland

Life satisfaction score: 9.03
Debt as a percentage of GDP: 20.2 percent (5th lowest)

Employment score:	10 (best)
Self-reported health:	8.51 (6th best)
Employees working long hours:	8.83 (17th best)
Disposable income:	5.3 (5th best)
Educational attainment:	9.35 (8th best)
Life expectancy:	9.45 (2nd best)

Switzerland has roughly the same level of life satisfaction as Israel, but unlike the Middle Eastern country, it scores near the top in most of these quality-of-life indices. The small, wealthy country bordering France and Germany scores in the top ten for nine out of the 20 OECD measurements, and in the top 20 for all but three. Swiss residents have the second-highest life expectancy in the OECD (82.2 years) and the highest rate of employment (79 percent of working-age residents). Switzerland also has a high rate of mothers who are employed after their children begin school—79 percent compared to an OECD average of 65 percent. The Swiss government subsidizes maternity leave for pregnancy and for up to 16 weeks following birth, which may provide an incentive for businesses to employ pregnant women.

6. Sweden

Life satisfaction score:	9.03
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	33.7 percent (9th lowest)
Employment score:	8.18 (6th best)
Self-reported health:	8.19 (11th best)
Employees working long hours:	9.86 2nd best)
Disposable income:	5.02 (10th best)
Educational attainment:	9.06 (10th best)
Life expectancy:	8.35 (7th best)

Sweden excels in a number of categories which make the lives of its citizens easier. The most striking of these is outdoor air quality, for which Sweden has the best out of all OECD countries. According to the Swedish government, its goal is that “the air should be so clean that no damage is inflicted on people's health, and animals, plants and cultural values.” Swedes have an above-average trust in their political institutions and above-average voter turnout for elections. The country also has the second highest level of “governmental transparency when drafting regulations,” further evidence of trust in the government. People in Sweden generally have a good balance between work and personal life. They certainly are not overworked, as only 0.01 percent of the population put in more than 50 hours a week on average, the second lowest amount among these countries.

5. The Netherlands

Life satisfaction score:	9.03
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	51.8 percent (20th lowest)
Employment score:	8.79 (4th best)
Self-reported health:	8.45 (7th best)
Employees working long hours:	10.0 (the best)
Disposable income:	4.86 (12th best)
Educational attainment:	7.19 (19th best)
Life expectancy:	7.25 (16th best)

Ninety-one percent of Dutch residents report being satisfied with their lives, more than any other country in the OECD. This is likely due in part to high scores for personal life and a good balance between work and leisure. In some countries, such as Turkey and Estonia, that figure is more than 10 percent. Dutch citizens also spend 70 percent of their day on personal care, leisure, eating and sleeping, the third-most of any country. This amount of leisure time reflects the national policy of work equality that comes from sharing of labor. In the 1980's, less than 40 percent of the country's working-age women were employed. That number is now more than 70 percent as a result of aggressive gender equality laws called the “emancipation plan.”

4. Australia

Life satisfaction score:	9.03
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	10.9 percent (3rd lowest)
Employment score:	8.05 (8th best)

Self-reported health:	9.18 (4th best)
Employees working long hours:	6.96 (28th best)
Disposable income:	5.16 (8th best)
Educational attainment:	6.62 (22nd best)
Life expectancy:	8.68 (3rd best)

Australia's performance varies when it comes to quality of life measurements. Seventy one percent of Australians reportedly trust their political institutions, compared to the OECD average of 56 percent. Australia also had the highest voter turnout among registered voters for the most recent election on record—96 percent. Australians are also generally in good health. The country's average life expectancy is two years longer than the OECD average. Tobacco consumption has also decreased by 50 percent since 1983, giving the country one of the lowest rates in the world and greatly reducing the risks of many chronic diseases. The country fares worse in other categories, however. Fourteen percent of employed people in the country work more than 50 hours a week on average, one of the highest percentages in the OECD. Joblessness for single-parent families is also a major problem in Australia, affecting more than 50 percent of such families in 2009.

According to the OECD, if the problem is not addressed, that number will increase 20 percent over the next 25 years. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, however, overall unemployment, which was 4.9 percent as of Apr., 2011, is the best it has been since Jan., 2009.

3. Norway

Life satisfaction score:	9.35
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	26 percent (third lowest)
Employment score:	8.98 (3rd best)
Self-reported health:	8.34 (9th best)
Employees working long hours:	9.47 (5th best)
Disposable income:	5.82 (2nd best)
Educational attainment:	8.37 (15th best)
Life expectancy:	7.69 (12th best)

Eighty-four percent of Norway's population is currently satisfied with their lives, compared to an average OECD rate of 54 percent. There are likely several reasons for this, as the Scandinavian country scored very well for housing, disposable income, and employment. Seventy-five percent of Norway's working-age population is employed, and only 0.34 percent of the population has been unemployed for more than a year. This is the one of the best rates in the OECD. Norway has the second highest disposable income among all countries on this list, behind only the United States. The average person across all 34 OECD nations works an average of 1,739 hours per year. The average Norwegian works just over 1,400 hours per year as the result of aggressive labor laws. For example, the country recently imposed sanctioned paternity leave, according to the International Labor Organization.

2. Canada

Life satisfaction score:	9.68
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	36 percent (11th lowest)
Employment score:	7.86 (10th best)
Self-reported health:	9.73 (2nd best)
Employees working long hours:	9.28 (10th best)
Disposable income:	5.16 (8th best)
Educational attainment:	9.39 (6th best)
Life expectancy:	7.8 (10th best)

Canada scores extremely well in the majority of metrics used to calculate "wellbeing." The country has the tenth greatest life expectancy of all OECD countries. Furthermore, 88 percent of people in Canada report being in "good health," compared to the OECD average of 69 percent. Although this is a subjective measure, it is "a good predictor of people's future health care use," according to the OECD. Education is also exceptional in the country. Eighty-seven percent of the population have received a high school degree or more, compared to the OECD average of 73 percent. In addition to this, the country has one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Canada is also relatively safe, with the lowest rate of reported assaults. The country's homicide rate, while higher than many other OECD countries, is still lower than the OECD average.

1. Denmark

Life satisfaction score:	10
Debt as a percentage of GDP:	39.5 percent (14th lowest)
Employment score:	8.4 (5th best)
Self-reported health:	7.37 (15th best)
Employees working long hours:	9.72 (3rd best)
Disposable income:	4.0 (18th best)
Educational attainment:	7.39 (18th best)
Life expectancy:	5.71 (25th best)

Danish residents have consistently rated themselves as the happiest in the world for years in several different studies. This is in some ways surprising, considering the Scandinavian country received only average scores for several metrics that other highly satisfied countries consistently perform well in. For example, Denmark's 26 percent income tax as a percent of GDP (the highest in the OECD) has resulted in an average disposable income of \$27,080 compared to the OECD average of \$36,800. This places Denmark among the bottom half of developed countries for disposable income. The country also ranks in the bottom third life expectancy and just average in self-reported health. However, Danes have one of the strongest senses of friendship and community, with 97 percent reporting they had someone other than a family member that they could rely on. Danish culture and government policy is one of the most leisure-friendly. Denmark's citizens spend more than 16 hours each week on leisure time, the second-highest rate in the OECD. The government also subsidizes a full year of maternity leave.

[20110605-04](#) 20:23 SteveB Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear Lianne,

I hope Hilary is doing a good job...but the wars continue..."free" trade continues...we continue to get raped and downgraded as a world power...Funny too how she thought she wanted to be President, but now she seems to be completely burned-out (as I'm sure I would be, in her shoes). She doesn't even want to be Secretary of State four more years or President any longer.

I don't know why Michelle and Sarah don't study her and realize that they don't really want to take on the job either. Obama wants the job, but has not proven to be the leader I hoped he would be.

When the election draws a little nearer, I'm going to turn my email rantings into a blog, this time around. I'll send you the link.

[20110606-01](#) 07:29 Lianne Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear SteveB,

Parlaying into a blog should be interesting. Right now my energy is the way of kado. Found a teacher and enjoying my study and practice of ikebana. Also, looking forward to days reading at the beach. Just sent away for an inflatable kayak that can be stowed in the car and easily carried to some rivers nearby.

[20110606-02](#) 08:53 SteveB Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear Lianne,

It's great to hear the latest news from you.

Had to give my red kayak to my daughter, Marissa, who just graduated from college. Have been in Florida for almost six months now, visiting daughters, grandkids, and friends (many now in Florida), and working on my woman's American citizenship. She was finally sworn-in May 25.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20110606-03](#) 09:18 Ben Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear SteveB,

Revere, of course, did not HANG the lamps—he was on the receiving end of that signal. [The article said "using". —SteveB]

And, to be fair to the idiot, he DID warn 'the British'. Technically. After all, those colonists were still British citizens, if unhappy ones. [That's bending very far. Normally, we call these people the "Colonists" (later, "Militiamen", then "Minutemen", then "Revolutionaries") to distinguish them from the British. —SteveB]

[20110606-04](#) 10:03 Bill Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

Dear SteveB,

These people don't understand the necessity of prosecuting unending and horrendously expensive war in far corners of the world.

[20110606-05](#) 10:04 DaveY Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

Dear SteveB,

In my opinion, the main reason for the U.S. decline is the low priority the nation puts on education. States throughout the country are slashing funds for education, closing schools, and laying off teachers. It seems to be the only part of the budget they are willing to cut, except for healthcare for seniors.

[20110606-06](#) 11:10 SteveB Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

DaveY,

Happy to have you join the discussion! I'm going to turn it into a blog when we get closer to the election.

Yes, the Republican agenda seems destined to let the rich get richer and keep the rest of us poor, uneducated, and without jobs. And, unfortunately, the Democrats don't seem to be much better. All the politicians are bought and sold by large campaign contributions and are ready to keep selling the rest of us down the river.

Take care and thanks for your thoughts, no matter if they agree or disagree...my only aim is to get at the truth and to try to help make things better.

[20110606-07](#) 11:19 SteveB "Palin Defends Her Grasp of History"

"Palin Defends Her Grasp of History" by Laurie Kellman, AP

June 6, 2011, ([http://www.northjersey.com/news/123209618 Palin defends her grasp of history.html](http://www.northjersey.com/news/123209618_Palin_defends_her_grasp_of_history.html))

(WASHINGTON) Sarah Palin insisted Sunday that history was on her side when she claimed that Paul Revere's famous ride was intended to warn both British soldiers and his fellow colonists.

"You realize that you messed up about Paul Revere, don't you?" "Fox News Sunday" anchor Chris Wallace asked the potential 2012 presidential candidate.

"I didn't mess up about Paul Revere," replied Palin, a paid contributor to the network. "Part of his ride was to warn the British that were already there. That, hey, you're not going to succeed. You're not going to take American arms. You are not going to beat our own well-armed persons, individual, private militia that we have," she added. "He did warn the British."

Palin, who again said she has not decided whether to run for president, was asked about the Revolutionary War hero during a stop Thursday in Boston on her East Coast bus tour. "He who warned the British that they weren't gonna be takin' away our arms by ringing those bells, and makin' sure as he's riding his horse through town to send those warning shots and bells that we were going to be sure and we were going to be free, and we were going to be armed."

Palin's brush with the nation's history came toward the end of her "One Nation" bus tour that generated intense interest as she traveled from Washington to New England. Along the way, she steadfastly refused "a million times" to say whether she was running for president. "I'm publicizing Americana and our foundation and how important it is that we learn about our past and our challenges and victories throughout American history, so that we can successfully proceed forward," Palin said in the broadcast interview. "It's not a campaign tour." And was she leaning toward or against running, Palin was asked?

"Still right there in the middle," she said.

20110606-08 12:06 SteveG Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

Dear SteveB,

In Washington they are charging \$500 A MONTH FOR ALL DAY KINDERGARTEN. IF YOU WANT ½ DAY THAT IS COVERED IN YOUR TAXES. Academic scholarships to 4 year colleges are being rescinded—not guaranteeing there will be money attached. Teachers are taking 3% cut and having their insurance raised

20110606-09 14:05 Dennis Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

from SteveB:

The ten nations on this list are rich in natural resources or highly developed service sectors. These are assets which are in short supply worldwide, and that bolsters the foundations of the economies in these countries. Money alone doesn't buy happiness, but it sure helps.

Dear SteveB,

Don't all of these countries have high taxes? We should send them some Republicans who would then b*tch and make everyone unhappy thus raising the relative position of America in this survey.

20110606-10 15:44 Dick Fw: President Obama's Visit to London

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Mama Mia.....

What a display of arrogance! These two, Michelle and Barry, act like kids in a candy store—and it's our candy that they are squandering by taking 500 of their closest friends to London . Just think, we are nearly bankrupt and Obama takes 500 staffers for a 3-day "official visit" to the U.K.

If you're not sure what "big government" is, take a look at this.

But you have already read about this in your local newspaper.

You didn't? Okay then, you saw it on CNN? No? Gee, I wonder why our media is failing to report these facts to the American people?

You and I may never see health care again the way it used to be, but "Emperor Obama" took six (6) doctors with him for a 3-day visit to London—along with 494 other essential staff.

[20110606-11](#) 18:05 SteveB Re: President Obama's Expensive Visit to London

Dear Dick,

Where were you when Bush was traveling (for example, in 2003 and 2007, as he and the other Republicans were destroying our economy)? It seems like Mr. Obama (in 2009) was being rather conservative:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/nov/19/uk.iraq>

<http://www.talkleft.com/story/2003/11/19/832/96440>

<http://boingboing.net/2007/11/29/president-bushs-trav.html>

http://www.airliners.net/aviation-forums/non_aviation/print.main?id=454954

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1389825/Obamas-Beast-Cadillac-flown-US-London-drive-Mall.html>

[20110606-12](#) 18:11 SteveB Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List"

Dear Dennis,

These countries do have high overall taxes. Much higher effective tax rates than the U.S. What's the effective tax rate, for example, on GE?

Your idea of sending them some Republicans (to keep?) is a policy I could get on board with! :-)

[20110606-13](#) 18:59 GaryC Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear SteveB,

I am sure if Obama said this, you would wage an enlightened defense of his intellectual prowess in contorting words to make his point. BTW, have you looked at some of the inane statements he has made in the past 2 years? Palin does not have an exclusive license for being an idiot.

[20110606-14](#) 19:02 GaryC Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List" Taxes

Dear SteveB,

You are mixing apples and oranges again. it's not the tax rate that is important but what is taxed. Who cares if the tax rate is 50% but they exclude all income made outside of their own country. This is far bigger than just the rate.

[20110606-15](#) 19:08 SteveB Re: "U.S. Doesn't Make Cut for Happiest Nations List" Taxes

Dear GaryC,

The key word is "effective", isn't it?

[20110606-16](#) 19:23 SteveB "New York Congressman: 'The Picture Was of Me, I Sent It.'"

In the interest of fairness, when an idiot appears, I will call him out...no matter his/her party affiliation. This guy is a liar and, worse, an idiot. He should resign immediately. What a wiener! What a whiner! He sounds almost as bad as Ron Paul.

As I always say, both parties are equally bad (well, almost). Neither of them can be trusted. Both of them are corrupt. Anyone who believes party dogma from one or the other is going to save us is sadly mistaken. The system (campaign financing, lobbying, etc.) must be changed or there will be no real change. Blind loyalty to either party is ludicrous.

"New York Congressman: 'The Picture Was of Me, I Sent It.'" MSNBC

June 6, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43299964/ns/politics-capitol_hill/t/new-york-congressman-picture-was-me-i-sent-it/)

(Weiner also admits to online relations with 'about six women over the past three years.')

(WASHINGTON) After days of denials, a choked-up New York Democratic Rep. Anthony Weiner confessed Monday that he tweeted a bulging-underpants photo of himself to a young woman. "The picture was of me, I sent it," he told a room full of reporters in Manhattan. Though Weiner says he does not believe he did anything that "violates any law or violates my oath to my constituents," House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi announced Monday that she's calling for an Ethics Committee investigation to "determine whether any official resources were used or any other violation of House rules occurred."

For his part, Weiner said, "I welcome and will fully cooperate with an investigation." Weiner said he intended to send the picture as a joke, but "I panicked, I took it down and said that I had been hacked."

Earlier Monday, the conservative website that started the furor over that lewd image, posted new photos from a second woman who said she received shirtless shots of the congressman.

Weiner, who said he has no intentions of resigning, admitted to further questionable online behavior at the news conference.

Weiner said he has had "several inappropriate conversations with women I have met online," he estimated that there had been "about six women over the past three years." He said many of the exchanges took place before his marriage, but others happened more recently.

Weiner insisted the relationships never moved beyond online interactions. "I have never met any of these women ... I've never had sex outside of my marriage."

He said he did not know the ages of all the women, but believes "they're all adults, at least to the best of my knowledge."

Earlier Monday, BigGovernment.com, a website run by conservative activist Andrew Breitbart, posted a new photo from a second woman allegedly in contact with Weiner. Breitbart said the new photo was in a cache of intimate online photographs, chats, and email exchanges the woman claimed to have.

Breitbart appeared unexpectedly at Weiner's news conference, approached the microphone and began taking reporters' questions before the congressman entered the room.

He said, "This is a continuing attempt to blame the messenger ... I'm being accused of being a hacker." Added Breitbart, "I'm here for some vindication." Breitbart's site published photos of shirtless man it claimed was Weiner Later pressed by reporters at the Monday afternoon event, Weiner apologized to Breitbart.

Weiner said he did not feel the scandal affected his work as a lawmaker but would understand if his constituents decided not to re-elect him. "I'm going to work very hard to win back their trust," he said.

Weiner said he used his home computer and personal Blackberry, not government computers, in his exchanges with the women. But that may not protect him from House rules that say a member "shall conduct himself at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House."

On numerous occasions, the House ethics committee has cited that general rule in finding a representative in violation of conduct standards.

Meanwhile, the celebrity website RadarOnline.com said a woman claimed to have 200 sexually explicit messages from Weiner through a Facebook account that Weiner no longer uses.

Weiner had said his Twitter account was hacked and that he'd hired a lawyer and a private security firm to get to investigate the incident involving the underwear shot. But he could not say for sure if the underwear photo was of him.

The photo purportedly showing Weiner shirtless was reminiscent of a photo of former Rep. Chris Lee, a New York Republican who resigned from office earlier this year after a shirtless photo he sent a woman on Craig's List became public.

"I was embarrassed and I didn't want it to lead to other embarrassing things," said Weiner of his initial denial of the story. "It was a dumb thing to do, to try to tell lies about it because it just led to more lies."

Weiner, 46, married Hillary Clinton aide Huma Abedin last July, with former President Bill Clinton officiating. He said Abedin, who wasn't present Monday, was aware of his online behavior prior to their wedding.

"I love my wife very much, and we have no intention of splitting up over this," insisted the New York congressman.

(Msnbc.com's Kara Kearns and Carrie Dann contributed to this report.)

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20110606-17 19:37 SteveB Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride" President Obama

Dear GaryC,

You misjudge me. I have no intrinsic loyalty to Obama. This is what I wrote to an old friend yesterday who had responded to the same email:

I hope Hilary is doing a good job...but the wars continue..."free" trade continues...we continue to get raped and downgraded as a world power... Funny too how she thought she wanted to be President, but now she seems to be completely burned-out (as I'm sure I would be, in her shoes). She doesn't even want to be Secretary of State four more years or President any longer.

I don't know why Michelle and Sarah don't study her and realize that they don't really want to take on the job either. Obama wants the job, but has not proven to be the leader I hoped he would be.

When the election draws a little nearer, I'm going to turn my email rantings into a blog, this time around. I'll send you the link."

If you think Obama has said such "inane" things, send one to me and I'd be happy to discuss it, but I suspect you are referring more to philosophical issues than to issues of brute stupidity.

I think it's extremely obvious that the tired, old, discredited ideas the Republican and Tea Baggers are brandishing around are not the solutions to our problems. The causes of our problems are corruption, boot-licking the rich and powerful, failure to innovate, the wars, and insufficient taxation.

The Republican solution seems to be to crush the old and weak, destroy education and unions, and refrain from talking about the real problems. They feel that if they tell the "big lie" often enough, people will believe it. I intend to fight them on that one tooth and nail.

20110606-18 19:44 GaryC Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear SteveB,

I apologize but I don't have time to track all of the idiot pronouncements of the great community organizer. The next time one pops up, I will send it along. It is nice to see you are SOMEWHAT of an equal opportunity basher but your emails tend to bash Republicans and then say that they all do it. Be fair and balanced and report the idiocy of the Democrats also. Your standing will be much enhanced as you will be seen to be fair and not just ideologically fixated.

20110606-19 19:53 SteveB Re: "Sarah Palin Revises History of Paul Revere's Ride"

Dear GaryC,

Please read the last two paragraphs...

Only a few more days in Florida...heading back to Santa Cruz on the 14th with my, now, American wife, just in time for "winter".

20110607-01 09:05 SteveG Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Level the playing field

(I have totally cleaned this e-mail from all other names, sending it to you in hopes you will keep it going and keep it clean. This is something I will fight for and I hope you all read it all the way through. You will be glad you did.)

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971... before computers, before e-mail, before cell phones, etc.

Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took 1 year or less to become the law of the land... all because of public pressure.

I'm asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise.

In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011

1. Term Limits. 12 years only, one of the possible options below:

- A. Two Six-year Senate terms.
- B. Six Two-year House terms.
- C. One Six-year Senate term and three Two-Year House terms.

2. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.

3. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people.

4. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.

5. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.

6. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.

7. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.

8. All contracts with past and present Congressmen are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make these current contracts with Congressmen. Congressmen made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people, then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Maybe it is time. THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS!!!! If you agree with the above, pass it on. If not, just delete. You are one of my 20+. Please keep it going.

20110607-02	09:31	SteveB	Fw: CredoAction Petition: Tell Congress to Tax the Rich
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from CredoAction:

Tell Congress: It's time to raise taxes on millionaires and billionaires. Click here to sign our petition:

http://act.credoaction.com/campaign/tax_millionaires/index2.html?r=7425&id=22146-4050539-FyNvKAx.

Today marks the tenth anniversary of the Bush tax cuts for the richest Americans—one of the biggest economic injustices of the Bush administration and one of the biggest drivers of our federal deficit.

These massive tax giveaways to the wealthy were supposed to expire at the beginning of the year, but Republicans went to the mat to extend them, and Democrats caved when it was most important that they stand up and show courage.

And now these same politicians who pushed for the tax cuts are saying we cannot afford our social safety net because "we're broke."

There is something deeply wrong with our priorities as a country if we're cutting back on services for children and the elderly, the sick and the destitute, and anything that helps the middle class stay afloat while simultaneously cutting taxes for the likes of Paris Hilton and the Koch brothers.

Fortunately, it doesn't have to be this way.

There's an epidemic of home foreclosures. Unemployment is rampant. The cost of food, gas and health care is going up. Families across the country are falling into poverty, while many more are struggling just to get by.

Yet Republicans who support all the policies that created the deficit are holding Americans hostage in ongoing negotiations over raising the debt ceiling and the 2012 budget. And what are they demanding? Cuts, cuts and more cuts.

Anyone who is making more than a million dollars a year can afford to pay more to prevent brutal budget cuts. Rather than shred the social safety net when we need it most, tax millionaires and billionaires. It's long past time for the super wealthy to pay their fair share.

Progressives need to offer an alternative to the morally bankrupt and economically baseless dogma of "tax cuts for the rich, massive spending cuts for everyone else." And the alternative cannot be simply to propose slightly less brutal spending cuts. We need to put tax increases back on the table.

While some members of the Democratic leadership have fallen into this trap of accepting the rightwing framing of the debate, progressive champions Rep. Jan Schakowsky and Sen. Bernie Sanders are leading the fight for a real solution to our budget crisis. They have each introduced a bill to raise the income tax rates on people who make more than one million dollars a year. And they need our help to start changing the narrative around the budget.

We won't be able to repeal the Bush tax cuts anytime soon, but on their anniversary we need to speak out for the principle that the rich need to pay their fair share. Increasing taxes on millionaires and billionaires won't be a silver bullet, but it would bring in tens of billions of dollars that would allow us to avoid some of the most brutal budget cuts we're now facing. And it would be a step toward making our tax system more fair.

The disparity between the rich and the poor is growing in a way that is deeply unhealthy to our society. The richest 1% of Americans are making 24% of the country's income, which is the highest share it has been since the 1930s. The 1930s were also the last time the richest 1% have so consistently paid such a low income tax rate. And as Michael Moore has pointed out, the top 400 Americans own more wealth than the bottom 50% of Americans put together.

This wide gulf between the haves and the have-nots not only affects our economy, it distorts our democracy. We have to take action before it's too late.

Our country isn't broke. But if the Republican's intellectually dishonest claim that we are is met with silence, our country's moral compass may become broken.

We cannot shred the social safety net when it's most needed. We cannot allow the budget to be balanced on the backs of the very people who've taken it on the chin during this economic crisis. It's long past time to require the super wealthy pay their fair share. Now, more than ever, we need you to speak out.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

20110607-03 19:51 SteveB Fw: Buy Americ-CAN!

I have been doing this as much as possible for about the last six months. I agree with everything said below, except that I think it should be done from this day forward, not just for one lousy month. Please pass it on. If you do this, the jobs will return eventually. After all, it's us against them, and we're in the fight of our lives. The very future is at stake. BUY AMERICAN! (or anything but Chinese!)

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Another potential solution: Check the can!

Did you all see that Diane Sawyer has done a special report on this very subject. They removed ALL items from a typical, middle-class family's home, that were not made in the U.S. There was hardly anything left besides the kitchen sink. Literally. During the special they are going to show truckloads of items—U.S. made—being brought in to replace everything. And will be talking about how to find these items and the difference in price etc.

It was interesting that Diane said that if every American/Canadian spent just \$64 (more than normal) on U.S./Canada made items this year, it would create something like 200,000 new jobs.

I WAS BUYING FOOD THE OTHER DAY AT WALMART. FOR EXAMPLE THE "OUR FAMILY" BRAND OF THE MANDARIN ORANGES SAYS RIGHT ON THE CAN 'FROM CHINA'.

I WAS SHOCKED!! SO FOR A FEW MORE CENTS I BOUGHT THE LIBERTY GOLD BRAND OR THE DOLE SINCE IT'S FROM CALIF.

Are we Americans/Canadians as dumb as we appear— or— is it that we just do not think? While the Chinese, knowingly and intentionally, export inferior and even toxic products and dangerous toys and goods to be sold in American/Canadian markets.

Yet 70% of Americans/Canadians believe that the trading privileges afforded to the Chinese should be suspended.

Well, duh..why do you need the government to suspend trading privileges?

SIMPLY DO IT YOURSELF, AMERICA/CANADA!!

Simply look on the bottom of every product you buy, and if it says 'Made in China ' or 'PRC' (and that now includes Hong Kong), simply choose another product, or none at all. You will be amazed at how dependent you are on Chinese products, and you will be equally amazed at what you can do without.

THINK ABOUT THIS: If 200 million Americans/Canadians refuse to buy just \$20 each of Chinese goods, that's a billion dollar trade imbalance resolved in our favor...fast!!

The downside? Some American/Canadian businesses will feel a temporary pinch from having foreign stockpiles of inventory. Wahhhhhhhhhhh!!

The solution? Let's give them fair warning and send our own message. Most of the people who have been reading about this matter are planning on implementing this on June 4th and continue it until July 4th. That is only one month of trading losses, but it will hit the Chinese for 1/12th of the total, or 8%, of their American/Canadian exports. Then they will at least have to ask themselves if the benefits of their arrogance and lawlessness were worth it.

Remember, June 4th to July 4th—START NOW! [Why not from now on? —SteveB]

Send this to everybody you know. Let's show them that we are Americans and Canadians and NOBODY can take us for granted.

If we can't live without cheap Chinese goods for one month out of our lives, WE DESERVE WHAT WE GET!

Pass it on, America/Canada.

20110608-01	11:13	SteveB	"New Battery Design Could Give Electric Vehicles a Jolt"
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Just as with railroads in days of yore, good schools, well-educated students, and government help will be necessary to build the future. Hopefully, we won't kill the goose that laid the golden egg in servitude to some dogma.

"New Battery Design Could Give Electric Vehicles a Jolt" by David L. Chandler, *MIT News*

June 6, 2011, (<http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2011/flow-batteries-0606.html>)

(Significant advance in battery architecture could be breakthrough for electric vehicles and grid storage.)

A radically new approach to the design of batteries, developed by researchers at MIT, could provide a lightweight and inexpensive alternative to existing batteries for electric vehicles and the power grid. The technology could even make "refueling" such batteries as quick and easy as pumping gas into a conventional car.

The new battery relies on an innovative architecture called a semi-solid flow cell, in which solid particles are suspended in a carrier liquid and pumped through the system. In this design, the battery's active components — the positive and negative electrodes, or cathodes and anodes — are composed of particles suspended in a liquid electrolyte. These two different suspensions are pumped through systems separated by a filter, such as a thin porous membrane.

The work was carried out by Mihai Duduta '10 and graduate student Bryan Ho, under the leadership of professors of materials science W. Craig Carter and Yet-Ming Chiang. It is described in a paper published May 20 in the journal *Advanced Energy Materials*. The paper was co-authored by visiting research scientist Pimpa Limthongkul '02, postdoc Vanessa Wood '10 and graduate student Victor Brunini '08.

One important characteristic of the new design is that it separates the two functions of the battery — storing energy until it is needed, and discharging that energy when it needs to be used — into separate physical structures. (In conventional batteries, the storage and discharge both take place in the same structure.) Separating these functions means that batteries can be designed more efficiently, Chiang says.

The new design should make it possible to reduce the size and the cost of a complete battery system, including all of its structural support and connectors, to about half the current levels. That dramatic reduction could be the key to making electric vehicles fully competitive with conventional gas- or diesel-powered vehicles, the researchers say.

Another potential advantage is that in vehicle applications, such a system would permit the possibility of simply "refueling" the battery by pumping out the liquid slurry and pumping in a fresh, fully charged replacement, or by

swapping out the tanks like tires at a pit stop, while still preserving the option of simply recharging the existing material when time permits.

Flow batteries have existed for some time, but have used liquids with very low energy density (the amount of energy that can be stored in a given volume). Because of this, existing flow batteries take up much more space than fuel cells and require rapid pumping of their fluid, further reducing their efficiency.

The new semi-solid flow batteries pioneered by Chiang and colleagues overcome this limitation, providing a 10-fold improvement in energy density over present liquid flow-batteries, and lower-cost manufacturing than conventional lithium-ion batteries. Because the material has such a high energy density, it does not need to be pumped rapidly to deliver its power. "It kind of oozes," Chiang says. Because the suspensions look and flow like black goo and could end up used in place of petroleum for transportation, Carter says, "We call it 'Cambridge crude.'"

The key insight by Chiang's team was that it would be possible to combine the basic structure of aqueous-flow batteries with the proven chemistry of lithium-ion batteries by reducing the batteries' solid materials to tiny particles that could be carried in a liquid suspension — similar to the way quicksand can flow like a liquid even though it consists mostly of solid particles. "We're using two proven technologies, and putting them together," Carter says.

In addition to potential applications in vehicles, the new battery system could be scaled up to very large sizes at low cost. This would make it particularly well-suited for large-scale electricity storage for utilities, potentially making intermittent, unpredictable sources such as wind and solar energy practical for powering the electric grid.

The team set out to "reinvent the rechargeable battery," Chiang says. But the device they came up with is potentially a whole family of new battery systems, because it's a design architecture that "is not linked to any particular chemistry." Chiang and his colleagues are now exploring different chemical combinations that could be used within the semi-solid flow system. "We'll figure out what can be practically developed today," Chiang says, "but as better materials come along, we can adapt them to this architecture."

Yury Gogotsi, Distinguished University Professor at Drexel University and director of Drexel's Nanotechnology Institute, says, "The demonstration of a semi-solid lithium-ion battery is a major breakthrough that shows that slurry-type active materials can be used for storing electrical energy." This advance, he says, "has tremendous importance for the future of energy production and storage."

Gogotsi cautions that making a practical, commercial version of such a battery will require research to find better cathode and anode materials and electrolytes, but adds, "I don't see fundamental problems that cannot be addressed — those are primarily engineering issues. Of course, developing working systems that can compete with currently available batteries in terms of cost and performance may take years."

Chiang, whose earlier insights on lithium-ion battery chemistries led to the 2001 founding of MIT spinoff A123 Systems, says the two technologies are complementary, and address different potential applications. For example, the new semi-solid flow batteries will probably never be suitable for smaller applications such as tools, or where short bursts of very high power are required — areas where A123's batteries excel.

The new technology is being licensed to a company called 24M Technologies, founded last summer by Chiang and Carter along with entrepreneur Throop Wilder, who is the company's president. The company has already raised more than \$16 million in venture capital and federal research financing.

The development of the technology was partly funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and Advanced Research Projects Agency — Energy (ARPA-E). Continuing research on the technology is taking place partly at 24M, where some recent MIT graduates who worked on the project are part of the team; at MIT, where professors Angela Belcher and Paula Hammond are co-investigators; and at Rutgers, with Professor Glenn Amatucci.

The target of the team's ongoing work, under a three-year ARPA-E grant awarded in September 2010, is to have, by the end of the grant period, "a fully-functioning, reduced-scale prototype system," Chiang says, ready to be engineered for production as a replacement for existing electric-car batteries.

Dear SteveB,

WOW, so very true never looked at it like that before! I will be sure to do this from now on and not just one month. My dad was a firm believer in buying American so he would not be happy with this report and I try and please them even though they are not with me anymore. I just never realized. Thanks for sharing!

20110610-01	09:29	SteveB	"Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse"
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Another dummy bites the dust (I hope)...

An incredibly unprecedented happening in the campaign of a man way below the level of Presidential material. Good riddance to bad garbage!

"Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse" by MSNBC Staff

June 10, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43343808/ns/politics-decision_2012/t/senior-gingrich-aides-resign-campaign-en-masse/)

WASHINGTON—The entire top echelon of Newt Gingrich's presidential campaign resigned on Thursday, a stunning mass exodus that left his bid for the Republican nomination in tatters. But the former House speaker vowed defiantly to remain a candidate.

"I am committed to running the substantive, solutions-oriented campaign I set out to run earlier this spring," Gingrich said in a posting to his Facebook page. "The campaign begins anew Sunday in Los Angeles."

NBC News confirmed the departures to Gingrich's team, including spokesman Rick Tyler, campaign manager Rob Johnson, and strategists Dave Carney and Sam Dawson.

Tyler told NBC, "There is a path to victory ... But there was a dispute on what that path to victory was." Tyler was with the former House speaker for nearly 12 years. "I have no regrets. I admire him deeply. I hope he does become president."

'A different vision'

Other officials said Gingrich was informed that his entire high command was quitting in a meeting at his headquarters in Washington. They cited differences over the direction of the campaign.

"We had a different vision for victory," Tyler told The Associated Press. "And since we couldn't resolve that difference, I didn't feel I could be useful in serving him." He said Gingrich was not allowing enough time to campaign in key states.

Carney also spoke to NBC saying, "The professional team came to the realization that the direction of the campaign they sought and Newt's vision for the campaign were incompatible."

Carney, who was heading up Gingrich's efforts in New Hampshire, is former aide to Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who may be mulling his own White House run. And Johnson, Gingrich's (now former) campaign manager, ran Perry's election bid last year.

"Nothing has changed," Perry's spokesman, Mark Miner, said in an interview on Thursday. "The governor is focused on the legislative session."

Longtime Gingrich ally and attorney, Randy Evans, told NBC News while most senior aides have left the campaign, he is still on board with the candidate's presidential run.

NBC also confirmed that South Carolina consultant Katon Dawson and Iowa operative Craig Schoenfeld quit Team Gingrich. The entire full-time staff in Iowa, six aides, also quit.

"You have to be able to raise money to run a campaign and you have to invest time in fundraising and to campaign here in the state and I did not have the confidence that was going to be happening," Schoenfeld told The Des Moines Register.

Also reported by NBC: former Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue—who was serving as Gingrich's national campaign co-chair—will now be endorsing Tim Pawlenty.

Scott Rials, a longtime aide who joined the departure, said, "I think the world of him, but at the end of the day we just could not see a clear path to win, and there was a question of commitment."

The upheaval in the campaign was likely to lead to a shakeup in the race for the party's presidential nomination, as well, as rivals reach out for disaffected staff, and possibly for donors who have been aligned with the former Georgia congressman. Gingrich has long been viewed, by even his closest allies, as a fountain of policy ideas but a man who is unable to avoid speaking in ways that spark unwelcome controversy.

Even before the sudden departures of his top aides, Gingrich's campaign was off to a notably rocky start. Within days of formally announcing he would run, he was assailed by conservatives for criticizing a plan to remake Medicare that Republicans pushed through the House.

He telephoned the author of the plan, Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, to apologize but did not back off his objections.

Within days, he had dropped from sight, embarking on a cruise to the Greek Isles with his wife, Callista, while rivals for the Republican nomination kept up their campaign appearances.

"I don't know how other people work," Gingrich said of his vacation in *The New York Times*. "To have a major breakthrough in policy, you have to be able to stop and think."

He returned to the United States earlier in the week to confront a rebellion that had been brewing for some time among the senior echelon of his campaign.

While Gingrich told his now-departed aides he would remain in the race, he faces formidable obstacles in assembling a new team in time to compete in a campaign that's well under way. He has the allegiance of several former aides who served him when he was in Congress, but most if not all of them have moved into other fields.

Most immediately, he is scheduled to participate in a debate next Monday in New Hampshire.

Gingrich, 67, last served in public office more than a decade ago. He resigned as speaker of the House after two terms following an unexpectedly close mid-term election in 1998 in which Republicans gained far fewer seats than he had predicted.

[20110610-02](#) 09:32 GaryC Re: "Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse"

Dear SteveB,

Agreed. Now if Obama would do the same thing and about 70% of the House and Senate.

[20110610-03](#) 09:56 SteveB Re: "Senior Gingrich Aides Resign Campaign en Masse" Sarah Palin

Dear GaryC,

I'd say get rid of 100% of the House and Senate (well...only 33% is possible next year). If I saw someone worthy to replace Obama, I'd say go for it, but these dogmatic Republicans running and not running are all dogs!

I think the Palin emails being released today will finish her "campaign". Mitt (What kind of name is that? Is he named after a piece of sports equipment? Mittens, huh?) is doomed because of his refusal or inability to compete in Iowa. He's also doomed with conservatives because of his very successful health care plan in Mass. The best piece of work he ever had little to do with! He's just another arrogant elitist and nobody knows how many wives he really has, but he could still be the nominee.

from (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/06/10/6827716-first-thoughts-palin-vs-the-gop-establishment>):

NBC's Michael Isikoff reported on "TODAY" this morning that the state of Alaska today will release more than 24,000 Palin emails from her two years as governor, many of them business she conducted from her personal email accounts. The Anchorage Daily News has more: "The emails were first requested during the 2008 White House race by citizens and news organizations as they vetted a vice presidential nominee whose political experience included less than one term as governor of Alaska and a term as mayor of the small town of Wasilla. The nearly three-year delay has been attributed largely to the sheer volume of the release and the flood of requests."

20110610-04	10:02	SteveB	The Beginning of the End for Sarah Palin
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I predict poor picked-on Sarah's "campaign" won't survive the release of all this evidence of ignorance and stupidity (then there's her promo movie):

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43281157/ns/politics-more_politics/.

Complete Palin emails (and more): <http://palinemail.msnbc.msn.com/>.

20110610-05	10:10	SteveB	Fw: Republican Attacks on Medicare
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from CredoAction:

Dear SteveB:

Democrats have been vocal in their opposition to the Republican attacks on Medicare. But even as recently as this week, major media outlets were speculating about whether Democrats would agree to severe cuts to Medicaid as part of a compromise with Republicans on raising the debt ceiling. Fortunately, Democratic senators are working to put that fear to rest.

Yesterday, Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller, a leading defender of Medicaid, announced that 36 other senators, including Sen. Nelson of Florida, joined him in sending a letter to President Obama vowing to oppose the Republican attacks on Medicaid.

Republican extremists in the House and the Senate have consistently pursued a strategy of hostage taking around "must-past" bills. When it came to the continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown, the Democrats caved and gave up. Thank Sen. Nelson for defending Medicaid "Thank you for co-signing Sen. Rockefeller's letter to President Obama opposing the Republican attacks on Medicaid. I commend you for drawing a line in the sand. I will stand with you as you continue to fight to preserve Medicaid. When senators step up for important programs like Medicaid, they deserve our thanks. Thank Sen. Nelson for co-signing the Rockefeller letter.

And now, the Republicans are trying the same strategy around raising raise the debt ceiling, which is necessary to avoid the U.S. Treasury defaulting on our debts.

The stakes in this fight are much higher than the fight over the continuing resolution. And predictably the Republicans are making extreme and irresponsible demands. Democrats cannot continue to cave, and the first step is drawing a line in the sand and declaring some things off limits.

The Rockefeller letter has the effect of declaring off limits the Republican proposals to turn Medicaid into block grants or to arbitrarily limit federal spending on Medicaid. The 37 Democrats who signed the letter to President Obama were forceful in their defense of the program, writing (emphasis added):

Since 1965, the federal government has helped states pay for the basic health care and long-term services low-income Americans need. A cap on federal funding or block grant would undermine this federal commitment. We are unwilling to allow the federal government to walk away from Medicaid's 68 million beneficiaries, the providers that serve them and the urban and rural communities in which they live.

Medicaid, which covers 68 million beneficiaries, is a cornerstone of our health care system. Besides covering poor children and their parents, pregnant woman, and the disabled, Medicaid is also a major source of health care funding for seniors—paying, for example, for the nursing care of two-thirds of nursing home residents.

To be sure, this fight is not over. But, this is a promising start.

Ever since New York Democrat Kathy Hochul improbably won a recent special election in a conservative district by running a campaign centered on defending Medicare, we have seen Democrats increasingly willing to take cuts to Medicare off the table. But Medicaid has always been more politically vulnerable than Medicare.

This letter is a meaningful signal that Democrats are strengthening their resolve to defend Medicaid. And we should make sure they know their constituents support them picking this fight.

Thank you for defending our social safety net.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager

20110612-01	15:50	Dale	"Palin Emails Show Engaged Leader Who Sought VP Nod"
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Her emails a big disappointment for left and media (same thing)...

"Palin Emails Show Engaged Leader Who Sought VP Nod" by Becky Bohrer, *Huffington Post*

June 11, 2009, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/11/palin-emails-show-engaged_n_875475.html)

JUNEAU, Alaska—There are no bombshells, no "gotcha" moments.

The emails of Sarah Palin—more than 24,000 pages of them released Friday by the state of Alaska from her first two years as governor—paint a picture of an image-conscious, driven leader, closely involved with the day-to-day duties of running the state and riding herd on the signature issues of her administration.

She angled for a vice presidential nomination months before John McCain picked her, but hesitated to endorse him until she got an explanation about "pro-environmental stands he's taking that could hurt Alaska."

The messages give a behind-the-scenes look at a politician who burst onto the national stage after serving as Wasilla mayor and less than two years as Alaska governor. They show a woman striving to balance work and home, fiercely protective of her family and highly sensitive to media coverage. She expressed a sometimes mothering side with aides but was quick to demand answers or accountability.

They seem to depict a more moderate Palin who worked to find a state response to global warming—she has since dismissed studies supporting climate change—and gave props to then-Sen. Barack Obama for his support of a natural gas pipeline in Alaska.

The records, comprising more than 13,400 emails, shed new light on Palin's rise from little-known governor to national political sensation. The emails end in Sept., 2008, shortly after her selection to be McCain's running mate. It was then that citizens and news organizations first requested the records.

Three years later, Palin is a best-selling author, reality TV star, sought-after speaker and kingmaker, successfully supporting dozens of candidates in last year's elections.

Her recent bus tour of the Northeast as well as an authorized documentary about her time as governor, have fueled speculation that Palin will run for president, but the Republican says she hasn't yet decided.

In Anchorage, people watched the release of the emails with interest, some blaming the media for paying too much attention to the out-dated records.

"I personally think they're afraid of her," said Richard Giese, who sold flowers at the Anchorage Farmer's Market on Saturday. "They're digging up a lot of stuff, some of it true. I won't deny that. But I think they are afraid of her for the election."

[20110612-02](#) 16:05 SteveB Re: "Palin Emails Show Engaged Leader Who Sought VP Nod"

Dear Dale,

Yes, disappointing so far. But I think there will still be plenty of good, funny, stupid stuff, though I'm beginning to wonder if she will really run. Hard to believe she actually wants to work that hard...that she actually wants the job...even if she doesn't understand all it involves.

But do you really want a President who can't even get Paul Revere right on a visit to his museum (her aides and daughter, at least, must have known she'd be asked something about him)? Before, she couldn't even name a single magazine or book she'd read lately. You want her just because of her dogma? Her looks? (I think Michelle is better looking, though Sarah is better looking than Ann Coulter.)

[20110613-01](#) 09:54 SteveB Fw: We Want Elizabeth Warren

from CredoAction:

Dear SteveB:

It's amazing! You and over 330,000 other members of CREDO Action and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee have joined members of Congress, top academics, and progressive organizations in calling on President Obama to nominate Elizabeth Warren to lead the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The media has taken notice of what we're doing. Recently, stories about our effort appeared in Reuters, Bloomberg News, CNN and Talking Points Memo. And the media aren't the only ones taking note about the momentum behind Professor Warren. Senate Republicans are so scared of her, they prevented the Senate from officially recessing last week.

Although this pushed back the next opportunity for President Obama to make a recess appointment, President Obama still faces a legal mandate to have a director of the CFPB in place by July 21st. He needs to make a choice soon, and we need to speak out to make sure he picks Elizabeth Warren.

Last month, 44 Republican Senators pledged to filibuster the nomination of anyone to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau unless the agency itself is significantly weakened. This threat makes it much more likely that President Obama will have to use his constitutional authority to make a recess appointment to fill the top slot at the agency.

And if President Obama uses a recess appointment, he has no reason not to pick Warren—a respected Harvard professor who is currently doing an excellent job working to get the CFPB off the ground. Professor Warren has proven that she is willing to stand up to Wall Street on behalf of consumers, which is why Washington and Wall Street insiders are trying to block her appointment.

But the buck stops at President Obama. He can and should choose the very best person to run the CFPB. And there's nobody better for that position than Elizabeth Warren.

Thank you for speaking out.

Matt Lockshin, Campaign Manager, CREDO Action from Working Assets

[20110615-01](#) 09:31 Dale Fw: What Charles Krauthammer Didn't Say

Dear SteveB,

Another view...

I know you must be aware there are "right leaning" blogs and e-mails, similar to the "left leaning" materials you circulate. I am sending this example to you...not all the other rabid "followers" on your list—it would drive them over the wall, if they bothered to read much of it—just for your entertainment. Actually, you may agree with almost all he says, now that I think about it.

<http://www.mahalo.com/> [A wonderful website! Learn anything! One of my favorites. —SteveB]

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says that Krauthammer says that he didn't say these things. How am I supposed to be open-minded (as it says below) about a lie? (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/krauthammer.asp>) —SteveB]

Dr. Krauthammer (<http://www.mahalo.com/charles-krauthammer/>) is an M.D., a lawyer and is paralyzed from the neck down. A friend went to hear Charles Krauthammer . He listened with 25 others in a closed room. What he says here, is NOT 2nd-hand but 1st. The ramifications are staggering for us, our children and their children.

Last Monday was a profound evening, Dr. Charles Krauthammer spoke to the Center for the American Experiment.. He is a brilliant intellectual, seasoned & articulate. He is forthright and careful in his analysis, and never resorts to emotions or personal insults. He is NOT a fear monger nor an extremist in his comments and views . He is a fiscal conservative, and has received a Pulitzer Prize for writing. He writes weekly for the *Washington Post*.

The entire room was held spellbound during his talk. I have summarized his comments, as we are living in uncharted waters economically and internationally.

Even 2 Dems at my table agreed with everything he said! If you feel like forwarding this to those who are open minded and have not drunk the Kool-Aid, feel free.

Summary of his comments:

1. Mr. Obama is a very intellectual, charming individual. He is not to be underestimated. He is a cool customer who doesn't show his emotions. It's very hard to know what's behind the mask. The taking down of the Clinton dynasty was an amazing accomplishment. The Clintons still do not understand what hit them. Obama was in the perfect place at the perfect time.
2. Obama has political skills comparable to Reagan and Clinton . He has a way of making you think he's on your side, agreeing with your position, while doing the opposite. Pay no attention to what he SAYS; rather, watch what he DOES!
3. Obama has a ruthless quest for power. He did not come to Washington to make something out of himself, but rather to change everything, including dismantling capitalism. He can't be straightforward on his ambitions, as the public would not go along. He has a heavy hand, and wants to level the playing field with income redistribution and punishment to the achievers of society. He would like to model the U.S. to Great Britain or Canada.
4. His three main goals are to control ENERGY, PUBLIC EDUCATION, and NATIONAL HEALTHCARE by the Federal government. He doesn't care about the auto or financial services industries, but got them as an early bonus. The cap and trade will add costs to everything and stifle growth. Paying for FREE college education is his goal. Most scary is his healthcare program, because if you make it FREE and add 46,000,000 people to a Medicare-type single-payer system, the costs will go through the roof. The only way to control costs is with massive RATIONING of services, like in Canada. God forbid!
5. He has surrounded himself with mostly far-left academic types. No one around him has ever even run a candy store. But they are going to try and run the auto, financial, banking and other industries. This obviously can't work in the long run. Obama is not a socialist; rather he's a far-left secular progressive bent on nothing short of revolution. He ran as a moderate, but will govern from the hard left. Again, watch what he does, not what he says.
6. Obama doesn't really see himself as President of the United States , but more as a ruler over the world. He sees himself above it all, trying to orchestrate and coordinate various countries and their agendas. He sees moral

equivalency in all cultures. His apology tour in Germany and England was a prime example of how he sees America, as an imperialist nation that has been arrogant, rather than a great noble nation that has at times made errors. This is the first President ever who has chastised our allies and appeased our enemies!

7. He is now handing out goodies. He hopes that the bill (and pain) will not come due until after he is reelected in 2012. He would like to blame all problems on Bush from the past, and hopefully his successor in the future. He has a huge ego, and Dr. Krauthammer believes he is a narcissist.

8. Republicans are in the wilderness for a while, but will emerge strong. Republicans are pining for another Reagan, but there will never be another like him. Krauthammer believes Mitt Romney, Tim Pawlenty and Bobby Jindahl (except for his terrible speech in February) are the future of the party. Newt Gingrich is brilliant, but has baggage. Sarah Palin is sincere and intelligent, but needs to really be seriously boning up on facts and info if she is to be a serious candidate in the future. We need to return to the party of lower taxes, smaller government, personal responsibility, strong national defense, and state's rights.

9. The current level of spending is irresponsible and outrageous. We are spending trillions that we don't have. This could lead to hyperinflation, depression or worse. No country has ever spent themselves into prosperity. The media is giving Obama, Reid and Pelosi a pass because they love their agenda. But eventually the bill will come due and people will realize the huge bailouts didn't work, nor will the stimulus package. These were trillion-dollar payoffs to Obama's allies, unions and the Congress to placate the left, so he can get support for #4 above.

10. The election was over in mid-September when Lehman brothers failed, fear and panic swept in, we had an unpopular President, and the war was grinding on indefinitely without a clear outcome. The people are in pain, and the mantra of change caused people to act emotionally. Any Dem would have won this election; it was surprising it was as close as it was.

11. In 2012, if the unemployment rate is over 10%, Republicans will be swept back into power. If it's under 8%, the Dems continue to roll. If it's between 8-10%, it will be a dogfight. It will all be about the economy. I hope this gets you really thinking about what's happening in Washington and Congress. There is a left-wing revolution going on, according to Krauthammer, and he encourages us to keep the faith and join the loyal resistance. The work will be hard, but we're right on most issues and can reclaim our country, before it's far too late.

20110618-01	06:16	SteveB	Re: What Charles Krauthammer Didn't Say
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Dear Dale,

Thank you for this. I find it fraught with errors.

1. Obama seems like a very weak President to me. He couldn't even get much done with a majority. I'm disappointed in him, but he is not some clever devil. That's laughable given his actions. He even appeased the Republicans by keeping the idiotic Bush tax cuts.
2. Sarah Palin "intelligent"? A huge haha!
3. Reagan was not an American hero. He put us deep into debt. The rest of the current debt comes from Bush, not from Obama. Face it!
4. We should be so lucky as to be like Canada! Look at the numbers.
5. I find this bit of dogma to be so totally false: "We need to return to the party of lower taxes, smaller government, personal responsibility, strong national defense, and state's rights." Ya, just what we need...even lower taxes and more money for wars. No, thank you! That's the sure path to national bankruptcy.

This guy is full of the traditional Republican fear tactics that thinking people are so tired of.

20110618-02	16:41	Dennis	"9 Countries That Do It Better: Why Does Europe Take Better Care of Its People Than America?"
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"9 Countries That Do It Better: Why Does Europe Take Better Care of Its People Than America?" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

June 18, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/151312/>)

An abiding belief in American exceptionalism is more or less ubiquitous across the political spectrum. But in many ways, what makes America different from other advanced democracies are relatively modest differences in priorities. While all wealthy democracies share the same basic model—they derive the bulk of their economic activity from the private sector while offering some form of social safety net for those who fall through the cracks—even slight differences in priorities can have a huge impact on the lives of their people.

Here are 9 important areas where other countries that do a better job providing for their citizens than we do:

1. Taking Care of the Ill: France

If you have access to the best health care in the United States, then you have some of the best care in the world. But that comes with an extremely steep price, and not everyone has that kind of access.

In 2008, the U.S. spent 16 percent of its economic output on health-care and covered 85 percent of its citizens. It was the only OECD country other than Mexico and Turkey to cover less than 90 percent of its people. We have the 37th longest average life expectancy, and a recent study found that American "life expectancy has been stagnant for much of the country and is actually decreasing over much of the Southern portion of the United States."

France, which has a health-care system ranked number one in the world by the WHO, spent 11.2 percent of its economy to cover everyone.

There are a number of drivers of health-care costs, but one statistic stands out: in the European (and European-style) economies, upwards of 70 percent of the total health-care bill is picked up by the government, meaning that people are insured in large pools with lots of bargaining clout to hold down providers' costs. In the U.S., less than half of our health care is in the public sector, resulting in a patchwork system of private insurers with much higher administrative costs. When you plug what France pays per person for health care into our own government's fiscal projections, you get balanced budgets by around 2014, which then turn into surpluses after 2040.

2. Collective Bargaining: France

At around 12 percent (in 2008), the United States doesn't have the lowest unionization rate among the wealthy countries. That distinction goes to France, where under 8 percent of the workforce belongs to a union. But union membership isn't important, collective bargaining is; and around 90 percent of non-managerial French workers—union members or not—are covered under collective bargaining agreements.

Honorable mention goes to the Scandinavian countries—with 53 percent of its workforce in a union, Norway comes in dead last among them; 68 percent of Swedes belong to a union, topping the list.

3. Inequality: Denmark

A large body of research shows that higher union density correlates with less inequality. The U.S. is the most unequal society among the wealthy countries—in the OECD, only three middle-income countries (Turkey, Mexico and Chile) have a more lopsided distribution of wealth. Denmark leads the way, with the flattest distribution among the high-income countries in the OECD.

4. Poverty: Denmark

Inequality is a measure of how much income those at the top of the pile take in compared to what those at the bottom grab. So, in countries with equal wealth, more inequality means more poverty—the piece of the economic

pie shared by those at the bottom end of the scale will be smaller by definition. Not surprisingly, Denmark, at 5.4 percent, has the lowest poverty rate among the European-style countries.

The OECD uses a different standard of poverty than does the U.S. government. It counts anyone making less than half of the median income as living in poverty. By that standard, we are plagued with a poverty rate of over 17 percent, higher than all the OECD countries other than Mexico, Israel and Chile. (The average among OECD countries in general is 11.1 percent.)

5. Child Poverty: Denmark

One of the most tragic comparisons for America, among the richest countries in the world, is that more than one in five children live in poverty, as measured by the OECD. The OECD average is under 13 percent, and Denmark again comes in last, with childhood poverty at around 4 percent. (Following it are Finland, Norway, Austria and Sweden.) (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/52/43/41929552.pdf>)

6. Gender Gap: Italy

Because women are disproportionately represented in lower paying jobs, and people at the bottom of the wage ladder get the most benefits of union membership, high unionization rates are also correlated with lower gender pay-gaps—it's one of several factors, but it's a key one.

Italy has the second highest union rate outside of Scandinavia, and also boasts the smallest gender gap. A female worker in the middle of the pack makes just 1.3 percent less than her male counterpart in Italy. Compare that with American women, who earn more than 20 percent less than American men. (The OECD average is 16 percent, and we're not the worst—that distinction goes to Japan among the European-style economies.)

7. Taking Care of the Young

At 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, the U.S. had the highest infant mortality rate among the high-income nations in 2006. Iceland, with 1.4 deaths/ 1,000 live births, had the lowest.

Among high-income countries, only Canada spent a lower share of its economic output on family benefits, services and tax breaks than the U.S., which devoted about 1.25 percent of GDP. France, which has battled low fertility rates for years, spends almost 4 percent. The U.S. is the only advanced country that doesn't offer paid maternity and/or paternity leave. Sweden offers the longest paid leave—16 months—at about 80 percent of one's income. Denmark allows the parents to divide a year off, with full pay.

Early childhood care and preschool programs confer long-lasting benefits on children who participate in them. About a third of American kids aged 3-5 were enrolled in such programs in 2008, compared with about two-thirds of kids in Denmark.

8. Taking Care of the Old: Luxembourg

Conservatives paint more progressive countries as being mired with chronically high unemployment. But there's a bit of sleight-of-hand at work: looking only at workers in their prime years, the U.S. has a low employment rate relative to most European countries. Ten of them—as well as Australia, Canada and Japan—had higher employment rates for people in their prime working years.

But we work our elderly a lot harder than they do in other countries. Among those aged 55-64, over 60 percent of Americans work, compared with just 35.3 percent in Belgium.

The Social Security system in the U.S. replaces 42 percent of the median salary — only the U.K. is stingier among the wealthy countries (but it pays a bigger share of the wages of lower-income workers). Iceland replaces 109 percent of the earnings of someone in the middle of the economic pack; Luxembourg and the Netherlands replace about 90 percent. The OECD average is 60 percent.

Among the wealthy countries, only Norway and Iceland have a higher retirement age (67) than we do in the U.S. (66). People in Luxembourg can retire with full benefits at 57, and the Italians join them just three months later.

9. Taxing Corporations Versus Individuals: Luxembourg

The U.S. government collects less in taxes than the other rich countries, on average, but that doesn't tell us who pays what. It's worth noting that the U.S. is tied for the OECD country that collects the lowest share of the economy in corporate taxes, at 1.8 percent of GDP (in 2008), or about half the group's average. That means that more of the burden falls on individuals and households. Americans fork over more in personal income taxes than the OECD average as a result—we pay 9.9 percent while the OECD as a whole pays 9 percent.

Denmark leads the world in corporate taxes, and the Slovak Republic has the lowest personal income taxes, but the most “balanced” system (an admittedly arbitrary standard) is arguably Luxembourg's, where corporations were taxed at 5.1 percent and individuals and families at 7.7 percent in 2008.

Aren't They Taxed to Death in General?

What about the “economy-killing” taxes under which those crazy European socialists suffer? Well, in 2007, we paid 7.5 percent of our economic output less in taxes than the average of OECD countries, but citizens of the other wealthy countries got a lot more for their tax dollars than we did—free or very low-cost health care, college educations, better unemployment benefits, job training and the list goes on.

In the United States, we paid the equivalent of 8.2 percent of our economy more in social spending out of our own pockets than the people in other rich countries did that year. So the savings we enjoyed on our tax bills were more than offset by what we paid for those things our counterparts bought with their taxes. When private and public spending on our social welfare are added together, Americans pay just a little bit more than the other citizens of the world's leading economic powers.

But What About the Debt?

Perhaps these countries just ran up piles of debt in the course of taking better care of their people?

That's not the case; among the world's wealthy democracies only six—Japan, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Belgium and Italy—had a higher ratio of debt to GDP than the United States last year. Denmark's debt level was less than half of our own.

Much has also been made of the Europeans' supposedly slower growth and lower average incomes. It is true that over the last decade, gross domestic product grew by about 1 percentage point more annually in the United States than in the core countries of the EU-15. But when we talk about “growth,” we mean a growing population as well as increasing productivity: more people making stuff means more total stuff.

The differences in population growth between the United States and the EU are stark. Since 1980, the population of the United States has increased by more than a third, compared with 7 percent in the EU (as a whole). Adding people, however, doesn't necessarily make countries more affluent. A better standard is the growth of GDP per person. As Paul Krugman pointed out, “Since 1980, per capita real G.D.P.—which is what matters for living standards—has risen at about the same rate in America and in the E.U. 15: 1.95 percent a year here; 1.83 percent there.” That's essentially a rounding error.

The *Wall Street Journal's* editorial board got terribly excited a few years back when a study by a right-wing think tank in Sweden “found that if Europe were part of the U.S., only tiny Luxembourg could rival the richest of the 50 American states in gross domestic product per capita.” A “rising tide still lifts all boats,” the *Journal* reminded us, “and U.S. GDP per capita was a whopping 32% higher than the EU average in 2000, and the gap hasn't closed since.”

As far as the raw data go, that's true. (But several individual European states have GDP per capita that are either higher than, or comparable to, that enjoyed in the United States.) The thing is, those data tell only part of the story about a country's economic health. We do have different priorities, and European workers expect six to eight weeks of vacation, paid sick days, and fewer hours of overtime—Europeans simply don't work themselves to the bone as we do. American men and women worked an average of 41 hours per week in 2005, while European men averaged 38 hours and European women only 30. As the OECD noted, “As for holiday and paid leave entitlements, the striking differences between Europe and the United States (including sickness and maternity) obviously explain some of the transatlantic gap in annual working hours.”

When you factor in the difference in time spent on the job, the income gap essentially disappears. Now, is this simply a matter of Americans' having a superior work ethic, unblunted by the perfidy of the nanny state? Well, no. Overworked Americans are miserable. According to research cited by Boston College's Sloan Work and Family Research Network, four in 10 workers who work a lot of extra hours say they "feel very angry toward their employers," versus 1 percent who work only a few extra hours. Just 3 percent of two-income couples who work long hours said they were content with the effort, and nine out of 10 U.S. workers said either, "My job requires that I work very hard," or "I never seem to have enough time to get everything done on my job."

So, again, what we see is merely a difference in priorities.

Note: Unless linked above, all data are from the OECD's downloadable Excel files found here: A correction was made to this article after publication.

(http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_201185_46462759_1_1_1_1,00.html.)

(Joshua Holland is an editor and senior writer at AlterNet. He is the author of *The 15 Biggest Lies About the Economy: And Everything else the Right Doesn't Want You to Know About Taxes, Jobs and Corporate America*.)

20110628-01 22:05 Pam Re: Aging Stars; The Economy, President Obama

Dear SteveB [in reply to young/old pics of the stars],

Good Lord! What are you trying to do? Depress the hell out of us? A couple of these don't look too bad, but what on earth happened to Grace Slick? I recently came across a photo of me when I was about 16. It was shocking how young I looked. Somehow I carry around that same image of myself in my head to this day; it's only when I look in the mirror that the shock sets in. Lots of people can't believe my age (the last time I got carded I was 48), but I know the truth! I think the thing is not to look forever young, but to look nice (at least not disgusting) in whatever moment you're in. (Does that make sense?)

I've just been reading about the greedy bank execs. who dragged us to the bottom of the sea. They've been doing this every 10 yrs. or so since Reagan adopted Milton Friedman. Different cast, same script. And the play's not over. No lessons learned, greed still abounding, innocents having to pay the price, and the continuation of society based almost entirely on consumption. Buy or die! I'm so angry. I'm not an angry sort of person, but I am continually outraged by the corruption and stupidity, the obtuseness and obliviousness everywhere I look that I want to shake something—like a CEO's scruff of the neck for instance.

Also read about how Obama has weaseled out on every campaign promise he made (just about). This article (in the NYRB) pointed out that Obama is great at giving the big speech that sounds momentous and inspiring but that leads to little or no actual action. I hate to say I agree. He's let his enemies set the agenda—over and over again. Appearing above the fray might seem like intelligent thoughtfulness to him, but while he's being cerebral on the mountaintop, the flood sweeps everything away. (Don't you just love my heated rhetoric?! I keep thinking if I can find the right words I'll discover an answer. Hasn't worked so far.) Now he's playing golf with John Boehner. Does Obama really believe that snake can be charmed so easily? (If there's a metaphor, I'll find it.)

20110629-01 07:39 SteveB "The Cost of War at Least \$3.7 trillion and Counting"

Republican entitlement programs...

Where was all the talk about cutting the deficit when the Republicans wanted to go to war?

(Democrats wanted to go to war too, but they aren't such big hypocrites about it.) Just as in the case of the economy, the Republicans think their "Big Lies", repeated over and over, can make the American people think the wars are all Obama's fault. Pretty soon, we'll have not only the word "Obamacare", but also "Obamawar" and "Obamaconomy". Total myth!

Don't believe the "Big Lie"! It's all simply about priorities. Who should get that priority treatment? The rich and powerful or the rest of us? Cost of U.S. wars since 9/11? See below.

"The Cost of War at Least \$3.7 trillion and Counting" by Reuters

June 29, 2011 (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/29/us-usa-war-idUSTRE75S25320110629>)

(Study finds 224,000 people have died directly from warfare and 7.8 million people have been displaced.)

(NEW YORK) When President Barack Obama cited cost as a reason to bring troops home from Afghanistan, he referred to a \$1 trillion price tag for America's wars.

Staggering as it is, that figure grossly underestimates the total cost of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the U.S. Treasury and ignores more imposing costs yet to come, according to a study released Wednesday.

The final bill will reach at least \$3.7 trillion and could be as high as \$4.4 trillion, according to the research project "Costs of War" by Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies.

In the 10 years since U.S. troops went into Afghanistan to root out the al-Qaida leaders behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, spending on the conflicts totaled \$2.3 trillion to \$2.7 trillion.

Those numbers will continue to soar when considering often overlooked costs such as long-term obligations to wounded veterans and projected war spending from 2012 through 2020.

The estimates do not include at least \$1 trillion more in interest payments coming due and many billions more in expenses that cannot be counted, according to the study.

20110629-02 09:50 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act; Term Limits

I've been thinking about this term-limit thing...

And read this in a forum after this article: (<http://news.yahoo.com/greek-deputies-set-back-key-austerity-bill-072341947.html>)

posted by Engineer:

The problem with one term [or term limits, to whatever extent] is they have absolutely no incentive to do anything but steal, they aren't coming back, they don't give a cr*p about getting anything done, don't have to worry about reelection...so they fill their pockets and scoot or don't do anything at all." And given the complexities of the law, no matter how much everyone might want it made simple, simplicity seems always to be beyond our grasp, therefore, you need smart, motivated, well-educated, experienced people to do the job. Without becoming corrupt, which does not happen in every country—Google it—but does happen in the U.S., because we allow it.

Though I am very much in favor of other parts of this proposed amendment, such as members of Congress being treated just like every other ordinary, legal citizen, I've never even been sure existing term limits are good for the Presidency or the nation.

Our problem is corruption. We have to face that ugly word head-on. Our politicians are bought and sold by the rich and powerful individuals and companies who pay for their incredibly expensive campaigns for election and reelection. How could it be more obvious? Who pays the biggest burden of taxes now? The rich? Haha...no, the rapidly shrinking, former middle class. More proof? Where are our jobs, especially our good manufacturing jobs, the ones we used to have in abundance, the very wealth of our great nation, the ones that created wealth and brought riches to our shores, where are they? Permitted to go to China/Mexico/Canada/India by the people we elected to make our collective lives (rich or poor) better, not worse. How can we keep letting the rascals get away with selling us all down the river?

20110629-03 20:38 SteveB Fw: Balancing the Budget at the Expense of American Jobs

from U.S. Chamber of Commerce:

Trying to "solve" America's deficit crisis on the backs of America's job creators isn't a real solution at all. On the contrary, it's a real threat to businesses, large and small, that are already struggling to recover from the economic downturn.

Unfortunately, some of the politicians involved in deficit negotiations have put a number of dangerous business tax hikes on the table—tax hikes that would cost jobs by forcing American employers to shut their doors. Call the White House. Send a letter to Congress.

One of these proposed tax hikes is repeal of the "Last In, First Out" (LIFO) accounting method that would raise taxes on 36% of all American businesses. Our employers, employees and economy can't afford this: please email your members of Congress today to urge them to oppose tax hikes on American employers.

LIFO isn't a so-called "loophole," as some politicians would have you believe. It is an established accounting method of calculating inventory that has been part of the U.S. tax code for more than 80 years.

It's used by American businesses, large and small—from manufacturers in the Midwest to small retailers in Tacoma; from the corner grocery store in Brooklyn to a distributor in New Mexico. Raising taxes on these employers could force many of them out of business.

At a time when the country is dependent on the private sector for recovery, penalizing businesses and forcing them to redo their business model is the direct opposite of what our economy needs.

Repeal is being pushed by the White House and a number of members of Congress as part of the debt ceiling debate and must be dropped from negotiations now. Call the White House Hotline and send a letter to your members of Congress now.

Retroactively taxing businesses for following the law is both a fundamentally flawed solution to offsetting our deficit crisis and one of the most egregious attacks on business to date.

Thank you for taking action today.

Sincerely, Bill Miller, Sr. VP and National Political Director, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

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20110701-01	06:26	SteveB	U.S. Citizenship Test
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Here's a cool sample U.S. citizenship test like Marci just had to take (and pass!):

<http://www.womansday.com/Articles/Life/Could-You-Pass-the-U.S.-Citizenship-Test.html?cid=glo>

How did you do? I got 10 for 10, but probably only because I helped Marci study for a few months. The test itself is only six questions, from a known list of 100. But, notice the test is in English and a minimal English reading/writing test is also administered.

We took part in the monthly swearing-in held in Tampa—about 1000 people from more than 83 countries. It was very inspiring, really. The legal process is there.

Nobody loves immigrants more than I do, but why do we not enforce our laws? Is it wrong for a country to have laws to protect its borders? What is the meaning of the law when it is ignored by the law-givers and law-enforcers?

20110701-02	12:39	Dennis	"If Ayn Rand & the Free Market Fetishists Were Right, We'd Be Living in a Golden Age—Does This Look Like a Golden Age to You?"
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Where the gold went....

"If Ayn Rand and the Free Market Fetishists Were Right, We'd Be Living in a Golden Age—Does This Look Like a Golden Age to You?" by Robert Parry, Consortium News

June 28, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/151463/>)

If the "free-market" theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman were correct, the United States of the last three decades should have experienced a golden age in which the lavish rewards flowing to the titans of industry would have transformed the society into a vibrant force for beneficial progress.

After all, it has been faith in "free-market economics" as a kind of secular religion that has driven U.S. government policies—from the emergence of Ronald Reagan through the neo-liberalism of Bill Clinton into the brave new world of House Republican budget chairman Paul Ryan.

By slashing income tax rates to historically low levels—and only slightly boosting them under President Clinton before dropping them again under George W. Bush—the U.S. government essentially incentivized greed or what Ayn Rand liked to call "the virtue of selfishness."

Further, by encouraging global "free trade" and removing regulations like the New Deal's Glass-Steagall separation of commercial and investment banks, the government also got out of the way of "progress," even if that "progress" has had crushing results for many middle-class Americans.

True, not all the extreme concepts of author/philosopher Ayn Rand and economist Milton Friedman have been implemented—there are still programs like Social Security and Medicare to get rid of—but their "magic of the market" should be glowing by now.

We should be able to assess whether laissez-faire capitalism is superior to the mixed public-private economy that dominated much of the 20th Century.

The old notion was that a relatively affluent middle class would contribute to the creation of profitable businesses because average people could afford to buy consumer goods, own their own homes and take an annual vacation with the kids. That "middle-class system," however, required intervention by the government as the representative of the everyman.

Beyond building a strong infrastructure for growth—highways, airports, schools, research programs, a safe banking system, a common defense, etc.—the government imposed a progressive tax structure that helped pay for these priorities and also discouraged the accumulation of massive wealth.

After all, the threat to a healthy democracy from concentrated wealth had been known to American leaders for generations.

A century ago, it was Republican President Theodore Roosevelt who advocated for a progressive income tax and an estate tax. In the 1930s, it was Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, who dealt with the economic and societal carnage that under-regulated financial markets inflicted on the nation during the Great Depression.

With those hard lessons learned, the federal government acted on behalf of the common citizen to limit Wall Street's freewheeling ways and to impose high tax rates on excessive wealth.

So, during Dwight Eisenhower's presidency of the 1950s, the marginal tax rate on the top tranche of earnings for the richest Americans was about 90 percent. When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, the top rate was still around 70 percent.

Discouraging Greed

Greed was not simply frowned upon; it was discouraged.

Put differently, government policy was to maintain some degree of egalitarianism within the U.S. political-economic system. And to a remarkable degree, the strategy worked.

The American middle class became the envy of the world, with otherwise average folk earning enough money to support their families comfortably and enjoy some pleasures of life that historically had been reserved only for the rich.

Without doubt, there were serious flaws in the U.S. system, especially due to the legacies of racism and sexism. And it was when the federal government responded to powerful social movements that demanded those injustices be addressed in the 1960s and 1970s, that an opening was created for right-wing politicians to exploit resentments among white men, particularly in the South.

By posing as populists hostile to “government social engineering,” the Right succeeded in duping large numbers of middle-class Americans into seeing their own interests—and their “freedom”—as in line with corporate titans who also decried federal regulations, including those meant to protect average citizens, like requiring seat belts in cars and discouraging cigarette smoking.

Amid the sluggish economy of the 1970s, the door swung open wider for the transformation of American society that had been favored by the likes of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, putting the supermen of industry over the everyman of democracy.

Friedman tested out his “free-market” theories in the socio-economic laboratories of brutal military dictatorships in Latin America, most famously collaborating with Chile’s Gen. Augusto Pinochet who crushed political opponents with torture and assassinations.

Ayn Rand became the darling of the American Right with her books, such as *Atlas Shrugged*, promoting the elitist notion that brilliant individuals represented the engine of society and that government efforts to lessen social inequality or help the average citizen were unjust and unwise.

The Pied Piper

Yet, while Rand and Friedman gave some intellectual heft to “free-market” theories, Ronald Reagan proved to be the perfect pied piper for guiding millions of working Americans in a happy dance toward their own serfdom.

In his first inaugural address, Reagan declared that “government is the problem”—and many middle-class whites cheered.

However, what Reagan’s policies meant in practice was a sustained assault on the middle class: the busting of unions, the export of millions of decent-paying jobs, and the transfer of enormous wealth to the already rich. The tax rates for the wealthiest were slashed about in half. Greed was incentivized.

Ironically, the Reagan era came just as technology—much of it created by government-funded research—was on the cusp of creating extraordinary wealth that could have been shared with average Americans. Those benefits instead accrued to the top one or two percent.

The rich also benefited from the off-shoring of jobs, exploiting cheap foreign labor and maximizing profits. The only viable way for the super-profits of “free trade” to be shared with the broader U.S. population was through taxes on the rich. However, Reagan and his anti-government true-believers made sure that those taxes were kept at historically low levels.

The Ayn Rand/Milton Friedman theories may have purported to believe that the “free market” would somehow generate benefits for the society as a whole, but their ideas really represented a moralistic frame which held that it was somehow right that the wealth of the society should go to its “most productive” members and that the rest of us were essentially “parasites.”

Apparently, special people like Rand also didn’t need to be encumbered by philosophical consistency. Though a fierce opponent of the welfare state, Rand secretly accepted the benefits of Medicare after she was diagnosed with lung cancer, according to one of her assistants.

She connived to have Evva Pryor, an employee of Rand’s law firm, arrange Social Security and Medicare benefits for Ann O’Connor, Ayn Rand using an altered spelling of her first name and her husband’s last name.

In *100 Voices: An Oral History of Ayn Rand*, Scott McConnell, founder of the Ayn Rand Institute’s media department, quoted Pryor as justifying Rand’s move by saying: “Doctors cost a lot more money than books earn and she could be totally wiped out.” Yet, it didn’t seem to matter much if “average” Americans were wiped out.

Essentially, the Right was promoting the Social Darwinism of the 19th Century, albeit in chic new clothes. The Gilded Age from a century ago was being recreated behind Reagan's crooked smile, Clinton's good-ole-boy charm and George W. Bush's Texas twang.

Whenever the political descendants of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt tried to steer the nation back toward programs that would benefit the middle class and demand greater sacrifice from the super-rich, the wheel was grabbed again by politicians and pundits shouting the epithet, "tax-and-spend."

Many average Americans were pacified by reminders of how Reagan made them feel good with his rhetoric about "the shining city on the hill."

The Rand/Friedman elitism also remains alive with today's arguments from Republicans who protest the idea of raising taxes on businessmen and entrepreneurs because they are the ones who "create the jobs," even if there is little evidence that they are actually creating American jobs.

Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, who is leading the fight to replace Medicare with a voucher system that envisions senior citizens buying health insurance from profit-making companies, cites Ayn Rand as his political inspiration.

A Land for Billionaires

The consequences of several decades of Reaganism and its related ideas are now apparent. Wealth has been concentrated at the top with billionaires living extravagant lives that not even monarchs could have envisioned, while the middle class shrinks and struggles, with one everyman after another being shoved down into the lower classes and into poverty.

Millions of Americans forego needed medical care because they can't afford health insurance; millions of young people, burdened by college loans, crowd back in with their parents; millions of trained workers settle for low-paying jobs; millions of families skip vacations and other simple pleasures of life.

Beyond the unfairness, there is the macro-economic problem which comes from massive income disparity. A healthy economy is one where the vast majority people can buy products, which can then be manufactured more cheaply, creating a positive cycle of profits and prosperity.

With Americans unable to afford the new car or the new refrigerator, American corporations see their domestic profit margins squeezed. So they are compensating for the struggling U.S. economy by expanding their businesses abroad in developing markets, but they also keep their profits there.

There are now economic studies that confirm what Americans have been sensing in their own lives, though the mainstream U.S. news media tends to attribute these trends to cultural changes, rather than political choices.

For instance, the *Washington Post* published a lengthy front-page article on June 19, describing the findings of researchers who gained access to economic data from the Internal Revenue Service which revealed which categories of taxpayers were making the high incomes.

To the surprise of some observers, the big bucks were not flowing primarily to athletes or actors or even stock market speculators. America's new super-rich were mostly corporate chieftains.

As the Post's Peter Whoriskey framed the story, U.S. business underwent a cultural transformation from the 1970's when chief executives believed more in sharing the wealth than they do today.

The article cites a U.S. dairy company CEO from the 1970's, Kenneth J. Douglas, who earned the equivalent of about \$1 million a year. He lived comfortably but not ostentatiously. Douglas had an office on the second floor of a milk distribution center, and he turned down raises because he felt it would hurt morale at the plant, Whoriskey reported.

However, just a few decades later, Gregg L. Engles, the current CEO of the same company, Dean Foods, averages about 10 times what Douglas made. Engles works in a glittering high-rise office building in Dallas; owns a vacation estate in Vail, Colorado; belongs to four golf clubs; and travels in a \$10 million corporate jet. He apparently has little concern about what his workers think.

"The evolution of executive grandeur—from very comfortable to jet-setting—reflects one of the primary reasons that the gap between those with the highest incomes and everyone else is widening," Whoriskey reported.

"For years, statistics have depicted growing income disparity in the United States, and it has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression. In 2008, the last year for which data are available, for example, the top 0.1 percent of earners took in more than 10 percent of the personal income in the United States, including capital gains, and the top 1 percent took in more than 20 percent.

"But economists had little idea who these people were. How many were Wall Street financiers? Sports stars? Entrepreneurs? Economists could only speculate, and debates over what is fair stalled. Now a mounting body of economic research indicates that the rise in pay for company executives is a critical feature in the widening income gap."

Jet-Setting Execs

The Post article continued: "The largest single chunk of the highest-income earners, it turns out, are executives and other managers in firms, according to a landmark analysis of tax returns by economists Jon Bakija, Adam Cole and Bradley T. Heim. These are not just executives from Wall Street, either, but from companies in even relatively mundane fields such as the milk business.

"The top 0.1 percent of earners make about \$1.7 million or more, including capital gains. Of those, 41 percent were executives, managers and supervisors at non-financial companies, according to the analysis, with nearly half of them deriving most of their income from their ownership in privately-held firms.

"An additional 18 percent were managers at financial firms or financial professionals at any sort of firm. In all, nearly 60 percent fell into one of those two categories. Other recent research, moreover, indicates that executive compensation at the nation's largest firms has roughly quadrupled in real terms since the 1970s, even as pay for 90 percent of America has stalled."

While these new statistics are striking—suggesting a broader problem with high-level greed than might have been believed—the Post ducked any political analysis that would have laid blame on Ronald Reagan and various right-wing economic theories.

In a follow-up editorial on June 26, the *Post* lamented the nation's growing income inequality but shied away from proposing higher marginal tax rates on the rich or faulting the past several decades of low tax rates. Instead, the Post suggested perhaps going after deductions on employer-provided health insurance and mortgage interest, tax breaks that also help middle-class families.

It appears that in Official Washington and inside the major U.S. news media the idea of learning from past presidents, including the Roosevelts and Dwight Eisenhower, is a non-starter. Instead there's an unapologetic embrace of the theories of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman, an affection that can pop out at unusual moments.

Addressing a CNBC "Fast Money" panel last year, movie director Oliver Stone was taken aback when one CNBC talking head gushed how Stone's "Wall Street" character Gordon Gecko had been an inspiration, known for his famous comment, "Greed is good." A perplexed Stone responded that Gecko, who made money by breaking up companies and eliminating jobs, was meant to be a villain.

However, the smug attitude of the CNBC stock picker represented a typical tribute to Ronald Reagan's legacy. After all, greed did not simply evolve from some vague shift in societal attitudes, as the Post suggests. Rather, it was stimulated—and rewarded—by Reagan's tax policies.

Reagan's continued popularity also makes it easier for today's "no-tax-increase" crowd to demand only spending cuts as a route to reducing the federal debt, an ocean of red ink largely created by the tax cuts of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush.

Tea Partiers, in demanding even more cuts in government help for average citizens and even more tax cuts for the rich, represent only the most deluded part of middle-class America. A recent poll of Americans rated Reagan the greatest U.S. president ever, further enshrining his anti-government message in the minds of many Americans, even those in the battered middle class.

When a majority of Americans voted for Republicans in Election 2010—and with early polls pointing toward a likely GOP victory in the presidential race of 2012—it's obvious that large swaths of the population have no sense of what's in store for them as they position their own necks under the boots of corporate masters.

The only answer to this American crisis would seem to be a reenergized and democratized federal government fighting for average citizens and against the greedy elites. But—after several decades of Reaganism, with the “free market” religion the new gospel of the political/media classes—that seems a difficult outcome to achieve.

(Robert Parry's new book is *Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq*.)

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20110701-03	17:55	SteveBA	Fw: A Short Quiz
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I AM SURE YOU WILL GET 100% RIGHT

Who Said It? Ten short questions:

This is a fun quiz. Listed below are 10 direct quotes. You have to guess which American politician said it.

Ready? Here we go! Which politician is responsible for each quote?

- A. Barack Obama
- B. Dan Quayle
- C. Sarah Palin
- D. George W. Bush

1. "Let me be absolutely clear. Israel is a strong friend of Israel's."
2. "I've now been in 57 states I think one left to go."
3. "On this Memorial Day, as our nation honors its unbroken line of fallen heroes, and I see many of them in the audience here today."
4. "What they'll say is, 'Well it costs too much money,' but you know what? It would cost about the same as what we would spend. It. Over the course of 10 years it would cost what it would costs us. (nervous laugh) All right. Okay.. We're going to. It. It would cost us about the same as it would cost for about hold on one second. I can't hear myself. But I'm glad you're fired up, though. I'm glad."
5. "The reforms we seek would bring greater competition, choice, savings and inefficiencies to our health care system."
6. "I bowled a 129. It's like—it was like the Special Olympics, or something."
7. "Of the many responsibilities granted to a president by our Constitution, few are more serious or more consequential than selecting a Supreme Court justice. The members of our highest court are granted life tenure, often serving long after the presidents who appointed them. And they are charged with the vital task of applying principles put to paper more than 20 centuries ago to some of the most difficult questions of our time."
- 8 "Everybody knows that it makes no sense that you send a kid to the emergency room for a treatable illness like asthma, they end up taking up a hospital bed, it costs, when, if you, they just gave, you gave them treatment early and they got some treatment, and a, a breathalyzer, or inhalator, not a breathalyzer. I haven't had much sleep in the last 48 hours."
9. "It was interesting to see that political interaction in Europe is not that different from the United States Senate. There's a lot of I don't know what the term is in Austrian, wheeling and dealing."

10. "I have made good judgments in the past. I have made good judgments in the future."

Sorry. This was a trick quiz. All of the correct answers are the same person. Each of these quotes are directly from President Barack Obama. And now you know why he brings his teleprompter with him everywhere he goes ...even when talking to a 6th grade class. And some members of the media continue to insist he is "The smartest man ever elected to the Presidency."

20110701-04 22:32 PamB Re: U.S. Citizenship Test

Dear SteveB,

As a citizen of the U.S., I'm not able to answer all of the questions correctly. But, I didn't study for a few months!! I live in the U.S., more concerned about the economy, political and financial corruption, living green to save our planet. How can you judge the U.S. when you are in Bolivia?"

20110702-01 06:00 SteveB Re: U.S. Citizenship Test

Dear PamB,

The answer to your question is very easy...I grew up and lived in the U.S. most of my life. I just spent 6 months in Florida, am here in Orlando right now. I still live in the U.S. part of the time. I have family and business interests there. When I'm in Bolivia I use the internet to stay caught up. I vote via absentee ballot. Why would I not be able to judge the U.S.? Besides, many foreigners who have never been to the U.S. do a very good job of judging us, better often than many Americans do, with more insight and with less blind loyalty.

20110702-02 13:00 Dennis "New American Socialism" & "An American Tragedy Brewing" & "One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People"

The following essay is by an investment advisor with a decidedly libertarian conservative perspective. I think you'll find it interesting in its analysis as a political observer and concerned investor. While Stansberry chooses to call the current American political and economic system a variant of state socialism, "New American Socialism," it seems to me to be a variant of old fashioned corporate fascism or nationalist socialism. But whatever he wants to call it, I won't quibble with his conclusion about who's getting all the profits and benefits and who's getting the short end of the stick from the gaming of the system.

"New American Socialism" by Porter Stansberry, DailyWealth

June 29, 2011, (<http://www.dailywealth.com/1773/New-American-Socialism>)

No one knows what to call it...

That's part of the problem. It's difficult to criticize something that doesn't yet have a proper name.

You can't just call our economic system "socialism." It's not. There's a profit motive and private ownership of nearly all assets. Socialism has neither of these. Besides, far too many people have become far too rich in our system to simply label it "socialism."

If you have ever traveled to an actual socialist country—with a power grid that never works, little public sanitation, petty graft at every turn, and endemic, horrifying poverty—you realize our system and real socialism aren't the same at all.

But our system isn't truly capitalism, either. The State intervenes in almost every industry, often in a big and expensive way. With government at all levels making up more than 40% of GDP, it's fair to say we live in a State dominated society.

And as with all socialist experiments, it is the poor who suffer the worst economic outcomes. It is their cash savings that get wiped out by inflation. It is their jobs that disappear when regulations reduce capital investment or government debt crowds out private capital in the markets.

If the poor knew the first thing about economics, they wouldn't keep voting for socialist politicians and their programs. Alas, they don't even know the basics.

The poor in America, like the poor everywhere, still believe you can rob Peter to pay Paul. They still believe their "leaders" are trying to serve their best interests. It is a sad hoax. What has really happened is clear: Bamboozling the poor has become a way of life for American politicians. And the poor's willingness—even eagerness—to embrace the resulting economic slavery is the linchpin of our system.

But it's not only the poor who have become addicted to the system. Businessmen like Warren Buffett embrace it, too—despite its limitations and taxes. Buffett calls it the "American System." He says it's the greatest system for creating wealth the world has ever seen.

We're not so sure.

Yes, it certainly makes it easy for big businessmen like Buffett to become wealthy. But those same benefits don't accrue to the society at large. For example... even though the value of America's production has soared over the last 40 years and asset prices have risen considerably, our debts have grown even more.

When you adjust for debt and inflation, you discover America hasn't gotten richer at all. Yes, we have become more affluent. And yes, some individuals have gotten vastly richer. But as a whole, when you add back the debts we've racked up, the country hasn't gotten richer at all.

Since the end of the gold standard in 1971, real after-tax wages, per capita, stagnated. On average, we haven't gotten any richer at all in 40 years. What happened over the last 40 years?

Why did so many people rush so eagerly into debt? Why did they borrow more and more to buy the same things at ever-higher prices—again and again and again? And why do people in America continue to work, day after day, for jobs that offer no opportunity and declining real wages? Most important, how did a few people end up getting so rich from this merry-go-round economic system that never takes us anywhere?

To answer this question, we need only answer one core question: Who benefits?

Whose wealth and power increases with inflation? Whose stature in society grows alongside the government? Who profits from increased spending on wars, prisons, and social programs that are doomed to fail? And most of all... who profits from an explosion in debt?

A certain class of people has the power to not only protect itself from these policies but to profit as well. These people have used the last 40 years to produce massive amounts of paper wealth. And they are now desperately trying to convert those paper accounts into real wealth, which explains the exploding price of farmland and precious metals.

This explosion of wealth at the top of the "food chain" is the main feature of what I call New American Socialism. It's a system fueled by paper money, the constant expansion of debt, and a kind of corruption that's hard to police because it occurs within the boundaries of the law.

Like the European and totalitarian socialism of the last 100 years, New American Socialism harnesses the power of the State to grow and maintain production. Like in traditional socialism, the poor pay the costs of New American Socialism. But unlike socialist systems of the past, this new American version has one critical improvement...

In the New American Socialism, the power of the system produces private profits.

In this way, it provides a huge incentive to entrepreneurs and politicians to work together on behalf of the system. This is what keeps the system going. This is what keeps it from collapsing upon itself. And this, unfortunately, is why the imbalances in the world economy will continue to grow until the entire global monetary system itself implodes.

"An American Tragedy Brewing" by Porter Stansberry

As I explained, in "New American Socialism", the power of the system produces private profits. It began when Nixon took us off the gold standard. Without the tie to gold, the amount of economic mischief our government could engineer became practically limitless.

Today, I'll show you an example of how New American Socialism works and how thoroughly corrupted the system has become, and I'll begin to set up our challenge as investors today...

While you're reading today's essay, I want you to think about whether you're willing to make a profit on a business that couldn't survive without government protection... whose products aren't saleable in a real market. In other words: How mercenary are you?

To answer that question, we're going to take a look at a tragedy that's brewing right now...

For many decades, the government has supported higher education in America. Does the government give money to actual students based on their achievement? Yes... but that's a small part of the program. Most of the government money spent comes via access to student loans—so-called Title IV funding.

A host of rules apply to these loans, but knowing just a few of them is instructive. The most important rule relates to a college's total revenue mix.

To access Title IV funding, a college cannot receive more than 90% of its revenue from government-related sources. The government is allowing the market to determine whether or not a college is useful and legitimate by requiring it to earn only 10% of its revenues from private sources. (Does this sound smart to you? It's tantamount to requiring only a tiny down payment to buy a house. It's dangerous because the student—and the college—doesn't have much skin in the game.)

There's another important rule. Colleges can lose access to government backed funds if loans made to previous students experience default rates in excess of 25% for three consecutive years. (Naturally, the rule has a key loophole, which I'll discuss in a moment.)

These two key rules, which leave the government on the hook for 90% of the risk of the student loans, led to the creation and massive growth of the for-profit education industry.

Clever entrepreneurs realized a traditional college education wasn't practical for many students who lacked either the cognitive ability to succeed at a traditional college or the desire to acquire a liberal arts education. What many students wanted, could master, and could afford were essentially trade schools that taught skills in demand from local employers. For-profit education grew up competing with poorly funded community colleges. And they had a major advantage: huge marketing budgets.

Let me show you what this means in terms of how these for-profit schools spend the Title IV money they receive.

Apollo is the largest company in the for-profit education space. In 2009, Apollo grew its total revenues by \$833 million. Yes, you read that correctly—\$833 million in revenue growth during a severe recession. Its Title IV funding rose by \$1.1 billion. That is, the amount of government-related loans and grants it received increased by more than its total revenue growth. The company became even more dependent on the government. Where did the money go? Not toward education. In 2009, Apollo increased its spending on faculty and other instructional costs by \$99 million. That is, out of every \$1 it got extra from the government, it spent roughly \$0.09 on actual education.

Instead, a lot of money went to shareholders. Since 2008, Apollo has spent more than \$1 billion buying back its own stock. But most of the money went to its executives. Apollo currently spends almost \$1.5 billion annually on compensation for its administrators and salesmen.

In one way, you can argue for-profit education executives have earned their paychecks. Enrollment is booming, with the public showing a clear preference for the curriculum offered by the for-profit schools. Since 1986, enrollment in the sector has grown six fold. The U.S. now has 2,800 for-profit institutions of higher learning. About 10% of all college students are now enrolled in for-profit schools.

And you can make a good case these firms are providing a valuable service at a reasonable price. Supporters of the industry note that average revenue per student is the lowest at for-profit colleges: \$11,130, while public universities average \$18,922 per student and private not-for-profit colleges received \$37,869 per student.

So are these students (and our society) getting a bargain? Does foisting 90% of the risk on government lead to positive outcomes? No, not really. Instead, much like Fannie Mae did to housing, these government guarantees create huge incentives for selling college to students who can't afford it. It also makes college more expensive and less affordable.

The most recent examination of student-loan repayment shows for-profit education students have much higher default rates. In 2008, the national default rate on student loans was 7%. The default rate for private not-for-profit schools (the most expensive) was 4%. The default rate for public not-for-profit school loans was 6%. The default rate for private for-profit schools was 11.6%. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said of the numbers:

The data tells us that students attending for-profit schools are the most likely to default... Far too many for-profit schools are saddling students with debt that they cannot afford in exchange for degrees and certificates they cannot use.

When you look at the default figures in aggregate, the problem jumps out at you. Students at for-profit schools represent 26% of the borrower population. They make up 43% of all defaults.

When I saw that number, the first thing that occurred to me was... "Wait a minute... I thought schools get kicked out of the program if default rates reach 25% for three consecutive years? How can for-profit schools represent so much of the default rate when they make up so few of the students borrowing?"

The answer is—borrowers who default after the first two years of repayment aren't counted.

What?!

That's right. To count as a default, you have to stop repaying your student loans in the first two years after graduation. The repayments required during this time are extremely low—much like the teaser rate on a subprime mortgage. The real extent of the problem can't be understood until you see the actual default rate on all loans. After all, the real default rate isn't the percentage of students who default in the first two years. It's the percentage of borrowers who never repay their debts. What is the real number? Well, we don't know. The Department of Education won't make that data public.

What we do know is the companies themselves write off between 50% and 60% of the private loans they make to their students.

The companies use these private loans to make sure they stay within the 90% rule that governs access to the government's backing. That's tantamount to the many second mortgages that were made on the side to home buyers, so they could afford their down payments. And not surprisingly, when folks buy a home using 100% borrowed money or when they get a college degree using 100% borrowed money, they frequently won't (or can't) pay the loan back.

I have no objection to a private lender who decides to lend to poor credit risks—even for things like an expensive home or degree. But let that lender bear the risk. Don't pass those risks to me via government protection.

Obviously, with 50% to 60% of these loans defaulting, the only real profit in the system comes from the government's protection. And the scary part is the amount of government money flooding into these schools is soaring. Historically, little government money was available to these schools—only \$2 billion to \$4 billion a year. But then... with the right kind of legal corruption... the floodgates opened.

Sally Stroup was the head lobbyist for Apollo. In 2002, she became the assistant secretary of the Department of Education under President Bush. Guess what happened next?

Stroup gutted the rules that governed which students these schools could recruit. Government funding for for-profit college education is now more than \$20 billion a year. And at current growth rates, within 10 years, 40% of all government-backed college funding will go to for-profit education.

Call it socialism. Call it New American Socialism. Call it compassionate conservatism. It doesn't matter what you call it, the rules of the game are clear: The government takes all of the risk while investors and executives keep all of the profits.

This brings me back to the challenge I outlined above. After reading today's essay, would you buy shares of Apollo? They're cheap, trading at about 3.5 times cash earnings, and the U.S. Treasury has essentially guaranteed its future revenues.

That's certainly attractive. But knowing what you now know about the for-profit education business, do you want to own this company?

"One of the Most Obvious Frauds Ever Foisted on the American People" by Porter Stansberry, DailyWealth

July 2, 2011, (<http://www.dailywealth.com/1776/One-of-the-Most-Obvious-Frauds-Ever-Foisted-on-the-American-People>)

Yesterday, I left you with a question...

Over the past few days, I've described what I call New American Socialism. As I've shown you, it's a kind of legal corruption whereby the risks of doing business are assumed by the taxpayers... but the profits still accrue to private enterprise.

The corruption has infected one industry after another. And it's weighing down our economy... But I've actually preferred having it in many of the stocks I've recommended over the years. It tends to be good for investors. So the question now is, am I still interested in buying into New American Socialism? It's a difficult question... and the answer is complicated. So bear with me...

In yesterday's essay, I described a tragedy unfolding in the education sector. If you missed the essay, I suggest you go back and give it a read. You'll find the numbers disturbing.

Essentially, the for-profit education industry is selling a product its customers cannot afford.

This industry games the rules of the government and spends a fortune on lobbying—more than \$12 million in the last year. This industry would literally not exist without government-guarantees standing behind 90% of its revenues.

And Wall Street experts estimate this industry will rack up around \$250 billion in credit losses over the next decade—an amount of money that exceeds the losses from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac so far.

All these risks will eventually cost the U.S. Treasury billions of dollars. You see, this industry overwhelmingly targets women and minorities—people who are often up against a wall financially. These students will never be able to repay these debts.

While these students have no financial skin in the game (many borrow 100% of their tuition), they face enormous consequences down the road from this scheme... Student loans are notoriously difficult to discharge, and many borrowers will be crippled financially by the obligations they cannot afford. The facts of this situation are incontrovertible and well known—even inside the current president's administration. And yet... even when all of these facts were studied and reviewed... what did the president do?

Critics had demanded so-called "gainful employment" regulations that would limit how much a student could borrow to an amount of money he would likely be able to repay based on the current employment and income track record of other alumni. Obviously, such sensible regulation was never likely to be implemented by Washington... especially not by a minority president when the funding in question goes overwhelmingly to poor, minority students.

Instead, in early June, Obama's administration promulgated a new set of rules that were supposed to address the abuses and the risks of the government's generous funding rules for for-profit education.

The new rules actually loosen the funding requirements—substantially. Colleges will be eligible for federal support as long as at least 35% of their students are repaying their loans over the first three years. Now, up to 65% of the students can default. And what about limiting loan amounts to ability to repay? Loan amounts may not exceed 30% of anticipated discretionary income.

How will students pay for food, housing, transportation, insurance, etc. if they're spending 30% of their incomes on student loans?

Rather than tightening the standards, the new rules actually loosen the standards. They also go further in guaranteeing continued federal support. Under the new rules, no schools will lose funding until 2015 at the soonest, to give them time to adapt to the new "standards," which were trumpeted as a major reform.

Only in Washington D.C.

The for-profit education "business" is one of the most obvious frauds ever foisted on the American people. The industry has been structured to take advantage of the least sophisticated members of society. It promises benefits the average student is unlikely to achieve: a better job and a better life. Instead, these students are saddled with unpayable debts and enjoy no corresponding increase in wages.

Assuming the government should not do anything to protect the students from this fraud, shouldn't the risks of perpetrating this fraud be left with the companies themselves? Let for-profit education companies guarantee these loans. Let them take the risk that these debts will never be repaid.

But that's not how New American Socialism works. What happens is, all the profits of this scam go to the executives and the shareholders. The risk goes to the government. Our leaders are now so corrupted by New American Socialism they can't even stop the for-profit education scheme I describe above.

The facts, by the way, aren't even in dispute. This is the obvious stuff—the stuff no one can really dispute. If our leaders let this industry rack up \$250 billion in bad debts over the next decade, how can we expect them to do anything to stop our massive annual deficits and our runaway federal debt?

If the administration can't stop the for-profit education industry from getting its hands into the U.S. Treasury, whom will it stop? Nobody.

So the only real question is: Do I want to be buying stocks—any stocks—right now?

When I consider the unsustainable debts and unfunded liabilities the government has taken on... and the upcoming credit crisis New American Socialism has created... I arrive at the answer: "No."

20110702-03	15:26	Dennis	"14 Propaganda Techniques Fox 'News' Uses to Brainwash Americans"
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In case you need to unwash your brain...

"14 Propaganda Techniques Fox 'News' Uses to Brainwash Americans" by Dr. Cynthia Boaz, Truthout

July 2, 2011, (<http://www.truth-out.org/14-propaganda-techniques-fox-news-uses-brainwash-americans/1309612678>)

There is nothing more sacred to the maintenance of democracy than a free press.

Access to comprehensive, accurate and quality information is essential to the manifestation of Socratic citizenship—the society characterized by a civically engaged, well-informed and socially invested populace. Thus, to the degree that access to quality information is willfully or unintentionally obstructed, democracy itself is degraded.

It is ironic that in the era of 24-hour cable news networks and "reality" programming, the news-to-fluff ratio and overall veracity of information has declined precipitously. Take the fact Americans now spend on average about 50 hours a week using various forms of media, while at the same time cultural literacy levels hover just above the gutter. Not only does mainstream media now tolerate gross misrepresentations of fact and history by public figures (highlighted most recently by Sarah Palin's ludicrous depiction of Paul Revere's ride), but many media actually legitimize these displays. Pause for a moment and ask yourself what it means that the world's largest, most profitable and most popular news channel passes off as fact every whim, impulse and outrageously incompetent analysis of its so-called reporters. How did we get here? Take the enormous amount of misinformation that is taken for truth by Fox audiences: the belief that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and that he was in on 9/11, the belief that climate change isn't real and/or man-made, the belief that Barack Obama is Muslim and wasn't born in the United States, the insistence that all Arabs are Muslim and all Muslims are terrorists, the inexplicable perceptions that immigrants are both too lazy to work and are

about to steal your job. All of these claims are demonstrably false, yet Fox News viewers will maintain their veracity with incredible zeal.

Why? Is it simply that we have lost our respect for knowledge?

My curiosity about this question compelled me to sit down and document the most oft-used methods by which willful ignorance has been turned into dogma by Fox News and other propagandists disguised as media. The techniques I identify here also help to explain the simultaneously powerful identification the Fox media audience has with the network, as well as their ardent, reflexive defenses of it. The good news is that the more conscious you are of these techniques, the less likely they are to work on you. The bad news is that those reading this article are probably the least in need of it.

1. Panic Mongering.

This goes one step beyond simple fear mongering. With panic mongering, there is never a break from the fear. The idea is to terrify and terrorize the audience during every waking moment. From Muslims to swine flu to recession to homosexuals to immigrants to the rapture itself, the belief over at Fox seems to be that if your fight-or-flight reflexes aren't activated, you aren't alive. This of course raises the question: why terrorize your own audience? Because it is the fastest way to bypasses the rational brain. In other words, when people are afraid, they don't think rationally. And when they can't think rationally, they'll believe anything.

2. Character Assassination/Ad Hominem.

Fox does not like to waste time debating the idea. Instead, they prefer a quicker route to dispensing with their opponents: go after the person's credibility, motives, intelligence, character, or, if necessary, sanity. No category of character assassination is off the table and no offense is beneath them. Fox and like-minded media figures also use ad hominem attacks not just against individuals, but entire categories of people in an effort to discredit the ideas of every person who is seen to fall into that category, e.g. "liberals," "hippies," "progressives" etc. This form of argument—if it can be called that—leaves no room for genuine debate over ideas, so by definition, it is undemocratic. Not to mention just plain crass.

3. Projection/Flipping.

This one is frustrating for the viewer who is trying to actually follow the argument. It involves taking whatever underhanded tactic you're using and then accusing your opponent of doing it to you first. We see this frequently in the immigration discussion, where anti-racists are accused of racism, or in the climate change debate, where those who argue for human causes of the phenomenon are accused of not having science or facts on their side. It's often called upon when the media host finds themselves on the ropes in the debate.

4. Rewriting History.

This is another way of saying that propagandists make the facts fit their worldview. The Downing Street Memos on the Iraq war were a classic example of this on a massive scale, but it happens daily and over smaller issues as well. A recent case in point is Palin's mangling of the Paul Revere ride, which Fox reporters have bent over backward to validate. Why lie about the historical facts, even when they can be demonstrated to be false? Well, because dogmatic minds actually find it easier to reject reality than to update their viewpoints. They will literally rewrite history if it serves their interests. And they'll often speak with such authority that the casual viewer will be tempted to question what they knew as fact.

5. Scapegoating/Othering.

This works best when people feel insecure or scared. It's technically a form of both fear mongering and diversion, but it is so pervasive that it deserves its own category. The simple idea is that if you can find a group to blame for social or economic problems, you can then go on to a) justify violence/dehumanization of them, and b) subvert responsibility for any harm that may befall them as a result.

6. Conflating Violence with Power and Opposition to Violence with Weakness.

This is more of what I'd call a "meta-frame" (a deeply held belief) than a media technique, but it is manifested in the ways news is reported constantly. For example, terms like "show of strength" are often used to describe acts of repression, such as those by the Iranian regime against the protesters in the summer of 2009. There are several concerning consequences of this form of conflation. First, it has the potential to make people feel falsely emboldened by shows of force—it can turn wars into sporting events. Secondly, especially in the context of American politics, displays of violence—whether manifested in war or debates about the Second Amendment—are seen as noble and (in an especially surreal irony) moral. Violence become synonymous with power, patriotism and piety.

7. Bullying.

This is a favorite technique of several Fox commentators. That it continues to be employed demonstrates that it seems to have some efficacy. Bullying and yelling works best on people who come to the conversation with a lack of confidence, either in themselves or their grasp of the subject being discussed. The bully exploits this lack of confidence by berating the guest into submission or compliance. Often, less self-possessed people will feel shame and anxiety when being berated and the quickest way to end the immediate discomfort is to cede authority to the bully. The bully is then able to interpret that as a "win."

8. Confusion.

As with the preceding technique, this one works best on an audience that is less confident and self-possessed. The idea is to deliberately confuse the argument, but insist that the logic is airtight and imply that anyone who disagrees is either too dumb or too fanatical to follow along. Less independent minds will interpret the confusion technique as a form of sophisticated thinking, thereby giving the user's claims veracity in the viewer's mind.

9. Populism.

This is especially popular in election years. The speakers identifies themselves as one of "the people" and the target of their ire as an enemy of the people. The opponent is always "elitist" or a "bureaucrat" or a "government insider" or some other category that is not the people. The idea is to make the opponent harder to relate to and harder to empathize with. It often goes hand in hand with scapegoating. A common logical fallacy with populism bias when used by the right is that accused "elitists" are almost always liberals—a category of political actors who, by definition, advocate for non-elite groups.

10. Invoking the Christian God.

This is similar to othering and populism. With morality politics, the idea is to declare yourself and your allies as patriots, Christians and "real Americans" (those are inseparable categories in this line of thinking) and anyone who challenges them is not. Basically, God loves Fox and Republicans and America. And hates taxes and anyone who doesn't love those other three things. Because the speaker has been benedicted by God to speak on behalf of all Americans, any challenge is perceived as immoral. It's a cheap and easy technique used by all totalitarian entities from states to cults.

11. Saturation.

There are three components to effective saturation: being repetitive, being ubiquitous and being consistent. The message must be repeated over and over, it must be everywhere and it must be shared across commentators: e.g. "Saddam has WMD." Veracity and hard data have no relationship to the efficacy of saturation. There is a psychological effect of being exposed to the same message over and over, regardless of whether it's true or if it even makes sense, e.g., "Barack Obama wasn't born in the United States." If something is said enough times, by enough people, many will come to accept it as truth. Another example is Fox's own slogan of "Fair and Balanced."

12. Disparaging Education.

There is an emerging and disturbing lack of reverence for education and intellectualism in many mainstream media discourses. In fact, in some circles (e.g. Fox), higher education is often disparaged as

elitist. Having a university credential is perceived by these folks as not a sign of credibility, but of a lack of it. In fact, among some commentators, evidence of intellectual prowess is treated snidely and as anti-American. The disdain for education and other evidence of being trained in critical thinking are direct threats to a hive-mind mentality, which is why they are so viscerally demeaned.

13. Guilt by Association.

This is a favorite of Glenn Beck and Andrew Breitbart, both of whom have used it to decimate the careers and lives of many good people. Here's how it works: if your cousin's college roommate's uncle's ex-wife attended a dinner party back in 1984 with Gorbachev's niece's ex-boyfriend's sister, then you, by extension are a communist set on destroying America. Period.

14. Diversion.

This is where, when on the ropes, the media commentator suddenly takes the debate in a weird but predictable direction to avoid accountability. This is the point in the discussion where most Fox anchors start comparing the opponent to Saul Alinsky or invoking ACORN or Media Matters, in a desperate attempt to win through guilt by association. Or they'll talk about wanting to focus on "moving forward," as though by analyzing the current state of things or God forbid, how we got to this state of things, you have no regard for the future. Any attempt to bring the discussion back to the issue at hand will likely be called deflection, an ironic use of the technique of projection/flipping.

In debating some of these tactics with colleagues and friends, I have also noticed that the Fox viewership seems to be marked by a sort of collective personality disorder whereby the viewer feels almost as though they've been let into a secret society. Something about their affiliation with the network makes them feel privileged and this affinity is likely what drives the viewers to defend the network so vehemently. They seem to identify with it at a core level, because it tells them they are special and privy to something the rest of us don't have. It's akin to the loyalty one feels by being let into a private club or a gang. That effect is also likely to make the propaganda more powerful, because it goes mostly unquestioned.

In considering these tactics and their possible effects on American public discourse, it is important to note that historically, those who've genuinely accessed truth have never berated those who did not. You don't get honored by history when you beat up your opponent: look at Martin Luther King Jr., Robert Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln. These men did not find the need to engage in othering, ad hominem attacks, guilt by association or bullying. This is because when a person has accessed a truth, they are not threatened by the opposing views of others. This reality reveals the righteous indignation of people like Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity as a symptom of untruth. These individuals are hostile and angry precisely because they don't feel confident in their own veracity. And in general, the more someone is losing their temper in a debate and the more intolerant they are of listening to others, the more you can be certain they do not know what they're talking about.

One final observation. Fox audiences, birthers and Tea Partiers often defend their arguments by pointing to the fact that a lot of people share the same perceptions. This is a reasonable point to the extent that Murdoch's News Corporation reaches a far larger audience than any other single media outlet. But, the fact that a lot of people believe something is not necessarily a sign that it's true; it's just a sign that it's been effectively marketed.

As honest, fair and truly intellectual debate degrades before the eyes of the global media audience, the quality of American democracy degrades along with it.

20110704-01 08:02 GaryC Re: "14 Propaganda Techniques..."

Dear Dennis,

While some of what you say is true about commentators on Fox, they are equally true on MSNBC and CNN. In the latter case, the topics may be changed but both the left and the right have their loons. It has bothered me for a long time that the popular magazines are U.S. and People, that the popular TV shows are American Idol and Survivor, that the popular books are written (spoken) by pop figures. The intellectual level of the U.S. population is worse than ever given the amount of money we waste on education.

I have employees who could not find Afghanistan on a map. I have employees who have no idea why the debt ceiling debate is critical. They are focused on Casey Anthony and other pulp cr*p. Of course, it is politically unacceptable to require kids to learn history, understand basic economics or understand how their government works.

Whether you are on the left, the right, or in the middle, the state of our citizenry sucks. Fox, MSNBC and CNN are just pandering to their audiences and are trying to sell product. Personally, Fox and the others would not exist if the major networks had not become so biased during the past 20 years. Plus, they only have 30 minutes to present their picture while the news channels have 24 hours.

20110707-01	07:29	GaryC	Illegal Immigration Produces "Two Californias"
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This is an article from Victor Davis Hansen, a Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University...

"Two Californias" by Victor Davis Hanson, *National Review*

Dec. 15, 2010, (<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/255320/two-californias-victor-davis-hanson?page=1>)

The last three weeks I have traveled about, taking the pulse of the more forgotten areas of central California. I wanted to witness, even if superficially, what is happening to a state that has the highest sales and income taxes, the most lavish entitlements, the near-worst public schools (based on federal test scores), and the largest number of illegal aliens in the nation, along with an overregulated private sector, a stagnant and shrinking manufacturing base, and an elite environmental ethos that restricts commerce and productivity without curbing consumption.

During this unscientific experiment, three times a week I rode a bike on a 20-mile trip over various rural roads in southwestern Fresno County . I also drove my car over to the coast to work, on various routes through towns like San Joaquin, Mendota, and Firebaugh. And near my home I have been driving, shopping, and touring by intent the rather segregated and impoverished areas of Caruthers, Fowler, Laton, Orange Cove, Parlier, and Selma . My own farmhouse is now in an area of abject poverty and almost no ethnic diversity; the closest elementary school (my alma mater, two miles away) is 94 percent Hispanic and 1 percent white, and well below federal testing norms in math and English.

Here are some general observations about what I saw (other than that the rural roads of California are fast turning into rubble, poorly maintained and reverting to what I remember seeing long ago in the rural South). First, remember that these areas are the ground zero, so to speak, of 20 years of illegal immigration. There has been a general depression in farming— to such an extent that the 20- to-100-acre tree and vine farmer, the erstwhile backbone of the old rural California , for all practical purposes has ceased to exist.

On the western side of the Central Valley , the effects of arbitrary cutoffs in federal irrigation water have idled tens of thousands of acres of prime agricultural land, leaving thousands unemployed. Manufacturing plants in the towns in these areas—which used to make harvesters, hydraulic lifts, trailers, food processing equipment—have largely shut down; their production has been shipped off overseas or south of the border.

Agriculture itself—from almonds to raisins—has increasingly become corporatized and mechanized, cutting by half the number of farm workers needed. So unemployment runs somewhere between 15 and 20 percent.

Many of the rural trailer-house compounds I saw appear to the naked eye no different from what I have seen in the Third World . There is a Caribbean look to the junked cars, electric wires crisscrossing between various outbuildings, plastic tarps substituting for replacement shingles, lean-tos cobbled together as auxiliary housing, pit bulls unleashed, and geese, goats, and chickens roaming around the yards. The public hears about all sorts of tough California regulations that stymie business—rigid zoning laws, strict building codes, constant inspections—but apparently none of that applies out here.

It is almost as if the more California regulates, the more it does not regulate. Its public employees prefer to go after misdemeanors in the upscale areas to justify our expensive oversight industry, while ignoring the felonies in the downtrodden areas, which are becoming feral and beyond the ability of any inspector to do anything but feel irrelevant. But in the regulators' defense, where would one get the money to redo an ad hoc trailer park with a spider web of illegal bare wires?

Many of the rented-out rural shacks and stationary Winnebagos are on former small farms—the vineyards overgrown with weeds, or torn out with the ground lying fallow. I pass on the cultural consequences to communities from the loss of thousands of small farming families. I don't think I can remember another time when so many acres in the eastern part of the valley have gone out of production, even though farm prices have recently rebounded. Apparently it is simply not worth the gamble of investing \$7,000 to \$10,000 an acre in a new orchard or vineyard. What an anomaly—with suddenly soaring farm prices, still we have thousands of acres in the world's richest agricultural belt, with available water on the east side of the valley and plentiful labor, gone idle or in disuse. Is credit frozen? Are there simply no more farmers? Are the schools so bad as to scare away potential agricultural entrepreneurs? Or are we all terrified by the national debt and uncertain future?

California coastal elites may worry about the oxygen content of water available to a three-inch smelt in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta, but they seem to have no interest in the epidemic dumping of trash, furniture, and often toxic substances throughout California's rural hinterland. Yesterday, for example, I rode my bike by a stopped van just as the occupants tossed seven plastic bags of raw refuse onto the side of the road. I rode up near their bumper and said in my broken Spanish not to throw garbage onto the public road. But there were three of them, and one of me. So I was lucky to be sworn at only. I note in passing that I would not drive into Mexico and, as a guest, dare to pull over and throw seven bags of trash into the environment of my host.

In fact, trash piles are commonplace out here—composed of everything from half-empty paint cans and children's plastic toys to diapers and moldy food. I have never seen a rural sheriff cite a litterer, or witnessed state EPA workers cleaning up these unauthorized wastelands. So I would suggest to Bay Area scientists that the environment is taking a much harder beating down here in central California than it is in the Delta. Perhaps before we cut off more irrigation water to the west side of the valley, we might invest some green dollars into cleaning up the unsightly and sometimes dangerous garbage that now litters the outskirts of our rural communities.

We hear about the tough small-business regulations that have driven residents out of the state, at the rate of 2,000 to 3,000 a week. But from my unscientific observations these past weeks, it seems rather easy to open a small business in California without any oversight at all, or at least what I might call a "counter business." I counted eleven mobile hot-kitchen trucks that simply park by the side of the road, spread about some plastic chairs, pull down a tarp canopy, and, presto, become mini-restaurants. There are no "facilities" such as toilets or washrooms. But I do frequently see lard trails on the isolated roads I bike on, where trucks apparently have simply opened their draining tanks and sped on, leaving a slick of cooking fats and oils. Crows and ground squirrels love them; they can be seen from a distance mysteriously occupied in the middle of the road.

At crossroads, peddlers in a counter-California economy sell almost anything. Here is what I noticed at an intersection on the west side last week: shovels, rakes, hoes, gas pumps, lawnmowers, edgers, blowers, jackets, gloves, and caps. The merchandise was all new. I doubt whether in high-tax California sales taxes or income taxes were paid on any of these stop-and-go transactions.

In two supermarkets 50 miles apart, I was the only one in line who did not pay with a social-service plastic card (gone are the days when "food stamps" were embarrassing bulky coupons). But I did not see any relationship between the use of the card and poverty as we once knew it: The electrical appurtenances owned by the user and the car into which the groceries were loaded were indistinguishable from those of the upper middle class.

By that I mean that most consumers drove late-model Camrys, Accords, or Tauruses, had iPhones, Bluetooths, or BlackBerries, and bought everything in the store with public assistance credit. This seemed a world apart from the trailers I had just ridden by the day before. I don't editorialize here on the logic or morality of any of this, but I note only that there are vast numbers of people who apparently are not working, are on public food assistance, and enjoy the technological veneer of the middle class. California has a consumer market surely, but often no apparent source of income. Does the \$40 million a day supplement to unemployment benefits from Washington explain some of this?

Do diversity concerns, as in lack of diversity, work both ways? Over a hundred-mile stretch, when I stopped in San Joaquin for a bottled water, or drove through Orange Cove, or got gas in Parlier, or went to a corner market in southwestern Selma, my home town, I was the only non-Hispanic—there were no Asians, no blacks, no other whites. We may speak of the richness of "diversity," but those who cherish that ideal simply have no idea that there are now countless inland communities that have become near-apartheid societies, where Spanish is the first language, the schools are not at all diverse, and the federal and state governments are either the main employers or at least the chief sources of income—whether through emergency rooms, rural health clinics, public schools, or social service offices. An observer

from Mars might conclude that our elites and masses have given up on the ideal of integration and assimilation, perhaps in the wake of the arrival of 11 to 15 million illegal aliens.

Again, I do not editorialize, but I note these vast transformations over the last 20 years that are the paradoxical wages of unchecked illegal immigration from Mexico, a vast expansion of California's entitlements and taxes, the flight of the upper middle class out of state, the deliberate effort not to tap natural resources, the downsizing in manufacturing and agriculture, and the departure of whites, blacks, and Asians from many of these small towns to more racially diverse and upscale areas of California.

Fresno's California State University campus is embroiled in controversy over the student body president's announcing that he is an illegal alien, with all the requisite protests in favor of the DREAM Act. I won't comment on the legislation per se, but again only note the anomaly. I taught at CSUF for 21 years. I think it fair to say that the predominant theme of the Chicano and Latin American Studies program's sizable curriculum was a fuzzy American culpability. By that I mean that students in those classes heard of the sins of America more often than its attractions. In my home town, Mexican flag decals on car windows are far more common than their American counterparts.

I note this because hundreds of students here illegally are now terrified of being deported to Mexico . I can understand that, given the chaos in Mexico and their own long residency in the United States . But here is what still confuses me: If one were to consider the classes that deal with Mexico at the university, or the visible displays of national chauvinism, then one might conclude that Mexico is a far more attractive and moral place than the United States.

So there is a surreal nature to these protests: something like, "Please do not send me back to the culture I nostalgically praise; please let me stay in the culture that I ignore or deprecate." I think the DREAM Act protestors might have been far more successful in winning public opinion had they stopped blaming the U.S. for suggesting that they might have to leave at some point, and instead explained why, in fact, they want to stay. What it is about America that makes a youth of 21 go on a hunger strike or demonstrate to be allowed to remain in this country rather than return to the place of his birth?

I think I know the answer to this paradox. Missing entirely in the above description is the attitude of the host, which by any historical standard can only be termed "indifferent." California does not care whether one broke the law to arrive here or continues to break it by staying. It asks nothing of the illegal immigrant—no proficiency in English, no acquaintance with American history and values, no proof of income, no record of education or skills. It does provide all the public assistance that it can afford (and more that it borrows for), and apparently waives enforcement of most of California's burdensome regulations and civic statutes that increasingly have plagued productive citizens to the point of driving them out.

How odd that we over-regulate those who are citizens and have capital to the point of banishing them from the state, but do not regulate those who are aliens and without capital to the point of encouraging millions more to follow in their footsteps.

How odd—to paraphrase what Critias once said of ancient Sparta—that California is at once both the nation's most un-free and most free state, the most repressed and the wildest.

Hundreds of thousands sense all that and vote accordingly with their feet, both into and out of California—and the result is a sort of social, cultural, economic, and political time-bomb, whose ticks are getting louder.

(Victor Davis Hanson is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, the editor of *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome*, and the author of *The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern*.)

20110711-01	13:49	Dennis	"The 'Fracking' Issue & a Question About Morocco"
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Dear SteveB,

Weren't you concerned about hydrofracking? If so, this could be of interest.

"The 'Fracking' Issue and a Question About Morocco" by Kent Moors, *Oil and Energy Investor*

July 11, 2011, (<http://oilandenergyinvestor.com/2011/07/the-fracking-issue-and-a-question-about-morocco/>)

As I await my next flight to London, now seems a good time to answer a couple of recent emails from your fellow Oil & Energy Investor subscribers. Let's get right to it.

Q: Kent, can you address the "fracking" issue one more time?

The 2010 documentary *Gasland* showed how bad things can get when 600+ chemicals are used to get the oil out of the ground, especially in close proximity to water resources. What companies employ this technique?

Also, the French recently revoked the licenses of one company — Toreador Resources in Paris — because fracking would have been their preferred method of oil extraction. The stock plummeted on the news. Will other companies (and countries) that use fracking find it difficult to lease land where the water table may be affected? ~ R. J.

A: Actually, several of you have written in with similar questions surrounding the French decision on fracking. But R.J. asks several questions here, so let me address them in order.

First, all companies that utilize horizontal drilling for shale gas extraction use hydrofracking. Second, the French decision results from where the drilling would be located.

To date, significant shale gas deposits have been determined at Bassin d'Ales, Plaine d'Ales, Montélimar, and Moselle (where there is also coal bed methane). The first three are most advanced in terms of exploration; unfortunately, they are also in the Paris region and have population density concerns.

This has become a political issue in the days before an election... and that is rarely a good time to get an objective appraisal.

Still, the environmentalists do have it right — if a company cannot provide sufficient guarantees that drilling poses no danger to water tables, it should not receive a license.

And these French companies will have a hard time providing the required guarantee. France has no history of combining hydrofracking and horizontal drilling. There have been no environmental baseline studies completed and no previous unconventional drilling as a basis.

Third, there is shale drilling under development in other European countries: Lower Saxony (Germany), Alum (Sweden), the Makó Trough/Szolnok Formation (Hungary), the Vienna Basin (Austria/Slovakia), as well as four very promising basins in Poland.

The French have a valid concern about heavy populations in proximity to drilling. True, the Barnett in Texas was initially an urban-based play (Fort Worth to Denton)... but France's density distribution is different.

Now let's return to the documentary...

The episodes portrayed in *Gasland* were the results of early drilling in Colorado, where, in my judgment, the companies were clearly at fault. There have been some questions raised about more recent drilling in the Marcellus on the East Coast, but these are quite infrequent.

Shale gas wells are at least 5,500 to 7,000 feet below the surface. Some — such as the Eagle Ford in Texas and the deep Utica, currently under evaluation below the Marcellus — are more than 12,000 feet down. These are well below any water resources.

The problems arise in two other ways:

1. Gas contamination on its way up to the surface.
2. The use of fracking fluid.

Gas contamination is a standard problem for both traditional — vertical — drilling and the newer unconventional drilling. It is not, therefore, something that has emerged only with the advent of shale gas development.

In passing, gas contamination is what caused the igniting water shown in Gasland.

Yet the problem can be resolved with the use of concentric pipe strings. Range Resources Corp. (NYSE:RRC) has an excellent system used in the Marcellus.

Regulators need to require the usage of the better pipe strings. Most of them do already.

The other matter, fracking fluid, is more contentious.

Of the hundreds of chemicals used for fracking, most are of no consequence to health or environment.

The problems emerge with the danger of leakage from the use of ethylene glycol (to inhibit the formation of scaling; also used in antifreeze), petroleum distillates (to reduce friction), and especially glutaraldehyde (as an antibacterial agent).

Once again, a secure system of returning the fluids (along with the flow back water) to the surface, and safe disposal of that water, is essential. Today this is accomplished by injecting it into deep disposal wells after processing.

However, new developments are already in field use in the Fayetteville in Arkansas and the Woodford in Oklahoma that eliminate the use of chemicals altogether... and even reduce overall operational costs per well at the same time.

Next, here's a direct question related to my recent travels.

Q: If Morocco is any good, why is TransAtlantic Petroleum pulling out? ~ Norman C.

A: The Canadian TransAtlantic Petroleum Ltd. (AMEX:TAT) stated in a June 28 SEC filing that it was likely to cap an exploration well and move associated equipment to its Turkish operations. The well in question, GRB-1, is on the Asilah exploration permit in Morocco.

The company further said that the well would probably be abandoned as noncommercial. However, the company provided no information in the filing about why it has decided to move equipment to Turkey.

The move comes only some three weeks after TAT acquired the production and oilfield assets of Thrace Basin Natural Gas in Turkey. The company may simply consider this one a better overall development opportunity.

20110712-01	18:12	Dennis	"Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"
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Hey, Obama, cut this...this is where all the waste is...

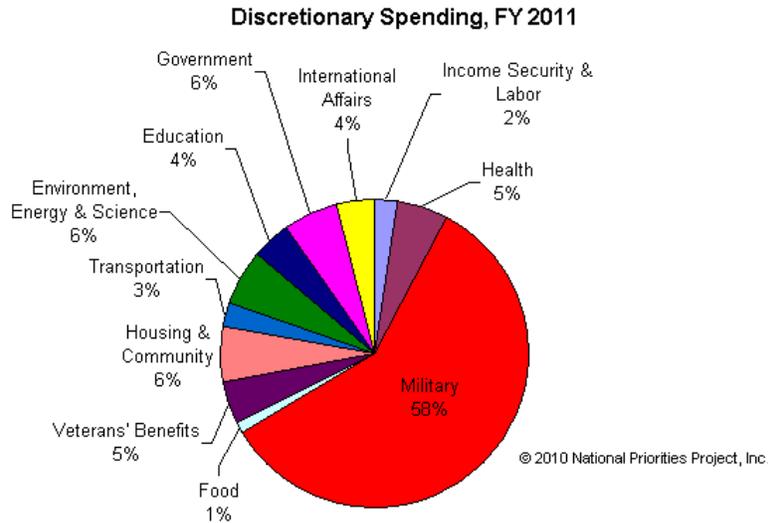
"Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?" by David Morris, CommonDreams

July 12, 2011 by [On the Commons](http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/12) (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/12>)

(Republicans ignore incompetence, bloat and corruption at the Pentagon.)

In all the talk about the federal deficit, why is the single largest culprit left out of the conversation? Why is the one part of government that best epitomizes everything conservatives say they hate about government— waste, incompetence, and corruption—all but exempt from conservative criticism?

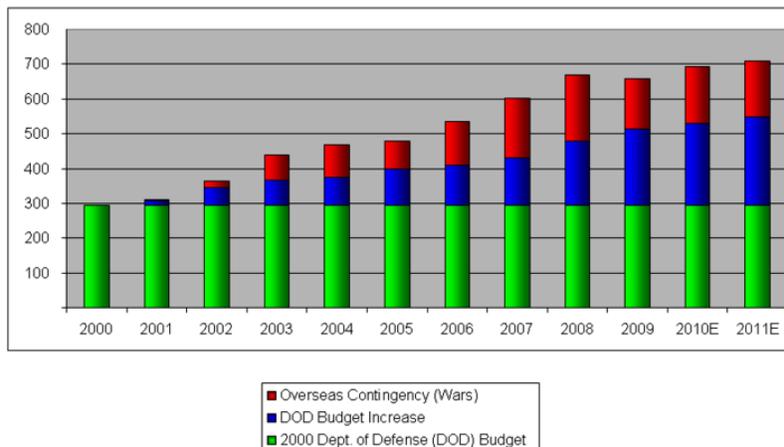
Of course, I'm talking about the Pentagon. Any serious battle plan to reduce the deficit must take on the Pentagon. In 2011 military spending accounted for more than 58 percent of all federal discretionary spending and even more if the interest on the federal debt that is related to military spending were added. In the last ten years we have spent more than \$7.6 trillion on military and homeland security according to the National Priorities Project:



<http://nationalpriorities.org/>

In the last decade military spending has soared from \$300 billion to \$700 billion ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:U.S. Defense Spending Trends.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:U.S._Defense_Spending_Trends.png)):

U.S. Defense Spending Trends 2000-2011 (\$ Billion)



When debt ceilings and deficits seem to be the only two items on Washington's agenda, it is both revealing and tragic that both parties give a free pass to military spending. Representative Paul Ryan's much discussed Tea Party budget accepted Obama's proposal for a pathetic \$78 billion reduction in military spending over 5 years, a recommendation that would only modestly slow the rate of growth of military spending.

Indeed, the Republican government battering ram appears to have stopped at the Pentagon door. This was evident early on. As soon as they took over the House of Representatives, Republicans changed the rules so that military spending does not have to be offset by reduced spending somewhere else, unlike any other kind of government spending. It is the only activity of government they believe does not have to be paid for. Which brings to mind a bit of wisdom from one of their heroes, Adam Smith. "Were the expense of war to be defrayed always by revenue raised within the year ... wars would in general be more speedily concluded, and less wantonly undertaken."

The Tea Party revolution has only strengthened the Republican Party's resolve that the Pentagon's budget is untouchable. An analysis by the Heritage Foundation of Republican votes on defense spending found that Tea Party freshmen were even more likely than their Republican elders to vote against cutting any part of the military budget.

What makes the hypocrisy even more revealing is that the Pentagon turns out to be the poster child for government waste and incompetence.

In 2009 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found “staggering” cost overruns of almost \$300 billion in nearly 70 percent of the Pentagon’s 96 major weapons. What’s more, the programs were running, on average, 21 months behind schedule. And when they were completed, they provided less than they promised.

The Defense Logistics Agency had no use for parts worth more than half of the \$13.7 billion in equipment stacked up in DOD warehouses in 2006 to 2008.

And these are only the tips of the military’s mispending iceberg. We really don’t know how much the Pentagon wastes because, believe it or not, there hasn’t been a complete audit of the Pentagon in more than 15 years.

In 1994, the Government Management Reform Act required the Inspector General of each federal agency to audit and publish the financial statements of their agency. The Department of Defense was the only agency that has been unable to comply. In fiscal 1998 the Department of Defense used \$1.7 trillion of undocumented adjustments to balance the books. In 2002 the situation was even worse. CBS News reported that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld admitted, “we cannot track \$2.3 trillion in transactions.”

Imagine that a school district were to reveal that it didn’t know where it spent its money. Now imagine the Republican response. Perhaps, “Off with their desktops!”

How did Congress’ respond to DOD’s delinquency? It gave it absolution and allowed it to opt out of its legal requirement. But as a sop to outraged public opinion Congress required DOD to set a date when it would have its book sufficiently in order to be audited. Which the Pentagon dutifully did, and missed every one of the target dates. The latest is 2017 and DOD has already announced it will be unable to meet that deadline.

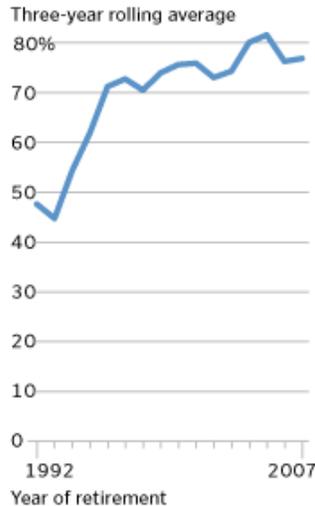
Adding insult to injury, last September, the GAO found that the new computer systems intended to improve the Pentagon’s financial oversight are themselves nearly 100 percent or \$7 billion over budget and as much as 12 years behind schedule!

The Pentagon is not just incompetent. It is corrupt. In Nov., 2009 the Pentagon’s Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA), the federal watchdog responsible for auditing oversight of military contractors, raised the question of criminal wrongdoing when it found that the audits that did occur were riddled with serious breaches of auditor independence. One Pentagon auditor admitted he did not perform detailed tests because, “The contractor would not appreciate it.”

Why would the Pentagon allow its contractors to get away with fraud? To answer that question we need to understand the incestuous relationship between the Pentagon and its contractors that has been going on for years, and is getting worse. From 2004 to 2008, 80 percent of retiring three and four star officers went to work as consultants or defense industry executives. Thirty-four out of 39 three- and four-star generals and admirals who retired in 2007 are now working in defense industry roles — nearly 90 percent.

RETIRED GENERALS WORKING FOR DEFENSE

Percent of retired three-, and four-star generals, and equivalent high-level admirals, who now work for defense consulting firms or defense contractors.



NOTE: A three-year rolling average, the average of each year and the previous two, is used to smooth out annual variation and reveal an underlying trend.

SOURCE: Globe reporting

DAVID BUTLER/GLOBE STAFF

(<http://defendingthepublicgood.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/retired-general-working-for-defense.png>)

Generals are recruited for private sector jobs well before they retire. Once employed by the military contractor the general maintains a Pentagon advisory role.

"In almost any other realm it would seem a clear conflict of interest. But this is the Pentagon where...such apparent conflicts are a routine fact of life", an in-depth investigation by the *Boston Globe* concluded.

U.S. military spending now exceeds the spending of all other countries combined. Knowledge military experts argue that we can cut at least \$1 trillion from the Pentagon budget without changing its currently expressed mission. But a growing number believe that the mission itself is suspect. Economic competitors like India and China certainly approve of our willingness to undermine our economic competitiveness by diverting trillions of dollars into war and weapons production. Some argue that all this spending has made us more secure but all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Certainly our \$2 trillion and counting military adventures in the Middle East and Afghanistan and Pakistan have won us few friends and multiplied our enemies.

Defense experts Gordon Adams and Matthew Leatherman, writing in the *Washington Post* offer another argument against unrestrained military spending.

"Countries feel threatened when rivals ramp up their defenses; this was true in the Cold War, and now it may happen with China. It's how arms races are born. We spend more, inspiring competitors to do the same — thus inflating defense budgets without making anyone safer. For example, Gates observed in May that no other country has a single ship comparable to our 11 aircraft carriers. Based on the perceived threat that this fleet poses, the Chinese are pursuing an anti-ship ballistic missile program. U.S. military officials have decried this "carrier-killer" effort, and in response we are diversifying our capabilities to strike China, including a new long-range bomber program, and modernizing our carrier fleet at a cost of about \$10 billion per ship."

For tens of millions of Americans real security comes not from fighting wars on foreign soil but from not having to worry losing their house or their job or their medical care. As Joshua Holland, columnist for Alternet points out 46 states faced

combined budget shortfalls this year of \$130 billion, leading them to fire tens of thousands of workers and cut off assistance to millions of families. Just the supplemental requests for fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan this year were \$170 billion.

What is perhaps most astonishing of all is that cutting the military budget is wildly popular. Even back in 1995, when military spending was only a fraction of its present size, a poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes reported that 42 percent of the U.S. public feeling that defense spending is too high and a majority of Americans were convinced that defense spending "has weakened the U.S. economy and given some allies an economic edge."

This March, Reuters released a new poll that found the majority of Americans support reducing defense spending.

The next time you hear Republicans insist they want to ferret out government waste and reduce spending and stamp out incompetence ask them why the one part of government that exemplifies everything they say is wrong with government is the one part of government they embrace most heartily.

20110723-01	14:47	SteveB	"China vs. U.S.: Who Will Win the 21st Century?" & "China's New Parochialism"
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Republicans say to America, "Screw you!" and take the weekend off...

The GOP is looking more like a party of the past than the party of the future: they seem to have opted for self-destruction (like I told ya). Come on, Republicans, even the American people are not this stupid. John Boehner has proven himself to be a snake-tongued liar! After digging the pit we are in during the Bush "era", now Republicans tell the nation to go to hell! Well...that looks like where we're headed with their pig-headed dogma, but, believe me, there will be hell to pay first, my Republican friends.

Bye, bye, GOP! Too bad...they had a couple of good ideas.

"China vs. U.S.: Who Will Win the 21st Century?" by Fareed Zakaria, CNN

July 14, 2011, (<http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/07/14/china-vs-the-u-s-who-will-win-the-21st-century/>)

(Editor's Note: The following is an edited excerpt from a transcript of Fareed Zakaria answering viewer questions online.)

We're clearly moving to a Post-American world. This is a world that is not dominated by the United States but not dominated by anyone else yet either.

The 21st Century is up for grabs and how the United States does depends on how well it can marshal the key ingredients of economic and societal success.

In the 20th Century, the key ingredients were labor and capital.

In the 21st Century, the key ingredients will be ideas and energy.

Ideas will be critical because manufacturing has been commoditized. That means that anyone can make anything. The only thing that distinguishes someone today is if that person or organization has new ideas and innovations. We need to create a better mousetrap every week. We need to do something different and unique.

Energy will be critical simply because everybody is growing quickly and everyone needs a supply of energy. Countries that have figured out the energy puzzle are going to do better and better.

So who's better suited for this new world?

In an odd way, China is best suited for the 20th Century. They have cheap labor and huge amounts of capital coming in. They can make whatever you want them to make. But they haven't yet been able to move up the value chain. They haven't been able to generate the big, new ideas.

Like the U.S., China also struggles with the issue of energy. China is a consumer, not a producer of energy.

But they are quickly getting very smart on the energy front. They are becoming the global leaders of clean tech—whether it is solar or wind.

They are also aggressively trying to move up the value chain. They are laying the foundations to compete in the 21st Century. They are building a great university system and they are working to get research labs in place.

In America's case, we have all the ingredients to succeed in the 21st Century. We have the most innovative companies in the world such as Facebook, Apple, and Google. We have the best universities in the world. We have a nexus between universities and research-oriented companies. We have the most dynamic capital markets in the world. We have an incredibly flexible, diverse society, which is also very much a part of our inherent societal innovation and dynamism.

But what we don't have is a political system that can harness all of this and execute. You see this with regard to energy policy. America has no energy policy and hasn't had one for thirty years. It's not just that. We also don't have an immigration policy. We don't have a policy toward jobs and growth. We don't have a policy toward the budget deficit.

Instead, we have an absurd political paralysis in Washington where everyone is more concerned with scoring points and maintaining their viability with their most extreme members rather than just coming together and solving problems.

There used to be a model in which you became famous as a lawmaker by making deals—by reaching out to the other side and doing some compromising, which you have to do because not everyone agrees with you, and moving the issue forward.

Now the way you get famous and powerful in Congress is by not making a deal, by being a deal breaker rather than a deal maker.

You can see this in the Republican Party right now where the energy is all in saying "No, there's no deal we could possibly accept."

If "No" is where we end up as a country, we could have all the innovation and ideas and dynamism in the world and we'd still will have a society that is crumbling. Look at California as an example. California has Silicon Valley and Hollywood. It has incredible private sector talent and creativity.

But after a while if every road is crumbling, every state university collapsing and every educational institution underfunded, people will no longer want to come there. They will no longer think that it is the place where they can make their American dream come true. In this case, having Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg there will probably not be enough.

"China's New Parochialism" by Fareed Zakaria, *TIME*

July 14, 2011, (<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2082959,00.html>)

On any particularly hot day this month, people around the world will do what they have done for decades: go to an air-conditioned movie theater and watch a summertime blockbuster. The latest, biggest movie is *Transformers: Dark of the Moon*, which has broken box-office records in the U.S. and in many of the 110 other countries in which it has been released. Except in the world's fastest-growing economy and movie market — China. The Chinese people will not get to see *Transformers*, nor the eagerly awaited new *Harry Potter* movie, nor any other Hollywood production. At least not yet. Gao Jun, the deputy general manager of Beijing's New Film Association, explained that no foreign movie would be allowed into China until the Chinese film *Beginning of the Great Revival* made 800 million Yuan, or \$124 million, which would be an all-time record for a Chinese movie.

Beginning of the Great Revival is a two-hour tale of the rise of China's Communist Party — released on the occasion of its 90th anniversary — and its heroic leader, Mao Zedong, who is played by a young Chinese heartthrob. The movie features a cast of hundreds of major Chinese actors, including Chow Yun Fat, with impressive sets and design, all at record cost. It has been released in 6,000 theaters across the country. But it doesn't seem to be winning hearts and minds. Despite many mass ticket giveaways, cinema houses are reported to be empty. A barrage of negative reviews on the Internet have been censored. On VeryCD, a pirated-film website, more than 90% of users described the film as "trash."

On one level, this is just a crude propaganda effort by a Chinese regime seeking legitimacy. But there is another aspect to this story. China is going through an internal struggle over whether it needs to borrow more ideas from the West or follow its own particular course. The question of how to handle Western films is becoming part of a much larger debate.

China is on course to become the largest movie market in the world. It has more than 6,200 movie theaters and is adding to them at the astonishing pace of three new theaters *a day*. But the government seems determined to keep Western movies at bay. There is a strict quota of 20 foreign movies imported every year. Those movies are censored and tightly restricted to a limited number of theaters. Hollywood studios receive only 13% of the ticket price, about half what they get everywhere else in the world. The DVDs are pirated within days, and the government makes no effort to stem this criminal activity. The result is that Hollywood, America's largest export industry, makes very little money in China. (See China stamping out democracy protests.)

And Hollywood isn't alone. The CEO of General Electric, Jeff Immelt, told the *Financial Times* earlier this year that it appeared that China did not want Western companies to succeed in that country anymore; he was voicing the feelings of many foreign CEOs. There is growing evidence in many areas that Beijing is favoring locals over Western companies, even violating the rules of market access and trade. The World Trade Organization ruled recently that China's regulations on foreign movies were a form of illegal protectionism and had to end. So far, Beijing has done nothing to abide by that ruling, though it is likely to expand its quotas to mollify the WTO.

Countries play trade games all the time, but this is different. Over the past few years, a new Chinese parochialism has been gaining strength in the Communist Party. Best symbolized by the senior party leader, Bo Xilai, it includes a romantic revival of Maoism, harking back to a time when the Chinese were more unified and more isolated from the rest of the world. It is a reaction to the rampant marketization and Westernization of China over the past 10 years. Bo, who has organized mass rallies to sing old Maoist songs and routinely quotes Mao aphorisms, might well ascend to the Standing Committee of China's Politburo next year on the strength of this new populism.

After centuries of isolation, China has grown in power and strength because it opened itself to the world, learned from the West and allowed its industries and society to borrow from and compete against the world's best. It allowed for an ongoing modernization of its economic structures and possibly its political institutions as well. Its leaders Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin understood that this openness was key to China's success. A new generation of Chinese leaders might decide they have learned enough and that it is time to turn inward and celebrate China's unique ways. If that happens, the world will confront a very different China over the next few decades.

20110723-02	15:59	SteveB	Re: "Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"
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Dear Dennis,

Amen! Very good, helpful graphics. (What does Obama have against graphics? They won't fit his cue-card machine?)

The Republican lies are such an obvious sham! Amazing to me that they are believed by anyone about anything.

The budget is not the problem, debt "ceilings" are not the problem. The Republicans (and their failed Bush-era policies that got us to here) are the problem. Isn't it now obvious? (The Democrats also have their share of "debts" to "them that brung 'em" that have also resulted in failures, but that's not really the problem, right now, is it?)

20110723-03	15:30	Charis	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
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Unfortunately the Democrats aren't doing one bit better. so where does that leave America?

20110723-04	15:46	SteveB	Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats
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Dear Charis,

Except that Obama has caved-in to every demand.

Where are taxes on the rich? Where is saving education? Where is cutting Pentagon spending? Where is sacrosanct Medicare or Social Security?

What more can the Democrats possible do in their single-handed effort to try to save the country? Those are not too stark of terms. It is black and white...the truth tellers and the liars. I have never seen it so clearly out in the open in 50 years of American politics.

Where does that leave us? We shall soon see...

[20110723-05](#) 16:05 SteveB A Thought on the National Debt

In the long run, isn't it perhaps better to run deficits, borrow money from the rest of the world, and pay interest, than to have the rest of the world buy everything productive in America and give us nothing? (Don't you think \$14 trillion would buy a lot of companies? Do you imagine those profits would stay here? Or stay here now, in the case of the multinationals, for that matter.)

And what politician of either party has or would stop such a process?

[20110723-06](#) 16:12 GaryC Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats

Dear SteveB,

Like emancipating the slaves. Oh, yeah, another dumb Republican idea.

Shall I give you a few more? Doubt it, your head is in the sand.

Neither Republicans or Democrats have all the good or bad answers. It's the system that creates abuses by both parties. Unfortunately, we get what we pay for—Republicans for wall street, Democrats for unions.

They are the same Steve, just different clothes.

[20110723-07](#) 15:22 RickF Re: Re: "Why is the Most Wasteful Government Agency Not Part of the Deficit Discussion?"

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I don't have time to debate you here, but I can't just not respond to your-comments. Listen, the whole thing is broke and now our country as is in serious financial trouble. I-don't have the answers, but raising the debt limit without at least an equal amount of cuts seems-in the best interest of the country, for now. There is more work to be done for sure. Again, I don't-have time to debate you longer and I'm not going to blame Obama or blame Bush, Democrats of-Republicans, there is enough blame to go around for all, but we are at a crossroads. I just have to-hope and pray they get their act together in the country's interest. Regardless of how it shakes-out, both parties will get some of the credit and both will get most of the blame.

[20110723-08](#) 17:00 Dennis Re: "China vs. U.S." Republicans & Democrats

from GaryC:

Like emancipating the slaves. Oh, yeah, another dumb Republican idea.

Dear GaryC,

If you think the Republicans of today have anything in common with the Republicanism of Lincoln, you need a remedial history course. Nixon's "Southern strategy" was based on the exploitation of anti-African American racism among Southern white voters, the descendants of the slave holders. I think that is really the Republican's dumb idea.

As for Democrats representing unions, they've done a p*ss poor job of it in comparison to the Republican fealty to Wall Street. In fact, a case can be made that Wall Street has both parties in their back pocket. Americans really need a new party that is "of the people, by the people, for the people" to quote your iconic Lincoln.

20110723-09	17:23	SteveB	"Health Care Debate: It's Time to Get Outraged"
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Why Miss Colorado is not in the Tea Party...

Ordinary people need ordinary insurance, medical too, just like anyone can get on their house, or car, or life. We all end up paying anyway, in huge uninsured emergency room visit costs, for example. Even Bolivia solves the health care problem better than the U.S.. These j*ck-offs in Washington need to get their act together. There are very real problems to be solved, though I think Obamacare is a step in the right direction. It seems to work for Mitt's Massachusetts and, in more "extreme" or "socialist" versions, in the rest of the free world.

"Health Care Debate: It's Time to Get Outraged" by Wendell Potter, CommonDreams

July 5, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/05-5>)

One of my favorite bumper stickers reads, "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention."

That's sort of how I feel about the health care debate. If more Americans paid attention to the fate of neighbors and loved ones who have fallen victim to the cruel dysfunction of our health care system, they would see through the onslaught of lies and propaganda perpetrated by special interests profiting from the status quo. Since I started speaking out against the abuses of the insurance industry, I have heard from hundreds of people with maddening and heartbreaking stories about being mistreated and victimized by the greed that characterizes so much of the profit driven American health care system.

Many other people send me links to articles or broadcasts they have seen. When I worked in the insurance industry, we called them "horror stories," and for good reason. The circumstances people often found themselves in were nightmarishly horrible. As an industry PR guy, my mission was to keep as many of those horror stories out of the media as possible. We didn't want the public to know.

It occurred to me recently that Americans are not sufficiently outraged because they either don't hear these stories or, if they do, don't believe how commonplace they are or that anyone they know could experience the same misfortune. Or they might hear that more than 50 million Americans don't have insurance because they can't afford it or, in many cases, can't buy it even if they can afford it, but they don't stop to think that real human beings make up that abstract 50 million figure.

The reality is that these stories are indeed commonplace. Almost all of us—regardless of our age, income, job or political affiliation—are just a layoff or plant closure away from being uninsured, or a business decision beyond our control from being underinsured, or an illness away from being forced into bankruptcy and homelessness.

My life changed when I really started paying attention a few years ago. I now have a new mission—to help people become aware of and understand what is going on around them. So, starting today, I will be sharing on an occasional basis some of the horror stories like the ones I used to work so hard to keep out of the press. My hope is that people will begin to remember why reform is so necessary and why repealing "Obamacare," despite its shortcomings, is not a real option.

You might have heard about this first one. Even if you have it bears retelling. A few weeks ago, a man in North Carolina was arrested for robbing a bank for \$1 so he could get government-provided health care in prison.

Fifty-nine-year-old Richard James Verone has a tumor in his chest and two ruptured disks, but no job or health insurance. He is one of those 50 million Americans I mentioned earlier. Verone told reporters he asked for only a dollar to show that

his motives were medical, not monetary. Because of his "preexisting" medical conditions, no private insurer will have anything to do with him. He wasn't destitute enough to qualify for Medicaid, the government program for low-income Americans, or old enough to qualify for Medicare, the government program for people 65 and older.

Verone and millions of other Americans who have a history of illness are considered by private insurers to be "uninsurable." Insurance company underwriters consider them an excessive risk to profits. Even insurers that operate as nonprofits, like many Blue Cross plans, refuse to sell coverage to a third or more of Americans who apply because they've been sick in the past. Many of the people they turn down are children who were born with birth defects.

Shortly after Verone staged his robbery, one of the contestants in the Miss USA pageant revealed during a nationally broadcast interview that she is homeless. Why? Her sick mother could not pay both the rent and her mounting medical bills. Twenty-three-year-old Blair Griffith was evicted along with her mother and brother just weeks after she won the title of Miss Colorado.

"I didn't know what to think" when sheriff's deputies starting putting the family's belongings in garbage bags, she said. "It was shocking. And then I saw my mom on her knees crying and begging them, 'Please don't do this to me' and then looking up at me and saying, 'I'm so sorry.'"

Blair's mother, a widow, lost her health insurance soon after suffering a severe heart attack. She was unable to get another policy. She and her children eventually had no choice but to join an untold number of other Americans who are homeless because they can't pay their medical bills. Many are bankrupt as well as homeless. Medical debt is the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States.

The third story I want to share with you hasn't made headlines. Most such stories never do. A few days ago a young woman who said she'd been raped sent me an email to ask if I might be able to help her find insurance.

"I am in the process of hiring a broker to help me find insurance, but it is just very overwhelming and sad," she wrote. "I have been denied by three major companies or had riders attached that will not cover anything related to HPV, cervical cancer, medications, or treatments. Basically, they will do nothing for me."

She wrote, essentially, to beg for help.

"I have never talked about what happened (to me), but I am learning that this is too big to handle on my own. There are so many barriers, and while I consider myself an intelligent person, I am by no means an expert when it comes to dealing with insurance agencies. I will take and am grateful for all the help that I can get."

I hope I can help her, but there is no assurance that either I or a broker or anyone else for that matter can help her get the coverage and access to care she needs. She is an apparent victim not just of rape but also of an unjust system that has devolved into seemingly intractable dysfunction while we were not paying close enough attention.

These are just three people whose lives have taken a tragic turn because of America's profit-driven private health care system. There are literally millions of other stories, many of which are even more maddening and heartbreaking.

When the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) is fully implemented in 2014, the number of uninsured Americans will be reduced by 30 million, and many of the insurance industry's most egregious practices—including refusing to sell coverage to people with preexisting conditions—will be outlawed.

Let's hope that there will be far fewer horror stories after 2014. But the new law is just the beginning. We still will have a long way to go before we have universal coverage, like every other developed country in the world.

Universal coverage, in my view, is the ultimate goal we all should share. Remember this if nothing else: Until we achieve it, you and your loved ones could easily be facing your own horror stories.

Wendell Potter is former Vice President of corporate communications at CIGNA, one of the United States' largest health insurance companies. In June 2009, he testified against the HMO industry in the U.S. Senate as a whistleblower. He is now the Senior Fellow on Health Care for the Center for Media and Democracy in Madison, Wisconsin.

"What Our Declaration Really Said" by E.J. Dionne Jr., *The Washington Post*

July 3, 2011, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/what-our-declaration-really-said/2011/07/02/AGugyvvh_story.html)

Our nation confronts a challenge this Fourth of July that we face but rarely: We are at odds over the meaning of our history and why, to quote our Declaration of Independence, "governments are instituted."

Only divisions this deep can explain why we are taking risks with our country's future that we're usually wise enough to avoid. Arguments over how much government should tax and spend are the very stuff of democracy's give-and-take. Now, the debate is shadowed by worries that if a willful faction does not get what it wants, it might bring the nation to default.

This is, well, crazy. It makes sense only if politicians believe—or have convinced themselves—that they are fighting over matters of principle so profound that any means to defeat their opponents is defensible.

We are closer to that point than we think, and our friends in the Tea Party have offered a helpful clue by naming their movement in honor of the 1773 revolt against tea taxes on that momentous night in Boston Harbor.

Whether they intend it or not, their name suggests they believe that the current elected government in Washington is as illegitimate as was a distant, unelected monarchy. It implies something fundamentally wrong with taxes themselves or, at the least, that current levels of taxation (the lowest in decades) are dangerously oppressive. And it hints that methods outside the normal political channels are justified in confronting such oppression.

We need to recognize the deep flaws in this vision of our present and our past. A reading of the Declaration of Independence makes clear that our forebears were not revolting against taxes as such—and most certainly not against government as such.

In the long list of "abuses and usurpations" the Declaration documents, taxes don't come up until the 17th item, and that item is neither a complaint about tax rates nor an objection to the idea of taxation. Our Founders remonstrated against the British crown "for imposing taxes on us without our consent." They were concerned about "consent," i.e. popular rule, not taxes.

The very first item on their list condemned the king because he "refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good." Note that the signers wanted to pass laws, not repeal them, and they began by speaking of "the public good," not about individuals or "the private sector." They knew that it takes public action—including effective and responsive government—to secure "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Their second grievance reinforced the first, accusing the king of having "forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance." Again, our forebears wanted to enact laws; they were not anti-government zealots.

Abuses three through nine also referred in some way to how laws were passed or justice was administered. The document doesn't really get to anything that looks like Big Government oppression ("He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance") until grievance No. 10.

This misunderstanding of our founding document is paralleled by a misunderstanding of our Constitution. "The federal government was created by the states to be an agent for the states, not the other way around," Gov. Rick Perry of Texas said recently.

No, our Constitution begins with the words "We the People" not "We the States." The Constitution's Preamble speaks of promoting "a more perfect Union," "Justice," "the common defense," "the general Welfare" and "the Blessings of Liberty." These were national goals.

I know states' rights advocates revere the 10th Amendment. But when the word "states" appears in the Constitution, it typically is part of a compound word, "United States," or refers to how the states and their people will be represented in the national government. We learned it in elementary school: The Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation to create a stronger federal government, not a weak confederate government. Perry's view was rejected in 1787 and again in 1865.

We praise our Founders annually for revolting against royal rule and for creating an exceptionally durable system of self-government. We can wreck that system if we forget our Founders' purpose of creating a representative form of national authority robust enough to secure the public good. It is still perfectly capable of doing that. But if we pretend we are living in Boston in 1773, we will draw all the wrong conclusions and make some remarkably foolish choices.

[20110723-11](#) 18:47 SteveB Re: "What Our Declaration Really Said"

Dear Dennis,

I love this article! Thanks.

I had just been marveling that this big lie of the Republican / Tea Party, that the founding fathers were rebelling against socialist-like, big government oppression, seems so much like Sarah Palin's retelling of the Paul Revere story, turning it from history to myth in one fell swoop. Are there others like her in the movement? Lord, help us!

Other times, I think our socialist, left-wing, brainiac, educated, media-controlling, college-professor elite (think NPR), that the Republicans talk about, would be up to shooting down some of these Brave New World-type myths these Republicans fabricate out of nothing but their ambition.

[20110724-01](#) 23:04 Ben Re: "What Our Declaration Really Said"

Dear SteveB,

You're right. This really is clear and succinct, the best and most briefly I've seen it stated. Revisionism is deadly, and it's shocking how many intelligent people have drunk this batch of pernicious Kool-Aid.

[20110725-01](#) 07:47 SteveB "Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"

When we're being told so many lies from the Right about our Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and what America is and is not, it's good to go back and see what history really tells us. THESE DOGMATIST REPUBLICANS HAVE GOTTEN IT WRONG! The Tea Party would do well to actually read the documents they profess such fervid loyalty to.

"Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation" by Kenneth C. Davis, CNN

July 4, 2011, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/07/04/davis.jefferson.other.words/index.html?iref=obnetwork>)

(Editor's note: Kenneth C. Davis is the author of "*Don't Know Much About History: Anniversary Edition*" (Harper Collins). He posts regularly at his blog at <http://www.dontknowmuch.com/>.)

As America celebrates its birthday on July 4, the timeless words of Thomas Jefferson will surely be invoked to remind us of our founding ideals—that "All men are created equal" and are "endowed by their Creator" with the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." These phrases, a cherished part of our history, have rightly been called "American Scripture."

But Jefferson penned another phrase, arguably his most famous after those from the Declaration of Independence. These far more contentious words—"a wall of separation between church and state"—lie at the heart of the ongoing debate between those who see America as a "Christian Nation" and those who see it as a secular republic, a debate that is hotter than a Washington Fourth of July.

It is true these words do not appear in any early national document. What may be Jefferson's second most-quoted phrase is found instead in a letter he sent to a Baptist association in Danbury, Connecticut.

While president in 1802, Jefferson wrote: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach

actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State ... "

The idea was not Jefferson's. Other 17th- and 18th-century Enlightenment writers had used a variant of it. Earlier still, religious dissident Roger Williams had written in a 1644 letter of a "hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world."

Williams, who founded Rhode Island with a colonial charter that included religious freedom, knew intolerance firsthand. He and other religious dissenters, including Anne Hutchinson, had been banished from neighboring Massachusetts, the "shining city on a hill" where Catholics, Quakers and Baptists were banned under penalty of death.

As president, Jefferson was voicing an idea that was fundamental to his view of religion and government, expressed most significantly in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which he drafted in 1777.

Revised by James Madison and passed by Virginia's legislature in Jan., 1786, the bill stated: "No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened (sic) in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief."

It was this simple—government could not dictate how to pray, or that you cannot pray, or that you must pray.

Jefferson regarded this law so highly that he had his authorship of the statute made part of his epitaph, along with writing the Declaration and founding the University of Virginia. (Being president wasn't worth a mention.)

Why do Jefferson's "other words" matter today?

First, because knowing history matters—it can safeguard us from repeating our mistakes and help us value our rights, won at great cost. Yet we are sorely lacking in knowledge about our past, as shown by a recent National Assessment of Educational Progress.

But more to the point, we are witnessing an aggressively promoted version of our history and heritage in which America is called a "Christian Nation."

This "Sunday School" version of our past has gained currency among conservative television commentators, school boards that have rewritten state textbooks and several GOP presidential candidates, some of whom trekked to Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition conference in early June 2011.

No one can argue, as "Christian Nation" proponents correctly state, that the Founding Fathers were not Christian, although some notably doubted Christ's divinity.

More precisely, the founders were, with very few exceptions, mainstream Protestants. Many of them were Episcopalians, the American offshoot of the official Church of England. The status of America's Catholics, both legally and socially, in the colonies and early Republic, was clearly second-class. Other Christian sects, including Baptists, Quakers and Mormons, faced official resistance, discrimination and worse for decades.

But the founders, and more specifically the framers of the Constitution, included men who had fought a war for independence—the very war celebrated on the "Glorious Fourth"—against a country in which church and state were essentially one.

They understood the long history of sectarian bloodshed in Europe that brought many pilgrims to America. They knew the dangers of merging government, which was designed to protect individual rights, with religion, which as Jefferson argued, was a matter of individual conscience. And that is why the U.S. Constitution reads as it does.

The supreme law of the land, written in the summer of 1787, includes no references to religion—including in the presidential oath of office—until the conclusion of Article VI, after all that dull stuff about debts and treaties: "No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." (There is a pro forma "Year of the Lord" reference in the date at the Constitution's conclusion.) Original intent? "No religious Test" seems pretty clear cut.

The primacy of a secular state was solidified when the First Amendment was included in the Bill of Rights. According to Purdue history professor Frank Lambert, that "introduced the radical notion that the state had no voice concerning matters of conscience."

Beyond that, the first House of Representatives, while debating the First Amendment, specifically rejected a Senate proposal calling for the establishment of Christianity as an official religion. As Lambert concludes, "There would be no Church of the United States. Nor would America represent itself as a Christian Republic."

The actions of the first presidents, founders of the first rank, confirmed this "original intent:"

- In 1790, President George Washington wrote to America's first synagogue, in Rhode Island, that "all possess alike liberty of conscience" and that "toleration" was an "inherent national gift," not the government's to dole out or take away.
- In 1797, with President John Adams in office, the Senate unanimously approved one of America's earliest foreign treaties, which emphatically stated (Article 11): "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen (Muslims)..."
- In 1802, Jefferson added his famous "wall of separation," implicit in the Constitution until he so described it (and cited in several Supreme Court decisions since).

These are, to borrow an admittedly loaded phrase, "inconvenient truths" to those who proclaim that America is a "Christian Nation."

The Constitution and the views of these Founding Fathers trump all arguments about references to God in presidential speeches (permitted under the First Amendment), on money (not introduced until the Civil War), the Pledge of Allegiance ("under God" added in 1954) and in the national motto "In God We Trust" (adopted by law in 1956).

And those contentious monuments to the Ten Commandments found around the country and occasionally challenged in court? Many of them were installed as a publicity stunt for Cecile B. DeMille's 1956 Hollywood spectacle, "The Ten Commandments."

So who are you going to believe? Thomas Jefferson or Hollywood? On second thought: Don't answer.

20110725-02	10:09	SteveG	"Little-Known U.S. Document Signed by President Adams Proclaims America's Government Is Secular"
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"Little-Known U.S. Document Signed by President Adams Proclaims America's Government Is Secular" by Jim Walker, *Early America Review*

Summer, 1997, (<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/summer97/secular.html>)

A few Christian fundamentalists attempt to convince us to return to the Christianity of early America, yet according to the historian, Robert T. Handy, "No more than 10 percent—probably less—of Americans in 1800 were members of congregations." The Founding Fathers, also, rarely practiced Christian orthodoxy. Although they supported the free exercise of any religion, they understood the dangers of religion. Most of them believed in deism and attended Freemasonry lodges. According to John J. Robinson, "Freemasonry had been a powerful force for religious freedom." Freemasons took seriously the principle that men should worship according to their own conscience. Masonry welcomed anyone from any religion or non-religion, as long as they believed in a Supreme Being. Washington, Franklin, Hancock, Hamilton, Lafayette, and many others accepted Freemasonry.

Treaty of Tripoli

The Constitution reflects our founders views of a secular government, protecting the freedom of any belief or unbelief. The historian, Robert Middlekauff, observed, "the idea that the Constitution expressed a moral view seems absurd. There were no genuine evangelicals in the Convention, and there were no heated declarations of Christian piety."

George Washington

Much of the myth of Washington's alleged Christianity came from Mason Weems influential book, "Life of Washington." The story of the cherry tree comes from this book and it has no historical basis. Weems, a Christian minister portrayed Washington as a devout Christian, yet Washington's own diaries show that he rarely attended Church.

Washington revealed almost nothing to indicate his spiritual frame of mind, hardly a mark of a devout Christian. In his thousands of letters, the name of Jesus Christ never appears. He rarely spoke about his religion, but his Freemasonry experience points to a belief in deism. Washington's initiation occurred at the Fredericksburg Lodge on Nov. 4, 1752, later becoming a Master mason in 1799, and remained a freemason until he died.

To the United Baptist Churches in Virginia in May, 1789, Washington said that every man "ought to be protected in worshipping the Deity according to the dictates of his own conscience."

After Washington's death, Dr. Abercrombie, a friend of his, replied to a Dr. Wilson, who had interrogated him about Washington's religion replied, "Sir, Washington was a Deist."

Thomas Jefferson

Even most Christians do not consider Jefferson a Christian. In many of his letters, he denounced the superstitions of Christianity. He did not believe in spiritual souls, angels or godly miracles. Although Jefferson did admire the morality of Jesus, Jefferson did not think him divine, nor did he believe in the Trinity or the miracles of Jesus. In a letter to Peter Carr, Aug. 10, 1787, he wrote, "Question with boldness even the existence of a god."

Jefferson believed in materialism, reason, and science. He never admitted to any religion but his own. In a letter to Ezra Stiles Ely, 25 June 1819, he wrote, "You say you are a Calvinist. I am not. I am of a sect by myself, as far as I know."

John Adams, a Unitarian, flatly denied the doctrine of eternal damnation. In a letter to Thomas Jefferson, he wrote:

I almost shudder at the thought of alluding to the most fatal example of the abuses of grief which the history of mankind has preserved—the Cross. Consider what calamities that engine of grief has produced!

In his letter to Samuel Miller, 8 July 1820, Adams admitted his unbelief of Protestant Calvinism: "I must acknowledge that I cannot class myself under that denomination." In his, "A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America" [1787-1788], John Adams wrote:

The United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature; and if men are now sufficiently enlightened to disabuse themselves of artifice, imposture, hypocrisy, and superstition, they will consider this event as an era in their history. Although the detail of the formation of the American governments is at present little known or regarded either in Europe or in America, it may hereafter become an object of curiosity. It will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the influence of Heaven, more than those at work upon ships or houses, or laboring in merchandise or agriculture; it will forever be acknowledged that these governments were contrived merely by the use of reason and the senses.

Thirteen governments [of the original states] thus founded on the natural authority of the people alone, without a pretence of miracle or mystery, and which are destined to spread over the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe, are a great point gained in favor of the rights of mankind.

James Madison

Called the father of the Constitution, Madison had no conventional sense of Christianity. In 1785, Madison wrote in his Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments: "During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution." "What influence, in fact, have ecclesiastical establishments had on society? In some instances they have been seen to erect a spiritual tyranny on the ruins of the civil authority; on many instances they have been seen upholding the thrones of political tyranny; in no instance have they been the guardians of the liberties of the people. Rulers who wish to subvert the public liberty may

have found an established clergy convenient auxiliaries. A just government, instituted to secure and perpetuate it, needs them not."

Benjamin Franklin

Although Franklin received religious training, his nature forced him to rebel against the irrational tenets of his parents' Christianity. His Autobiography reveals his skepticism, "My parents had given me betimes religious impressions, and I received from my infancy a pious education in the principles of Calvinism. But scarcely was I arrived at fifteen years of age, when, after having doubted in turn of different tenets, according as I found them combated in the different books that I read, I began to doubt of Revelation itself. "Some books against Deism fell into my hands. . . It happened that they wrought an effect on my quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the Deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist."

In an essay on "Toleration," Franklin wrote:

If we look back into history for the character of the present sects in Christianity, we shall find few that have not in their turns been persecutors, and complainers of persecution. The primitive Christians thought persecution extremely wrong in the Pagans, but practiced it on one another. The first Protestants of the Church of England blamed persecution in the Romish church, but practiced it upon the Puritans. These found it wrong in the Bishops, but fell into the same practice themselves both here [England] and in New England.

Dr. Priestley, an intimate friend of Franklin, wrote of him:

It is much to be lamented that a man of Franklin's general good character and great influence should have been an unbeliever in Christianity, and also have done as much as he did to make others unbelievers (Priestley's Autobiography)

Thomas Paine

This freethinker and author of several books, influenced more early Americans than any other writer. Although he held Deist beliefs, he wrote in his famous *The Age of Reason*: "I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my church."

"Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is no more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory to itself than this thing called Christianity."

The U.S. Constitution

The most convincing evidence that our government did not ground itself upon Christianity comes from the very document that defines it—the United States Constitution. If indeed our Framers had aimed to found a Christian republic, it would seem highly unlikely that they would have forgotten to leave out their Christian intentions in the Supreme law of the land. In fact, nowhere in the Constitution do we have a single mention of Christianity, God, Jesus, or any Supreme Being. There occurs only two references to religion and they both use exclusionary wording. The 1st Amendment's says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." and in Article VI, Section 3, "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

Thomas Jefferson interpreted the 1st Amendment in his famous letter to the Danbury Baptist Association in Jan. 1, 1802:

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State.

Some Religious activists try to extricate the concept of separation between church and State by claiming that those words do not occur in the Constitution. Indeed they do not, but neither does it exactly say "freedom of religion," yet the First Amendment implies both.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote in his Autobiography, in reference to the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom:

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting "Jesus Christ," so that it would read "A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;" the insertion was rejected by the great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.

James Madison, perhaps the greatest supporter for separation of church and State, and whom many refer to as the father of the Constitution, also held similar views which he expressed in his letter to Edward Livingston, 10 July 1822:

"And I have no doubt that every new example will succeed, as every past one has done, in shewing that religion & Govt will both exist in greater purity, the less they are mixed together."

Today, if ever our government needed proof that the separation of church and State works to ensure the freedom of religion, one only need to look at the plethora of Churches, temples, and shrines that exist in the cities and towns throughout the United States. Only a secular government, divorced from religion could possibly allow such tolerant diversity.

The Declaration of Independence

Many Christians who think of America as founded upon Christianity usually present the Declaration as "proof." The reason appears obvious: the document mentions God. However, the God in the Declaration does not describe Christianity's God. It describes "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." This nature's view of God agrees with deist philosophy but any attempt to use the Declaration as a support for Christianity will fail for this reason alone.

More significantly, the Declaration does not represent the law of the land as it came before the Constitution. The Declaration aimed at announcing their separation from Great Britain and listed the various grievances with the "thirteen united States of America." The grievances against Great Britain no longer hold, and we have more than thirteen states.

Today, the Declaration represents an important historical document about rebellious intentions against Great Britain at a time before the formation of our independent government. Although the Declaration may have influential power, it may inspire the lofty thoughts of poets, and judges may mention it in their summations, it holds no legal power today. Our presidents, judges and policemen must take an oath to uphold the Constitution, but never to the Declaration of Independence.

Of course the Declaration depicts a great political document, as it aimed at a future government upheld by citizens instead of a religious monarchy. It observed that all men "are created equal" meaning that we all come inborn with the abilities of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That "to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men." The Declaration says nothing about our rights secured by Christianity, nor does it imply anything about a Christian foundation.

Treaty of Tripoli

Unlike governments of the past, the American Fathers set up a government divorced from religion. The establishment of a secular government did not require a reflection to themselves about its origin; they knew this as an unspoken given. However, as the U.S. delved into international affairs, few foreign nations knew about the intentions of America. For this reason, an insight from a little known but legal document written in the late 1700s explicitly reveals the secular nature of the United States to a foreign nation. Officially called the "Treaty of peace and friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli, of Barbary," most refer to it as simply the Treaty of Tripoli. In Article 11, it states:

As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity, of Musselmen; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.

The preliminary treaty began with a signing on Nov. 4, 1796 (the end of George Washington's last term as president). Joel Barlow, the American diplomat served as counsel to Algiers and held responsibility for the treaty negotiations. Barlow had once served under Washington as a chaplain in the revolutionary army. He became good friends with Paine,

Jefferson, and read Enlightenment literature. Later he abandoned Christian orthodoxy for rationalism and became an advocate of secular government. Barlow, along with his associate, Captain Richard O'Brien, et al, translated and modified the Arabic version of the treaty into English. From this came the added Amendment 11. Barlow forwarded the treaty to U.S. legislators for approval in 1797. Timothy Pickering, the secretary of state, endorsed it and John Adams concurred (now during his presidency), sending the document on to the Senate. The Senate approved the treaty on June 7, 1797, and officially ratified by the Senate with John Adams signature on 10 June, 1797. All during this multi-review process, the wording of Article 11 never raised the slightest concern. The treaty even became public through its publication in The Philadelphia Gazette on 17 June 1797.

So here we have a clear admission by the United States that our government did not found itself upon Christianity. Unlike the Declaration of Independence, this treaty represented U.S. law as all treaties do according to the Constitution (see Article VI, Sect. 2).

Although the Christian exclusionary wording in the Treaty of Tripoli only lasted for eight years and no longer has legal status, it clearly represented the feelings of our Founding Fathers at the beginning of the U.S. government.

Common Law

According to the Constitution's 7th Amendment: "In suits at common law, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved; and no fact, tried by a jury, shall be otherwise reexamined in any court of the United States than according to the rules of the common law."

Here, many Christians believe that common law came from Christian foundations and therefore the Constitution derives from it. They use various quotes from Supreme Court Justices proclaiming that Christianity came as part of the laws of England, and therefore from its common law heritage.

But one of our principle Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, elaborated about the history of common law in his letter to Thomas Cooper on Feb. 10, 1814:

For we know that the common law is that system of law which was introduced by the Saxons on their settlement in England, and altered from time to time by proper legislative authority from that time to the date of Magna Charta, which terminates the period of the common law. This settlement took place about the middle of the fifth century. But Christianity was not introduced till the seventh century; the conversion of the first christian king of the Heptarchy having taken place about the year 598, and that of the last about 686. Here then, was a space of two hundred years, during which the common law was in existence, and Christianity no part of it.

If any one chooses to build a doctrine on any law of that period, supposed to have been lost, it is incumbent on him to prove it to have existed, and what were its contents. These were so far alterations of the common law, and became themselves a part of it. But none of these adopt Christianity as a part of the common law. If, therefore, from the settlement of the Saxons to the introduction of Christianity among them, that system of religion could not be a part of the common law, because they were not yet Christians, and if, having their laws from that period to the close of the common law, we are all able to find among them no such act of adoption, we may safely affirm (though contradicted by all the judges and writers on earth) that Christianity neither is, nor ever was a part of the common law.

In the same letter, Jefferson examined how the error spread about Christianity and common law. Jefferson realized that a misinterpretation had occurred with a Latin term by Priscot, "**ancien scripture**," in reference to common law history. The term meant "ancient scripture" but people had incorrectly interpreted it to mean "Holy Scripture," thus spreading the myth that common law came from the Bible. Jefferson writes:

And Blackstone repeats, in the words of Sir Matthew Hale, that 'Christianity is part of the laws of England,' citing Ventris and Strange ubi surpa. 4. Blackst. 59. Lord Mansfield qualifies it a little by saying that 'The essential principles of revealed religion are part of the common law.' In the case of the Chamberlain of London v. Evans, 1767. But he cites no authority, and leaves us at our peril to find out what, in the opinion of the judge, and according to the measure of his foot or his faith, are those essential principles of revealed religion obligatory on us as a part of the common law.

Thus we find this string of authorities, when examined to the beginning, all hanging on the same hook, a perverted expression of Priscot's, or on one another, or nobody." The Encyclopedia Britannica, also describes the Saxon origin and

adds: "The nature of the new common law was at first much influenced by the principles of Roman law, but later it developed more and more along independent lines." Also prominent among the characteristics that derived out of common law include the institution of the jury, and the right to speedy trial.

Christian Sources

Virtually all the evidence that attempts to connect a foundation of Christianity upon the government rests mainly on quotes and opinions from a few of the colonial statesmen who had professed a belief in Christianity. Sometimes the quotes come from their youth before their introduction to Enlightenment ideas or simply from personal beliefs. But statements of beliefs, by themselves, say nothing about Christianity as the source of the U.S. government.

There did occur, however, some who wished a connection between church and State. Patrick Henry, for example, proposed a tax to help sustain "some form of Christian worship" for the state of Virginia. But Jefferson and other statesmen did not agree. In 1779, Jefferson introduced a bill for the Statute for Religious Freedom which became Virginia law. Jefferson designed this law to completely separate religion from government. None of Henry's Christian views ever got introduced into Virginia's or U.S. Government law.

Unfortunately, later developments in our government have clouded early history. The original Pledge of Allegiance, authored by Francis Bellamy in 1892 did not contain the words "under God." Not until June 1954 did those words appear in the Allegiance. The United States currency never had "In God We Trust" printed on money until after the Civil War. Many Christians who visit historical monuments and see the word "God" inscribed in stone, automatically impart their own personal God of Christianity, without understanding the Framers Deist context.

In the Supreme Court's 1892 Holy Trinity Church vs. United States, Justice David Brewer wrote that "this is a Christian nation." Many Christians use this as evidence. However, Brewer wrote this in dicta, as a personal opinion only and does not serve as a legal pronouncement. Later Brewer felt obliged to explain himself: "But in what sense can [the United States] be called a Christian nation? Not in the sense that Christianity is the established religion or the people are compelled in any manner to support it. On the contrary, the Constitution specifically provides that 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.' Neither is it Christian in the sense that all its citizens are either in fact or in name Christians. On the contrary, all religions have free scope within its borders. Numbers of our people profess other religions, and many reject all."

Conclusion

The Framers derived an independent government out of Enlightenment thinking against the grievances caused by Great Britain. Our Founders paid little heed to political beliefs about Christianity. The 1st Amendment stands as the bulkhead against an establishment of religion and at the same time insures the free expression of any belief. The Treaty of Tripoli, an instrument of the Constitution, clearly stated our non-Christian foundation. We inherited common law from Great Britain which derived from pre-Christian Saxons rather than from Biblical scripture.

Today we have powerful Christian organizations who work to spread historical myths about early America and attempt to bring a Christian theocracy to the government. If this ever happens, then indeed, we will have ignored the lessons from history. Fortunately, most liberal Christians today agree with the principles of separation of church and State, just as they did in early America.

They all attributed the peaceful dominion of religion in their country mainly to the separation of church and state. I do not hesitate to affirm that during my stay in America I did not meet a single individual, of the clergy or the laity, who was not of the same opinion on this point.—Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1835

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Special thanks to Ed Buckner, Robert Boston, Selena Brewington and Lion G. Miles, for help in providing me with source materials.

20110725-03	10:52	GaryC	Re: "Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"
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Dear SteveB,

I agree with this article and its content and message. But, as you often forget or fail to acknowledge, not ALL Republicans are DOGMATISTS and many Democrats are also Dogmatists in their beliefs and opinions. Be an equal opportunity opinionater.

20110725-04	16:24	SteveB	Re: "Why the U.S. Is Not a Christian Nation"
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Dear GaryC,

Across a fair sampling of time, you are completely right, my friend. History shows all kinds of contrary situations and I find those interesting and instructive.

BUT, my commentaries deal with this crucial present moment in history only. I'm not really interested in hypothetical or historical situations except as they pertain directly to the matter at hand. One such recent instance has been my pointing out the errors of Palin/Tea Party history, especially as it pertains to the Constitution.

The fact that liberals may have been stupid, dogmatic, and wrong at times in the past does not seem to me to be relevant. They seem to be acting responsibly now.

Unfortunately our current real crisis is not hypothetical. It is that the Republican party is, at this moment in history, tragically stupid, dogmatic, and wrong.

To me, that is what's important. not some measure of what might or might not be fair to the supposedly big, grown-up boys of the Republican party.

20110725-05	14:02	SteveG	Fw: "Why Boehner Cries"
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from Alan Grayson:

I know why House Speaker John Boehner walked out of debt ceiling talks with President Obama on Friday.

It's because Boehner can't deliver.

It doesn't matter what terms the President offers. It's that simple. Boehner can't deliver the votes. The President might as well be negotiating with Tiger Woods; Tiger can't deliver the votes, either. But at least Tiger has a better swing. On Friday, the President said, "I think that one of the questions that the Republican Party is going to have to ask itself is, can they say yes to anything? Can they say yes to anything?"

The answer to your question, Mr. President, is no. The national Republican Party can't even says yes to yes. And Boehner can't do anything about that.

In May 1935, Pierre Laval, then the Foreign Minister of France, and also the once and future Prime Minister of France, met with Josef Stalin, the Soviet dictator. Laval, a Catholic, urged Stalin to stop persecuting Catholics in the Soviet Union. Stalin asked Laval why it mattered. Laval replied that continued persecution could provoke a quarrel between Stalin and the Pope.

Stalin replied, "The Pope? How many divisions does he have?"

I don't think that anyone could confuse John Boehner with the Pope, but nevertheless, at this point, President Obama might ask the same question about Boehner. How many divisions does John Boehner have?

Fifty-nine House Republicans abandoned Boehner on the "compromise" appropriations bill. Even though Boehner depicted it to them as a Republican victory on par with, say, the Battle of Stalingrad.

And now, Fox News has reported that between 80 and 120 Republican members of the House will vote against any bill to increase the debt ceiling, no matter what else is in it. You can be sure that Fox News knows what Republicans in Washington are thinking—because Fox News tells them what to think.

So somewhere between a third and a half of all of the Republicans in the House of Representatives are going to vote against increasing the debt ceiling, no matter what Boehner puts in front of them. Boehner is a general with no troops. The coach has no players. The teacher has no students. The chief has no Indians. The bride has no bridesmaids. That's why Boehner is always crying.

It seems as though all those rounds of golf lately between Boehner and the President aren't likely to accomplish much, except maybe lowering the President's handicap. According to Fox, Boehner can't deliver enough Republican votes to increase the debt limit. So where does that leave us?

Congress has over 200 caucuses. The largest is the Congressional Progressive Caucus. I think that what Congress needs is a new caucus, Democrats and Republicans, who are willing to raise the debt ceiling without cutting Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

I'd call it the Sane Caucus.

Courage, Alan Grayson

P.S. Please sign our petition at: <http://www.No-Cuts.com>. And pass it on to every friend you have. Because the Sane Caucus needs to know you're with them.

Paid for and Authorized by the Committee to Elect Alan Grayson 8419 Oak Road, Orlando, FL 32819

20110725-06	15:27	Mark	Americans Deserve Better
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"The fact that we are here today to debate raising America 's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the U.S. government cannot pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our Government's reckless fiscal policies. Increasing America 's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that 'the buck stops here.'

Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership.

Americans deserve better."

—Senator Barack H. Obama, Mar., 2006

20110725-07	16:04	SteveB	"Obama's 5 Big Mistakes"
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Ya, the President may not be a big liar like the Republicans, but he doesn't seem to be able to lead either, even when he had a Congressional majority in both Houses for two years. I'm afraid it's going to turn-out that he wasn't Presidential material after all, despite all his good intentions. I think we're in big trouble. Read on...

"Obama's 5 Big Mistakes" by David Frum, CNN

July 25, 2011, (http://us.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/07/25/frum.obama.mistakes/index.html?hpt=po_t2)

(Editor's note: David Frum writes a weekly column for CNN.com. A special assistant to President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2002, he is the author of six books, including *Comeback: Conservatism That Can Win Again*, and is the editor of FrumForum.)

Washington (CNN)—If the debt ceiling crisis were a movie, President Barack Obama would deserve an Oscar for his performance in the role of "the last reasonable man."

But of course the crisis is not a movie. The crisis is a deadly serious clash of ideas and interests. And there, the president has lost his way. Obama has lost his way so badly that even his core liberal supporters should be questioning whether they have got the right man in the job. The indictment has five headings:

1. Obama has ceased to lead on the economy.

The management guru Franklin Covey famously said: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Economic recovery is—or should be—the main thing. In 2009, Obama advanced a series of bold proposals to accelerate recovery: his big fiscal stimulus, the auto bailout and so on.

The president's proposals did not fail, exactly. But they did not work as advertised. The American economy limps weakly forward, leaving millions out of work. During the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt

demanded from his administration "bold, persistent experimentation." By contrast, Obama put measures in place at the beginning and waited for them to yield results. And waited. And waited. And waited.

Finally, at the end of 2010, he added one more measure to the mix: a partial cut to the payroll tax, included as part of the deal that renewed the Bush tax cuts. The payroll tax holiday is welcome if late. But it was small (2 percentage points out of the 12.6% paid by workers and employers) and was almost immediately offset by the surge in oil prices after the so-called Arab Spring. That surge took back from workers every dollar of the \$110 billion in tax relief delivered by the payroll holiday. And since December, Obama has surrendered entirely to the claim that we can somehow fix the economy by fixing the debt problem. The truth is the opposite: Fix the economy, and the debt problem will shrink to much more manageable proportions.

2. Obama does not effectively use the domestic powers of the presidency.

Talk radio shows accuse Obama of acting like a Third World dictator heading a thug government. That's a devilishly ingenious line of attack on a president who actually makes weaker use of his domestic power than any since Jimmy Carter.

Example: The U.S. recovery that commenced in the summer of 2009, stalled in the spring and summer of 2010. Many economists blame the stall on the Federal Reserve's Apr., 2010 decision to stop providing additional monetary stimulus for fear of igniting inflation. Those inflation fears proved utterly misplaced, and in late 2010 the Federal Reserve resumed its monetary stimulus. Where was the president during this crucial debate? AWOL.

Yes, yes, the Federal Reserve is independent and all that. But other presidents have succeeded in making their views known and respected on monetary policy. Obama had a unique chance to influence the debate, because through the summer of 2010 two of the seven seats on the Fed's Board of Governors stood vacant. The president nominated expansion-minded governors to fill the seats. The nominations were put on hold by Republican senators. And what did the president do? Did he take to the airways to demand action on his nominees? Did he punish the senators by stopping federal projects in their states? Did he fill the seats with recess appointments?

To borrow the answer from Fred Armisen's imitation of Obama on "Saturday Night Live": "I'm seeing two big accomplishments: jack and squat."

3. Obama cannot communicate empathy for Americans in economic distress.

Remember that video of the Obama supporter expressing her exhaustion and disappointment with the president's record of help to the middle class? Watch it again, and pay careful attention to what the president does. He first makes a perfunctory effort to connect with the woman in front of him as a fellow-parent. Then he rattles off a list of small programmatic changes: in the student loan program, in credit card regulation, none of them especially relevant to the woman in question. He finishes with a "stay the course" message that must ring hollow in the ears of all those for whom the "course" means unemployment of 38 weeks or longer. Notice what the president does not do. He does not thank his questioner for defending him. He does not ask her questions of his own. He is so determined to sell his narrative, that he cannot hear or honor her fears. And indeed the questioner did lose her job a few weeks after the town hall meeting.

For two years, Obama's economic message has been "recovery is around the corner." He has delivered this message from factory floors and restaurant tables. He has not spoken in front of groups of unemployed; he has not spoken at welfare offices.

Obama's disconnect from those in distress may explain the remarkable collapse of his support among younger whites, once one of his most important groups of supporters. Pew reports a 10-point surge in Republican identification among whites under age 30 since 2008. These are some of the voters hardest hit by this recession. They are voters to whom this president has spoken least.

4. Obama over-relied on banks and bankers.

Like President George W. Bush before him, Obama took bold and necessary action to save the U.S. financial system in the early spring of 2009. A lot of ugly things were done. A lot of reckless people got away scot-free—in fact, richer than ever. But apocalypse was averted, so congratulations all around. Afterward though: Where was

the reckoning? The administration remained focused on reassuring bankers long after it had finished the job of saving the banks.

Yes, Congress did pass a law, Dodd-Frank, that addressed some of the worst abuses of the 2000s. For example, Dodd-Frank exposes ratings agencies to private lawsuits for "knowing or reckless" failures to conduct proper investigations of the bonds they rate.

Unless you follow banking law closely, however, you would have little idea that any preventive measures have been taken against the next bubble. What got the headlines instead was the president's appointment of one high-profile banker, William Daley, as his chief of staff—and a rumor that he intended to appoint another as his second secretary of the Treasury, Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase. Little enough justice was done. Almost none was seen to be done.

5. Obama is not a good negotiator.

It's really striking that any time the president inserts himself into a negotiation, he ends up with zero results and all parties mad at him. The Middle East may be the most extreme case, but there are domestic counterparts, too.

When he negotiated the renewal of the Bush tax cuts in 2010, why didn't he get himself an increase in the debt ceiling at the same time? The tax cuts expanded the deficit beyond what it otherwise would have been. Republicans dearly wanted the tax cuts extended and would have paid for them. But no.

In this round of debt negotiations, the president has drawn red lines. He has threatened to veto a small increase in the debt ceiling, one that would force him to return to the argument before the election in 2012. By contrast, he has not threatened to veto debt-ceiling measures that cut too deeply into social programs. His red lines are drawn for his political advantage—not to protect his core supporters' values and interests. His red lines are not theirs.

Whether it was health care or the deficit or now the debt ceiling, direct encounters between Obama and his Republican opposite numbers have always ended badly for the president. Yes, the president faces unusually extreme and intransigent opposition. But that's a description of the difficulty, not an excuse for failure.

Presidents win negotiations when they can mobilize the public behind them. That was Ronald Reagan's secret weapon in 1981. It has never been Barack Obama's. And the results are as we all see.

20110726-01	06:58	SteveB	"Congress Continues Debate Over Whether or Not Nation Should Be Economically Ruined"
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Now we're getting closer to the truth...GO REPUBLICANTS!!!!

"Congress Continues Debate Over Whether or Not Nation Should Be Economically Ruined" *The Onion*

July 20, 2011, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/congress-continues-debate-over-whether-or-not-nati,20977/>)

(WASHINGTON) Members of the U.S. Congress reported Wednesday they were continuing to carefully debate the issue of whether or not they should allow the country to descend into a roiling economic meltdown of historically dire proportions.



"It is a question that, I think, is worthy of serious consideration: Should we take steps to avoid a crippling, decades-long depression that would lead to disastrous consequences on a worldwide scale? Or should we not do that?" asked House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA), adding that arguments could be made for both sides, and that the debate over ensuring America's financial solvency versus allowing the nation to default on its debt—which would torpedo stock markets, cause mortgage and interests rates to skyrocket, and decimate the value of the U.S. dollar—is "certainly a conversation worth having."

"Obviously, we don't want to rush to consensus on whether it is or isn't a good idea to save the American economy and all our respective livelihoods from certain peril until we've examined this thorny dilemma from every angle. And if we're still discussing this matter whenever, well, then, so be it." At press time, President Obama said he personally believed the country should not be economically ruined.

20110726-02	07:26	SteveB	"God Urges Rick Perry Not to Run for President"
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Another Republican winner! You tell him how it is, God, OK? This time, You know what You're talking about!

"God Urges Rick Perry Not to Run for President" by *The Onion*

July 21, 2011, (<http://www.theonion.com/articles/god-urges-rick-perry-not-to-run-for-president,20981/>)

(AUSTIN, Tex.) Describing Texas Gov. Rick Perry as grossly unqualified for the position, God, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, urged Perry not to run for president of the United States Wednesday. "I prayed last night and asked the Lord to support my candidacy, and He said no," Perry told reporters outside the Texas Capitol, explaining that God had cited the governor's rejection of federal stimulus funds to expand state jobless benefits, his irresponsible speculation about Texas seceding from the union, and his overall lack of concrete solutions to the nation's problems as reasons why He could not endorse a Perry presidential bid.

I believe God made some valid points about my lack of credentials, and He's absolutely right. My extreme beliefs when it comes to social issues and states' rights are not only disturbingly narrow-minded, but would also make me a horrible president.

When reached for comment, God said He would not be present at Perry's much-talked about Christian day of prayer on Aug. 6, calling the governor's use of his public office to endorse a religion both "irresponsible" and a violation of the Constitution.

20110726-03	08:05	Dick	Fw: Social Security: An Entitlement?
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A great email that make perfect sense, both ethically and mathematically. Since we pre-paid for these benefits, are they really an entitlement?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Social Security An "Entitlement???"

What is wrong here?

Remember, not only did you contribute to Social Security but your employer did too. It totaled 15% of your income before taxes. If you averaged only 30K over your working life, that's close to \$220,500.

If you calculate the future value of \$4,500 per year (yours & your employer's contribution) at a simple 5% (less than what the govt. pays on the money that it borrows), after 49 years of working (me) you'd have \$892,919.98.

If you took out only 3% per year, you receive \$26,787.60 per year and it would last better than 30 years, and that's with no interest paid on that final amount on deposit! If you bought an annuity and it paid 4% per year, you'd have a lifetime income of \$2,976.40 per month.

The folks in Washington have pulled off a bigger Ponzi scheme than Bernie Madoff ever had.

Entitlement my a*s, Just because they borrowed the money, doesn't make my benefits some kind of charity or handout!! Congressional benefits, aka. free health care, outrageous retirement packages, 67 paid holidays, three weeks paid vacation, unlimited paid sick days, now that's welfare, and they have the nerve to call my retirement entitlements !!!!

Emergency Rooms for their general health care—At just one hospital the cost to taxpayers totaled over 25 million a year!!! Someone please tell me what the HELL's wrong with all the people that run this country!!!!!!

We're "broke" & can't help our own Seniors, Veterans, Orphans, Homeless etc.,???????????

In the last months we have provided aid to Haiti, Chile, and Turkey. And now Pakistan home of bin Laden. Literally, BILLIONS of DOLLARS!!!

Our retired seniors living on a 'fixed income' receive no aid nor do they get any breaks while our government and religious organizations pour Hundreds of Billions of \$\$\$\$'s and Tons of Food to Foreign Countries!

They call Social Security and Medicare an entitlement even though most of us have been paying for it all our working lives and now when it's time for us to collect, the government is running out of money. Why did the government borrow from it in the first place?

AMERICA: a country where we have homeless without shelter, children going to bed hungry, elderly going without 'needed' meds, and mentally ill without treatment—etc., etc.

YET.....They have a 'Benefit' for the people of Haiti on 12 TV stations, ships and planes lining up with food, water,tents, clothes, bedding, doctors, and medical supplies.

Imagine if the *GOVERNMENT* gave 'U.S.' the same support they give to other countries.

SAD? YEAH, OK, SO WHEN DO WE GET ANGRY AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?????

99% of people won't bother to forward this.

I'm one of the 1%—I Just Did

20110726-04	10:19	SteveB	Re: Social Security: An Entitlement?
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Dear Dick,

I disagree with the slight emphasis on foreign aid in this piece...I don't think it wise to abrogate our influence in the world at large, especially the little influence we seem to have left.

But...how can the American people and our political system allow the government to rob the poor to pay the rich, and let the country and its future be damned? This is really the Republicans' grand scheme!

Or how is it not, my friends?

Maybe Americans could get perturbed enough to raise hell with their Congressmen??? Not that it looks like they're listening.

20110727-01 09:21 SteveB Republicans

Don't these Republicans realize that they are over-reaching by a mile, especially since they are a minority in the House and the Democrats control the Senate and the Presidency? Have they completely failed to study their American history?

Should Obama choose, he can always (or instantly, it would/will be interesting to see his political calculation here) invoke a National Emergency of some sort (which would probably be accurate) and raise the debt ceiling one way or another. Default is simply not in the best interest of the country and may be in our dire interest.

In this, perhaps likely, case, the Republicans get nothing. No budget cuts at all. We continue to print money.

Here's what has happened so far, in a nutshell:

1. The Tea Baggers demanded huge concessions from the other Republicans and the President on taxes and spending, so big you would think they wanted a "no" from the opposition. They thought this demand and its rejection, along with a worsening economy they refuse to do anything about, would give them the next election.
2. Instead, Obama caved to all their demands, to the extent that the current Democrat proposal in the Senate contains more cuts than Boehner's bill in the House. The President caved on taxes. He caved, but he turned the tables on them at the same time.
3. The Republicans (probably secretly shocked, no?) shook their heads and said, "Can't!"

Oh, OK, they don't really want what they said they wanted. OK... So, what is it they want? Chaos? Destruction? Third-World status? Chinese overlords? :-)

20110727-02 11:08 Dick U.S. Debt Visualization

Open link and be sure to scroll to the end. OMG! (<http://www.wtfnoway.com/>)

20110727-03 12:10 Dennis Re: Republicans

from SteveB:

OK... So, what is it they want? Chaos? Destruction? Third-World status? Chinese overlords? :-)

Dear SteveB,

Geez, isn't it obvious? They are simply obsessed with wanting to destroy the alien being they see infesting the White House. The only consequence they see from doing that blindly narrow-minded act is that they can restore their political hegemony over all Americans. It doesn't matter if the country can be financially destroyed in the process. Hugely greater deficits from soaring interest on the national debt? Deficits don't matter, as Dick Cheney so clearly pointed out and Republicans accepted as convenient wisdom, before they realized it could be used as an issue for undermining the

perceived Usurper-in-Chief. Just make up a set of facts and repeat the biggest lies ad infinitum ALA Joseph Goebbels. What does truth matter when the goal is simply authoritarian power?

20110728-01	10:34	SteveB	Democrats "In Retreat"
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How much ground the Democrats gave...

"In Retreat" by Chuck Todd, Mark Murray, Domenico Montanaro, and Brooke Brower, CNN

July 28, 2011, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/07/28/7187100-first-thoughts-in-retreat>)

1. In retreat?

In this debt debate, who's up one day can quickly go down the next—and vice versa. That's why, after we wrote yesterday that House Speaker John Boehner was boxed in, he now appears likely to get his legislation through the House today (he turned things around the old fashioned way; he willed it). But when you take a step back from the hour-by-hour movements in this debate, it's obvious how much ground the White House and Democrats have conceded. First, they retreated on their push for a clean debt-ceiling raise. Then they retreated on the size of the spending cuts (now both sides say the cuts must equal or exceed the eventual debt-limit hike). Then they backed away from insisting that tax revenues be included in the final package (both the Boehner and Reid plans exclude them). And now it seems that their final line in the sand is insisting that the debt ceiling must—in one step—be raised beyond 2012, versus Boehner's two-step approach, which would guarantee another debt showdown early next year.

2. Another line in the sand, and another retreat?

Yesterday afternoon, the entire Dem Senate caucus—the 51 Democrats and two Dem-leaning independents—signed a letter to Boehner saying they'd oppose his legislation if it gets to their chamber. "A short-term extension like the one in your bill would put America at risk, along with every family and business in it," the letter states. "Your approach would force us once again to face the threat of default in five or six short months. Every day, another expert warns us that your short-term approach could be nearly as disastrous as a default and would lead to a downgrade in our credit rating." But will Democrats once again blink? Bottom line: It looks like they've gotten their clocks cleaned in these negotiations, and Republicans are once again counting on Democrats to retreat. The one thing that could bail out Democrats: that the GOP doesn't know when to declare victory and walk away from the blackjack table.

3. Losing the debt battle, but winning the larger war?

Democrats admit that this entire debt battle hasn't been a big winner for them. But they argue that they could end up winning the longer-term war. They point to polls showing them winning the actual tax debate (that the public wants balance and is willing to pay higher taxes); they say they could still get their revenues through the commission the eventual legislation sets up, or with the expiration of the Bush tax cuts (if Obama wins in 2012); and they contend that the president likely comes out this messy debate looking better than anyone in Congress. In large part, Republicans have gained the upper hand in this game of chicken, because they've proved that their Tea Party is tying their hands to the steering wheel (and Republicans have proven adept at using the "we can't control these guys" negotiating strategy). But Democrats could wield this argument in 2012: No matter how much ground they gave up, they protected the country from the guys who were willing to crash both cars.

20110729-01	11:40	Dick	"President Obama Is No Longer Tethered to Reality"
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Dear Steve,

What is your take on this?

"President Obama Is No Longer Tethered to Reality" by Peter Ferrara, *Forbes*

July 28, 2011, (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/peterferrara/2011/07/28/president-obama-is-no-longer-tethered-to-reality/>)

(Peter Ferrara is Director of Entitlement and Budget Policy for the Heartland Institute, general counsel for the American Civil Rights Union and senior fellow for the Carleson Center for Public Policy. He served in the White House Office of Policy Development under President Reagan, and as associate deputy attorney general under the first President Bush. He is the author of *America's Ticking Bankruptcy Bomb*, now available from HarperCollins.)

President Barack Obama's speech to the nation Monday night was highly disturbing. Because, read carefully, it reveals a president wildly divorced from the fundamental realities of the nation he is supposed to be leading.

President Obama actually told America on national television that it is a nation "with a system in which the deck seems stacked against middle class Americans in favor of the wealthiest few." It is incomprehensible how a man serving as president of these United States could make such a fundamentally false assertion about his own country.

As I explain in my new book, *America's Ticking Bankruptcy Bomb*, before Obama was even elected, official IRS data showed that for 2007, the top 1% of income earners paid more in federal income taxes than the bottom 95% combined. The top 1% paid 40.4% of all federal income taxes that year, almost twice their share of income. The middle fifth of income earners, the actual middle class, paid 4.7% of federal income taxes. Deck stacked against the middle class in favor of the wealthiest few?

Moreover, the bottom 40% of income earners as a group paid no federal income taxes that year. They instead received net payments from the IRS equal to 4% of total federal tax revenues. As my book explains, this was actually the result of nearly 30 years of Reaganomics. Today close to 50% of Americans pay no federal income tax.

We see the same in some states. In California, the top 1% pay 48% of all state income taxes. In New York, the top 1% pay 41% of all state income taxes. In New Jersey, until recently the top 1% paid 46% of state income taxes.

Moreover [again? —SteveB], America's corporate income tax rate is virtually the highest in the industrialized world at nearly 40% on average, counting state corporate rates. Even Communist China has a 25% corporate rate, with the average in the mostly socialist European Union below that. In formerly socialist Canada, the corporate rate today is 16.5%, scheduled to fall under current law to 15% next year. Doesn't sound like America suffers a deck stacked against the middle class in favor of the wealthiest few.

And already scheduled under current law for 2013 are increases in the top tax rates of every major federal tax, apart from the already too high corporate tax rate. That is because the Obamacare taxes become effective that year, and the Bush tax cuts expire. So the top two income tax rates would go up nearly 20%, the capital gains tax rate would go up nearly 60%, the tax on corporate dividends would nearly triple, and the Medicare payroll tax would go up 62% for the nation's small businesses, job creators and investors.

Obama's wildly erroneous statement Monday night indicates he is not living in the real world, which is dangerous for America. These tax policies so heavily skewed against the nation's small businesses, job creators and investors are central reasons why there has been no recovery from the last recession, why working people can't get jobs, why their wages are falling in real terms, why unemployment is still rising 3.5 years after the last recession started, why a record number of Americans are in poverty. As a consequence, in reality, it is Obama's anti-market economic policies that are actually in effect stacked heavily against the middle class, working people and the poor.

Obama also told the nation Monday night he wants to "ask hedge fund managers to stop paying taxes at a lower rate than their secretaries." This is another false truism that is widely circulated throughout the liberal/left. The allegation arises because capital gains income is taxed at 15%, while individual income tax rates range higher than that. But as I explain in my book, the fundamental mistake is the failure to recognize that capital income is taxed multiple times, not just by the capital gains tax. It is taxed at least four times, by the individual income tax, the corporate income tax, and the death tax, besides the capital gains tax. That is why the most fair as well as most economically productive rate for the capital gains tax would be zero, as is the case in much of the industrialized world.

The president further proclaimed Monday night that "most Americans don't understand how we can ask a senior citizen to pay more for her Medicare benefits before we ask corporate jet owners and oil companies to give up tax breaks that other companies don't get." But his Obamacare law already more than asks seniors to pay more for their Medicare

benefits. It requires them to pay 40% to 200% more if they, in the President's infinite wisdom, earn too much, defined as over \$85,000 a year this time.

Note also the tax break for corporate jet owners was adopted in the Obama stimulus to create jobs in corporate jet manufacturing. Yet, such tax breaks for corporate jets or oil companies that other companies do not get are special interest, central economic planning loopholes that undermine the economy rather than advance it. The only truly pro-growth tax policy is the lowest possible tax rates for all, with no special interest loopholes. But the amount of revenue lost on Obama's corporate jet scam is so trivial it is not even worth talking about as possibly even contributing to solving the deficit and debt crisis.

Finally on Monday night, Obama threatened America's seniors with more, saying that if House Republicans don't agree to his tax increase to increase the debt limit, "we would not have enough money to pay the bills—bills that include monthly Social Security checks." This can only be described as calculated deception.

The Social Security trust funds include \$2.7 trillion in government bonds, which are due and payable when needed to pay Social Security benefits. As I also show in my book, those bonds do not represent any real savings and investment. They involve only a statement of the legal authority Social Security has to draw from general revenues, on top of payroll tax revenues. But in dealing with a crisis over the debt limit, that legal authority can be the critical factor.

While those bonds are explicitly not transferable, and so cannot be sold to the public to raise money, under prior practice they would be cashed out by selling new government bonds to the public. Since the Social Security trust fund bonds are included in the national debt subject to the debt limit, they can be replaced by such new public bonds without the total debt going over the limit.

Moreover [again? X3? —SteveB], those Social Security trust fund bonds are explicitly backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. That means Obama is constitutionally required to pay them when needed to pay Social Security benefits. In addition, there is more than enough general revenue coming in to just cash out the trust fund bonds as necessary in any event, even without issuing any new public bonds.

As a result, Obama is constitutionally required to pay Social Security benefits, under his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed. That means failing to pay those benefits would be an impeachable offense."

20110730-01	12:17	SteveB	"First Thoughts: A Game of Leverage"
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The debt limit battle...

"First Thoughts: A Game of Leverage" by Chuck Todd, Mark Murray, Domenico Montanaro, and Brooke Brower, NBC

July 29, 2011, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/07/29/7195706-first-thoughts-a-game-of-leverage>)

In retreat

In this debt debate, who's up one day can quickly go down the next—and vice versa. That's why, after we wrote yesterday that House Speaker John Boehner was boxed in, he now appears likely to get his legislation through the House today (he turned things around the old fashioned way; he willed it). But when you take a step back from the hour-by-hour movements in this debate, it's obvious how much ground the White House and Democrats have conceded. First, they retreated on their push for a clean debt-ceiling raise. Then they retreated on the size of the spending cuts (now both sides say the cuts must equal or exceed the eventual debt-limit hike). Then they backed away from insisting that tax revenues be included in the final package (both the Boehner and Reid plans exclude them). And now it seems that their final line in the sand is insisting that the debt ceiling must—in one step—be raised beyond 2012, versus Boehner's two-step approach, which would guarantee another debt showdown early next year.

Another line in the sand, and another retreat?

Yesterday afternoon, the entire Dem Senate caucus—the 51 Democrats and two Dem-leaning independents—signed a letter to Boehner saying they'd oppose his legislation if it gets to their chamber. "A short-term extension like the one in your bill would put America at risk, along with every family and business in it," the letter states. "Your approach would

force us once again to face the threat of default in five or six short months. Every day, another expert warns us that your short-term approach could be nearly as disastrous as a default and would lead to a downgrade in our credit rating." But will Democrats once again blink?

Bottom line: It looks like they've gotten their clocks cleaned in these negotiations, and Republicans are once again counting on Democrats to retreat. The one thing that could bail out Democrats: that the GOP doesn't know when to declare victory and walk away from the blackjack table.

Losing the debt battle, but winning the larger war?

Democrats admit that this entire debt battle hasn't been a big winner for them. But they argue that they could end up winning the longer-term war. They point to polls showing them winning the actual tax debate (that the public wants balance and is willing to pay higher taxes); they say they could still get their revenues through the commission the eventual legislation sets up, or with the expiration of the Bush tax cuts (if Obama wins in 2012); and they contend that the president likely comes out this messy debate looking better than anyone in Congress. In large part, Republicans have gained the upper hand in this game of chicken, because they've proved that their Tea Party is tying their hands to the steering wheel (and Republicans have proven adept at using the "we can't control these guys" negotiating strategy). But Democrats could wield this argument in 2012: No matter how much ground they gave up, they protected the country from the guys who were willing to crash both cars.

A game of leverage

Yesterday, we said that who's up one day in this debt debate can quickly go down the next. And that's precisely what happened on Thursday night, when House Speaker John Boehner—who had appeared likely to get his debt legislation through the House—had to postpone the vote. The reason: GOP leaders simply didn't have the votes to pass it. Why does all of this matter, even though Boehner's bill is supposedly D.O.A. in the Senate? It's about leverage. Had Republican passed their bill last night, it would have put pressure on the White House and Democrats, even though Senate Dems had vowed to oppose the Boehner bill. But with the GOP's failure last night, Democrats suddenly have much more leverage than they did yesterday. Expect Mitch McConnell and a band of frustrated Senate Republicans (whom McConnell is simply trying to keep calm) to give Boehner a couple of hours this morning to try to pass his legislation again. But if that doesn't happen, Senate Republicans might end up cutting a deal with Harry Reid and the Democrats—moving things faster than any of us thought possible.

Final House bill will need GOP and Dem votes.

Here's another reason why Democrats suddenly have more leverage in this debt debate: We've heard that House leaders weren't trying to flip just the last 10 or 15 votes yesterday. GOP leaders had already moved DOZENS of House Republican votes from "maybe" "no" to "yes." What does that mean: There just aren't enough House GOP votes—by themselves—to raise the debt ceiling. The eventual compromise bill is going to take 105 to 110 House Republican votes, as well as 105 to 110 House Democratic votes. So message to Kevin McCarthy and Steny Hoyer: Time to roll up your sleeves; Monday could be the REALLY long day.

Do House Republicans really want to do this again in six months?

Rhetorically, Democrats now have additional leverage in their fight to have a single debt-ceiling hike through 2012 (as opposed to the GOP desire to have another hike early next year). As White House Communications Director Dan Pfeiffer tweeted last night, "Someone remind me why Speaker Boehner is dead set on doing this again in December?" And as a top Senate Democratic aide emailed First Read, "If this isn't reason enough to avoid doing all this over again in six months, what is?" Some Republicans might believe doing this again will make the president look weak at a time when Americans are actually beginning to tune into the election. Is that possible? Maybe, but it's just as possible that it turns into a total you-know-what show, and has more of what last night highlighted—Republicans attacking Republicans and a party in disarray. So it's hard enough to imagine gambling with the U.S. economy at this point, but it also means gambling with your own political future and relevancy.

The old rules no longer apply.

There are two more lessons we learned last night. First, the old rules to twist recalcitrant arms no longer apply. Tea Party and conservative House members don't really care about important committee assignments. They don't place a value on fundraising help. And earmarks and extra pork for their districts? Forget about it. As the *Washington Post* recounts, GOP

Rep. Jeff Flake—who opposes Boehner’s bill—“praised the lack of horse-trading of the type that marred passage of Obama’s health-care legislation. ‘It is the most refreshing thing in the world to see what’s going on in there,’ Flake said. ‘This kind of negotiation a couple years ago would have cost about \$20 billion.’” It is refreshing. But it’s also a curse if you’re trying to get things done.

Can Republicans govern?

A second lesson we learned: It’s a legitimate question to ask if the Tea Party fueled Republican Party can govern. Last night wasn’t just about Boehner failing to get the votes. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor and House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy were united with their speaker in trying to get votes for the bill. Some folks are trying to make this a referendum on Boehner’s speakership, but could anyone else have managed this group?

Bottom line: The entire GOP leadership doesn’t know how to manage the Tea Party and their conservative members. Boehner and Republicans have spent the last several weeks accusing President Obama of not leading. But as one GOP member told NBC’s Luke Russert: "Our message has been that we lead and Obama doesn't. That didn't happen [last night]." Obama himself referred to Boehner’s challenge earlier this month: "The politics that swept him into the speakership were good for a midterm election; they’re tough for governing."

20110802-01	11:05	Mark	Fw: Bernie Madoff & Social Security
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[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

No matter what your political views are, this strikes a chord with us baby boomers who have paid into SS our entire lives and are just hoping that the \$’s are there when we need them.....so we hope for lots of "new investors".

Why did Bernie Madoff go to prison? To make it simple, he talked people into investing with him. Trouble was, he didn't invest their money. As time rolled on he simply took the money from the new investors to pay off the old investors. Finally there were too many old investors and not enough money from new investors coming in to keep the payments going.

Next thing you know Madoff is one of the most hated men in America and he is off to jail. Some of you know this. But not enough of you. Madoff did to his investors what the government has been doing to us for over 70 years with Social Security. There is no meaningful difference between the two schemes, except that one was operated by a private individual who is now in jail, and the other is operated by politicians who enjoy perks, privileges and status in spite of their actions.

Do you need a side-by-side comparison here?

BERNIE MADOFF: Takes money from investors with the promise that the money will be invested and made available to them later.

SOCIAL SECURITY: Takes money from wage earners with the promise that the money will be invested in a "Trust Fund" (Lock Box) and made available later.

BERNIE MADOFF: Instead of investing the money Madoff spends it on nice homes in the Hamptons and yachts.

SOCIAL SECURITY: Instead of depositing money in a Trust Fund the politicians transfer it to the General Revenue Fund and use it for general spending and vote buying.

BERNIE MADOFF: When the time comes to pay the investors back Madoff simply uses some of the new funds from newer investors to pay back the older investors.

SOCIAL SECURITY: When benefits for older investors become due, the politicians pay them with money taken from younger and newer wage earners to pay the older investors.

BERNIE MADOFF: When Madoff’s scheme is discovered all hell breaks loose. New investors won't give him any money.

SOCIAL SECURITY: When Social Security runs out of money the politicians try to force the taxpayers to send them some more or they’ll cancel those who paid into it.

BERNIE MADOFF: Is in jail.

YOUR POLITICIANS: Remain in Washington with fat medical and retirement benefits.

"If you put the federal government in charge of the Sahara Desert , in five years there'd be a shortage of sand." —Milton Friedman

[20110805-01](#) 19:11 GaryF Fw: 1911

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The year is 1911— One hundred years ago. What a difference a century makes! Here are some statistics for the Year 1911:

1. The average life expectancy for men was 47 years.
2. Fuel for the Model T Ford was sold in drug stores only.
3. Only 14 percent of the homes had a bathtub.
4. Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.
5. There were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads.
6. The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
7. The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower !
8. The average U.S. wage in 1910 was 22 cents per hour.
9. The average U.S. worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year ..
10. A competent accountant could expect to earn \$2000 per year,
11. A dentist made \$2,500 per year, a veterinarian between \$1,500 and \$4,000 per year, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
12. More than 95 percent of all births took place at home .
13. Ninety percent of all Doctors had NO COLLEGE EDUCATION! Instead, they attended so-called "medical schools", many of which were condemned in the press AND the government as "substandard."
14. Sugar cost four cents a pound.
15. Eggs were fourteen cents a dozen.
16. Coffee was fifteen cents a pound.
17. Most women only washed their hair once a month, and used Borax or egg yolks for shampoo.
18. Canada passed a law that prohibited poor people from entering their country for any reason.
19. The Five leading causes of death were: Pneumonia and influenza, Tuberculosis, Diarrhea, Heart disease, Stroke
20. The American flag had 45 stars.
21. The population of Las Vegas, Nevada, was only 30!
22. Crossword puzzles, canned beer, and iced tea hadn't been invented yet.
23. There was neither a Mother's Day nor a Father's Day.
24. Two out of every 10 adults couldn't read or write and only 6% of all Americans had graduated from high school.
25. Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all available over the counter at the local corner drugstores. Back then pharmacists said, "Heroin clears the complexion, gives buoyancy to the mind, Regulates the stomach and bowels, and is, in fact, a perfect guardian of health!" (Shocking?)
26. 18% of households had at least one full-time servant or domestic help.
27. There were about 230 reported murders in the ENTIRE U.S.A.!

I am now going to forward this to someone else without typing it myself. From there, it will be sent to others all over the WORLD—all in a matter of seconds! Try to imagine what it may be like in another 100 years.

[20110806-01](#) 18:06 GaryF Quotes About Voters

Truer words were never spoken:

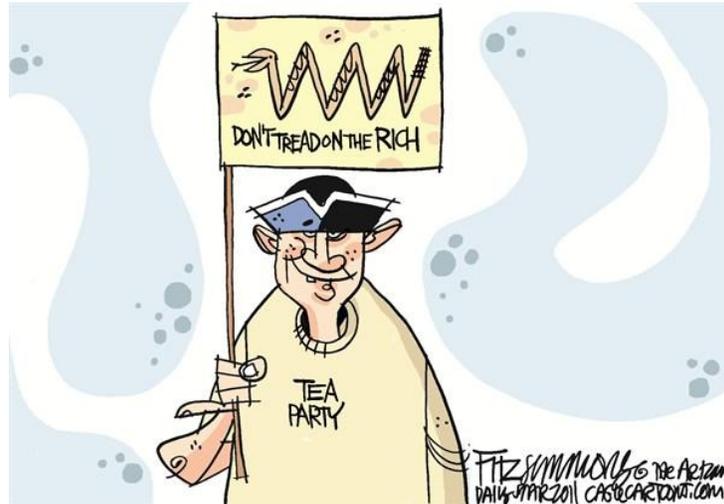
"The short memories of American voters is what keeps our politicians in office" —Will Rogers

"The greatest argument against democracy is a 5 minute conversation with the average voter." —Winston Churchill

Well...there's also the other question: If de-regulation and tax cuts for the rich and powerful generate wealth, jobs, and growth for the American economy...then why hasn't the great conservative experiment conducted since Ronald Reagan resulted in a successful America instead of a jobless, declining, failing America?

"The Question Conservatives Can't Answer" by Paul Buchheit, Common Dreams

July 26th, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/07/26-1>)



David Fitzsimmons / Arizona Daily Star

The following fact was sent to numerous conservative pundits, politicians, and profit seekers:

Based on Tax Foundation figures, the richest 1 percent has TRIPLED its share of America's income over the past 30 years. Much of the gain came from tax cuts and minimally taxed financial instruments. If their income had increased only at the pace of American productivity (80 percent), they would be taking about a TRILLION DOLLARS LESS out of our economy.

And a question was posed:

In what way do the richest 1 percent deserve these extraordinary gains?

This question was not posed in sarcasm. A factual answer is genuinely sought. It seems unlikely that 1 percent of the population worked three times harder than the rest of us, or contributed three times as much to American productivity. Money earned from tax cuts and minimally taxed financial instruments is not productive income. And while some big earners have developed innovative ideas and leading edge businesses, it seems fair to say that taxpayer-funded research at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (the Internet), the National Institute of Health (pharmaceuticals), and the National Science Foundation (the Digital Library Initiative) has laid a half-century foundation for their idea-building.

So I asked anyone out there to explain, defend, or justify the fact that over 20% of our country's income (it was 7 percent in 1980) now goes to the richest 1 percent of Americans.

Very few responses were forthcoming. To his credit, renowned economist and writer Thomas Sowell took the time to respond. Unfortunately, his response relied upon classical economic theory: "Most people are paid voluntarily by others to whom they supply goods and/or services, and only to the extent that others value what is supplied enough to part with their own hard cash."

Mr. Sowell is also a believer in economic mobility, claiming that people often move from one earnings quintile to another over time. While there's some truth in this, Treasury Department figures show that nearly 9 out of 10 of those in the top 1% remained in the top quintile of earners over a ten year period.

A few other conservatives responded to my question, with varying degrees of coherence in their arguments. Reference was made to the "Pareto Efficiency," a situation in which an allocation of resources makes at least one individual better off without making any other individual worse off: the result is said to be a net improvement overall. But this does not address the resulting contribution to inequality, which is the main point.

Another respondent claimed: "What we found is that the rich did get richer over the last 30 years, but so did the middle class, the working class and the poorest." But based on 1980 dollars and IRS data, this is how U.S. income has been redistributed since that time:

- Incomes for the top 1 percent have gone from \$148,000 to \$450,000
- Incomes for the next 9 percent have gone from \$46,000 to \$50,000
- Incomes for the next 40 percent have gone from \$17,500 to \$15,000
- Incomes for the bottom 50 percent have gone from \$5,400 to \$3,750

As it stands, the question remains unanswered. Maybe if we offer a prize..?

20110807-02	11:00	SteveG	"30 Years Ago Today: The Day the Middle Class Died"
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"30 Years Ago Today: The Day the Middle Class Died" by Michael Moore, AlterNet

Aug. 6, 2011,

http://www.alternet.org/newsandviews/article/645360/30_years_ago_today%3A_the_day_the_middle_class_died...a_letter_from_michael_moore/#parag

From time to time, someone under 30 will ask me, "When did this all begin, America's downward slide?" They say they've heard of a time when working people could raise a family and send the kids to college on just one parent's income (and that college in states like California and New York was almost free). That anyone who wanted a decent paying job could get one. That people only worked five days a week, eight hours a day, got the whole weekend off and had a paid vacation every summer. That many jobs were union jobs, from baggers at the grocery store to the guy painting your house, and this meant that no matter how "lowly" your job was you had guarantees of a pension, occasional raises, health insurance and someone to stick up for you if you were unfairly treated.

Young people have heard of this mythical time—but it was no myth, it was real. And when they ask, "When did this all end?", I say, "It ended on this day: Aug. 5th, 1981."

Beginning on this date, 30 years ago, Big Business and the Right Wing decided to "go for it"—to see if they could actually destroy the middle class so that they could become richer themselves.

And they've succeeded.

On Aug. 5, 1981, President Ronald Reagan fired every member of the air traffic controllers union (PATCO) who'd defied his order to return to work and declared their union illegal. They had been on strike for just two days.

It was a bold and brash move. No one had ever tried it. What made it even bolder was that PATCO was one of only three unions that had endorsed Reagan for president! It sent a shock wave through workers across the country. If he would do this to the people who were with him, what would he do to us?

Reagan had been backed by Wall Street in his run for the White House and they, along with right-wing Christians, wanted to restructure America and turn back the tide that President Franklin D. Roosevelt started—a tide that was intended to make life better for the average working person. The rich hated paying better wages and providing benefits. They hated paying taxes even more. And they despised unions. The right-wing Christians hated anything that sounded like socialism or holding out a helping hand to minorities or women.

Reagan promised to end all that. So when the air traffic controllers went on strike, he seized the moment. In getting rid of every single last one of them and outlawing their union, he sent a clear and strong message: The days of everyone having a comfortable middle class life were over. America, from now on, would be run this way:

- The super-rich will make more, much, much more, and the rest of you will scramble for the crumbs that are left.
- Everyone must work! Mom, Dad, the teenagers in the house! Dad, you work a second job! Kids, here's your latch-key! Your parents might be home in time to put you to bed.
- 50 million of you must go without health insurance! And health insurance companies: you go ahead and decide who you want to help—or not.
- Unions are evil! You will not belong to a union! You do not need an advocate! Shut up and get back to work! No, you can't leave now, we're not done. Your kids can make their own dinner.
- You want to go to college? No problem—just sign here and be in hock to a bank for the next 20 years!
- What's "a raise"? Get back to work and shut up!

And so it went. But Reagan could not have pulled this off by himself in 1981. He had some big help:

The AFL-CIO.

The biggest organization of unions in America told its members to cross the picket lines of the air traffic controllers and go to work. And that's just what these union members did. Union pilots, flight attendants, delivery truck drivers, baggage handlers—they all crossed the line and helped to break the strike. And union members of all stripes crossed the picket lines and continued to fly.

Reagan and Wall Street could not believe their eyes! Hundreds of thousands of working people and union members endorsing the firing of fellow union members. It was Christmas in August for Corporate America.

And that was the beginning of the end. Reagan and the Republicans knew they could get away with anything—and they did. They slashed taxes on the rich. They made it harder for you to start a union at your workplace. They eliminated safety regulations on the job. They ignored the monopoly laws and allowed thousands of companies to merge or be bought out and closed down. Corporations froze wages and threatened to move overseas if the workers didn't accept lower pay and less benefits. And when the workers agreed to work for less, they moved the jobs overseas anyway.

And at every step along the way, the majority of Americans went along with this. There was little opposition or fight-back. The "masses" did not rise up and protect their jobs, their homes, their schools (which used to be the best in the world). They just accepted their fate and took the beating.

I have often wondered what would have happened had we all just stopped flying, period, back in 1981. What if all the unions had said to Reagan, "Give those controllers their jobs back or we're shutting the country down!"? You know what would have happened. The corporate elite and their boy Reagan would have buckled.

But we didn't do it. And so, bit by bit, piece by piece, in the ensuing 30 years, those in power have destroyed the middle class of our country and, in turn, have wrecked the future for our young people. Wages have remained stagnant for 30 years. Take a look at the statistics and you can see that every decline we're now suffering with had its beginning in 1981 (here's a little scene to illustrate that from my last movie).

It all began on this day, 30 years ago. One of the darkest days in American history. And we let it happen to us. Yes, they had the money, and the media and the cops. But we had 200 million of us. Ever wonder what it would look like if 200 million got truly upset and wanted their country, their life, their job, their weekend, their time with their kids back?

Have we all just given up? What are we waiting for? Forget about the 20% who support the Tea Party—we are the other 80%! This decline will only end when we demand it. And not through an online petition or a tweet. We are going to have to turn the TV and the computer and the video games off and get out in the streets (like they've done in Wisconsin). Some of you need to run for local office next year. We need to demand that the Democrats either get a spine and stop taking corporate money—or step aside.

When is enough, enough? The middle class dream will not just magically reappear. Wall Street's plan is clear: America is to be a nation of Haves and Have Nothings. Is that OK for you?

Why not use today to pause and think about the little steps you can take to turn this around in your neighborhood, at your workplace, in your school? Is there any better day to start than today?

Yours, Michael Moore

20110808-01 10:30 Ben Rick Perry's Texas A&M Transcript

Wow. Astonishing. But not.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/05/rick-perry-college-transcript_n_919357.html

[or] <http://www.scribd.com/doc/61684192/Rick-Perry-s-Texas-A-M-Transcript>

PER: JAMES RICHARD		585764		TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY	
ROUTE #2, HASKELL, TEXAS		3-4-50 HASKELL, TEXAS		COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS	
DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH	COURSE NUMBER	HOURS TH-PR	Grade	CR HRS	GR PTS
PRE-VETERINARY MEDICINE					
1ST TERM SS 1968					
COMP. & RHETORIC	ENGL 103	9 0	B	3	6
HISTORY OF THE U.S.	HIST 105	9 0	C	3	3
685764		6		6	9
FALL SEMESTER 1968					
WORLD MIL. SYSTEMS	A S 101	0 2	C	1	1
GEN. BOT. OF SEED PLTS	BIOL 101	2 3	C	3	3
GENERAL CHEMISTRY	CHEM 101	3 3	C	4	4
IMPROV. OF LEARNING	EDUC 101	1 3	A	2	6
COMP. + RHETORIC	ENGL 104	3 0	C	3	3
ALGEBRA	MATH 102	3 0	B	3	6
REQUIRED PHY. ED.	P E 101	0 2	B	2	2
685764		16		16	25
SPRING SEMESTER 1969					
WORLD MIL. SYSTEMS	A S 102	0 2	B	1	2
VERTEBRATE ZOOLOGY	BIOL 107	2 3	C	3	3
GENERAL CHEMISTRY	CHEM 102	3 3	C	4	4
HISTORY OF THE U.S.	HIST 106	3 0	C	3	3
PLANE TRIGONOMETRY	MATH 103	3 0	D	3	3
REQUIRED PHY. ED.	P E 102	0 2	B	2	2
685764		14		14	14
FOUR POINT SYSTEM EFFECTIVE JUNE 1969					
FALL SEMESTER 1969					
WORLD MIL. SYSTEMS	A S 201	0 2	A	1	4
ORGANIC CHEMISTRY I	CHEM 227	3 0	D	3	3
ORG. CHEM. LAB.	CHEM 237	0 3	B	1	3
INTRO TO LITERATURE	ENGL 203	3 0	B	3	9
REQUIRED PHY. ED.	P E 201	0 2	C	2	2
COLLEGE PHYSICS	PHYS 201	3 3	C	4	8
AMER. NATNL. GOVT.	POLS 206	3 0	B	3	9
685764		15		15	38
SPRING SEMESTER 1970					
WORLD MIL. SYSTEMS	A S 202	0 2	C	1	2
ORGANIC CHEMISTRY II	CHEM 228	3 0	F	3	3
ORG. CHEM. LAB.	CHEM 238	0 3	D	1	1
SHAKESPEARE	ENGL 212	3 0	D	3	3
REQUIRED PHY. ED.	P E 202	0 2	B	2	2
COLLEGE PHYSICS	PHYS 202	3 3	C	4	8
685764		12		9	17
2ND TERM SS 1970					
SOIL SCIENCE	AGRO 301	9 6	B	4	12
PRIN. OF ECONOMICS	ECON 203	9 0	D	3	3
685764		7		7	15
ANIMAL SCIENCE 8-31-70					
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GRADUATE, PAINT CREEK RURAL H.S., HASKELL, TEXAS, 1968					
<small>Grading System: A (92-100), B (84-91), C (76-83), D (70-75), F (0-49), WP - withdrew passing, WF - withdrew failing. Semester is 18 weeks. Summer term is 6 weeks. Credit Hour: 1 hour of recitation or 2 to 4 hours of practice a week for one semester.</small>					
<small>ENTITLED TO HONORABLE DISMISSAL UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED. NOT AN OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT WITHOUT IMPRESS SEAL OF UNIVERSITY.</small>					
<small>TO THE RECIPIENT OF THIS DOCUMENT: THIS INFORMATION MAY NOT BE RELEASED OR TRANSFERRED TO ANY OTHER PERSON, AGENCY OR PARTY WITHOUT THE STUDENT'S CONSENT.</small>					
<small>Date _____ Director of Admissions and Registrar</small>					

20110808-02 20:47 Dick Fw: "545 vs. 300,000,000 People"

[Original source of email unknown. —SteveB]

Charlie Reese's Final Column

This is very interesting, but somewhat dubious. According to Snopes.com, it is an updating of a column first appearing in 1985 (when Ronald Reagan was President). It was updated again when Bill Clinton was President in 1995 and presumably again when G.W. Bush was President.

Charlie Reese retired from the *Sentinel* in 2001. There is an article praising the advent of Obama over G.W. Bush who "was a blunderer" dated Aug., 2008. That would be his final column as far as I can see.

This version, however, presumably dates from 2008 and has appeared only on the web. It's unclear whether it was modified by Charlie Reese. In any case, the whole business about taxes at the end is not from Reese's column.

As to my opinion, Reese is perfectly right, it is the Congress, not the President, who make the laws and set the budget. Thus the deficits are the creation of the Congress (although the President does have to sign the laws that Congress writes). As for taxes, they are the price we pay for the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force, federal, state and local roads, bridges, and courts, measures protecting our pharmaceuticals, meats and vegetables, federal, state and local parklands, regulating banks, regulating business in general, industry, state, interstate and international trade, Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security and a host of other things.

If you find taxes a burden and don't want to pay them, say goodbye to the Army, Navy, Marines, etc. your police and firemen, decent roads, honest business dealings, honest banks, health care and Social Security at 65, and say hello to potholes, deteriorating bridges, e coli at every restaurant and super market, etc. etc. It's a pain, but I'll pay, thank you.

And while I'm thanking folks, thanks to those geniuses in the Republican Party who decided to link raising the debt ceiling to cutting the deficit and nearly brought this country to default. Yes, they got their way, and now the nation's credit has been devalued, the market is tanking (so long 401-K!) and the reputation of the United States of America has been so badly damaged that it will take years to rectify it. A perfect example of what Reese was talking about. Ideologues and idiots in Congress (another term for Tea Party and Grover Norquist Republicans) have certainly fixed things for us. And the morons will blame Obama.

Charley Reese has been a journalist for 49 years. He is retiring and this is HIS LAST COLUMN for the *Orlando Sentinel*. Be sure to read the Tax List at the end.

This is about as clear and easy to understand as it can be. The article below is completely neutral, neither anti-republican or democrat. Charlie Reese, a retired reporter for the Orlando Sentinel, has hit the nail directly on the head, defining clearly who it is that in the final analysis must assume responsibility for the judgments made that impact each one of us every day. It's a short but good read. Worth the time. Worth remembering!

"545 vs. 300,000,000 People" by Charlie Reese, *Orlando Sentinel*

Apr. 26, 2011 (<http://stocksthatpay.com/?p=19394>)

Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them.

Have you ever wondered, if both the Democrats and the Republicans are against deficits, WHY do we have deficits?

Have you ever wondered, if all the politicians are against inflation and high taxes, WHY do we have inflation and high taxes?

You and I don't propose a federal budget. The President does.

You and I don't have the Constitutional authority to vote on appropriations. The House of Representatives does.

You and I don't write the tax code, Congress does.

You and I don't set fiscal policy, Congress does.

You and I don't control monetary policy, the Federal Reserve Bank does.

One hundred senators, 435 congressmen, one President, and nine Supreme Court justices equates to 545 human beings out of the 300 million are directly, legally, morally, and individually responsible for the domestic problems that plague this country.

I excluded the members of the Federal Reserve Board because that problem was created by the Congress. In 1913, Congress delegated its Constitutional duty to provide a sound currency to a federally chartered, but private, central bank.

I excluded all the special interests and lobbyists for a sound reason. They have no legal authority. They have no ability to coerce a senator, a congressman, or a President to do one cotton-picking thing.

I don't care if they offer a politician \$1 million dollars in cash. The politician has the power to accept or reject it. No matter what the lobbyist promises, it is the legislator's responsibility to determine how he votes.

Those 545 human beings spend much of their energy convincing you that what they did is not their fault. They cooperate in this common con regardless of party.

What separates a politician from a normal human being is an excessive amount of gall. No normal human being would have the gall of a Speaker, who stood up and criticized the President for creating deficits. The President can only propose a budget. He cannot force the Congress to accept it.

The Constitution, which is the supreme law of the land, gives sole responsibility to the House of Representatives for originating and approving appropriations and taxes. Who is the speaker of the House now? He is the leader of the majority party. He and fellow House members, not the President, can approve any budget they want. If the President vetoes it, they can pass it over his veto if they agree to.

It seems inconceivable to me that a nation of 300 million cannot replace 545 people who stand convicted—by present facts—of incompetence and irresponsibility. I can't think of a single domestic problem that is not traceable directly to those 545 people. When you fully grasp the plain truth that 545 people exercise the power of the federal government, then it must follow that what exists is what they want to exist.

If the tax code is unfair, it's because they want it unfair.

If the budget is in the red, it's because they want it in the red.

If the Army & Marines are in Iraq and Afghanistan it's because they want them in Iraq and Afghanistan ...

If they do not receive social security but are on an elite retirement plan not available to the people, it's because they want it that way.

There are no insoluble government problems.

Do not let these 545 people shift the blame to bureaucrats, whom they hire and whose jobs they can abolish; to lobbyists, whose gifts and advice they can reject; to regulators, to whom they give the power to regulate and from whom they can take this power. Above all, do not let them con you into the belief that there exists disembodied mystical forces like "the economy," "inflation," or "politics" that prevent them from doing what they take an oath to do.

Those 545 people, and they alone, are responsible.

They and they alone have the power.

They and they alone should be held accountable by the people who are their bosses.

Provided the voters have the gumption to manage their own employees...

We should vote all of them out of office and clean up their mess! What you do with this article now that you have read it... is up to you.

This might be funny if it weren't so true. Be sure to read all the way to the end:

Tax his land, tax his bed, tax the table at which he's fed.
Tax his tractor, tax his mule, teach him taxes are the rule.
Tax his work, tax his pay, he works for peanuts anyway!
Tax his cow, tax his goat, tax his pants, tax his coat.
Tax his ties, tax his shirt, tax his work, tax his dirt. tax his tobacco, tax his drink,
Tax him if he tries to think.
Tax his cigars, tax his beers, if he cries tax his tears, tax his car, tax his gas,

Find other ways to tax his a*s.
Tax all he has then let him know
That you won't be done 'till he has no dough.
When he screams and hollers, then tax him some more.
Tax him till he's good and sore.
Then tax his coffin, tax his grave, tax the sod in which he's laid.
Put these words upon his tomb, 'Taxes drove me to my doom...'
When he's gone, do not relax. It's time to apply the inheritance tax.

Accounts Receivable Tax, Building Permit Tax, CDL license Tax, Cigarette Tax, Corporate Income Tax, Dog License Tax, Excise Taxes, Federal Income Tax, Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA), Fishing License Tax, Food License Tax, Fuel Permit Tax, Gasoline Tax (currently 44.75 cents per gallon), Gross Receipts Tax, Hunting License Tax, Inheritance Tax, Inventory Tax, IRS Interest Charges IRS Penalties (tax on top of tax), Liquor Tax, Luxury Taxes, Marriage License Tax, Medicare Tax, Personal Property Tax, Property Tax, Real Estate Tax, Service Charge Tax, Social Security Tax, Road Usage Tax, Recreational Vehicle Tax, Sales Tax, School Tax, State Income Tax, State Unemployment Tax (SUTA), Telephone Federal Excise Tax, Telephone Federal Universal Service Fee Tax, Telephone Federal, State and Local Surcharge Taxes, Telephone Minimum Usage Surcharge Tax, Telephone Recurring and Nonrecurring Charges Tax, Telephone State and Local Tax, Telephone Usage Charge Tax, Utility Taxes, Vehicle License Registration Tax, Vehicle Sales Tax, Watercraft Registration Tax, Well Permit Tax, Workers Compensation Tax...

STILL THINK THIS IS FUNNY?

Not one of these taxes existed 100 years ago, & our nation was the most prosperous in the world. We had absolutely no national debt, had the largest middle class in the world, and Mom, if agreed, stayed home to raise the kids.

What in the heck happened? Can you spell 'politicians?'

I hope this goes around the U.S. at least 545 times!!! YOU can help it get there!!! GO AHEAD. . . BE AN AMERICAN!!!

20110808-03	20:49	Dick	Video: Marco Rubio vs. John Kerry on the Debt Crisis
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Check out the video here:

<http://hotair.com/archives/2011/07/30/video-marco-rubio-vs-john-kerry-on-the-debt-crisis/>

It's long (15 min.) but worth it.

20110808-04	21:05	GaryF	"Poll: Will Anti-Congress Mood Cause Another 'Wave' Election?"
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"Poll: Will Anti-Congress Mood Cause Another 'Wave' Election?" by Susan Page, USA TODAY

Aug. 8, 2011, (http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/2011-08-08-poll-gallup-election_n.htm)

(WASHINGTON) A USA TODAY/Gallup Poll finds signs that another "wave" election with the potential to dramatically change the capital's political makeup may be building.

President Obama speaks at the State Dining Room of the White House Monday. Only 24% of those surveyed say most members of Congress deserve re-election, the lowest standing since Gallup began asking the question in 1991. Fifty-six percent say their own representative deserves another term, similar to responses just before tumultuous elections in 1994, 2006 and 2010 that changed control of the House or Senate.

And a majority of Americans, 51%, say President Obama doesn't deserve reelection; 47% say he does. In another question, Obama bests an unnamed Republican presidential candidate by 48%-45%, though he remains below the 50% threshold.

"Is there substantial dissatisfaction with the direction of the country, with the way things are, with the people in charge? The answer to that is yes," says Stuart Rothenberg, editor and publisher of the non-partisan Rothenberg Political Report,

who has written about the prospect of a fourth "wave" election in a row. Less clear is whether voters are ready to blame one party or the other.

"These numbers don't say Obama is going to lose," he adds, "but as long as you have a majority of people who are disapproving and you have the president sitting only in the upper 40s, he's still at great risk."

The 2012 election is 15 months away, which is plenty of time for the political landscape to shift. About this time before the 1994 election, when Democrats lost control of the House and Senate, dismay with Congress already was set. But a year before the 2006 election, when Democrats regained control of both houses, incumbents still had somewhat higher support.

If congressional elections were held today, Americans by 49%-45% say they would vote for the Democratic candidate over the Republican. In the GOP contest to challenge Obama, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney continues to lead the field, at 24%, but a potential candidate who hasn't entered the race yet is in second place.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who has been exploring a presidential campaign, ranks behind Romney at 17%. Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann, who like Perry appeals to many Tea Party supporters and Christian evangelicals, is fourth at 13%. In third place is Texas Rep. Ron Paul, at 14%. No other Republican candidate breaks into double digits. Former House speaker Newt Gingrich is at 7%, businessman Herman Cain at 4%, former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty at 3%, former Utah governor Jon Huntsman at 2%, and former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum at 1%.

Perry narrowly leads Romney among Tea Party supporters, 23% to 22%. Bachmann claims 19% of members of the Tea Party movement.

The poll of 1,521 adults, taken Thursday through Sunday, has a margin of error of +/- 4 percentage points.

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20110810-01	09:40	Phil	Fw: Social Security 'Information'
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[Source of original email unknown, but most of it has been debunked by Snopes.com.
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/socialsecurity/changes.asp>. —SteveB]

PLEASE READ THIS. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE REALIZE WHAT HAS HAPPENED AND IS GOING TO HAPPEN & TO AND BE PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL.

History Lesson On Your Social Security Card

Franklin Roosevelt, a Democrat, introduced the Social Security (FICA) Program. He promised:

1. That participation in the program would be completely voluntary.

No longer voluntary.

2. That the participants would only have to pay 1% of the first \$1,400 of their annual incomes into the program.

Now 7.65% on the first \$90,000.

3. That the money the participants elected to put into the program would be deductible from their income for tax purposes each year.

No longer tax deductible.

4. That the money the participants put into the independent 'Trust Fund' rather than into the general operating fund, and therefore, would only be used to fund the Social Security Retirement Program, and no other government program.

Under Johnson the money was moved to the general fund and spent.

5. That the annuity payments to the retirees would never be taxed as income.

Under Clinton & Gore up to 85% of your social security can be taxed.

Since many of us have paid into FICA for years and are now receiving a social security check every month — and then finding that we are getting taxed on 85% of the money we paid to the federal government to 'put away' — you may be interested in the following:

Q: Which political party took Social Security from the independent 'Trust Fund' and put it into the general fund so that Congress could spend it?

A: It was Lyndon Johnson and the democratically controlled House and Senate.

Q: Which political party eliminated the income tax deduction for Social Security (FICA) withholding?

A: The Democratic party.

Q: Which political party started taxing Social Security annuities?

A: The Democratic party, with Al Gore casting the 'tie-breaking' deciding vote as President of the Senate, while he was Vice President of the U.S.

AND MY FAVORITE:

Q: Which political party decided to start giving annuity payments to immigrants?

A: That's right! Jimmy Carter and the Democratic Party. Immigrants moved into this country, and at age 65, began to receive Social Security payments! The Democratic party gave these payments to them, even though they never paid a dime into it!

Then, after violating the original contract (FICA), the Democrats turn around and tell you that the Republicans want to take your Social Security away! And the worst part about it is uninformed citizens believe it! If enough people receive this, maybe a seed of awareness will be planted and maybe changes will evolve. Maybe not, some Democrats are awfully sure of what isn't so.

But it's worth a try. How many people can YOU send this to? Actions speak louder than bumper stickers. I love my country, it's myself serving corrupt government I hate.

20110816-01 08:37 SteveB Rick Perry

I feel so much better now, knowing that Gov. Perry is there to solve our problems, just like he did those of Texas. Jeez!

He is just one terrific guy, isn't he?

Too bad for him (besides his other problems) that he's from Bush's state, and so similar on the surface. I don't think anybody wants to be reminded of any of that again.

God, I hope the big lies of this "cowboy" don't work. Amen.

Thank you, God. And, Jesus, this isn't really one of your people, is it? If he is, he sure interprets your teachings strangely, doesn't he? P.S.—Did you really tell him to run, God? But...that would mean...

20110816-02 11:53 Mark Fw: Quote from Cicero
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Learning curve...

[Source of original email unknown.—SteveB]

"The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance."—Cicero, 55 BC

SO WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED IN THE LAST 2065 YEARS????? EVIDENTLY, NOTHING!

20110823-01	12:20	Dennis	from <i>The Empire at Dusk</i> & "Has Our Bloated Security Budget Made Us Safer?"
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Poorer and less safe...

The U.S. military is no longer interested in protecting America. It is interested in feeding itself.

And there's another view of the zombie pentagon. [Second article.—SteveB]

excerpt from *The Empire at Dusk*, by Stephen Glain, *Foreign Policy*

Aug. 16, 2011, (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/16/the_empire_at_dusk)

(American pundits decry the onset of sharp defense cuts, but the Pentagon can't even account for \$1 trillion in its own spending. Isn't it time to rein in the beast?)

In its scramble to avoid another legislative gang war over the nation's debt ceiling, Washington is preparing to shake down the Defense Department in the name of deficit reduction. While budget cutters preoccupy themselves with line-item expenditures, they overlook the Pentagon's biggest cost center: empire. The burden of global hegemony, the commitment to project force across every strategic waterway, air corridor, and land bridge, has exhausted the U.S. military and will be even harder to sustain as budget cuts force strategists and logisticians to do more with less. A national discussion about the logic of maintaining huge forward bases, to say nothing of their financial and human costs, is long overdue.

American relations with the world, and increasingly America's security policy at home, have become thoroughly and all but irreparably militarized. The culprits are not the nation's military leaders, though they can be aggressive and cunning interagency operators, but civilian elites who have seen to it that the nation is engaged in a self-perpetuating cycle of low-grade conflict. They have been hiding in plain sight, hyping threats and exaggerating the capabilities and resources of adversaries. They have convinced a plurality of citizens that their best guarantee of security is not peace but war, and they did so with the help of a supine or complicit Congress. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. presidents have ordered troops into battle 22 times, compared with 14 times during the Cold War. Not once did they appeal to lawmakers for a declaration of war.

In ancient times, empires exacted tribute from their dependencies. In the age of American hegemony, just the opposite is the case. In return for the global commons, the United States bankrolls a geopolitical welfare state that allows some of its largest beneficiaries to neglect their basic responsibilities as sovereign states and allies...

The price of this deception is vast. If the Pentagon were a corporation, it would be the largest in the world as well as the most sloppily run. Its procurement budget, at a staggering \$107 billion in 2010, expands even as the number of deployable warplanes, combat ships, and troops diminishes. To entice lawmakers into approving costly weapons programs, the Pentagon dangles the prospect of jobs in the states and districts of key lawmakers, a costly way of manufacturing but an astute political maneuver. Waste, inefficiency, and political patronage, no stranger to military legislative affairs, get more lavish by the year. In Apr., 2008, the Government Accountability Office found that 95 major Pentagon projects exceeded their original budgets by a total of nearly \$300 billion. A year later, it concluded that nothing had changed. In 2009, lawmakers larded the Pentagon's annual budget proposal with nearly \$5 billion in programs and weapons it did not request. With arms factories scattered like feeding troughs nationwide, America has become the equivalent of a company town with the Pentagon as primary employer. The making of war, or at least the preparation for

it, has become a money center, a business line—a racket, as Marine general and Medal of Honor recipient Smedley Butler put it nearly a century ago.

"Has Our Bloated Security Budget Made Us Safer?" by Chris Hellman, *Salon*

Aug. 16, 2011, (http://www.salon.com/2011/08/16/national_security_budget_safety/)

(We've spent nearly \$8 trillion on counterterrorism since 9/11. It's time to assess the results.)

The killing of Osama Bin Laden did not put cuts in national security spending on the table, but the debt-ceiling debate finally did. And mild as those projected cuts might have been, last week, newly minted Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta was already digging in his heels and decrying the modest potential cost-cutting plans as a "doomsday mechanism" for the military. Pentagon allies on Capitol Hill were similarly raising the alarm as they moved forward with this year's even larger military budget.

None of this should surprise you. As with all addictions, once you're hooked on massive military spending, it's hard to think realistically or ask the obvious questions.

So, at a moment when discussion about cutting military spending is actually on the rise for the first time in years, let me offer some little known basics about the spending spree this country has been on since Sept. 11, 2001, and raise just a few simple questions about what all that money has actually bought Americans. Consider this my contribution to a future 12-step program for national security sobriety.

Let's start with the three basic post-9/11 numbers that Washington's addicts need to know:

1. \$5.9 trillion: That's the sum of taxpayer dollars that's gone into the Pentagon's annual "base budget," from 2000 to today. Note that the base budget includes nuclear weapons activities, even though they are overseen by the Department of Energy, but—and this is crucial—not the cost of our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nonetheless, even without those war costs, the Pentagon budget managed to grow from \$302.9 billion in 2000, to \$545.1 billion in 2011. That's a dollar increase of \$242.2 billion or an 80 percent jump (\$163.6 billion and 44 percent if you adjust for inflation). It's enough to make your head swim, and we're barely started.

2. \$1.36 trillion: That's the total cost of the Iraq and Afghan wars by this Sept. 30th, the end of the current fiscal year, including all moneys spent for those wars by the Pentagon, the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and other federal agencies. Of this, \$869 billion will have been for Iraq, \$487.6 billion for Afghanistan.

Add up our first two key national security spending numbers and you're already at \$7.2 trillion since the Sept. 11th attacks. And even that staggering figure doesn't catch the full extent of Washington spending in these years. So onward to our third number:

3. \$636 billion: Most people usually ignore this part of the national security budget and we seldom see any figures for it, but it's the amount, adjusted for inflation, that the U.S. government has spent so far on "homeland security." This isn't an easy figure to arrive at because homeland-security funding flows through literally dozens of federal agencies and not just the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). A mere \$16 billion was requested for homeland security in 2001. For 2012, the figure is \$71.6 billion, only \$37 billion of which will go through DHS. A substantial part, \$18.1 billion, will be funneled through—don't be surprised—the Department of Defense, while other agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services (\$4.6 billion) and the Department of Justice (\$4.1 billion) pick up the slack.

Add those three figures together and you're at the edge of \$8 trillion in national security spending for the last decade-plus and perhaps wondering where the nearest group for compulsive-spending addiction meets....

Are we safer?

An Apr., 2010 Heritage Foundation report, "30 Terrorist Plots Foiled: How the System Worked," looked at known incidents where terrorist attacks were actually thwarted and so provides some guidance. The Heritage experts wrote, "Since Sept. 11, 2001, at least 30 planned terrorist attacks have been foiled, all but two of them prevented by law enforcement. The

two notable exceptions are the passengers and flight attendants who subdued the 'shoe bomber' in 2001 and the 'underwear bomber' on Christmas Day in 2009."

In other words, in the vast majority of cases, the plots we know about were broken up by "law enforcement" or civilians, in no way aided by the \$7.2 trillion that was invested in the military—or in many cases even the \$636 billion that went into homeland security. And while most of those cases involved federal authorities, at least three were stopped by local law enforcement action.

In truth, given the current lack of assessment tools, it's virtually impossible for outsiders—and probably insiders as well—to evaluate the effectiveness of this country's many security-related programs. And this stymies our ability to properly determine the allocation of federal resources on the basis of program efficiency and the relative levels of the threats addressed.

So here's one final question that just about no one asks:

Could we be less safe?

It's possible that all that funding, especially the moneys that have gone into our various wars and conflicts, our secret drone campaigns and "black sites," our various forays into Pakistan, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and other places may actually have made us less safe. Certainly, they have exacerbated existing tensions and created new ones, eroded our standing in some of the most volatile regions of the world, resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the misery of many more, and made Iraq and Afghanistan, among other places, potential recruiting and training grounds for future generations of insurgents and terrorists. Does anything remain of the international goodwill toward our country that was the one positive legacy of the infamous attacks of Sept. 11, 2001? Unlikely.

(Chris Hellman is a Senior Research Analyst at the National Priorities Project)

20110823-02	16:13	Jim	Fw: Now You're Mad?
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Now you're mad... What did you say then?

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!!!! Folks: Let's keep a copy in our pockets for quick reference when speaking with, and sending out emails to friends on the other side.

Now, since Obama's regime, all of a sudden, folks have gotten mad, and want to take America Back...BACK TO WHAT/WHERE is my question????

After the 8 Years of the Bush/Cheney Disaster, Now You Get Mad?

You didn't get mad when the Supreme Court stopped a legal recount and appointed a President.

You didn't get mad when Cheney allowed Energy company officials to dictate Energy policy and push us to invade Iraq.

You didn't get mad when a covert CIA operative got outed.

You didn't get mad when the Patriot Act got passed.

You didn't get mad when we illegally invaded a country that posed no threat to us.

You didn't get mad when we spent over \$800 billion (and counting) on said illegal war.

You didn't get mad when Bush borrowed more money from foreign sources than the previous 42 Presidents combined.

You didn't get mad when over \$10 billion in cash just disappeared in Iraq. [I think they have since found it. —SteveB]

You didn't get mad when you found out we were torturing people.

You didn't get mad when Bush embraced trade and outsourcing policies that shipped 6 million American jobs out of the country.

You didn't get mad when the government was illegally wiretapping Americans.

You didn't get mad when we didn't catch Bin Laden.

You didn't get mad when Bush rang up 10 trillion dollars in combined budget and current account deficits.

You didn't get mad when you saw the horrible conditions at Walter Reed.

You didn't get mad when we let a major U.S. city, New Orleans, drown.

You didn't get mad when we gave people who had more money than they could spend, the filthy rich, over \$1 trillion in tax breaks.

You didn't get mad with the worst 8 years of job creations in several decades.

You didn't get mad when over 200,000 U.S. Citizens lost their lives because they had no health insurance.

You didn't get mad when lack of oversight and regulations from the Bush Administration caused U.S. Citizens to lose \$12 trillion in investments, retirement, and home values.

You finally got mad when a black man was elected President and decided that people in America deserved the right to see a doctor if they are sick. Yes, illegal wars, lies, corruption, torture, job losses by the millions, stealing your tax dollars to make the rich richer, and the worst economic disaster since 1929 are all okay with you, but helping fellow Americans who are sick...

Oh, Hell No!! Now you're mad!!!!

20110823-03	18:09	Jim	"Why Is President Obama So Anxious to Cut Social Security?"
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Below is an article forwarded by Senator Bernie Sanders that deserves to be read in full instead of spreading false information about Social Security and scaring the sh*t out of people, especially about some proposals to start cutting benefits because of their supposed impact on the deficit because it does not contribute to that. but here is the encouraging part. I highlighted some things in bold most people don't know in the quote.

The determination to cut Social Security is especially strange given the finances of the program. Under the law, Social Security is financed by the designated Social Security tax. It does not contribute to the deficit, since **the law prohibits payments from being made if there is not money in the Social Security trust fund. That means that if the trust fund were drained, rather than contributing to the deficit, full benefits would not be paid.**

And the date where this could be an issue is still relatively distant. The Congressional Budget Office just released new projections showing that the Social Security **trust fund is fully solvent through the year 2038. Even after that date, the program would have enough money to pay 81 percent of scheduled benefits for the rest of the century.** The folks who say that there will be nothing there for our children or grandchildren are just making it up or repeating the nonsense promulgated by some political hack.

Furthermore, this **gap is not hard to close.** Currently, the tax on the wages subject to the tax is capped at \$107,000. The upward redistribution of income over the last three decades has caused a large share of wage income to escape taxation, as more money ends up in the pocket of CEOs and Wall Street types than ordinary workers. **If all wage income were subject to the tax, then it would leave Social Security fully solvent for its 75-year planning period.**

We could also go the route of increasing the tax on ordinary workers to cover the shortfall. After all, part of the story is that people are enjoying longer retirements, even if the wealthy have benefited much more from the increase in longevity than the typical worker. By 2040, average wages are projected to be 45 percent higher than today, adjusting for the impact of inflation. If just 5 percent of the projected wage growth over this period was used to finance Social Security, the program would be fully solvent for the rest of the century.

Again, the whole story is worth reading.

"Why Is President Obama So Anxious to Cut Social Security?" by Dean Baker, Huffington Post

Aug. 23, 2011, (<http://sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/news/?id=5c3160f6-e9fa-41af-a63c-9895a793fbfc>)

On his tour of the Midwest last week, President Obama again indicated his interest in cutting Social Security. He repeated a proposal that his administration first put forward in the debt ceiling negotiations: he wants to cut the annual cost of living adjustment by 0.3 percentage points.

This cut may sound small, but it adds up over time. A person in their 70s who had been getting benefits for ten years would see a reduction of 3 percent. By the time they were in their 80s, the cut would be 6 percent. And if they lived into their 90s, their benefit would be more than 9 percent lower as a result of President Obama's proposal.

For an average retiree who can expect to get benefits for 20 years, President Obama's plan would cut their lifetime Social Security benefits by roughly 3 percent. By comparison, his much feared tax increases on the rich would reduce the after-tax income of someone earning \$300,000 a year by just 0.5 percent. In this case, a beneficiary who will be mostly dependent on their Social Security income in retirement will take about six times as large a hit relative to their income under President Obama's plan to cut Social Security than a couple earning \$300,000 would from his plan to raise their taxes.

This cut to Social Security seems especially inappropriate since the near retirees who would feel the full impact of this cut have just seen most of their wealth destroyed by the collapse of the housing bubble and the plunge in the stock market. The typical near retiree (ages 55-64) has just \$170,000 in net wealth, including the equity in their home.

This means that if they used every last penny in their 401(k) and other savings, they would have just about enough money to pay off the mortgage on a typical home. This would leave them 100 percent dependent on Social Security for their income. And of course, half of near retirees have less than this amount, meaning that they will not even be able to pay off the mortgage on a typical home. But apparently President Obama feels that these people need to make greater sacrifices.

The determination to cut Social Security is especially strange given the finances of the program. Under the law, Social Security is financed by the designated Social Security tax. It does not contribute to the deficit, since the law prohibits payments from being made if there is not money in the Social Security trust fund. That means that if the trust fund were drained, rather than contributing to the deficit, full benefits would not be paid.

And the date where this could be an issue is still relatively distant. The Congressional Budget Office just released new projections showing that the Social Security trust fund is fully solvent through the year 2038. Even after that date, the program would have enough money to pay 81 percent of scheduled benefits for the rest of the century. The folks who say that there will be nothing there for our children or grandchildren are just making it up or repeating the nonsense promulgated by some political hack.

Furthermore, this gap is not hard to close. Currently, the tax on the wages subject to the tax is capped at \$107,000. The upward redistribution of income over the last three decades has caused a large share of wage income to escape taxation, as more money ends up in the pocket of CEOs and Wall Street types than ordinary workers. If all wage income were subject to the tax, then it would leave Social Security fully solvent for its 75-year planning period.

We could also go the route of increasing the tax on ordinary workers to cover the shortfall. After all, part of the story is that people are enjoying longer retirements, even if the wealthy have benefited much more from the increase in longevity than the typical worker. By 2040, average wages are projected to be 45 percent higher than today, adjusting for the impact of inflation. If just 5 percent of the projected wage growth over this period was used to finance Social Security, the program would be fully solvent for the rest of the century.

Most people would be surprised to know that 5 percent of the wage growth projected over the next three decades would be sufficient to keep Social Security solvent. After all, there is a well-funded and well-connected industry of people spreading disaster stories about Social Security and its massive deficit.

Many people will be taken aback by the idea of "projected wage growth," after all most workers' wages have been stagnant or falling in recent years. This is true. The projections refer to average wages, which had been rising, at least until the recession.

This brings up the fundamental point. The country has been and is getting richer. The reason that most people do not feel better off is that most of the money has gone to those at the top. Part of the reason is that they have been distracted by nonsense about the crushing burden of Social Security, so they have not paid attention to the policies that put more money in the pockets of the rich. Unfortunately, at the moment, President Obama seems to be working with the distracters.

20110824-01	11:28	Bob	"Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"
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This woman let the cat out of the bag This clip is showing Congresswoman Maxine Waters discussing drilling for new oil reserves. She explains, in a slip of the tongue, what this whole thing is all about.

NOW... What can you say? (notice the reaction of the people around her) This clip is about as blatant as a Liberal can get. What she said was The Truth, accidentally, and notice that when she realized what she revealed to the public and the news media, it stopped her dead in her own tracks for a long moment. BUT it was too late.

Just hope the country wakes up in the 2012 elections!!!!... She leaked out: Obama's Scary Agenda. I don't think it is possible for Too Many Americans to see this video, and I hope you feel the same way. Please send it Far and Wide across America , and send it along as fast as possible. Thanks...

"Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!" by Joe Alberero, SBY News, (with video)

Aug. 23, 2011, (<http://sbynews.blogspot.com/2009/10/whoops-she-let-it-all-slip-out.html>)

Ok people. If you don't want to believe the right wing, crazy, religious conservatives, then believe what the far left liberals and the Obama administration are saying. Maxine Waters, the "liberals liberal", says it in just a few sentences. This clip is showing Congresswoman Maxine Waters discussing drilling for new oil reserves. She explains, in a slip of the tongue, what this whole administration's agenda is all about. Whoops! She let it all slip out!...What can you say...notice the people around her. This clip is about as blatant as a liberal can get.

What she said was accidental, and notice that it stopped her dead in her tracks for a long moment, but it was too late. Looks like the TRUTH came out of her mouth! Notice the lady to the left trying to control her reaction to what Maxine Walters just said.

Hard to lie about it when you see it for yourself in her own words. Just hope the country wakes up in the 2010 elections. Scary agenda. Watch the attached video and you will see the intent of Obama's grand plan and it is not pretty. But luckily, the "congress person" shifted her mouth into gear before engaging her brain and let the cat out of the bag.. I do not think it is possible for too many people to see this video and I hope you feel the same way and will help send it along as fast as possible. They certainly didn't waste any time. Look at GM, Chrysler and the banks. Obama's Socialist government is already taking over. Now, if they can just push Obamacare through, they will have complete control of America!

20110825-01	13:14	SteveG	"Big Government? Obama Has 273,000 Fewer Federal Employees Than Reagan"
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Interesting numbers. Democrats are more conservative than Republicans...?

Aug. 24, 2011, (<http://www.politicususa.com/en/big-government-obama-reagan>)

Every single Republican today talks about being a Reagan conservative. This is a conservative that believes in small government, reducing federal spending and ultimately runs a lean and mean government. They talk about this stuff in campaigns, but in practice they failed miserably.

In fact HISTORICALLY, it is has been Democratic presidents who have reduced the size of the federal government. The Republicans have lied to the people so much that I believe the current crop somehow BELIEVES the history as they have been told, rather than researching the facts for themselves. This may be a stretch, but I am trying to give them the benefit of the doubt.

According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which tracks the number of employees per year, the data shows that the "conservatives" for small government are really just big government conservatives. I know that is an oxymoron, but numbers don't lie.

Let's start with President Carter. On Dec. 31st 1976 (Not Carter's term yet), total nonmilitary personnel was 2,883,000. By Dec. 31st 1980 the end of his term (minus a month), the total in nonmilitary personnel was 2,875,000. Federal government nonmilitary employees shrunk by 8,000 employees under Carter.

On Jan. 21st, 1981, President Reagan started with 2,875,000 nonmilitary federal employees. By the end of Reagan's terms the total number of nonmilitary federal employees was 3,113,000. That is an INCREASE of 238,000

Let's move on to President George H.W. Bush. On Jan. 20th, 1989, total federal nonmilitary employment was 3,113,000 by the end of his only term, President George H.W. Bush had 3,083,000 federal nonmilitary employees on the books. That is a REDUCTION of 30,000 employees.

President Bill Clinton came into office with 3,083,000 and by the END of his TWO TERMS he reduced the number of Federal employees to 2,703,000. That is a reduction of 380,000 federal employees.

Now finally, President George W. Bush came into office with 2,703,000 nonmilitary employees and by the time his terms were through, the total nonmilitary federal employees on the books were 2,756,000, which is an INCREASE of 53,000 employees.

The small government, lean and mean political party, seems to be the Democratic Party. President Clinton reduced the size of the federal government's nonmilitary employees by OVER 10%.

The "so called" small government President Reagan INCREASED the nonmilitary size of government by almost 10%.

In fact, Democratic president Bill Clinton reduced the size of the federal government employee size to PRE- REAGAN levels. Clinton left office with 2,703,000 and Reagan started his term in 1981 with 2,875,000

The Reagan conservatives, in fact the entire GOP TODAY are trying to frame President Obama as a big government liberal but again, the numbers don't lie.

By the end of 2010, the United States STILL has less employees on the books than we did back in 1980 even though the population has grown from 226,545,805 to approximately 330,000,000 in 2010.

TOTAL NONMILITARY EMPLOYEES IN 1980 — 2,875,000
TOTAL NONMILITARY EMPLOYEES IN 2010 — 2,840,000

We have 35,000 less nonmilitary employees under President Obama than we had 30 years ago.

So it comes to mind that those who claim to be Reagan small government conservatives and blame Democrats for growing government are either lying to the American people or are themselves willfully ignorant.

AMAZING WORD GAME

Did you know that, the words "race car" spelled backwards still spells "race car"?

And that "eat" is the only word that, if you take the first letter and move it to the last, spells its own past tense, "ate"?

And if you rearrange the letters in "Tea Party Republicans," and add just a few more letters, it spells: "Shut the f*ck up you free-loading, progress-blocking, benefit-grabbing, resource-sucking, violent hypocrites, and deal with the fact that you nearly wrecked the country under Bush and that our President is black, so get over it."

Isn't that interesting?

20110826-02	16:58	Jim	Electile Dysfunction
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A new word is born...

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

I knew someone would find a name for our election process for this year.

Electile Dysfunction: The inability to become aroused over any of the choices for President put forth by either party in the 2012 election year.

20110826-03	19:06	Dennis	"The Cost of Corporate Communism"
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"The Cost of Corporate Communism" by Dylan Ratigan, Huffington Post

Aug. 23, 2011, (<http://www.dylanratigan.com/2011/08/23/the-cost-of-corporate-communism/>)

Lately I have been using the phrase "Corporate Communism" on my television show. I think it is an especially fitting term when discussing the current landscape in both our banking and health care systems.

As Americans, I believe we reject communism because it historically has allowed a tiny group of people to consolidate complete control over national resources (including people), in the process stifling competition, freedom and choice. It leaves its citizens stagnating under the perpetual broken systems with no natural motivation to innovate, improve services or reduce costs.

Lack of choice, lazy, unresponsive customer service, a culture of exploitation and a small powerbase formed by cronyism and nepotism are the hallmarks of a communist system that steals from its citizenry and a major reason why America spent half a century fighting a Cold War with the U.S.S.R.

And yet today we find ourselves as a country in two distinctly different categories: those who are forced to compete tooth and nail each day to provide value to society in return for income for ourselves and our families and those who would instead use our lawmaking apparatus to help themselves to our tax money and/or to protect themselves from true competition.

If you allow weak, outdated players to take control of the government and change the rules so they are protected from the natural competition and reward systems that have created so many innovations in our country, you not only steal from the citizens on behalf of the least worthy but you also doom them by trapping the capital that would be used to generate new innovation and, most tangibly in our current situation, jobs.

We are losing the opportunity cost of all the great ideas that should be coming from the proper deployment of that \$23.7 trillion in capital. Everything from innovation in medical delivery systems to accessible space travel, free energy to the driverless car; all of these things may never come to bear because those powerful individuals who have failed, been

passed over by technological advancements, innovation and flat-out smarts, have commandeered our government to unfairly sustain their wealth and power.

Unfortunately, they use our wealth and laws not only to benefit their outdated, failed companies, but also spend a small pittance of their ill-gotten gains lobbying and favor-trading with politicians so the government will continue to protect them from competition and their well-deserved failure.

The massive spike in unemployment, the utter destruction of retirement wealth, the collapse in the value of our homes, the worst recession since the Great Depression have all resulted directly from the abdication of proper government.

Even with all that — the only changes that have been made, have been made to prop up and hide the massive flaws on behalf of those who perpetuated them. Still utterly nothing has been done to disclose the flaws in this system, improve it or rebuild it. Only true rules-based capitalism ensures constant adaptation and implementation of the latest and best practices for a given business, as those businesses that don't adapt fail, and those who deploy the latest innovations to their customers benefit, prosper.

The concept of communism is rightly reviled in this country for the simple reason that it is blind to human nature, allowing a small group of individuals near-total control, while sticking everyone else with the same cr*ppy systems — and the bill. America spent countless lives and half a century fighting against this system of government. So why are we standing for it now?

20110826-04 19:45 Dennis "Why Conservatives Should Be Heard at the Enough Rally"

Conservatives who have had enough are invited....

"Why Conservatives Should Be Heard at the Enough Rally" by Shane Brooks, Wake Up & Stand Up

Aug. 26, 2011, (<http://www.coffeepartyusa.com/brooks-enough-2>)

20110829-01 15:03 Mark Fw: Congressmen Should Wear Uniforms Like NASCAR Drivers

[Source of original email unknown, but I like it! —SteveB]

"I think Congressmen should wear uniforms like NASCAR drivers so we could identify their corporate sponsors."

Found this at the end of a conservative rant against Obamacare.....so I deleted the major part and gleaned this! This is probably something we can all get behind.....

20110830-01 17:50 Jim "Three Charts to Email to Your Right-Wing Brother-In-Law"

Here are some charts that more people need to see concerning the actual numbers and not Fox spin about deficits, jobs, and presidents. Feel free to pass them along to people who prefer facts to rhetoric.

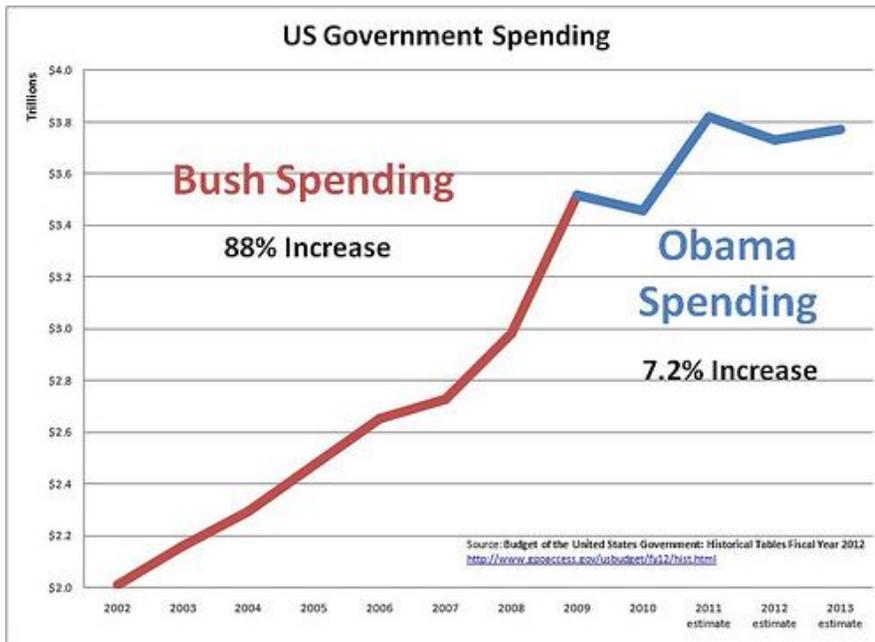
"Three Charts to Email to Your Right-Wing Brother-In-Law" by Dave Johnson, NationOfChange

Aug. 30, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/three-charts-email-your-right-wing-brother-law-1314715523>)

Problem: Your right-wing brother-in-law is plugged into the FOX-Limbaugh lie machine, and keeps sending you emails about "Obama spending" and "Obama deficits" and how the "Stimulus" just made things worse.

Solution: Here are three "reality-based" charts to send to him. These charts show what actually happened.

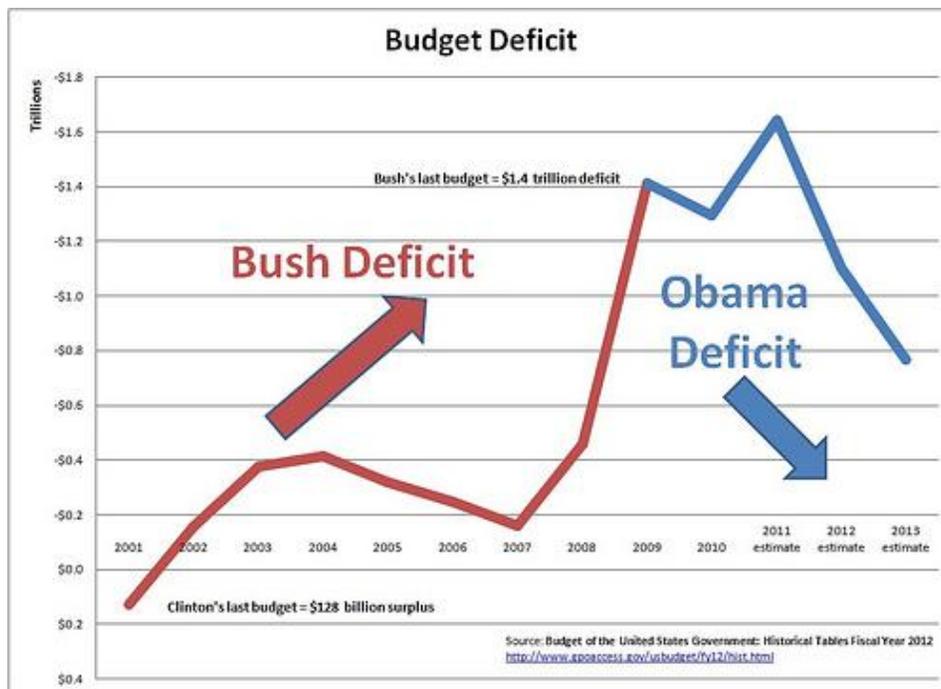
Spending



Government spending increased dramatically under Bush. It has not increased much under Obama. Note that this chart does not reflect any spending cuts resulting from deficit-cutting deals.

Most news sources are funded by corporations and investors. Their goal is to drive people to advertisers while pushing the corporate agenda. NationOfChange is a 501(c)3 organization funded almost 100% from its readers—you! Our only accountability is to the public.

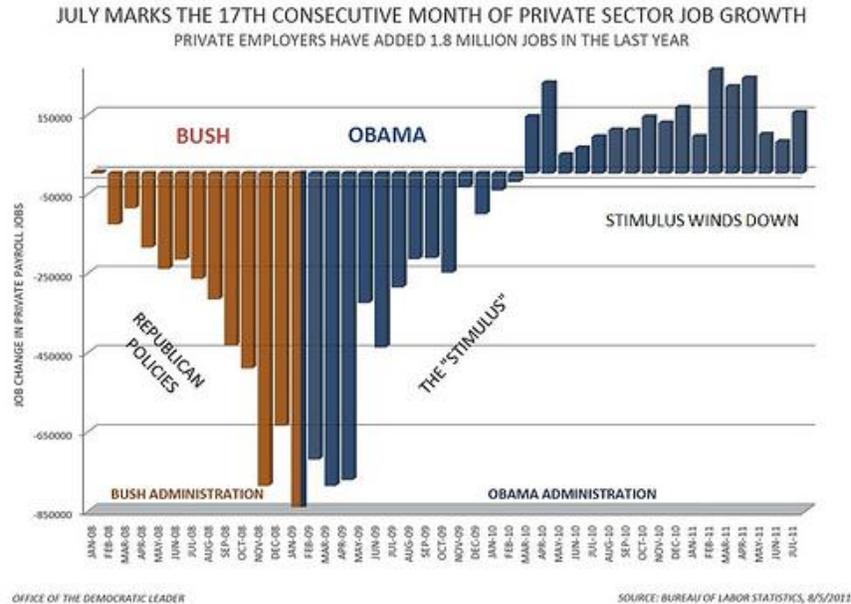
Deficits



Notes, this chart includes Clinton's last budget year for comparison.

The numbers in these two charts come from Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables Fiscal Year 2012. They are just the amounts that the government spent and borrowed, period. Anyone can go look them up. People who claim that Obama "tripled the deficit" are either misled or are trying to mislead.

The Stimulus and Jobs



In this chart, the RED lines on the left side—the ones that keep doing DOWN—show what happened to jobs under the policies of Bush and the Republicans. We were losing lots and lots of jobs every month, and it was getting worse and worse. The BLUE lines—the ones that just go UP—show what happened to jobs when the stimulus was in effect. We stopped losing jobs and started gaining jobs, and it was getting better and better. The leveling off on the right side of the chart shows what happened as the stimulus started to wind down: job creation leveled off at too low a level.

It looks a lot like the stimulus reversed what was going on before the stimulus.

Conclusion: THE STIMULUS WORKED, BUT WAS NOT ENOUGH!

More False Things

These are just three of the false things that everyone "knows." Some others are (click through): Obama bailed out the banks, businesses will hire if they get tax cuts, health care reform cost \$1 trillion, "Social Security is a Ponzi Scheme or is "going broke", government spending "takes money out of the economy."

Why This Matters

These things really matter. We all want to fix the terrible problems the country has. But it is so important to know just what the problems are before you decide how to fix them. Otherwise, the things you do to try to solve those problems might just make them worse. If you get tricked into thinking that Obama has made things worse and that we should go back to what we were doing before Obama—tax cuts for the rich, giving giant corporations and Wall Street everything they want—when those are the things that caused the problems in the first place, then we will be in real trouble.

20110905-01	12:06	Jim	"Humankind's Most Ambitious Science Projects"
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Big science...

Here is a neat page with ten of the biggest ongoing science projects trying to find out about earth and space. There are links for each one for the curious.

Some lofty price tags for both construction and operations. Most with multination funding.

"Humankind's Most Ambitious Science Projects" by Gregory Mone, Brooke Borel, Katherine Bagley and Jennifer Abbasi, PopSci/MSNBC

July 16, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44363598/ns/technology_and_science-future_of_technology/t/humankinds-most-ambitious-science-projects/?gt1=43001)

(Large, expensive instruments are helping man discover whole new worlds.)

To improve our view of a vast and complex universe, scientists are creating increasingly ambitious new tools. The work is not easy. Truly big science requires decades of expensive commitment from multiple nations. But the instruments that result are nearly as awe-inspiring as the new worlds they help us discover.

Like anything that's large and involved, big science is not easy to measure. For our rankings, we took into account four objective factors: the construction costs above all, but also the operating budget, the size of the staff and the physical size of the project itself. Even these were hard to compare on an apples-to-apples basis, though, so we also used a tiering system.

Then we added in three subjective factors, weighing them more heavily to reflect their relative importance: the project's scientific utility, its utility to the average person ("what will it do for me") and the always essential "wow" factor.

10. The Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider

The RHIC, on Long Island, N.Y., smashes gold ions into each other, producing temperatures of up to 7.2 trillion degrees Fahrenheit — so hot that protons and neutrons melt. Why? So scientists can re-create the conditions that existed during the first millionth of a second after the Big Bang.

Read more about the RHIC's time-machine-like abilities here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects>

9. Neptune, the world's largest undersea observatory

A massive ocean observatory network that includes some 530 miles of cable and 130 instruments with 400 sensors, is designed to provide the first large-scale, around-the-clock monitoring of an ocean system. That includes animal life, geology, and chemistry.

Read more about Neptune's battery of networked instruments here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=1>.

8. The Very Large Array

One of the largest telescopes in the world, the VLA has 27 individual radio antennas, each of which is 82 feet in diameter. It needs that kind of muscle to create detailed images of celestial objects as close as the moon — or as far away as the edge of the observable universe.

Read more about the VLA's use to you — like predicting an asteroid strike — here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=2>.

7. The National Ignition Facility

The world's largest and most energetic laser, Livermore, CA's National Ignition Facility stands 10 stories tall and generates 2 million joules of ultraviolet energy. It's capable of reaching temperatures and pressures similar to those found in the cores of stars.

Read more about this ridiculously powerful laser here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=3>

6. Juno, a Jupiter orbiter on a suicide mission

Juno will enter Jupiter's orbit in 2016, but before then, it'll reach speeds of 134,000 miles per hour — one of the fastest human-made objects ever built. It'll make 33 passes around the planet, then commit suicide by diving directly into it, burning up like a meteor in Jupiter's hydrogen atmosphere.

Read more about Juno's noble mission here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=4>.

5. Advanced Light Source

A Berkeley, CA-based particle accelerator, the ALS beams photons a million times as bright as the sun's surface into proteins, battery electrodes, superconductors and other materials to reveal their atomic, molecular and electronic properties. It's helped show the 3-D structure of RNA polymerase enzymes and described the dust from a comet's tail.

Read more about this "ultimate microscope" here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=5>.

4. The International Space Station

What's left to say about the ISS? It costs \$2 billion a year and thousands of employees just to keep the lights on, and has supported the longest continuous human presence in space: 11 years this November. It's not just space fun, either: research on the ISS has led to the discovery of salmonella vaccines, too.

Read more about this long-lasting space presence here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=6>.

3. Spallation Neutron Source

A sort of ludicrously powerful movie camera for molecules, the SNS has a particle accelerator that shoots bursts (to the tune of 2 quadrillion neutrons per pulse) into a chamber to reflect off of materials. But it doesn't create explosions; the SNS is better suited to figure out how to create objects like, say, better batteries.

Read more about this neutron accelerator here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=7>.

2. The Large Hadron Collider

Ah, of course, the world's largest particle collider. It costs about \$1 billion annually to run, more than 10,000 employees from 60 continents toil on it, and the whole thing is designed to unlock the fundamental physical secrets of the universe. Lately: Does the Higgs boson, commonly referred to as the "God Particle," actually exist?

Read more about the LHC and its quest to learn about dark matter and the origin of the universe here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=8>.

1. The Earthscope

The Earthscope is the world's largest science project. Designed to track North America's geological evolution, this observatory records data over 3.8 million square miles, amassing 67 terabytes of data. It analyzes seismic slips in the San Andreas fault, sure, but also the plume of magma underneath Yellowstone and much, much more.

Read more about the telescope that peers into the heart of our planet here:

<http://www.popsci.com/science/gallery/2011-07/big-science-universes-ten-most-epic-projects?image=9>.

20110906-01	18:06	Dennis	How to Think About Taxes
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Posted by Jack on Truthout, Sept. 6, 2011: [No link found, Jan. 20, 2012. —SteveB]

To my friends on the right who frequent this blog, before you get your shorts in a knot (and I know you will), let me make a peace keeping proposal.

Here's an idea that serves me well and it may help you with your thinking. When I pay my \$20,000 plus in annual income taxes, I just imagine it is my annual contribution to free and reduced lunches for needy kids, food stamps and unemployment benefits for folks who are un or underemployed, disaster relief, Headstart, college loans and grants for needy kids with promise, supplements to the interstate highway system and other infrastructure needs, the national parks, care for the elderly and disabled, veterans' benefits, government agencies and programs to protect the health of our citizens and insure environmental preservation...

You get the idea. This helps me sleep at night. You see, I think THESE are the things that make this nation great. They're things you hate, but I cherish. So, I don't sweat over my tax bill when I realize MY taxes are being used for those things. Remember now, it's my money, and I'm not asking you to spend one cent of yours on any of these endeavors.

Now because, in my mind, I can pretend that's where my money is going, it leaves you to cover paying for subsidies for oil, pharmaceutical and financial corporations, offsetting the tax breaks for each other or maybe just your rich buddies, offsetting the major corporations who pay little to no taxes, costs of waging and perpetuating unjust wars and wars of aggression, increasing the nuclear arsenal, building more prisons, enforcing warrantless law enforcement efforts, completing the wall between us and Mexico, and so on. You know the things you apparently cherish about this country.

After all, you folks attribute our greatness to being able to kick everyone else's a*s. You'll sleep better just knowing every penny of your taxes went into those pots, and are not being wasted caring for the people of the country or the environment. Both of which are evidently dispensable in your mind. Just say to yourself, "I have to pay my taxes, because that Jack is p*ssing away his money on unimportant things." Believe me, in my mind, I won't even try to share the cost of your stuff. I offer this deal to you so you can feel better.

Hey, it's win-win.

20110907-01	10:31	Phil	Re: How to Think About Taxes
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Dear Dennis,

OK, I see your point. But here is an idea that serves me well. Let's take out all the waste that goes to the bureaucracy. We don't need thousands of government employees to handle and "skim off" these funds that the feds are receiving before funneling less back to our communities. I have absolutely no problem helping pay for reduced lunches for kids in my community, donating food to those that are unemployed or underemployed through no fault of their own WHO ARE TRULY SEEKING EMPLOYMENT. I have cared for elderly parents and would gladly donate sometimes to people in my community that I know need a helping hand. I have routinely donated for disaster relief. I think veterans' benefits should be increased multi-fold but don't think we need someone collecting a salary of a million dollars to oversee the handling of funds.

Now, because in my mind, I know that my tax dollars are being wasted by almost every governmental program; I know funds that should be used for infrastructure improvements, colleges and universities that act like big business rather than concentrating on providing students with a quality education, elected officials that squander my taxes on "pet" projects that benefit the very few instead of the many etc. etc. therefore, I just have a real problem sending money I earn to Washington for anything other than to protect our freedoms. Look at what the feds did to the Social Security fund, Medicare. Can there be any possible way that it could have been mishandled in a worse way.

So while you may sleep well at night with your misdirected logic, I seethe with the thought of what could be if the scoundrels that are misappropriating our tax dollars would handle our money in an honest and responsible manner. I do not hate the things you cherish, I loathe the fact that government is not more successful in achieving the goals you desire.

20110907-02	15:51	Pam	Re: How to Think About Taxes
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This juxtaposition of views is most interesting. There is obviously intelligence and good will on both sides, but I'd like to suggest a way of thinking about the differences. Too much waste (no statistics), suspicion that the un- or under-

employed really prefer living on the dole to gainful employment, higher education becoming corporatized (good point), too much "pork" going to self-interested Congressmen (perhaps a point to be taken seriously), paranoia that the government is out to eliminate our freedom (maybe so, but what are those freedoms exactly? Freedom is such a huge term as to be meaningless). Weigh all that against help for the needy, money for the infrastructure, environmental protection, workplace safety, defense, etc. etc.

There are those who distrust government, as if it were a monolith out to pick our pockets and "nanny" us to death. And there are those who distrust big business (corporations making huge profits) and the financial industry (under-regulated for too long, as we can all see as our portfolios shrink). Just as there are responsible corporations (Whole Foods, for example) and honest bankers, so too there are government agencies that are under-funded but still trying to fulfill their mandates. We all recognize the urgent need for jobs. I have several (well educated) friends who have been looking for full-time work for up to three years. None of them enjoys the position they're in, believe me.

We have descended into a blame game that no one is going to win, not when it relies on snappy quips, bogus information, and fear-mongering on the one hand and platitudes and wishy-washiness on the other.

The debates are a joke, and I find them too painful to watch. Fine rhetoric, no matter how sincerely delivered, will not get the job done. What we need are sound analyses of verifiable facts and reasoned arguments as to why one course of action is better than another. Forget whether it's a liberal or a conservative who's working to convince you. Identity politics are a red herring. Will Obama's jobs bill help the economy and the unemployed? Then let's go for it. If small-business and corporate investment offer the best solutions, then let's support that. I don't care who delivers my mail, so long as it comes consistently and on time. If a single-payer health care system will deliver better care to more people, then let's not get hysterical and call it socialism. "Socialism" is another word like "freedom." Most people throw those terms around with little concern for what they actually mean. They are simply code words for one side or another and are useful mainly to inflame the audience.

What is working in other countries? We don't have to adopt everything Germany is doing, but couldn't we learn SOMETHING from them. Why is our medical system ranked tops when it comes to the latest, most expensive procedures and way down the list when it comes to infant mortality? Ask a Canadian or a Brit whether they'd rather have their own system or ours. Ask a pensioner if she'd rather not collect Social Security. Ask yourself how you can distance yourself from the suffering in our country and the world without recognizing that luck has a lot to do with your current comfort. Ask yourself whether ideas (ideology) are more important than people. And you might want to read Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon" before you answer that.

I'm sick of Mitt Romney apologizing for what is apparently a successful health care program in Massachusetts because it sounds "socialistic." I'm sick of hypocrites who blame the unemployed, care more about image than truth, and buy elections. It's no longer a matter of how many votes you get, but of how much money you can raise, because money buys votes. I am beyond sick of Congress.

Yes, I guess I am a liberal, because I'd rather look for solutions that help people than b*tch about how feckless everyone else is. I assume that government (which WE ELECTED) is our best option for assuring fairness, just as I expect business to care more about profit than about general social welfare. If the private sector can save us, then let's see some results. If it can't, then let's let government help us over the hurdle that has stopped us in our tracks. A bit more pragmatism and a lot less "philosophy" would do us all a world of good.

If you read this far, I thank you. I need to vent—as you can see.

20110907-03	16:45	Mary	Re: How to Think About Taxes
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Dear Dennis,

BUT, have you ever worked with welfare recipients? I have. Sad to say that many (sorry, no stats, but enough #s to be significant) ARE complacent and "prefer living on the dole to gainful employment. Much abuse there.

20110907-04	20:45	Mary	Re: How to Think About Taxes
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Dear Pam,

I'm not in the mood to vent, so I'll be brief. You make good points...BUT one point you made makes you as guilty as those you attack. I refer to "I have several (well educated) friends who have been looking for full time work for up to three years." None of them enjoys the position they're in, believe me." Yes, we all know people who are suffering from this economy and long for work commensurate with their education. BUT, have you ever worked with welfare recipients? I have. Sad to say that many (sorry, no stats, but enough #s to be significant) ARE complacent and "prefer living on the dole to gainful employment. Much abuse there.

That's all the "vent" I have.

20110908-01 11:51 Jim Fw: A Group of Baboons?

This political joke would apply to both our charming parties, I thought I would forward it for your enjoyment.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

The English language has some wonderfully anthropomorphic collective nouns for the various groups of animals.

We are all familiar with a Herd of cows, a Flock of chickens, a School of fish and a Gaggle of geese. However, less widely known is a Pride of lions, a Murder of crows (as well as their cousins the rooks and ravens), an Exaltation of doves and, presumably because they look so wise, a Parliament of owls. Now consider a group of Baboons. They are the loudest, most dangerous, most obnoxious, most viciously aggressive and least intelligent of all primates. And what is the proper collective noun for a group of baboons?

Believe it or not a Congress!

I guess that pretty much explains things.....!

20110908-02 11:22 Dennis Re: How to Think About Taxes

from Mary:

BUT, have you ever worked with welfare recipients? I have. Sad to say that many (sorry, no stats, but enough #s to be significant) ARE complacent and "prefer living on the dole to gainful employment. Much abuse there.

Dear Mary,

Yes, I too have worked with welfare recipients, both as a social worker in Detroit and later as a photographer for corporate and business publications, such as *Forbes* magazine. As a social worker I found that there were some "complacent" people on welfare in Detroit, many who had given up on finding employment after years of trying in a city with over 30% employment, and others who had minimal education and the discipline to hold a steady job, in resignation feeling that it just wasn't worth the effort.

In contrast to these poor welfare recipients in Detroit who lacked empowerment, the recipients I encountered as a photographer were highly empowered, employing numerous lobbyists and politicians in Washington to make sure their welfare benefits were bountiful and uninterrupted. These recipients regularly receive tax refunds (even while making millions in profits), enormous subsidies from taxpayer funds (which they progressively contribute less and less to), and apparently (as if they needed more incentives since they are currently sitting on piles of cash) even more tax concessions to be promised tonight from Washington to produce new jobs (even after they have spent years downsizing employees through automation and sending jobs abroad).

Yes, there is much abuse of the system of welfare in America. Socialism, in the unique form that exists in this country, certainly works much better for the rich (consider too, the bailout of the megabanks) than for the poor. Too bad some people are more than willing to overlook the massive abuses by rich recipients while obsessively scapegoating the poor ones.

20110909-01 13:22 Pam Re: How to Think About Taxes

Dear Mary,

Not sure I understand this. Are you saying some welfare recipients are rich and hire lobbyists? Somehow that doesn't compute. You make a good point though: downsizing (to increase efficiency or whatever) and shipping jobs overseas have not put Americans back to work. Republicans want to cut spending, but when you cut govt. spending, people get laid off, adding to the unemployment problem. What are we to do? Seriously. What?

20110911-01 09:00 SteveB Re: How to Think About Taxes

Dear Dennis et al.,

I know I'm a little slow in responding! It's really not that I have had to think about it or anything. It's just that, for a lazy, retired guy, I've been really busy.

I like the humorous idea in this email, but it seems that human nature makes us do the opposite. We love to get p*ssed about our taxes going to what we don't want and probably won't give that up. But the main point is well-taken: the Right seems to hate that it is possible for government to do any good, except to destroy (wars, arrests, wiretaps, walls). Government does do some good, despite at least 50 years of Republican efforts, night and day, to prevent it from doing so, and have, instead, attempted to pervert government into becoming some kind of self-serving cash cow.

Hence our current problems.

On other fronts...it's 9/11 ten years later. I feel so much safer! Let's do more of those Republican things we've done, so we can sink all the way down to Libya's level, or Syria's. I wonder which pattern our government would follow in such a circumstance? Egypt's or Syria's? My bet is that the U.S. government would be the most ruthless of all. Remember Kent State? And that was when times were good and only college students were protesting (fairly mildly)... No one ever went to jail for the murders, if I recall correctly, just as in Libya under Khadafi.

While I'm online...I might as well take this opportunity to fill in the gaps a little. Yes, we're enjoying winter in Bolivia. The weather has been wonderful, if a little hot at times. We're still looking around for just the right restaurant location, but we're being really picky and not really in a hurry, even though the business plan is all set. Meanwhile, I'm treasuring my leisure time and trying to get as much writing done as I can every day. That's my #1 priority right now. I'm also working on a little local business, with others, to produce spice cabinets that I've designed. There really aren't any good ones here, I saw a need, then came into contact with a partner that can help make it happen. I've also got more beef cattle growing up than I've ever had before, but my brother-in-law, Diego, handles all that work very efficiently.

Marci has taken a little (we hope) consulting project. She knows so many people here from years in the gas and oil industry that it's hard for her to avoid working, and it's lucrative enough and she's young enough that it's difficult to resist requests from old friends, but we're trying to keep it to a minimum so we have more time for other things. Saul is heading for Miami next week to spend a year working and getting ready to go back to college, probably in Florida, after that. Thanks to my friend, Rebeca, who's now studying in Japan, I'm now a legal Bolivian immigrant for the next year.

I'll try to get everybody updated on everything else in individual emails in the coming days.

Obama is a traitor to the cause. The Republicans should love him! They should even love Obamacare! It's really more of a Republican than a socialist deal. But...the Republicans still hate Obama because, let's face it, he's black and not a real Christian and maybe not even a real American (though that seems to have finally simmered down a little, at least temporarily).

20110911-02 09:29 SteveB Re: How to Think About Taxes

Dear Mary,

Good to hear from you! So your response to Pam's brilliant, thorough email is that we need to destroy the country because of alleged massive abuse in the welfare system? Sorry. The numbers don't bear this out.

PLEASE! LAZY BROWN AND BLACK PEOPLE ARE NOT OUR PROBLEM! Corrupt politicians and their rich friends are our problem. You don't see any of the rich without jobs! (haha, just kidding).

20110911-03 11:03 SteveB Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"

Dear Bob,

I don't think I'd spend much time worrying about any socialist plots (despite what the poor, dumb Congresswoman says)....the Democrats are too inept to accomplish any such thing!

Worry more about the fascist plots that have already sold out the American people to the rich and powerful. Why do you think we have illegal aliens instead of jobs, like we used to have? In whose interest is it to have low wages and a surplus of labor in the U.S.? Let me make it simple: the powerful companies or the powerless poor?

20110911-04 21:32 Bob Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"

Dear SteveB,

The Republicans have taught you to be afraid very well. I doubt you can look at anything without their guiding hand so that the rich can get richer and kill the American Dream.

20110912-01 06:00 SteveB Re: "Congresswoman Makes a Slip—Whoops!"

Dear Bob,

They have me scared alright! Especially that Rick Perry devil!

20110912-02 21:03 Dick Fw: Reportedly Dumb Traveling Congressmen

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says False. (<http://www.snopes.com/travel/trap/congress.asp>) —SteveB]

The idiots are running the asylum !!!!!!!

A DC airport ticket agent-must read! This is priceless funny stuff; but alas, is only a small indication of how much trouble our country is in. God Bless America! A DC airport ticket agent offers some examples of 'why' our country is in trouble:

1. I had a New Hampshire Congresswoman (Carol Shea-Porter) ask for an aisle seat so that her hair wouldn't get messed up by being near the window. (On an airplane!)
2. I got a call from a Kansas Congressman's (Moore) staffer (Howard Bauleke), who wanted to go to Capetown. I started to explain the length of the flight and the passport information, and then he interrupted me with, "I'm not trying to make you look stupid, but Capetown is in Massachusetts....."Without trying to make him look stupid, I calmly explained, "Cape Cod is in Massachusetts, Capetown is in Africa." His response—click.
3. A senior Vermont Congressman (Bernie Sanders) called, furious about a Florida package we did. I asked what was wrong with the vacation in Orlando. He said he was expecting an ocean-view room. I tried to explain that's not possible, since Orlando is in the middle of the state. He replied, "Don't lie to me, I looked on the map and Florida is a very thin state!" (OMG)
4. I got a call from a lawmaker's wife (Landra Reid) who asked, "Is it possible to see England from Canada?" I said, "No." She said, "But they look so close on the map." (OMG, again!)

5. An aide for a cabinet member (Janet Napolitano) once called and asked if he could rent a car in Dallas. I pulled up the reservation and noticed he had only a 1-hour layover in Dallas. When I asked him why he wanted to rent a car, he said, "I heard Dallas was a big airport, and we will need a car to drive between gates to save time." (Aghhhh)

6. An Illinois Congresswoman (Jan Schakowsky) called last week. She needed to know how it was possible that her flight from Detroit left at 8:30 a.m., and got to Chicago at 8:33 a.m. I explained that Michigan was an hour ahead of Illinois, but she couldn't understand the concept of time zones. Finally, I told her the plane went fast, and she bought that.

7. A New York lawmaker, (Jerrold Nadler) called and asked, "Do airlines put your physical description on your bag so they know whose luggage belongs to whom?" I said, "No, why do you ask?" He replied, "Well, when I checked in with the airline, they put a tag on my luggage that said (FAT), and I'm overweight. I think that's very rude!" After putting him on hold for a minute, while I looked into it. (I was dying laughing.), I came back and explained the city code for Fresno, Ca. is (FAT—Fresno Air Terminal), and the airline was just putting a destination tag on his luggage.

8. A Senator John Kerry aide (Lindsay Ross) called to inquire about a trip package to Hawaii. After going over all the cost info, she asked, "Would it be cheaper to fly to California and then take the train to Hawaii?"

9. I just got off the phone with a freshman Congressman, Bobby Bright from Alabama, who asked, "How do I know which plane to get on?" I asked him what exactly he meant, to which he replied, "I was told my flight number is 823, but none of these planes have that number on them."

10. Senator Dianne Feinstein called and said, "I need to fly to Pepsi-Cola, Florida. Do I have to get on one of those little computer planes?" I asked if she meant fly to Pensacola, FL on a commuter plane. She said, "Yeah, whatever, smarty!"

11. Mary Landrieu, La. Senator called and had a question about the documents she needed in order to fly to China. After a lengthy discussion about passports, I reminded her that she needed a visa. "Oh, no I don't. I've been to China many times and never had to have one of those." I double checked and sure enough, her stay required a visa. When I told her this she said, "Look, I've been to China four times and every time they have accepted my American Express!"

12. A New Jersey Congressman (John Adler) called to make reservations, "I want to go from Chicago to Rhino, New York." I was at a loss for words. Finally, I said, "Are you sure that's the name of the town?" "Yes, what flights do you have?" replied the man. After some searching, I came back with, "I'm sorry, sir, I've looked up every airport code in the country and can't find a "Rhino" anywhere." The man retorted, "Oh, don't be silly! Everyone knows where it is. Check your map!" So I scoured a map of the state of New York and finally offered, "You don't mean Buffalo, do you?" The reply? "Whatever! I knew it was a big animal."

Now you know why the Government is in the shape that it's in! Could anyone be this DUMB? YES, THEY WALK AMONG US, ARE IN POLITICS, AND THEY CONTINUE TO BREED.. I don't write it, I just offer it for your consideration. Like manure, you just gotta spread it around. [You're right. It is kinda like manure, since it's all lies. —SteveB]

20110913-01	08:21	SteveB	Re: Reportedly Dumb Traveling Congressmen
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Dear Dick,

God, I hope these aren't true!

20110913-02	20:39	Dick	Fw: Letter from an Airman About Military Pay
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[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says the letter is genuine. (<http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/qipay.asp>)—SteveB]

MILITARY PAY

If you get this more than once, feel honored that you know more than one person who supports our military and appreciates what they do. If you don't forward it, you don't deserve their sacrifice.

CINDY WILLIAMS was appointed by Obama as an Assistant Director for NATIONAL SECURITY in the Congressional Budget Office.

This is an Airman's response to Cindy Williams' editorial piece in the *Washington Times* [sic, *Post.*—SteveB] about MILITARY PAY. It should be printed in all newspapers across America.

Ms. Cindy William wrote a piece for the *Washington Times* [sic, *Post.*—SteveB] denouncing the pay raise(s) coming service members' way this year citing that she stated a 13% wage increase was more than they deserve.

A young airman from Hill AFB responds to her article below. He ought to get a bonus for this:

Ms. Williams:

I just had the pleasure of reading your column, "Our GI's earn enough" and I am a bit confused. Frankly, I'm wondering where this vaunted overpayment is going, because as far as I can tell, it disappears every month between DFAS (The Defense Finance and Accounting Service) and my bank account. Checking my latest earnings statement I see that I make \$1,117.80 before taxes per month. After taxes, I take home \$874.20. When I run that through the calculator, I come up with an annual salary of \$13,413.60 before taxes, and \$10,490.40 after.

I work in the Air Force Network Control Center where I am part of the team responsible for a 5,000 host computer network. I am involved with infrastructure segments, specifically with Cisco Systems equipment. A quick check under jobs for "Network Technicians" in the Washington , D.C. area reveals a position in my career field, requiring three years experience in my job. Amazingly, this job does NOT pay \$13,413.60 a year. No, this job is being offered at \$70,000 to \$80,000 per annum..... I'm sure you can draw the obvious conclusions.

Given the tenor of your column, I would assume that you NEVER had the pleasure of serving your country in her armed forces. Before you take it upon yourself to once more castigate congressional and DOD leadership for attempting to get the families in the military's lowest pay brackets off of WIC and food stamps, I suggest that you join a group of deploying soldiers headed for AFGHANISTAN ; I leave the choice of service branch up to you. Whatever choice you make though, opt for the SIX month rotation: it will guarantee you the longest possible time away from your family and friends, thus giving you full "deployment experience."

As your group prepares to board the plane, make sure to note the spouses and children who are saying good-bye to their loved ones. Also take care to note that several families are still unsure of how they'll be able to make ends meet while the primary breadwinner is gone. Obviously they've been squandering the "vast" piles of cash the government has been giving them.

Try to deploy over a major holiday; Christmas and Thanksgiving are perennial favorites.. And when you're actually over there, sitting in a foxhole, shivering against the cold desert night, and the flight sergeant tells you that there aren't enough people on shift to relieve you for chow, remember this: trade whatever MRE's (meal-ready-to-eat) you manage to get for the tuna noodle casserole or cheese tortellini, and add Tabasco to everything. This gives some flavor.

Talk to your loved ones as often as you are permitted; it won't be nearly long enough or often enough, but take what you can get and be thankful for it. You may have picked up on the fact that I disagree with most of the points you present in your open piece.

But, tomorrow from KABUL, I will defend to the death your right to say it.

You see, I am an American fighting man, a guarantor of your First Amendment right and every other right you cherish...On a daily basis, my brother and sister soldiers worldwide ensure that you and people like you can thumb your collective noses at us, all on a salary that is nothing short of pitiful and under conditions that would make most people cringe. We hemorrhage our best and brightest into the private sector because we can't offer the stability and pay of civilian companies.

And you, Ms. Williams, have the gall to say that we make more than we deserve?

A1C Michael Bragg, Hill AFB, AFNCC

IF YOU AGREE, PLEASE PASS THIS ALONG TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN.

20110914-01 11:08 Phil Why S&P Downgraded the U.S.

This puts it in a good perspective. Enjoy...

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Why S&P downgraded the U.S.—this puts it in perspective...

U.S. Tax revenue:	\$2,170,000,000,000
Fed budget:	\$3,820,000,000,000
New debt:	\$1,650,000,000,000
National debt:	\$14,271,000,000,000
Recent budget cuts:	\$38,500,000,000

Let's remove 8 zeros and pretend it's a household budget: [divided by 10,000,000. —SteveB]

Annual family income:	\$21,700
Money the family spent:	\$38,200
New debt on the credit card:	\$16,500
Outstanding balance on the credit card:	\$142,710
Total budget cuts:	\$385

Understand those deep cuts now?

20110914-02 13:57 Dennis Re: Why S&P Downgraded the U.S.

from Phil:

Annual family income: \$21,700

Dear Phil,

Here's the problem. People need a lot more family income to make it in the good U.S. of A. these days. No one can live like middle class Americans on a piddling third world salary.

20110914-03 21:05 Dick Fw: 1% Tax on All Bank Transactions—HR-4646

[Source of original email unknown. Sorry, Dick, but Snopes.com blew this out of the water!
<http://www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/debtfree.asp>. —SteveB]

Is this for real? Please pass on:

Watch for this AFTER November elections; remember this BEFORE you VOTE in case you think Obama's looking out for your best interest.

1% tax on all bank transactions (HR 4646)

This government just cannot think of enough ways to hurt the American people! This Bill must die FORWARD THIS TO EVERYONE YOU KNOW! NEW OBAMA TAX SLIPPED IN WHILE WE WERE ASLEEP.

Checked this on snopes, it's true! [see above,—SteveB] Check out HR 4646. (see below copied from Snopes) [which says it isn't at all as represented here. —SteveB]

President Obama's finance team is recommending a one percent (1%) transaction fee (TAX). Obama's plan is to sneak it in after the November elections to keep it under the radar.

This is a 1% tax on all transactions at any financial institution—banks, credit unions, savings and loans, etc. Any deposit you make, or even a transfer within your account, will have a 1% tax charged.

If your paycheck or your social security or whatever is direct deposit, it will get a 1% tax charged for the transaction.

If your paycheck is \$1000, then you will pay Obama \$10 just for the privilege of depositing your paycheck in your bank. Even if you hand carry your paycheck or any check into your bank for a deposit, 1% tax will be charged.

You receive a \$5,000 stock dividend from your broker, Obama takes \$50 just to allow you to deposit that check in the bank.

If you take \$1,000 cash to deposit at your bank, 1% tax will be charged.

Mind you, this is from the man who promised that, if you make under \$250,000 per year, you will not see on e penny of new tax. Keep your eyes and ears open, you will be amazed at what you learn about this guy's under-the-table moves to increase the number of ways you are taxed.

Oh, and by the way, you receive a refund from the IRS next year and you have it direct deposited or you walk in to deposit that check, you guessed it.. You will pay a 1% charge of that money just for putting it in your bank. Remember, any money, cash, check or whatever, no matter where it came from, you will pay a 1% fee if you put it in the bank. Some will say, oh well, it's just 1%. Are you kidding me? It's a 1% tax increase across the board. Remember, once the tax is there, they can also raise it at will. And if anyone protests, they will just say, "oh, that's not really a tax, it's a user fee"! Think this is no big deal? Go back and look at the transactions you made from last year's banking statements. Then add the total of all those transactions and deduct 1%.

Still think it's no big deal??? Do not let them do this to us Americans!!!

[20110916-01](#)

19:54

Dennis

excerpt from *Between Race and Reason: Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*

Interesting article with several good follow-up comments.....

excerpt from *Between Race and Reason: Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, by: Susan Searls Giroux, Stanford University Press

Sept. 16, 2011, (<http://www.truth-out.org/between-race-and-reason-anti-intellectualism-american-life/1314634662>)

In late Oct., 2008, just days before the U.S. presidential election, George Monbiot of London's *The Guardian*, caught perhaps in a mood of deepening anxiety and dread over the impending outcome, leveled an indictment against the American government and at least half of the electorate in the form of a question: "How did politics in the U.S. come to be dominated by people who make a virtue out of ignorance?" In a rather unkind primatological allusion, he invoked as evidence the eight-year reign of George W. Bush, the recent vogue of Sarah Palin—and before her, Dan Quayle, apparently to round out the VP wing of "gibbering numbskulls" past and present—as well as the "screaming ignoramuses" in attendance at Republican rallies who insisted that Barack Obama was both a Muslim and a terrorist.

"Like most people on my side of the Atlantic," he ventured, "I have for many years been mystified by American politics. The U.S. has the world's best universities and attracts the world's finest minds. It dominates in discoveries in science and medicine. Its wealth and power depend on the application of knowledge. Yet, uniquely among the developed nations

learning is a grave political disadvantage."¹ A troubling observation to be sure. How exactly does one make sense of, let alone respond to, such an astonishing contradiction, such an ungenerous play on the concept of American exceptionalism? There are, of course, a number of possibilities.

1. Denial: reduce the charge to a hiccup of European arrogance tinged with a bit of resentment.
2. Dismissal: declaim as cynical the blanket condemnation of ineptitude among government officials and the fools who elected them.
3. Deflection: assert that the election results—and the resounding defeat handed to the McCain-Palin campaign, which ran primarily on emotional appeals to fear and patriotic fervor—vindicate the good sense of the voters and render Monbiot's judgment too quick. It would be tempting to answer "
4. All of the above" and continue to bask in the warm afterglow of the Obama victory and the ensuing worldwide celebration that marked the end of the Bush era. But, alas, we are not saved.

Indeed the pre-election antics appeared in hindsight little more than an opening prelude to the "delirium," as *The Economist* termed it, of the summer of 2009 debates on health care; the furor over the president's "indoctrination" of school children; the growing momentum of the "birthers," unchecked by repeated proof against their claims; and other crazed conspiracy theorists who showed up at town hall meetings armed to the teeth, leaving many to wonder why the nation surrendered public debate over the most pressing political issues of our time (to say nothing of media coverage) to the most extreme and unstable elements of the far right.² Even the esteemed journalist Bill Moyers, deeply unsettled by current events, couldn't resist a bit of uncharacteristic sarcasm: "So here we are, wallowing in our dysfunction. Governed—if you listen to the rabble rousers—by a black nationalist from Kenya smuggled into the United States to kill Sarah Palin's baby."³ The peculiar degradation of these three fundamentals of a substantive democracy—informed and judicious political discourse, intelligence, and education—in contemporary American politics to which Monbiot and others refer has had a long and storied career, extending back to the early days of the republic. The subject was given unparalleled examination in Richard Hofstadter's Pulitzer-prize winning volume, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, published in 1963. It is important to note, however, that for Hofstadter anti-intellectuals are neither the "gibbering numbskulls" nor the "screaming ignoramuses" that Monbiot and a growing chorus of journalists, scholars, and others criticize. Rather, Hofstadter viewed them as a far more effective enemy to the educated mind and to a vibrant, democratic political culture, which requires for its very survival an abiding commitment on the part of its citizenry to critical thought, moral judgment, the capacity for self-reflection, and an acute awareness of self-limitation. Neither uneducated nor unintellectual, anti-intellectuals constitute the ranks of the "half-educated," men and women who are "deeply engaged with ideas, often obsessively engaged with this or that outworn or rejected idea."⁴

Hofstadter describes them as hardly indifferent or hostile to the life of the mind, but as "marginal intellectuals, would-be intellectuals, unfrocked or embittered intellectuals, the literate leaders of the semi-literate, full of seriousness and high purpose about the causes that bring them to the attention of the world."⁵ Indeed, he notes, even the most rigorous thinkers are not immune to anti-intellectual moments. Writing in the immediate aftermath of McCarthy era, he locates among the anti-intellectual vanguard the following: highly intelligent and articulate evangelical ministers; religious fundamentalists of various sorts; politicians who inflamed populist and nationalist sentiment (including, he notes, some of the shrewdest); businessmen and other self-appointed spokespersons for practicality, utilitarianism, and free enterprise; right-wing editors with strong intellectual pretensions; anti-Communist pundits; and for that matter, Communist leaders, who held intellectuals in high suspicion, if not contempt. What such a disparate assemblage of characters share is a kind of militancy fueled by a severe, fundamentalist morality; he calls them "one hundred per centers," who brook no ambiguities, doubts, equivocations, reservations, and certainly no criticism. Such rigidity they consider evidence of their own toughness and strength—as well as, revealingly, a testament to their masculinity.⁶

Following Hofstadter's logic into the present moment, we would add to these ranks latter-day market fundamentalists, such as Jim Cramer and other disciples of the brilliant and tragically myopic Milton Freedman, and their powerful and embittered friends in the conservative movement, such as the peerless Grover Norquist and Karl Rove, Bush's reputed brain; the intellectual denizens of highly partisan think tanks, from the American Heritage Institute to the Heritage, Olin, Schaffie, and Coors foundations, like Charles Murray; as well as their learned counterparts in the academy, like Lawrence Mead or Samuel Huntington; the various crusaders of the Christian right, like Pat Robertson, who called for the assassination of a world leader, and others who rail against science and the rights of women and gays such as Bill McCartney, the founder of the Promise Keepers; demagogic populists like Patrick Buchanan and Rush Limbaugh; jingoistic patriots inspired by Newt Gingrich and Tom DeLay; and the impassioned, often inflammatory anti-immigration and anti-terrorist politicians and media pundits, of whom there are far too many, such as Tom Tancredo, Thelma Drake, Bill

O'Reilly, Ann Coulter, Lou Dobbs, Glenn Beck. And we would acknowledge, as we do so, the continuing draw of masculinist posturing for both men and women. For nearly four decades, these "leaders of the semi-literate" have assisted in the transformation not only of all three branches of government but of the political culture of the nation as well, swaying the voting public through base appeals to our deepest insecurities and fears, most typically expressed and circulated through racially charged representational codes. In apocalyptic tones, they warned that "traditional American values" and "our American way of life" were on the brink of collapse as a result of some marauding horde—thugged-out young black men, welfare queens, overpopulating Latinos, illegal immigrants, radical Jihadists, or "gay married terrorists" (in economist Paul Krugman's satiric phrase). And most Americans went along for the ride. Even those who didn't buy the coded rhetoric (even as they enjoyed the privileges of a still-uneven playing field) complacently went about their lives, feasting on too-easy credit, flipping houses, or fixating on celebrity culture until all the consumer bubbles finally broke. Though the candidate who stood for change, for a restoration of democratic principle against a rising tide of fundamentalisms—market, military, religious—won the 2008 election by a respectable but not overwhelming margin, the legacy of the last forty years of conservative counterrevolution did not magically disappear after Inauguration Day.⁷

Nearly a half-century after it was written, Hofstadter's erudite volume remains essential reading for those troubled by the effects of anti-intellectualism, and the various fundamentalisms that inspire and inflame it, on democratic public life and political culture. In fact, his uncompromising analysis of the political climate in which Thomas Jefferson ran for president in the infamous 1800 election—an election that also signaled a revolutionary shift in the political direction of the nation—is particularly instructive in light of the 2008 campaign, which uncannily recapitulated many of the same themes. Jefferson was the first distinguished victim of a decisively anti-intellectual attack, and the assault on him (leveled principally by Federalist leaders and members of the established clergy) set a precedent for subsequent efforts to render an active, curious mind either trivial and ridiculous or evil and dangerous. The echoes of such efforts to sway the electorate on principles that violate reason, reflection, evidence, and judgment are heard to this day: intellect makes "men" timid and ineffectual; they are likely to vacillate rather than to act boldly in the face of crisis; their intellectual pursuits produce in general a suspicion of, or a hostility to, Christianity; and they are committed to abstract, radical, or even "foreign" ideas over the quintessential American values of God and country.

The capacity for reflective, creative, and critical thought, finely honed argumentation, and public persuasion—talents one might otherwise assume well recommend a candidate for the office of president—were transformed into the gravest of liabilities. Jefferson's critics assailed his philosophical training and literary talents, which they insisted made him unfit for practical tasks. Their eager acknowledgment of the elegance of his rhetorical style provided only further proof of the man's lack of political substance. Said one South Carolina congressman, William Loughton Smith:

The characteristic traits of a philosopher, when he turns politician, are, timidity, whimsicalness, and a disposition to reason from certain principles, and not from the true nature of man; a proneness to predicate all his measures on certain abstract theories, formed in the recess of his cabinet, and not on the existing state of things and circumstances; an inertness of mind, as applied to governmental policy, *a wavering of disposition when great and sudden emergencies demand promptness of decision and energy of action.*⁸

Thought, according to those suspicious of a critical and contemplative mind, inevitably got in the way of action. In addition to these offenses, Jefferson also stood accused of a lack of experience, particularly military experience—the very ingredient which had made his esteemed predecessor, George Washington, a patriot, a man of great character, and an effective, no-nonsense leader. Smith, contriving to portray Jefferson's astonishing and wide-ranging intellectual abilities as trivial and ridiculous, mocked his scientific interests and his inventiveness as "impaling butterflies and insects, and contriving turn-about chairs" adding that such merits "might entitle him to the Professorship of a college" but were utterly incompatible with the duties of the presidency and the command of the Western Army.⁹

Such charges should sound strangely familiar. Barack Obama's reflective capacities and rhetorical strengths have been frequently acknowledged by his opponents, who, interestingly enough, hailed from similar quarters: the religious right and Republican descendants of Federalist persuasion. But the praise, like that heaped on Jefferson, primarily served to underscore allegations of inexperience and unbridled idealism. Like its distant predecessor, the election of 2008 was framed as a choice between military experience and character—the strength of which seemed to rest on an ex-soldier's patriotic zeal and plain speech, on the one hand, and change—in the figure of a young cosmopolitan and former University of Chicago professor of law who represented new ideas, gifted oratory, and hope—on the other. Then, as now, when the bad news befalls the White House—whether by messenger on horseback or emergency phone call—at three o'clock in the morning, Americans are prompted to vote for a man of action, not intelligence, which is derided as inevitably naïve, "timid," "abstract," or "wavering." Whereas the former law professor was said to lack any military experience and have negligible foreign policy credentials, McCain emphasized his war record, his heroism, his endurance, as vouchsafed by his five-year imprisonment in a Viet Cong POW camp, and above all his patriotism.

Appeals to practicality and patriotism were not the only rhetorical weapons in the arsenal of Jefferson's opponents—or Obama's. Hofstadter regales his readers with various efforts to paint Jefferson as a dangerous scourge without faith or morals. His learning and speculation, it was said, made an atheist of Jefferson; he had not only challenged theologians about the age of the earth but opposed having school children read the Bible—vagaries that made him a threat to religion and society. Further proof of his alleged immorality was offered in a litany of accusations: that he was a coward during the Revolutionary War, that he started the French Revolution, that he harbored a secret ambition to become a dictator, another Bonaparte. And strikingly, though Hofstadter makes only a passing reference to the charge, the integrity of this white, patrician male was tainted by an association with race: it was asserted that he "kept a slave wench and sired mulattoes," a dishonor less to his wife than to his white blood—thus, according to the racial reasoning of the time, proof of moral depravity.

Obama was subject to similar demagogic efforts throughout the seemingly interminable two-year campaign cycle. While McCain played the role of the valiant soldier and patriot, Obama stood accused of "palling around with terrorists" like University of Illinois at Chicago professor Bill Ayers and other subversive intellectuals (a redundancy for conservatives).

Moreover, Obama's Christianity was called into question repeatedly with insinuations of his secret Muslim faith, as if the espousal of such doctrines were adequate grounds to disqualify him immediately from political office. Indeed, it was Sarah Palin's very religiosity—in addition to other perceived assets including her folksy demeanor, her status as mother of five, her fascination with guns, and not so implicitly her whiteness as mirrored in the clean, white snows of the Alaskan wilderness—that made this contemporary Annie Oakley such an appealing vice presidential pick for the McCain team. She embraced the very commitments and values of the Republicans' most stalwart constituency: the Christian right. In contrast, much was made of Obama's middle name, "Hussein," which was chanted over and over again at Republican rallies, betraying similar efforts to associate him with the dangerous Middle Eastern dictator, if not quite claiming, as in Jefferson's case, that he aspired to become a despot. (That accusation, of course, would come within Obama's first six months of office, when during the summer of 2009, angry constituents at town hall meetings would tout images of the president with a Hitler moustache or feature him on placards with Stalin, Mao, or Che Guevara.) Such charges performed a double duty for the Obama's critics, casting "Barack Hussein Obama" as not only a threat to all Christians, but beyond the pale of whiteness, both as a man of African descent and as an alleged Muslim, a category that increasingly carries both religious and ethno-racial "civilizational" implication.

Just as Jefferson's intellectual disposition, his sensibilities, his tastes were pilloried as "foreign," a clear precursor to contemporary tactics designed to generate fear toward those characterized as "not American," Barack Obama was consistently characterized as alien. Of Jefferson, one Federalist pamphleteer claimed: "It was in France, where he resided nearly seven years, and until the revolution had made some progress, that his disposition to theory, and his skepticism in religion, morals, and government, acquired full strength and vigor. Mr. Jefferson is known to be a theorist in politics, as well as in philosophy and morals. He is a philosophe in the modern French sense of the word."¹⁰

The anti-intellectual rejection of the candidate as a "theorist" and a "*philosophe*" anticipates accusations of anti-Americanism hurled at contemporary intellectuals, particularly those critical of the Bush administration, even as the charge ironically depicts thinking as a foreign, even subversive activity. Obama was not only educated in various regions of the world including Indonesia, Africa and the United States, but he was also of mixed-race heritage. Most definitely, it was implied, where not emphatically stated, he was "not one of us."¹¹ Of course, like Jefferson, Barack Obama did win the presidential election; but the rather shocking figure of the fifty-eight million (46 percent of the popular) votes cast for the McCain-Palin ticket, despite its many allegiances to the utterly corrupt and generally despised Bush administration, should give us pause. This brief engagement with the Jeffersonian legacy is all the more revealing for the decidedly ironic way in which Jefferson, and much of the iconography of the American Revolution, has been appropriated by the far right in post-election America—from "tea parties," to the incessant appearance of the Gladstone flag and other militia flags featuring rattlesnakes and often accompanied by the slogan, "Don't Tread on Me," to the "patriot movement" (and its various calls for revolution, succession, and state sovereignty), which has made Jefferson's quip that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of tyrants and patriots" its rallying cry.

Historically speaking, the suspicion of intellect has for centuries spawned a variety of anti-intellectual commitments—the fetishization of folksiness, the cult of efficiency and practicality, jingoistic patriotism, militarized masculinity, and religious fervor. Whereas in the era in which Hofstadter wrote it was still possible to equate mainstream intellectual culture with the culture of liberalism, this is no longer the case. The below-the-radar conservative counter-revolution begun in the late 1960s, coterminous with a highly visible repressive law-and-order crackdown on various civil rights and anti-war protesters, and eventually displaced the liberal hegemony of mid-century America, as its advocates exploited and intensified the anti-intellectualism of the culture. The consequence of this ascendancy has been a crisis of liberal ideals

and democratic values, of the very possibility of politics, which has generated a cottage industry of similarly themed tomes that commence where Hofstadter's probing analysis left off.

However, questions remain about whether the presumption that Obama's presidency commences an officially "post-racial" and "post-partisan" period of American politics will continue to hold true, providing yet another kind of dubious departure from reality and reason. To be sure the George W. Bush administration, if unsurpassed in the degree of its commitment to anti-intellectualism, was certainly not alone in its willingness to deceive and manipulate everyday "folks." Over the past century, there have been political leaders—Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Bill Clinton—who successfully tempered their intelligence, invoked a colloquial idiom, claimed an affinity for common values and tastes (Bill and his Big Mac attacks) and survived. Others who were less adept—Adlai Stevenson, Al Gore, John Kerry—simply perished, as their opponents effectively labeled them as too cerebral, too elite, if not also effete, for effective leadership. While it is true that on the campaign trail, Obama exemplified thoughtfulness and circumspection and spoke with eloquence and dignity, he also proved adept at staying connected with the everyday, playing hoops with his mates from high school the morning of the election, assuaging the fears of children who faced a daunting move with the promise of a puppy.

In the service of heightening such "exuberant identification" (as Judith Butler describes it) with Obama's leadership, a few items are missing from the presidential agenda altogether, and their absence weighs heavily against soaring hopes for genuine democratic renewal. Successive bailouts for financials and other industries have proven unhelpful for everyday citizens—and particularly citizens of color—facing alarming levels of unemployment, impoverishment, and home foreclosure. Yet Obama has chosen to abet the nation's collective refusal to discuss race and, more emphatically, racial injustice—his one speech on the subject notwithstanding.

Yet at no other time have we been more in need of a critically engaged, creative, and thoughtful citizenry who can face with courage and conviction the challenges—political, economic, ecological, spiritual—that we face both nationally and internationally. Obama is a product of this elite system and will not push against its interests, unless compelled by an informed and active citizenry. "Obama used hundreds of millions of dollars in campaign funds to appeal to and manipulate this illiteracy and irrationalism to his advantage," observes Hedges.¹² And indeed the electorate was invited to focus increasingly on the person of this potential leader—his eloquence, his gravity, his unflinching cool, even his jump shot—and a compelling personal narrative that simultaneously invoked the triumphalism of America's beloved immigration mythology and offered a redemptive conclusion to its most egregious racial sins. However, Hedges warns that "these forces will prove to be his most deadly nemesis once they collide with the awful reality that awaits us."¹³

I suspect Hedges is largely correct in his assessment. Yet we cannot accept that our capacity to think, our educational system, and with it American democracy itself, have reached a terminal stage. And it is because I reject these premises that I argue strongly for academics, administrators, teachers, intellectuals, and others to assume their responsibilities as educators who play a vital role in molding citizens who can actively and critically participate in democratic public life. Hedges is undoubtedly right about one thing. The electorate is fast headed on that collision course with the reality that the Bush administration sought and that it apparently managed to repress for so long. As Obama himself acknowledged in his Inauguration Day speech, few presidents have taken the oath of office under conditions quite so devastating.

Perhaps for this reason, ultimately, he has been compared to former presidents Abraham Lincoln, also a one-term senator from Illinois who confronted a nation ravaged by civil war; Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who led America through the Great Depression and Second World War; and John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the civil rights-era commander in chief who inspired America with his youthful idealism and his sense of hope. But it is also for this reason that I've gone even further back in American history and invoked the legacy of Thomas Jefferson, who also served in the country's highest office in turbulent times, who like Obama would lead the nation through the convulsions of revolutionary change. Jefferson witnessed a political revolution in France and then in the United States, and was able, as a result of those who fought and died for their country, for its ideals of life, liberty, and equality, to ascend to the position of president of a new nation divided in its search for the way forward. Moreover, he was to serve while Western nations were experiencing yet another, equally profound revolution in economic development; he was a plantation owner and adherent of an agrarian way of life that was about to give way to new forces of industrialization, which would transform the country in ways quite unknown and unimaginable. And there was the fact of slavery, America's original sin, about which he wrote most eloquently and ambivalently.

In order to meet all of these political, economic, and spiritual challenges, the nation's third president understood all too well the necessity of an educated citizenry. Having survived his own bitter and contentious political campaign, Jefferson had witnessed first-hand the nefarious and—as we have seen—cataclysmic danger that anti-intellectual, populist demagoguery poses for a democratic nation. Surely it was this complex set of conditions and experiences that inspired his

radical educational thought, for it was Jefferson who was one of the first to put forth a multi-tiered plan for free and universal public education as the primary means of safeguarding a young and fragile democratic nation. And it is this legacy that seems to me to offer the most important lessons for the Obama administration, and for those anxious to serve the country in its current state of multiple crises. For Jefferson, education was the primary means of producing the kind of critically informed and active citizenry necessary to both nurture and sustain a vibrant public sphere; he believed that democracy was the highest form of political organization for any nation because it provided the conditions for its citizens to grow both intellectually and morally through the exercise of these faculties. Consider this passage from Jefferson's moving preamble to the 1776 "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge," which bears the hallmark of his views on the relationship between education and public life:

Whereas certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that *the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large;* And whereas it is generally true that people will be happiest whose laws are best, and are best administered, and that laws will be wisely formed, and honestly administered, in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest.¹⁴

Jefferson made education central to his philosophical thought and political commitments; it proved the best means for both preserving the natural rights of citizens from all forms of tyranny and a means for enabling wise and honest self-government. Jefferson conceived of education as a preeminently political issue—and politics as a preeminently educational concern.

As Obama confronts the challenges of the wars he has inherited, an economy experiencing a shift as profound as the industrial revolution which displaced agrarianism as a way of life, the moral stain of a vast carceral empire both at home and abroad, as well as a citizenry riven by the divisive and demagogic rhetoric of four decades of conservative counterrevolution, the legacy of Jefferson, and his insistence on the preeminence of education, may well provide the way forward—and, too, a warning. I have attempted to argue that a (raceless) racist logic has shaped each element of these knotted crises—the "civilizational" war on terror as well as the nation's willingness to transform the welfare state into a neoliberal warfare state—and the ease with which it criminalized the social ills that issued from that pervasive and repressive shift. In fact, as early as 2001, ACLU director Graham Boyd noted that the United States was incarcerating African-American men at a rate approximately four times the rate of incarceration of black men in South Africa under apartheid. Worse still, we have managed to replicate—at least on a statistical level—the shame of chattel slavery in this country: The number of black men in prison has already equaled the number of men enslaved in 1820. [And] if current trends continue, only 15 years remain before the United States incarcerates as many African-American men as were forced into chattel bondage at slavery's peak, in 1860.¹⁵

Following Boyd's prediction, the ranks of the incarcerated have swollen from 2 million to 2.3 million in the ensuing eight years. We have moved from a time in which black Americans were legally defined as property, to one in which they have been granted 3/5 humanity. From sub-humanity, they rose to the ranks of second-class citizens, and once a full schedule of rights had been achieved equally "before the law," those rights and entitlements were dismantled along with the social state, which held the promise of their provision. In the fantasy world where "there is no such thing as society," there are now only dysfunctional men, women, and their families locked up or locked out of the American Dream. Still marked by the original sin of slavery, which we have not entirely repudiated, we now find ourselves in an era ominously reminiscent of that biblical season of plague, only this time it is not divine power striking down the first-born children of Pharaoh's kingdom because he refused to grant full freedom to all people, but rather the sovereign power of the state seizing every third son born black. Or perhaps we should push even further back in locating an apt metaphor for the present to ancient Babylon, to the building of that colossal tower of Babel, which eventually wrought divine destruction, condemning humanity to endless confused chatter and conflict. Whatever path of destruction Jefferson envisioned for a nation that refused to take heed of its own moral recklessness and injustice, we would do well to heed his warning. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, he wrote: "Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever."¹⁶ Averting catastrophe—the organizing theme of the second half of this book—will require a most arduous task for the nation's citizenry: a critical and consistent commitment to think and reflect, to act as citizens who are worthy of a democracy.

¹Monbiot, George. "How These Jibbering Numbskulls Came to Dominate Washington." *Guardian*, Oct. 28, 2008..

²Editor. "American Health Care: Keep It Honest." *Economist*, Aug. 20, 2009.

³Transcript. "Bill Moyers Journal", Sept. 4, 2009.

⁴Hofstadter, Richard. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (p. 21.). New York: Vintage, 1963.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid, 119.

⁷For a comprehensive analysis of these various fundamentalisms, see Hery A. Giroux's *Against the Terror of Neoliberalism: Politics Beyond the Age of Greed* (2008).

⁸Ibid., 147—48.

⁹Ibid., 149.

¹⁰On the blog accompanying the website accompanying his 2009 publication, *The Threat of Race*, David Goldberg pointed out the racially driven differences in the ways in which relative political newcomers Barack Obama and Sarah Palin were embraced by the electorate. He notes: "More than half the whites polled registered harsher senses of blacks than they did of whites. While 50 percent of white respondents at least sometimes have had sympathy for blacks, nearly half had never or rarely. Similarly, more than 30 percent of white respondents have never or rarely admired blacks. Nearly half the respondents characterized blacks as at least moderately violent, and 38 percent as lazy. Lest one think that generally stated racial prejudice does not necessarily translate into bias against a particular person, the study also revealed that 47 percent characterized Obama as 'inexperienced' while just 4 percent did McCain, 17 percent as 'un-American' and just 2 percent did McCain, and only 29 percent 'patriotic' while 61 percent did McCain. Just under 20 percent consider Obama's religion 'a reason not to vote for him,' perhaps a less surprising fact considering that 14 percent still think he is a Muslim."

¹¹Hedges, Chris. *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of the Spectacle* (p. 111.). New York: Nation Books, 2009.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Peterson, Merrill D. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (p. 215.), New York: Penguin, 1975.

¹⁴Boyd, Julian P. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. Volume 2: 1777 to 18 June 1779 (pp. 526—27). Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1950.

¹⁵Boyd, Graham. "The Drug War Is the New Jim Crow." NACLA Report on the Americas. July 31, 2001.

¹⁶Peterson, Merrill D. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (p. 215.), New York: Penguin, 1975.

20110918-01	17:07	Jim	"A Riddle That Brings Joy to Mega-Rich Hearts"
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The difference between you and the rich is not just that they have more money...

Here is a background article that you might want to read when you start hearing more Teapublican attacks on the idea that the rich can't afford to pay more taxes.

Republicans keep trying to frame taxes as stealing from the rich instead of the price we pay for civilization.

The tax code is so skewed in their favor....

"A Riddle That Brings Joy to Mega-Rich Hearts" by Sam Pizzigati, Nation of Change

Sept. 17, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/riddle-brings-joy-mega-rich-hearts-1316324803>)

The Census won't count it. The IRS won't tax it, at anywhere near full freight. What is it? It's enough, all by itself, to keep grand fortunes constantly soaring.

Can we start the century over?

Economically, new Census Bureau income stats released last week suggest, our 21st century so far rates as the worst century in American history. We are hurtling backwards — at an alarmingly rapid rate.

The typical American household income, \$53,164 in 2000 after adjusting for inflation, stood at just \$49,445 last year. Incomes for the typical working-age household — under 65 — have dropped over 10 percent since 2000.

The number of Americans living in poverty, meanwhile, is rising. In 2000, 11.3 percent of Americans rated as officially poor. Last year, 15.1 percent fit the poverty definition — under \$22,314 for a family of four — and almost half those in poverty, 44.3 percent, had incomes less than half the poverty threshold.

What about households at the other end of the income spectrum? The annual Census Bureau figures on incomes at our tippy top have never been particularly helpful. Census statisticians, to protect the confidentiality of the households they survey, “top code” income categories — at \$1.1 million.

We know, as a result, exactly how many American households made under \$10,000 last year or between \$50,000 and \$60,000. But we have no clue, from the annual Census figures, how many made over \$5, \$10, or \$20 million.

The even bigger shortcoming with the annual Census stats: The Census income survey doesn’t count “capital gains,” the profits from the sale of stocks, bonds, and other assets. Capital gains just happen to make up the single biggest category of income America’s super rich pull in every year.

In fact, as the Washington Post reminded us last week, capital gains make up nearly 60 percent of the income that goes to America’s 400 highest-earning taxpayers. Since the early 1990s, over 80 percent of all capital gains have gone to America’s richest 5 percent — and almost half to the richest 0.1 percent.

None of this capital gains income shows up in the new Census income figures released last week, the prime reason why the Census data show the average income of America’s top 5 percent, adjusted for inflation, down over the past decade, down even more sharply than incomes in America’s statistical middle.

Top 5 percent households took home an inflation-adjusted \$320,000 in 2001, according to the Census figures out last week, and only \$288,000 in 2010.

But these totals bear only a passing resemblance to the sums households in the top 5 percent have actually been raking in. We know that for a fact, thanks to statisticians at the IRS. Their IRS annual reports do include capital gains income.

What sort of difference does this inclusion make to America’s income picture? A quite substantial one.

Between 2001 and 2008, the IRS stats show, the top 5 percent’s share of America’s national income rose from 31.99 percent to 34.74 percent. The Census Bureau annual data have the top 5 percent share, for these same years, falling from 22.4 percent to 21.5 percent.

A distressing irony lurks in all these numbers. The Census Bureau doesn’t count capital gains income. The IRS doesn’t tax it — at anywhere near the tax rate that applies to ordinary income. In real life, this preferential treatment for capital gains serves to make the super rich ever richer.

The world of professional baseball offers a particularly vivid example. In 2010, all Major League players will pay a 35 percent tax on any salary over \$373,650. Any Major League owner who sells his franchise this year, by contrast, will pay just a 15 percent tax on the capital gains mega millions he makes on the sale.

That’s not, of course, the fault of the IRS. Over the past three decades, Presidents and members of Congress, both Democratic and Republican, have opted to lower the capital gains rate — and kept it low.

Still, capital gains only make up part of our national inequality story, and the latest Census figures, even without any capital gains data, do have important inequality stories to tell.

One such story: According to the new Census stats, the nation's income divide between households at the 95th percentile — that is, households making more than all but the nation's top 5 percent — and households at the 20th and 50th percentiles has, in modern times, never been higher.

Back in 1968, households at the 20th percentile made an inflation-adjusted \$18,251. Households at the 95th percentile that year took home \$156,316. In 2010, 20th-percentile households had incomes only slightly higher, just \$20,000. The much more robust 2010 income at the 95th percentile: almost \$181,000.

Overall income inequality, the new Census Bureau annual income report concludes after presenting stats like these, definitely "is increasing" much, much faster, unfortunately, than the Census stats show us.

20110920-01	16:46	Dennis	"Misconceptions & Realities About Who Pays Taxes"
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Don't be conned by accusations that the poor don't have any skin in the game:

"Misconceptions and Realities About Who Pays Taxes" by Chuck Marr and Brian Highsmith, CBPP

May 31, 2011, (<http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3505>)

A recent finding by Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation that 51 percent of households owed no federal income tax in 2009¹ is being used to advance the argument that low- and moderate-income families do not pay sufficient taxes.

Apart from the fact that most of those who make this argument also call for maintaining or increasing all of the tax cuts of recent years for people at the top of the income scale, the 51 percent figure, its significance, and its policy implications are widely misunderstood.

1. *The 51 percent figure is an anomaly that reflects the unique circumstances of 2009*, when the recession greatly swelled the number of Americans with low incomes and when temporary tax cuts created by the 2009 Recovery Act—including the "Making Work Pay" tax credit and an exclusion from tax of the first \$2,400 in unemployment benefits—were in effect. Together, these developments removed millions of Americans from the federal income tax rolls. Both of these temporary tax measures have since expired. In a more typical year, 35 percent to 40 percent of households owe no federal income tax. In 2007, the figure was 37.9 percent.²

2. The 51 percent figure covers only the federal income tax and ignores the substantial amounts of other federal taxes—especially the payroll tax—that many of these households pay. As a result, it greatly overstates the share of households that do not pay any federal taxes. Data from the Urban Institute-Brookings Tax Policy Center show only about *14 percent* of households paid neither federal income tax nor payroll tax in 2009, despite the high unemployment and temporary tax cuts that marked that year.³

3. This percentage would be even lower if federal excise taxes on gasoline and other items were taken into account.

4. Most of the people who pay neither federal income tax nor payroll taxes are low-income people who are elderly, unable to work due to a serious disability, or students, most of whom subsequently become taxpayers. (In a year like 2009, this group also includes a significant number of people who have been unemployed the entire year and cannot find work.)

5. Moreover, low-income households as a whole *do, in fact, pay federal taxes*. Congressional Budget Office data show that the poorest fifth of households as a group paid an average of 4 percent of their incomes in federal taxes in 2007 (the latest year for which these data are available), not an insignificant amount given how modest these households' incomes are—the poorest fifth of households had average income of \$18,400 in 2007.⁴ The next-to-the bottom fifth—those with incomes between \$20,500 and \$34,300 in 2007—paid an average of 10 percent of their incomes in federal taxes.

6. Even these figures *understate* low-income households' total tax burden, because these households also pay substantial *state* and *local* taxes. Data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy show that the poorest fifth of households paid *a stunning 12.3 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes in 2010*.⁵

7. When all federal, state, and local taxes are taken into account, *the bottom fifth of households paid 16.3 percent of their incomes in taxes, on average, in 2010.* The second-poorest fifth paid 20.7 percent.⁶

It also is important to consider who the people are who don't owe federal income tax in a given year:

1. Some 70 percent of people who owe no federal income tax in a given year are low-income working households. These people do pay payroll taxes, as well as federal excise taxes (and, as noted, state and local taxes). Most of these working households also pay federal income tax in other years, when their incomes are higher—which can be seen by looking at the low-income working households that receive the Earned Income Tax Credit (see next).

2. The majority of EITC recipients receive the credit for only one or two years at a time, such as when their incomes drop due to a temporary layoff; they pay federal income tax in other years. In fact, EITC recipients pay *much more in federal income taxes over time than they receive in EITC benefits.* A leading study of this issue found that taxpayers who claimed the EITC at least once during an 18-year period *paid a net \$473 billion in federal income tax over that period* (in 2006 dollars).⁷ This finding shows that—while in any single year some taxpayers will receive refundable tax credits whose value may exceed their payroll tax liability—EITC recipients as a group pay significant federal *income* taxes over time in addition to the payroll and state and local taxes they pay each year.

3. The fact that most people who do not pay federal income tax in a given year do pay substantial amounts of other taxes, and also are net federal *income* taxpayers over time, belies the claim that households that don't owe income tax will form bad policy judgments because they ostensibly "don't have any skin in the game."

4. The federal tax system is progressive overall, but state and local tax systems are regressive and undo a significant share of that progressivity. There is nothing wrong with having one part of the overall tax system shield low- and moderate-income households, who pay substantial amounts of other taxes and who generally pay federal income tax as well in other years.

To significantly increase the share of households that owe federal income tax, policymakers would have to take such steps as lowering the personal exemption or standard deduction—which would tax many low-income working families into, or deeper into, poverty; weakening the EITC or Child Tax Credit, which would significantly increase child poverty while reducing incentives for work over welfare; or paring back the tax exclusion for Social Security benefits, which would subject more seniors with small, fixed incomes to the income tax.

This analysis now explores these issues in more detail.

Of-Cited 51 Percent Figure Is Temporary Spike Caused by Recession

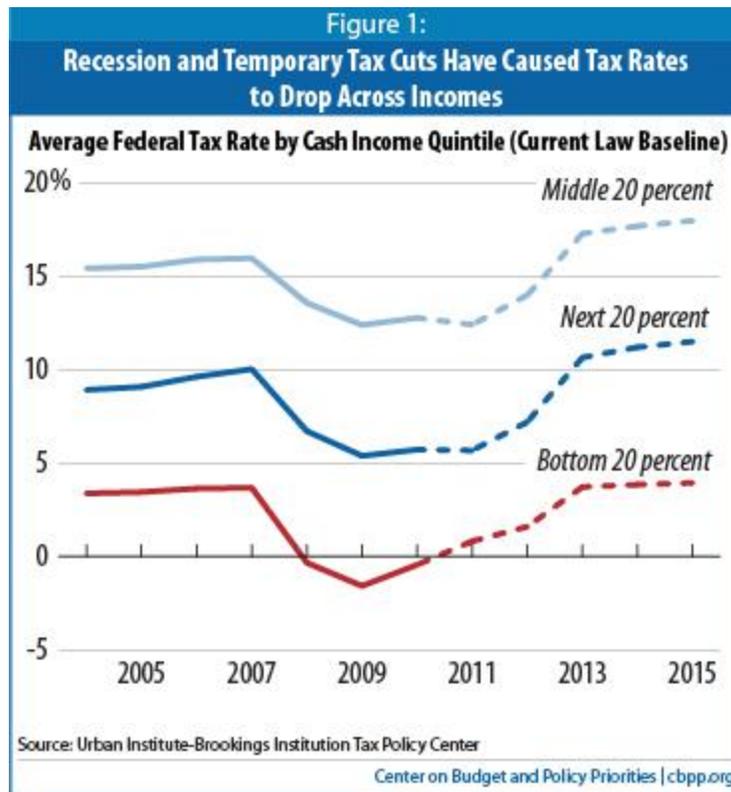
In a typical year, roughly 35-40 percent of households have no net federal income liability; in 2007, the figure was 37.9 percent.⁸ In 2009, however, two factors combined to cause a large, temporary spike in the share of Americans with no net federal income tax liability—the recession, which reduced many people's incomes, and several temporary tax cuts that have now expired. The 51 percent figure reflects these temporary factors.

Recession-induced decline in incomes. In 2009, unemployment was at its highest level in decades and rising sharply, and incomes were falling. Income tax liabilities are designed to adjust to these cyclical factors, rising when the economy is strong and falling when it is weak; this automatic adjustment helps to stabilize the economy by cushioning the drop in people's after-tax incomes—and thus their spending—during a downturn. One consequence of the economic downturn was a sharp decline in both federal and state tax receipts, as millions of workers lost their jobs or had their work hours reduced. For many Americans, the loss of income meant that while they owed federal income taxes in 2008, they did not in 2009.

Temporary tax cuts. Policymakers responded to the deep economic contraction by enacting policies to stimulate consumer demand, including targeted public investments and temporary tax cuts that removed millions more Americans from the tax rolls. Roughly 95 percent of working families benefited from the Recovery Act's Making Work Pay tax credit, which reduced their federal income tax liability by \$400 for individuals and \$800 for married couples. For some of these people, the tax credit eliminated their federal tax liability. Other temporary

income tax cuts, including the exclusion of the first \$2,400 in unemployment insurance benefits and a first-time homebuyer tax credit, eliminated federal income tax liability for additional taxpayers.

In other words, the federal income tax system did what it is supposed to do during the recession—take a smaller bite out of people’s incomes. As the temporary tax cuts expire and the economy and incomes strengthen, people’s tax liabilities will rebound (see Figure 1).



Lower-Income People Pay Considerable Payroll, State, and Local Taxes

The notion that “half of Americans don’t pay taxes” not only overstates the share of households that do not pay federal income taxes in a typical year. It also ignores the other taxes people pay, including federal payroll taxes and state and local taxes.

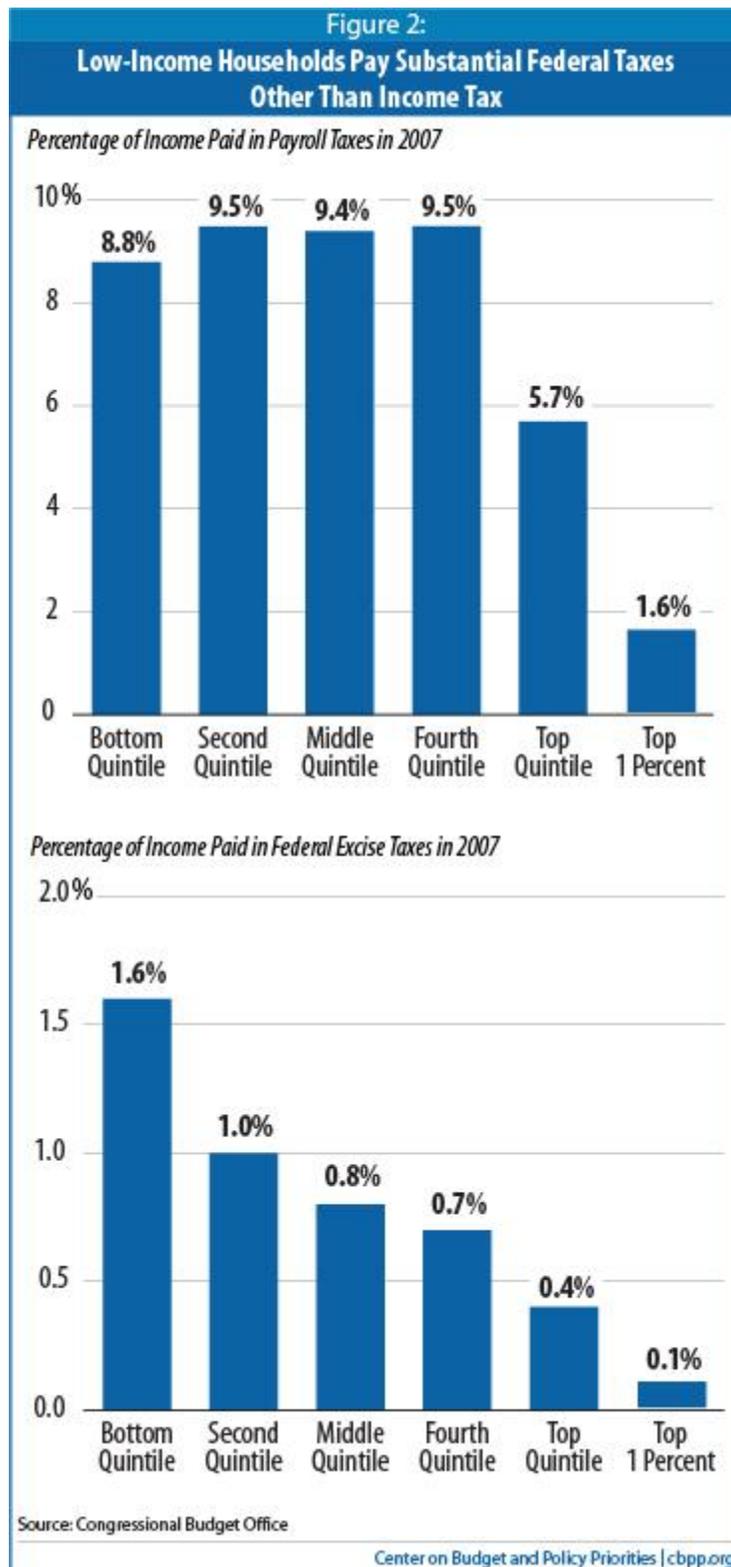
Policymakers, pundits, and others often overlook this point. At a hearing last month, Senator Charles Grassley said, “According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, 49 percent of households are paying 100 percent of taxes coming in to the federal government.” At the same hearing, Cato Institute Senior Fellow Alan Reynolds asserted, “Poor people don’t pay taxes in this country.” Last April, referring to a Tax Policy Center estimate of households with no federal income tax liability in 2009, Fox Business host Stuart Varney said on “Fox and Friends,” “Yes, 47 percent of households pay not a single dime in taxes.”⁹

None of these assertions are correct. As the Tax Policy Center’s Howard Gleckman noted regarding TPC’s estimate that 47 percent of Americans owed no federal income tax in 2009, “rarely has a bit of data been so misunderstood, or so misused.” Gleckman wrote:

Let me explain—repeat actually—what [the 47 percent figure] means: About half of taxpayers paid no federal income tax last year. It does not mean they paid no tax at all. Many shelled out Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes. In fact, only 14 percent of Americans didn’t pay either income or payroll taxes. Some paid property taxes and, it is fair to say, just about all of them paid sales taxes of one kind or another. So to say they pay no taxes is flat wrong.¹⁰

The reality is that the income tax is one of a number of types of taxes that individuals pay, both over the course of their lifetimes and in a given year, and it makes little sense to treat it as though it were the only one that matters. Some 86

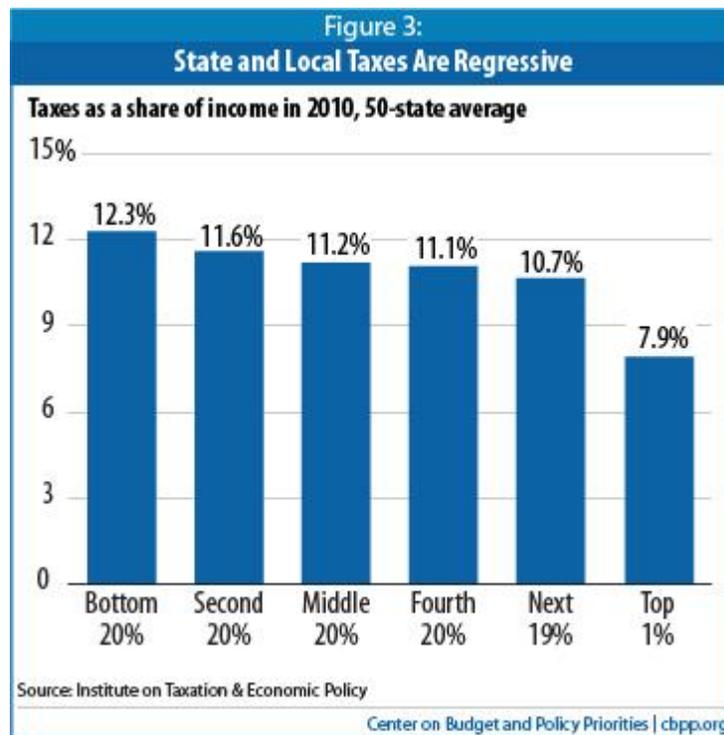
percent of working households pay more in payroll taxes than in federal income taxes.¹¹ In fact, low- and moderate-income people pay a much larger share of their incomes in federal payroll taxes than high-income people do: taxpayers in the bottom 20 percent of the income scale paid an average of 8.8 percent of their incomes in payroll taxes in 2007, compared to just 1.6 percent for taxpayers in the top 1 percent of the income distribution (see Figure 2).¹²



In addition, Congressional Budget Office data show that lower-income households pay a significantly larger share of their incomes in federal excise taxes (levied on goods such as gasoline) than middle- and upper-income households do.

When all federal taxes are considered, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of Americans pay such taxes. The poorest fifth of households paid an average of 4 percent of their incomes in federal taxes despite their low incomes in 2007, while the next fifth paid an average of 10 percent of income in federal taxes.

Low-income families also pay substantial state and local taxes. Most state and local taxes are regressive, meaning that low-income families pay a larger share of their incomes in these taxes than wealthier households do. The bottom fifth of taxpayers paid 12.3 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes in 2010, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) model.¹³ That was well above the 7.9 percent average rate that the top 1 percent of households paid (see Figure 3).

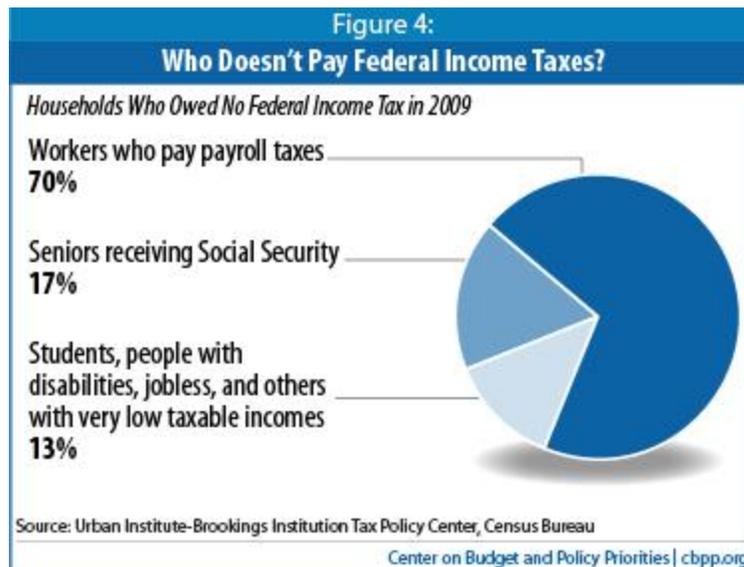


Considering *all* taxes—federal, state, and local—the bottom 20 percent of households paid an average of just over 16 percent of their incomes in taxes (12.3 percent in state and local taxes plus 3.9 percent in federal taxes) in 2009. The next 20 percent paid about 21 percent of income in taxes, on average.¹⁴

In fact, when all taxes are considered, the share of taxes that each fifth of households pays is similar to its share of the nation's total income.¹⁵ The tax system as a whole is only mildly progressive.¹⁶

Policy Options to Force People with Low Incomes to Pay Federal Income Tax Are Unsound

Some have implied or suggested that people who do not owe federal income tax are “freeloaders” who don’t have a “stake in the system” and that making them pay federal income taxes would improve the tax code. Yet the vast majority of the people who owe no federal income taxes fall into one of three categories (see Figure 4):¹⁷



1. Approximately 70 percent are working people who pay payroll taxes. As noted above, even the low-income households in this group pay substantial federal income taxes over time. The main options to force these people to pay federal income tax in years when their incomes are low include cutting the EITC or the Child Tax Credit, which would tend to reduce work incentives and increase child poverty and welfare use, and lowering the standard deduction or personal exemption, which could tax many low-income working families into, or deeper into, poverty.

2. An additional 17 percent of people who did not pay federal income taxes in 2009 are people aged 65 or older. The main option to make these individuals pay federal income tax would be to subject their Social Security benefits to taxation.¹⁸

3. The remaining 13 percent consists largely of students, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and others with very low taxable incomes.¹⁹ To make these people pay federal income taxes, policymakers would have to tax disability, veterans', and similar benefits or make full-time students and the long-term jobless individuals borrow (or draw from any available savings) to pay taxes on their meager incomes.

In short, the kinds of policy changes that would impose federal income taxes on these groups of people would make the overall tax system *less* fair and *less* sensible, not more so. An examination of the EITC illustrates this point, as the next section explains.

Corporations and Small Business Owners Also Pay No Income Tax During Bad Years

As this report notes, in addition to paying other taxes each year (many of which involve significant tax burdens), most people who do not pay federal income tax in a given year *do* pay that tax over time. For example, more than half of the tax filers who received the EITC between 1989 and 2006 received the credit for no more than a year or two at a time and generally paid substantial amounts of federal income tax in other years.* In fact, the taxpayers who claimed the EITC during this 18-year period paid \$473 billion in net federal income tax over that period (in 2006 dollars) even after taking the EITC payments they received into account.

The tax-paying record of both large corporations and small businesses follows an analogous pattern—in some years no taxes are paid, while in other years substantial taxes are paid. During the years when they have net operating losses, companies that are subject to the corporate income tax generally have no tax liability.

A GAO study found that in every year from 1998 to 2005, approximately *55 percent* of large corporations paid no corporate income tax.** But just 2.7 percent of large corporations reported no net tax liability in all eight of those eight years. This reflects a similar pattern as applies to families and individuals—those who do not pay income tax in a given year often do pay income tax over time.

This pattern also applies to small business owners and others who deduct business losses from their taxable incomes and thereby eliminate their income tax liability in some years.

*Tim Dowd and John B. Horowitz, "Income Mobility and the Earned Income Tax Credit: Short-Term Safety Net or Long-Term Income Support," *Public Finance Review* (forthcoming).

**Large corporations are those with at least \$250 million in assets or \$50 million in gross receipts. Government Accountability Office, "Comparison of the Reported Tax Liabilities of Foreign- and U.S.-Controlled Corporations, 1998-2005," July 2008, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08957.pdf>.

Cutting the EITC Would Discourage Work and Increase Poverty

From its roots as an idea from conservative economist Milton Friedman several decades ago, the EITC has become an increasingly important tool to make work pay more than welfare and enough to lift people working full time at the minimum wage out of poverty. Research has demonstrated the EITC's effectiveness. Nobel laureate (and noted conservative economist) Gary S. Becker has written, "Empirical studies confirm . . . that the EITC increases the labor force participation and employment of people with low wages because they need to work in order to receive this credit."²⁰ (Becker also has applauded the EITC for being "fully available to families with both parents present, even where only one works and the other cares for their children [i.e., for being available to low-income working families with stay-at-home mothers].")

Studies of the EITC expansions of the 1980s and 1990s found those expansions induced more than half a million people to enter the labor force. One prominent study identified the EITC as "a particularly important contributor to both the recent decrease in welfare use and the recent increase in employment, labor supply, and earnings" among female-headed families.²¹ The creation of the refundable component of the Child Tax Credit, which like the EITC is available only to families that work, has complemented the EITC's pro-work efforts. Moreover, the EITC and the refundable Child Tax Credit together lifted 7.2 million people out of poverty in 2009, including 4 million children.²² These refundable credits lift more children out of poverty than any other program or category of programs at any level of government.

Several factors reinforce the importance of these credits in promoting and rewarding low-wage work. In recent decades, incomes in the United States have grown increasingly unequal, with the lion's share of the economic gains from globalization, advances in technology, and the like accruing to those on the upper rungs of the income ladder. CBO data show that the average income among people in the lowest income fifth was \$17,700 in 2007; if all incomes had grown at the same rate since 1979, that figure would have been \$6,000 higher. Our economy benefits from globalization and technological change, but there are winners and losers. The refundable tax credits help to offset a portion of the effects of the stagnation of wages at the bottom of the income spectrum.

In addition, the weak labor market is likely to continue exerting downward pressure on wages over the next several years. The unemployment rate remains stubbornly high, at 9 percent in Apr., 2011. CBO projects that it will not drop to under 6 percent until 2015. Taking note of the current bleak employment picture facing out-of-work men, columnist David Brooks recently wrote that "wage subsidies" should be on the list of future policy responses. The EITC is a much-needed wage subsidy for low-income workers (although the EITC for poor workers without children remains very small and could be strengthened).

Finally, over the past several decades, policymakers have essentially relied more on the EITC to supplement low wages and less on the minimum wage, which they have allowed to decline by 19 percent in purchasing power since 1970 (i.e., the minimum wage has fallen by 19 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars).

For all of these reasons, scaling back the EITC in order to require more low-income working households to pay federal income taxes would be a significant step backward, discouraging work and increasing poverty.

End Notes:

¹The Urban Institute-Brookings Institution Tax Policy Center had previously estimated the share of households who owed no federal income tax in 2009 to be 47 percent. (http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3505#_ftnref1)

²Tax Policy Center, "Tax Units with Zero or Negative Tax Liability, 2004-2008," Oct. 16, 2009, <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/numbers/Content/PDF/T09-0412.pdf>.

³Tax Policy Center, "Tax Units with Zero or Negative Tax Liability, 2009-2019," July 1, 2009, <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/numbers/Content/PDF/T09-0333.pdf>.

⁴Congressional Budget Office, "Average Federal Taxes by Income Group," June 2010, http://www.cbo.gov/publications/collections/tax/2010/all_tables.pdf.

⁵Citizens for Tax Justice, "All Americans Pay Taxes," Apr. 15, 2010, <http://www.ctj.org/pdf/taxday2010.pdf>.

⁶Citizens for Tax Justice, 2010.

⁷Tim Dowd and John B. Horowitz, "Income Mobility and the Earned Income Tax Credit: Short-Term Safety Net or Long-Term Income Support," *Public Finance Review* (forthcoming)

⁸Tax Policy Center, "Tax Units with Zero or Negative Tax Liability, 2004-2008," Oct. 16, 2009, <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/numbers/Content/PDF/T09-0412.pdf>.

⁹Media Matters, "Do conservative media figures want to raise taxes on middle- and low-income Americans?," Apr. 9, 2010, <http://mediamatters.org/research/201004090030>.

¹⁰Howard Gleckman, "About Those 47 Percent Who Pay 'No Taxes,'" *TaxVox*, Apr. 15, 2010, <http://taxvox.taxpolicycenter.org/2010/04/15/about-those-47-percent-who-pay-%E2%80%9Cno-taxes-%E2%80%9D/>.

¹¹Len Burman and Greg Leiserson, "Two-Thirds of Tax Units Pay More Payroll Tax Than Income Tax," *Tax Notes*, Apr. 9, 2007.

¹²Congressional Budget Office, 2010.

¹³Citizens for Tax Justice, 2010.

¹⁴Citizens for Tax Justice, 2010.

¹⁵Citizens for Tax Justice, 2010.

¹⁶Before taxes, the bottom 20 percent of households received 4 percent of national income and the top 1 percent received 19.4 percent. After taxes, the bottom 20 percent of households received 4.9 percent of national income and the top 1 percent received 17.1 percent. Congressional Budget Office, 2010.

¹⁷Tax Policy Center, "Who Doesn't Pay Federal Taxes," <http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxtopics/federal-taxes-households.cfm>

¹⁸Under current law, Social Security benefits are not subject to the income tax for filers whose income is below \$25,000 for individuals and \$32,000 for couples.

¹⁹March 2010 Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

²⁰Gary S. Becker, "How to End Welfare 'As We Know It'—Fast," *Business Week*, June 3, 1996.

²¹Jeffrey Grogger, "The Effects of Time Limits, the EITC, and Other Policy Changes on Welfare Use, Work, and Income among Female-Headed Families," *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, May 2003.

²²Arloc Sherman, "Despite Deep Recession and High Unemployment, Government Efforts—including the Recovery Act—Prevented Poverty From Rising in 2009, New Census Data Show," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Jan. 5, 2011.

It amazes me that right-wing politicians are all in an uproar about "class warfare," as if such a clash would be inappropriate and un-American. When millions of Americans struggle to house, clothe, feed, and educate their families, while a few wealthy citizens guard their treasure with ever fiercer dragons, it is inappropriate to blame the poor for

somehow fomenting a class "war." The war is being waged against them. I can't help thinking about the heavily taxed peasants in pre-Revolutionary France who finally revolted and burned the chateaux of their overlords, who were exempt from taxes. Where is the fairness? Yes, the poor have "skin in the game." The rich are taking their prosperity out of their hide.

[20110925-01](#) 17:32 Dennis Stephen Colbert Quote: A Christian Nation



"If this is going to be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we have to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that He commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition and then admit that we just don't want to do it."

[20110926-01](#) 09:41 Jim Video: "Recycled Water Bottles Act Like Electricity"

Practical Third World energy conservation...

They had been blocking the sun getting in to keep the house cool but then had to use electric lights if they wanted to see well. A clever solution to give light without heat and almost zero cost after cheap installation.

Ingenious!

Video: "Recycled Water Bottles Act Like Electricity" (<http://youtu.be/SBW13NtND68>)

[20110927-01](#) 17:47 Dennis "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

"Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War" by Roger Bybee, [CommonDreams](#)

Sept. 27, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/09/27-8>)

In his severely distorted view of the "class war" currently splitting America apart, House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), who represents southeastern Wisconsin's crumbling factory towns, reflects a juvenile embrace of the view of his heroine, Ayn Rand (required reading for his entire staff).

Through the shift of capital from productive industries to deregulated Wall Street, the relocation of much of America's industrial base to low-wage nations, and unilateral wage cutting by CEOs who see how the Great Recession has strengthened their leverage over workers, we are witnessing the ongoing shrinkage of middle-class job opportunities. Like Rand, Ryan interprets any move toward easing America's crushing inequality as showing ingratitude toward those he worships as the "job creators." This view is repeated incessantly by Republicans.

However, the fact remains that, it's been some time since the "job creators" actually created any significant number of jobs in the United States. We saw 0.9 percent job growth in the 1999-2009 decade marked chiefly by Wall Street deregulation and \$1.2 trillion in tax cuts mainly siphoned up by the ultra-wealthy investor class. But the very notion of a mild tax increase on millionaires and billionaires provokes cries from Ryan that "class warfare" is being self-destructively waged against the Job Creators:

A top House Republican accused President Obama of appealing to Americans' "fear, envy and anxiety" by pushing a new tax rate on people making more than \$1 million annually, saying the "class warfare path" will only hurt the economy.

'Class warfare ... may make for really good politics, but it makes for rotten economics,' Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis., chairman of the House Budget Committee, told "Fox News Sunday."

Behind the 'class war' rhetoric

The domestic politics of much of the 1990s were shaped by GOP demonization of welfare clients; current politics in Wisconsin and elsewhere are dominated by contempt directed against teachers and other public employees. The reality: On one side stands the richest 1 percent, increasingly unified in their resistance to paying their fair share of taxes and assuming the burdens of healing an economically divided society. Their share of the national pie has tripled since the 1970s, to about 24 percent of all income. Just 400 individuals control as much wealth as the bottom 150 million Americans.

A vast torrent of dollars, rapidly shooting upward in a jet-stream, has given the top 1% more political power than at any point in the last 90 years. The super-rich have gained more surplus wealth to contribute more massively to candidates who serve their interests and to hire lobbyists to advance policies of tax-cutting, deregulation, privatization and "free trade."

These are all policies that detach the ruling class further from a commitment to strong public institutions (e.g., schools, healthcare, access to higher education), American workers and the nation itself.

On the other side of the class divide stands a fragmented, atomized, and—until the Wisconsin labor rebellion earlier this year—badly demoralized majority of working families. They face a constant and totally one-sided bombardment by corporate and government policies that undermine their economic security, take away rights to unionization, and make their survival ever more precarious.

Without cohesiveness and organizations, families scramble simply to survive, with political involvement often falling as a priority despite its potential for relieving their suffering.

Warren Buffet, the billionaire investor who is viewed by many of his fellow CEOs as a traitor to his class for his frankness about the low taxes that he pays relative to his secretary, expressed the current reality bluntly:

There's class warfare, all right," Mr. Buffett said, "but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.

Through the shift of capital from productive industries to deregulated Wall Street, the relocation of much of America's industrial base to low-wage nations, and unilateral wage cutting by CEOs who see how the Great Recession has strengthened their leverage over workers, we are witnessing the ongoing shrinkage of middle-class job opportunities.

The loss of middle-class jobs has been severe, and is of course still growing. Former Reagan budget director David Stockman estimated the loss nationally at 12 percent of "high-value" jobs, falling to 68 million from 77 million. That means plummeting wages. In Ryan's hometown of Janesville, hollowed out by the pre-Christmas 2008 shutdown of its giant GM plant, the average wage has fallen from \$23.27 in 2007 to \$18.82 last year.

Up until now, the tensions have largely and tragically been contained within families and working-class neighborhoods as victims of declining incomes and disappearing dreams turn on each other. Janesville has been afflicted by rising abuse against women and a major increase in child abuse and neglect.

Child poverty has nearly doubled to 47.1 percent since 2000, and the town has also experienced a near-doubling in suicides over the past two years.

When will class war victims fight back?

Eventually, all the frustration, pent-up rage and seemingly endless suffering felt by the victims of the CEOs one-way class war will erupt. The potential for mass disorder in the streets of the United States is becoming apparent even to elite figures like New York's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg:

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg warned today that public frustration over joblessness in the U.S. is in danger of boiling over and could lead to riots in the streets if the government fails to create more jobs.

You have a lot of kids graduating college who can't find jobs. That's what happened in Cairo. That's what happened in Madrid. You don't want those kinds of riots here.

There is also an even larger number of young people who can't afford college who are seething with anger.

I'm sure that Paul Ryan and his allies also don't want "those kinds of riots" taking place in Janesville, Racine, or anywhere else in the United States. Yet while prescribing austerity for the vast majority of his already-struggling constituents, Ryan has been leading a life marked by anything but fiscal discipline.

For example, Ryan and two of his pals were spotted in Washington spending \$700 on two bottles of \$350 wine. Susan Feinberg, an associate business professor at Rutgers did the math and figured out that the \$700 in wine the trio consumed over the course of 90 minutes amounted to more than the entire weekly income of a couple making minimum wage.

Of course, Ryan is opposed to increasing the minimum wage, in the same way that he has voted to oppose extended unemployment benefits, foreclosure assistance and expanded S-CHIP healthcare to children. He's been pushing to end taxation on the overseas operations of U.S. corporations.

With a lifestyle reminiscent of Marie Antoinette and his contempt for the plight of workers and the poor, Ryan and his allies may well be lighting the fuse for a social explosion.

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[20110928-01](#) 19:02 Dennis Quote: Remember When...

**Remember when teachers,
public employees, Planned Par-
enthood, NPR and PBS crashed
the stock market, wiped out
half of our 401Ks, took trillions
in taxpayer funded bail outs,
spilled oil in the Gulf of Mexico,
gave themselves billions in
bonuses, and paid no taxes?
Yeah, me neither... Pass it on**

[20110929-01](#) 08:36 Pam Hillary Clinton in 2012?

I have a question for you all. How would you feel about Hillary running in 2012? She's smart, experienced, and tough. Is she a Democrat who could win? Is Obama falling behind the curve of history, or do you think he'll get his engine started? I guess that's more than two questions—and a mixed metaphor to boot.

[20110929-02](#) 12:49 Clark Re: Hillary Clinton in 2012?

Dear Pam,

While it's true that Hillary has high approval ratings at the moment, challenging Obama in 2012 would doom any chances the Democrats have of keeping the White House and probably doom any chances she would have of ever becoming president in 2016.

Taking on an incumbent from your own party always weakens the incumbent but seldom (never?) results in actually getting the nomination (most recently, see: Reagan vs. Ford in 1976, Kennedy vs. Carter in 1980—with both wounded incumbents losing in the general). Ted Kennedy never recovered (though Reagan did, he was taking on an "inherited" presidency in Gerald Ford, who had never actually been elected president and didn't have an ardent constituency).

Hillary would risk losing huge numbers of Obama loyalists (perhaps especially African-Americans, who otherwise would be very strongly for her) in 2016.

Also, as a major player in the Administration, on what basis would she run against him? He even incorporated the individual mandate into his health care program (which she supported in the 2008, primaries, and he did not). As Sec. of State, she can't run against his foreign policy, either. And by attacking him as a weak leader, again she'd be risking alienating African-Americans, in particular. She could only attack him on the economy, which would just give ammunition to the GOP in the general, and doom either Democrat to defeat.

No, if she's interested, she'll wait till 2016.

20110930-01 10:44 SteveB Re: Hillary Clinton in 2012?

I have to say I have a couple of problems with Hillary. I don't think she can defeat anybody. I don't think I would ever know if she or Bill (again) were the President. Maybe that's a plus.

And I have to say, though Obama is not really our guy either, that I think Hillary & Bill represent the failed Democrat policies and actions of the past. She's the ultimate insider, at this point in time, though I think those Republican dogs in Congress would eat her fat butt alive. And the Clintons are not adverse to selling favors, like nights in the White House, remember? Wonder what else they sold while in power?

But, of course, the really massive, definitive lies and hugely, tragically failed policies and philosophies sleep in the Republican tents.

We'd better stand behind Obama and hope for the best. I think that's what Hillary thinks too, though I might have missed something lately.

20110930-02 13:00 Pam Re: Now You're Mad?

Dear Jim and SteveB,

This is an amazing list. No wonder I feel so bummed.

20110930-03 14:58 SteveB Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

Dear Gary C,

I just found this from my friend, Dennis, and it expresses a lot of things I've been thinking about. What do you think?

[See Sept. 27, 2011, 5:47 pm, "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War" by Roger Bybee, CommonDreams, Sept. 27, 2011, (<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/09/27-8>). —SteveB]

Do you really think these stupid, evil, born-agin' Christians all somehow, uncannily, know which political philosophy is best for the country? What are the odds that Bachman, Perry, Gingrich, Palin et al, are somehow, miraculously right? Pretty low, in my betting book!

20110930-04 15:07 GaryC Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

Dear SteveB,

Well, they may have a lot of good solutions but it always scares me when they invoke religion as part of the solution. There is separation of church and state for a damn good reason. And, it goes both ways, not just to protect secularism.

However, I feel the Democrats do the same thing by making EVERYTHING politically correct to the detriment of the majority and often the poor.

It's all about POWER. Very few in public office have the *cajones* to do what's right regardless of the opinion of their constituents.

Therefore, eliminate the potential and create TERM LIMITS.

20110930-05 15:14 SteveB Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

Dear GaryC,

No, "eliminate the potential", and end the corruption of unfettered campaign financing and the resulting favors owed that distorts all the professional political thinking in this country. This term limit talk is a tea bagger's red herring.

What you say about Democrats is true in many ways. But remember, we are only here on this one cusp of history, and, at this moment, one party seems out to destroy us just to prove some esoteric point. The other party seems bent on merely remaining stuck in the past.

To me it's sort of like the difference between Armageddon and a fart.

20110930-06 15:39 GaryC Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

Dear SteveB,

My concern about financing reform is that you HAVE to apply it to Corporations, Unions, Fat Cats and other concerns that can raise a lot of money. I am always afraid that limiting donations too much opens the door more so for under the table financing. My call for term limits has been going on for over 30 years after spending time in DC. I could care less what the tea party wants or calls for. It's a lunatic fringe in many cases just like the environmental wackos on the left.

For example, we have a private company that wants to build a pipeline from Canada to the U.S. that will create 18,000+ good paying construction jobs for mostly low skilled people plus over 1000 permanent jobs after the construction. In addition, the pipeline will supply cheap Canadian natural gas and reduce our dependence on foreign petrol. But, the f*cking regulators in DC are concerned about the environmental impact even though it has passed every study conducted for the past 5 years. You can't blame this one on the Republicans or the Tea Party. These are your boys f*cking the poor on this one.

[This Keystone XL Pipeline is no big deal, yet see how the Right lines up monolithically and monomaniacally behind it, as if it were the end all and be all of the nation in 2011. How do these troops get rallied like this? —SteveB]

20110930-07 15:51 SteveB Re: "Rep. Paul Ryan's Class War"

Dear GaryC,

Of course, the law of the land must be applied to all! Not even illegal immigrants shouldn't be able to corrupt our politics. Definitely not corporations, unions, fat cats, or foreign governments.

The Teabaggers want term limits so Washington, with its complications and subtleties, will be full of rookies who know nothing. They would be putty in the hands of the powerful vested interests that run this country.

Term limits is the last thing I want. The amendment on the President should be reversed to level the playing field and prevent all the lame duck cr*p we have now. Imagine how hard things would be with even more lame ducks sitting around quacking and powerless.

I would think, after the Gulf oil debacle/disaster, which potentially could have ruined your beach for quite some time, you would see that it's almost impossible to be too careful in these matters. The powers that be are almost never careful enough in my book.

[20110930-08](#) 16:06 SteveB Re: Now You're Mad?

Dear Pam,

It pretty much sums it all up, doesn't it? Haven't heard back from any of my misguided Republican friends yet. ☺

[20110930-09](#) 16:14 Pam Re: Now You're Mad?

Dear SteveB,

I simply do not understand how anyone can support these bozos. My best friend has moved from being a Republican to calling herself a Libertarian, but I don't see that as much better. We talk about politics—some—but we have to be careful not to step on each others' toes. I keep trying to get to the bottom of what accounts for the difference between us, and I think it's this: she doesn't trust govt. but likes private enterprise; I don't trust the corporations but think govt. is at least SUPPOSED to work on all citizens' behalf. I never thought I'd say this, but maybe Marx had it right—about capitalism that is. And this Supreme Court is terrifying. Citizens United is dreadful. Elections are to be bought now, more than ever. America is losing its soul, and I don't see anything on the horizon to change that. Aaaarrrrrgh!!

[20110930-10](#) 17:24 SteveB "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"

<http://news.yahoo.com/awlaqi-killing-re-ignites-us-debate-rights-152720230.html> [No longer available. See below. — SteveB]

"Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights" by AFP

Sept. 30, 2011

(http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle09.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2011/September/middleeast_September611.xml§ion=middleeast)

(WASHINGTON) The killing of U.S.-born Al-Qaeda cleric Anwar al-Awlaqi has renewed the debate over how far Washington can go in hunting down and assassinating alleged terror suspects who are American citizens.

Awlaqi, killed in Yemen with several other suspected militants, had been at the center of a court case filed last year challenging the U.S. government's right to target its own citizens for assassination which highlighted questions about constitutional rights.

Many U.S. lawmakers and other Americans cheered the news of Awlaqi's death, but civil rights backers said the case raises serious questions.

Glenn Greenwald, a lawyer and commentator, said there had been no effort to indict Awlaqi on any crimes and that there was "substantial doubt" about his involvement in any attacks against the U.S..

"He was simply ordered killed by the president: his judge, jury and executioner," Greenwald wrote on Salon.com.

"What's most amazing is that its citizens will not merely refrain from objecting, but will stand and cheer the U.S. government's new power to assassinate their fellow citizens, far from any battlefield, literally without a shred of due process," he added.

Last year, civil liberties groups filed a lawsuit on behalf of the cleric's father, Nasser al-Awlaqi, saying it was unconstitutional for the CIA to order the death of an American citizen without due process.

A judge dismissed the case without ruling on the merit of the suit, saying he could not legally block the government from targeting Awlaqi, but said it raises serious constitutional issues.

"Can (the president) order the assassination of a U.S. citizen without first affording him any form of judicial process whatsoever, based on the mere assertion that he is a dangerous member of a terrorist organization?" U.S. District Judge John Bates wrote in December.

In Apr., 2010, a U.S. official said President Barack Obama's administration had taken the rare step of authorizing the targeted killing of Awlaqi, after U.S. intelligence agencies linked him to attacks.

Ari Fleischer, who was spokesman for former president George W. Bush, said the action shows the need for aggressive actions in the fight on terrorism.

"I wonder if the Bush-violated-the-Constitution crowd will decry the killing of an American without a trial via drone?" he said in a Twitter message.

Despite the legal questions, many members of Congress hailed the killing of Awlaqi, who was born in New Mexico and became an Internet phenomenon by producing video and audio recordings in fluent English to lure Westerners into militant actions.

Republican Representative Peter King, chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, called Awlaqi's killing "a great success in our fight against Al-Qaeda and its affiliates."

"For the past several years, al-Awlaqi has been more dangerous even than Osama bin Laden had been. The killing of al-Awlaqi is a tremendous tribute to President Obama and the men and women of our intelligence community," he said.

"He fueled hate against America, and we are safer because al-Awlaqi is dead. We must nevertheless continue our efforts to combat and discredit the violent Islamist ideology he espoused and disseminated," said Republican Senator Susan Collins.

Last year, a group of U.S. lawmakers unveiled legislation to strip Americans thought to have joined extremist groups like Al-Qaeda of their citizenship. But the effort was criticized by some who said this appeared to lack due process.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, who was previously CIA chief, told ABC News last year: "Awlaqi is a terrorist, and yes, he's a U.S. citizen, but he is first and foremost a terrorist and we're going to treat him like a terrorist. We don't have an assassination list, but I can tell you this, we have a terrorist list and he's on it."

Awlaqi, a charismatic preacher who spoke fluent English, was seen as having the unique ability to recruit Al-Qaeda operatives in the West.

U.S. intelligence officials believe Awlaqi was linked to a U.S. army major who allegedly shot dead 13 people in Fort Hood, Texas, and to a Nigerian student accused of trying to blow up a U.S. airliner on Dec. 25, 2009.

He also was believed to have coordinated the 2010 plot to blow up cargo aircraft bound for the United States and had called for attacks against U.S. and Arab governments across the world.

Dear SteveB,

I find this one difficult. On the one hand, this guy was clearly very dangerous. But should we just arbitrarily take someone out? I wasn't sorry when Bin Laden went, and I wish Hitler had perished when that bomb went off. I've often thought targeted killing preferable to all-out war. But I'm in a muddle here.

[20111001-01](#) 19:31 SteveB Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"

Dear Pam,

No, I think your gut instinct is right, Pam, though there are many worrisome elements to such a killing, especially if a government is not of the highest moral fiber, like ours is.

But I part company with the bleeding heart liberals here. We are in a unique situation, unforeseen by the Constitution and past law. But we are at war, and there are situations in, for instance, a place like Afghanistan, where an officer might have to summarily execute one of his own men for mutiny, etc. This would be an American executed without trial. Not good, but maybe necessary if you're in that situation—one reason not to get into those situations, if at all possible.

But this present war cannot be avoided and I say, especially on foreign soil, we fight it tooth and nail and to hell with combatants' rights. Where are the rights of suicide bomber victims?

Regardless, the legal precedents are now pretty much set, it seems to me, and things have gone against terrorists' rights, at least in the U.S. of A. I also happen to think that things should go too against any potential rights of illegal aliens, except a trip back home, but that's just me. I say we have too many people already. The place is too damned crowded for me...except maybe Maine and Montana.

Personally, I like the way these CIA guys can sit there at their laptops and guide these little killers to their targets. No muddle for me. I'd like to do one myself, honestly. I think we need to make peace with these Islamic dudes, but in the meantime, I still agree with George Bush's goal—just not his methods—of doing something to make our enemies ponder that maybe they would have been much better off to leave us alone and just continue to water their camels and pump their oil.

Maybe it's a testosterone thing, but I should be having less of that by now...?

[20111001-02](#) 20:39 Pam Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"

Dear SteveB,

I think you're right. Al Awlaki (or however you spell it) gave up his rights to due process when he went to Yemen and started making bombs. I guess I just worry about our becoming like Russia, offing people right and left because they pose a threat to the govt. I trust Obama to go after the right targets, but I'd hate to see targeted assassinations happening here. We've had assassinations, yes, but, so far as I know, none sanctioned by the govt., conspiracy theories notwithstanding. You ever get the feeling I worry too much??

:-) One of my students once told me I think too much. He probably had a point.

[20111001-03](#) 11:29 SteveB Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"

Dear Pam,

My old Zen instructor once told me that the only problem with thinking is that it doesn't get you anywhere. I guess it was one of those "one hand clapping" things.

[20111001-04](#) 14:40 Bill Re: "Awlaqi Killing Reignites U.S. Debate on Rights"

Dear Pam and SteveB,

I think I'm with SteveB on this one. My reasoning isn't perfectly apt, but if the police see someone, known to be a lawbreaker, about to murder someone, wouldn't it be permissible for them to preempt the murder with deadly force? One can argue that, even if al Awlaki's acts were in relative slow motion compared to the described police action, there is great similarity.

20111002-01 14:49 SteveG Fw: Occupy Wall St.

from Van Jones, RebuildTheDream.com:

Wall Street has long been the home of the biggest threat to American democracy. Now it has become home to what may be our best hope for rescuing it.

For everyone who loves this country, for everyone whose heart is breaking for the growing ranks of the poor, for everyone who is seething at the unopposed demolition of America's working and middle class: the time has come to get off the fence.

A new generation has gone to the scene of the crimes committed against our future. The time has come for all people of good will to give our full-throated backing to the young people of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

So this Wednesday, we're joining with MoveOn, and labor and community groups in New York for a massive march down to the Occupy Wall Street encampment. And for those who can't make it to New York, we're also holding a huge online "Virtual March on Wall Street" in solidarity with the brave protesters in New York.

Occupations are springing up all over the country as well. Our movement was born after Madison, Wisconsin, to stand up for middle and working class families. We've engaged 130,000 people to crowd-source our own jobs agenda—the Contract for the American Dream. In August, tens of thousands of us demonstrated for jobs in rallies across the nation. And this week in Washington, D.C., we host our first national gathering: the Take Back The American Dream conference.

The occupation of Wall Street—and the occupations throughout the country—are expressions of the same spirit and dynamic. And these particular demonstrations, perhaps uniquely, contain the spark to grow into a movement that can be transformative. They are the first, small step in the creation of a movement that can restore American democracy, and renew the American Dream.

Now is our time to choose. Will we keep rewarding those whose financial manipulations have brought us to ruin? Or will we stand with those whose democratic innovations are breathing life into our finest ideals? Both groups are within blocks of each other in downtown Manhattan.

For the past 30 years, the country has stood behind the titans on Wall Street and their values. We listened when they said that their banks were too big to fail. Today, there is only one thing that's too big to fail: the

dreams of this new generation, finding its voice in Liberty Park. All of America should now stand with them. Thank you for being a part of, and believing in, this movement.

<http://www.occupytogether.org/>

—Van, Natalie, Billy, Jim, Ian, Somer, and the rest of the Rebuild the Dream team

20111003-01 14:00 SteveB "The Word Obama Won't Dare Say"

"The Word Obama Won't Dare Say" by LZ Granderson, CNN

Sept. 13, 2011 (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/09/13/opinion/granderson-obama-stimulus/index.html?iref=obnetwork>)

(Grand Rapids, Mich.) Say what you will about the Republican Party's politics, but one thing I think we all can agree on is that they know how to control the message.

Instead of "educated," they say "elitist."

Instead of "the rich," they prefer "job creators."

And in their latest linguistic sleight of hand, the modern-day Houdinis have managed to turn "stimulus" into a four-letter word.

Or at least a word President Barack Obama no longer feels comfortable saying. In 2009, he couldn't say it enough. Now ... well, I didn't hear it once during his jobs speech last week, even though \$447 billion in tax cuts and government spending would certainly qualify as being one.

Perry: 'Stimulus created zero jobs' But the president and his administration can avoid whatever word they choose in describing the jobs bill; that's not going to change what Republicans say about it:

"With the president traveling the country touting his Stimulus II plan, it is important to understand the lessons from his first stimulus," Republican National Committee Reince Priebus said.

"I suspect I am not the only American asking, if a trillion dollars' worth of stimulus didn't work, why will another \$450 billion do the trick?" former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson asked.

"He had \$800 billion worth of stimulus in the first round of stimulus. It created zero jobs, \$400-plus billion in this package. And I can do the math on that one. Half of zero jobs is going to be zero jobs," said Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

As usual, Republicans are dictating the conversation, this time massaging their response to the president's jobs bill to support their assertion that his \$787 billion stimulus package was a failure.

And each day Obama avoids saying the word, he inadvertently gives their claims credibility by appearing to distance himself from his initiative.

Instead of using equivocal language, the president just needs to reclaim the word "stimulus." And he needs to do it now as he tries to sell his jobs bill to the public. After all, it's not like anyone's forgotten the word or the 2009 measure he pushed through Congress. Might as well talk about its successes and shortcomings while trying to help out-of-work Americans, as opposed to being forced to do so in the general election, where such talk will be interpreted as simply trying to help himself.

Besides, the truth is the administration's projections were overly optimistic and failed to meet the president's own mark of keeping the unemployment rate under 8%. Not to mention by its very spending structure, the impact of the stimulus package was not even designed to be felt by the majority of Americans quickly, which may have been wise fiscally but not so politically.

However, even with all of that, for anyone to characterize the stimulus package as a complete failure means he or she either had no idea just how bad the country's economy was or they're just parroting partisan talking points. (Between May 1999 and May 2009, private-sector jobs increased by just 1.1%, the lowest 10-year period since the Depression.)

And I can't help but notice how the chatty Republicans' tongues are tied when it comes to mentioning the 750,000 jobs that were lost on average in the first three months of 2009, during which the stimulus took effect and how that number declined to 35,000 by the beginning of 2010?

And am I the only one who finds it strange that Republican leadership wants to deem the stimulus a failure but fails to mention the studies performed by economists across the political spectrum that credit the stimulus for staving off a depression.

And then there's front-runner Perry calling the president's stimulus package a failure during Monday's debate while not mentioning how he used \$6 billion from the first "failed" stimulus package to balance his state's budget. Not sure what they call that in Texas, but in the Midwest we call that hypocrisy.

Maybe I'm just being silly for letting the facts get in the way of a good campaign slogan. Perhaps I'm a bit naive to think the GOP should actually point out the stimulus pros with the cons in hopes of finding a more perfect solution to the country's economic woes.

In any case, it seems Obama's strategy of trying to pass a jobs stimulus package without saying the word "stimulus" just makes talking about the bill more difficult than it has to be. And if he continues to let undecided voters believe the first stimulus package was unsuccessful, what's their motivation for getting behind him and pressuring their representatives to pass the second?

Or even vote for him?

[20111003-02](#) 06:02 Pam Re: Occupy Wall St.

Dear SteveG,

I've wondered for a long time when people were going to take to the streets, so I guess I shouldn't complain when they do. I'm delighted to see Americans making a collective public statement of our discontent. What I do wish, though, is that this movement—which I support—would articulate a specific cause(s). We could think about what would boil down into a catchy slogan like in the old days: "Make Love, Not War," "Hell, no, we won't go," "End Apartheid Now," "One Man, One Vote." Here are some ideas: End Tax Loopholes Now, Share the Wealth, Health Care for All, Support Our Schools, Social Security is Not a Gift, Take Back the Power, Vote as if Your Life Depended on it. These aren't very good, but you get the idea. I know we're all generally dissatisfied, but we need to put pressure on specific nerves. It's not just the Tea Party that's angry. Progressives need to do some shouting and hollering too. If we know where we want to go, I believe someone will emerge to lead us there. We all thought that would be Obama, and it may yet be, but we need to make enough noise to drown out the Right. They're not the only ones that need to be appeased.

[20111003-03](#) 06:04 Dennis Video: "Occupy Wall Street Protester Lectures Fox News Reporter"

Here's a Fox News interview that you won't be seeing on Fox News:

[Video: "Occupy Wall Street Protester Lectures Fox News Reporter" by David Taintor, TPM](#)

Oct. 3, 2011, (<http://tpmlivewire.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-protester-lectures-fox-news-reporter-video.php?ref=fpb>)

[20111003-04](#) 06:56 SteveB Re: Occupy Wall St.

Dear Pam,

I like your signs, Pam! Makes me think you must have been out there in the streets back in the day...I certainly was. Helping to publish an anti-war newspaper (*The Spread Eagle*) while I was in the army, plus appearing on Nashville, TN television during a protest, ended up keeping me out of Viet Nam as an almost sure-to-die medic. Part of the army wanted to get me out of the country as fast as possible, but another department wanted to investigate me, so they "flagged" my records, and I couldn't go anywhere. Nothing ever happened except that I didn't die in Viet Nam. I ended up working as a disk jockey at an Army radio station. The military and government are such stupid organizations. Even Republicans realize the latter, but seem to be blind to the former. Maybe it's that gun thing they got goin'?

But, ya, I've been amazed that with so many huge problems, especially for lower-income (or zero-income) people, that the people themselves are so sheep-like and sleepy. It's like they've been drugged with TV and football and the feeling that all is hopeless. We didn't used to feel this way in America.

And has been eloquently pointed out in these postings by Dennis and others, it is many of the most victimized who are the most confused, having decided that what's good for rich Republicans must be good for them too, and all the rest of us. Sorry, WRONG! Proven wrong by the last 30 years of U.S. history!

I'm so happy to see this movement of dissatisfaction grow! I love it when things work logically. Maybe, finally, people will remember who really has the power, though you might think the Arab Spring would have reminded them. But are we that

brave and ballsy? Well, that remains to be seen. We appear to be nothing more than a nation of complete pu*sies, in every way, to me right now...people, government, business...all of it.

Something's wrong!

I do wish we had a leader who feels as so many of the rest of us do...that radical change is needed, but even more radical Republican change must be avoided at all cost. Where is that dude or lady?

20111004-01	07:54	SteveB	"Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"
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Another excellent use of our tax dollars would be to spend a little more to do a better and more expeditious job of inspecting our crucial food supply.

"Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected" by Brad Racino, MSNBC

Oct. 3, 2011, (http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44701433/ns/health-food_safety/#.Txcflm9SQhJ)

(As shipments rise, many say FDA can't ensure the food that ends up on your plate is safe.)

EAST LOS ANGELES, Calif.—At a sprawling warehouse here, two investigators from the U. S. Food and Drug Administration watched intently as 50 boxes of preserved bean curd from China were emptied into a grinding machine.

The monstrously loud apparatus worked its way through 1,800 glass bottles, grinding the glass and spewing out a stream of chunky yellow ooze that would be collected, treated and disposed of in the sewer system.

FDA investigators had decided that the bottles of bean curds were improperly heat-sealed and, as a result, were susceptible to harmful bacteria like botulism, which can be fatal.

The case of the destroyed bean curds was relatively straightforward: They had been flagged as suspect as soon as they arrived in port due to a defective heat seal and were sent directly to an FDA warehouse for testing.

That's not always how it happens.

The FDA's Los Angeles district is one of the busiest in the U. S., overseeing the inspection of more than half a million food shipments arriving through 24 ports of entry in the L.A. area. Through the port stream products like Cambodian rice by the ton, tapioca pearls from the Philippines, tea biscuits from China, sugar cane and fish from around the world.

In 2010, about 3,500 shipments here were refused entry because they were contaminated with filth, pesticides, drug residue or traces of salmonella, according to a News21 analysis of the FDA's database of import refusals. Some of the imports contained unsafe color additives or were mislabeled. And some were even poisonous.

Nationwide, the FDA said that last year it rejected nearly 16,000 food-related shipments out of more than 10 million that arrived in more than 320 ports.

"If it comes in here and it's bad," said Denise Williams, a supervisor in the FDA's Division of Import Operations in Southern California, "we're gonna get 'em."
Except when they don't.

Critics, including the U.S. Government Accountability Office, say the FDA is simply not up to the task of ensuring the safety of food imports, which are entering this country in ever-growing numbers. The FDA expects 24 million shipments of FDA-regulated goods to pass through the nation's ports of entry this year, up from 6 million a decade ago.

About this project

This three-part food safety series is the result of a partnership between msnbc.com and the Carnegie-Knight News21 program. The project, "How Safe is your Food?" was reported by 27 journalism students from Arizona State University, Harvard University, University of Maryland, University of Missouri and the University Nebraska.

During that time, the number of FDA investigators stayed constant at about 1,350. The agency began adding investigators in 2009 and now has about 1,800—still far short of the number required to keep up with the pace of imports.

In 2010, FDA inspectors physically examined 2.06 percent of all food-related imports. The FDA expects only 1.59 percent of all food imports to be examined this year and even less—only 1.47 percent—next year, according to its Office of Regulatory Affairs.

Which shipments get inspected is increasingly determined by a new computer system called PREDICT, or Predictive Risk-based Evaluation for Dynamic Import Compliance Targeting, that is now used at 70 percent of U.S. import operations at land, sea and air ports. It analyzes information such as a manufacturer's history with the agency, lab test results and even current weather patterns, assigning a risk-based score to each shipment to direct investigators toward the riskiest ones.

After a shipment is flagged, it's up to a person to investigate further. Investigators give top priority to the items with the highest scores and work their way down—at least, to the point they can with limited staff.

This summer, the FDA gave News21 unusual behind-the-scenes access at its largest operating district to show the ways in which front-line operations attempt to keep unsafe food from reaching American supermarket shelves and dinner tables.

Sensory tests

Bugs in your food? It's allowed!

1. Macaroni and noodle products: One insect fragment per gram.
2. Ground thyme: Less than 925 insect fragments per 10 grams.
3. Canned tomatoes: Nine or fewer fly eggs or four or fewer fly eggs and one maggot per 500 grams. (Source: FDA)

Steve Angold works out of a narrow lab at the FDA's new \$40 million testing facility in Irvine, Calif. He is one of about 25 FDA specialists across the country who rely on their senses of sight, touch, taste and smell to detect decomposition or filth in food products.

"It's either pass or fail," Angold said. "Ocean grimy smells would be passing; even stale or fishy odors would be passing."

But if the food smells like turnips or cabbage, it's probably spoiled, he said.

"The worst ones are fecal," Angold continued, the fish inches from his face. "Some people refer to it as baby diapers. I don't have kids, so ..."

Reaching the tail, Angold laid the fish on a sterilized countertop.

"There's nothing wrong with this fish," he announced. "It's pretty good."

Organoleptic testing—or the evaluation of a food's taste, appearance, smell and texture—is one of several methods the FDA uses to determine the safety of food products. Others include chemical and microbiological tests as well as tests to detect insects.

Ants in your sugar? Some may be OK

A few doors down from Angold, entomologist John Sedwick placed a sample of sugar cane under a microscope and moved the Petri dish slowly under the lens until he spotted black ants—some whole, some cut in half, all dead—among the particles of sugar.

The FDA is tolerant of ants and other field insects that get mixed in with foods prior to harvesting because they pose little threat to human health. If investigators are uncertain, they can consult the "Food Defect Action Levels," a manual that sets out exactly how many insect parts, larvae or animal hairs are acceptable.

"Other things like blowfly maggots, cockroaches, they carry a whole host of food borne pathogens," such as bacteria and viruses as well as parasites, Sedwick said, "so there's a very low tolerance for those kinds of insects."

Entomologists also look for "anything that a human would find repulsive or aesthetically displeasing," he said.

"I've had samples where I've found rat hair, shrew hair, bat hair ... beetles, maggots ... all in one sample," he said.

Those are the food products the FDA rejects, either ordering the food to be destroyed like the Chinese bean curd or returned to the country it came from.

Circumventing the system

The food inspection system is far from foolproof.

In order to avoid holding up commerce, food shipments often are allowed to proceed directly from a port to the importer. The FDA may decide to physically inspect a shipment only after it has been moved.

But once food products are in the hands of the importer, there are opportunities for fraud. To thwart investigators, importers may re-label a shipment or swap out the original product for something more likely to pass FDA inspection, said Williams, the FDA supervisor.

Sometimes importers will mislabel products they know will get scrutiny.

"And they do get clever," Williams said.

A section of the Long Beach warehouse called "the museum" houses hundreds of confiscated items that importers tried to slip into this country by calling them something other than what they are.

The counterfeit Nike shoes piled onto one table were labeled rice sticks, Williams said. These will be passed to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which might slap the importer with a fine.

FDA investigators admit they can't catch every risky import. There's just too much.

The FDA outlined some of the ways it is trying to keep up in a special report issued in July 2011, titled "Pathway to Global Product Safety and Quality." In the report, the agency said it has opened offices in several large food-exporting countries, including China, India and Costa Rica, and has boosted the number of inspections in other countries in an attempt to stop problems at the source.

Still, the report paints a gloomy picture of the FDA's ability to cope. "Despite ... recent improvements, FDA does not—nor will it—have the resources to adequately keep pace with the pressures of globalization," the report states.

Carl Nielsen, former director of the FDA's Office of Regulatory Affairs Division of Import Operations and Policy, said the biggest problem the FDA faces is an antiquated structure that focuses mostly on domestic food.

The FDA has about 1,800 investigators who oversee more than 44,000 U.S. food manufacturers and more than 100,000 additional registered food facilities, such as warehouses and grain elevators.

At the same time, the agency is responsible for nearly 200,000 foreign food facilities that have registered with the FDA in order to import the millions of food shipments that arrive in the U.S. each year.

With numbers like that, "Where would you want the people?" Nielsen said. "Would you want some people at the border? Well, there's very few."

FDA Public Affairs Officer Patricia El-Hinnawy said the number of investigators assigned to examine imported food shipments nationally is 277 full-time equivalents. That's just five more than in 2009. These employees do field exams, sample collections and conduct security reviews, among other things, at ports of entry around the country.

Nielsen said the FDA's food import operations are "still a bastard child" within the FDA. Until the agency sets up a separate, well-financed division devoted to food imports, inspections are "not going to happen effectively for a very, very long time," he said.

A new mandate

By the numbers: FDA in brief:

1. Budget: \$784 million.
2. Responsible for the safety of 80 percent of the nation's food supply.
3. Employs 1,900 investigators in the U.S.
4. Employs an additional 900 investigators in the greater Washington area.
5. Responsible for oversight of 44,000 U.S. food manufacturers, 100,000 additional registered food facilities and 200,000 registered foreign facilities.

The Food Safety Modernization Act, passed earlier this year, gives the FDA a new mandate to make certain food is safe for U.S. consumers. Among the requirements are stricter rules for imported foods and more inspections.

The law places more responsibility for food safety on foreign manufacturers. And it calls for the FDA to inspect at least 600 foreign food facilities within the next year and to double the number of inspections each year for the next five years. That would mean 19,200 foreign inspections in year six.

The FDA inspected 354 foreign food establishments in 2010 and estimates it will inspect 994 in 2011.

In its July report, the FDA said the 2011 goal might be attainable but not the rest.

"It would be impossible for FDA to complete 19,200 foreign food inspections in year six without a substantial increase in resources or a complete overhaul in the way it operates," the report said.

More resources also are needed for intelligence-gathering and technological improvements, such as a global data-information sharing system, the FDA report said.

Technology, Nielsen said, has long been the biggest weak spot in the FDA's ability to monitor food imports. In 2000, FDA officials came up with a list of 10 things they needed to better monitor imports, and seven of them had to do with technology, Nielsen said.

"And I promise you, they're still not done," he said.

Additional resources are unlikely as Congress cuts spending in an effort to reduce the nation's debt. A measure in the U.S. House of Representatives would cut \$285 million from the agency's 2012 budget, with \$35 million coming from food safety, according to the Agriculture Appropriations Bill.

Los Angeles District Director Alonza Cruse said the FDA has made major improvements over the past decade, including better communication and collaboration with other agencies such as U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the use of PREDICT, the new computer system that is helping pinpoint which shipments should be inspected. But while PREDICT is a powerful tool, the safety of food imports still lies largely in the hands of investigators like Denise Williams and scientists like Steve Angold.

Until someone invents a robot that can distinguish safe food from unsafe food, Cruse said, it's "a person who has to ultimately decide, yea or nay."

While tools may be able to help do that more quickly, he said, ultimately "it all comes down to a person."

20111004-02	07:59	GaryC	Re: "Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"
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Dear SteveB,

I am not sure this story is accurate. All of the meat products we import are inspected in Denmark to U.S.D.A. standards and then pre approved in the U.S. before they can ship. In addition, all of the pastry products we purchase in France are inspected in France to U.S.D.A. standards and the pre approved before we can ship to the U.S.. Even for samples, we have to get clearance. Even if the goods are not inspected in the foreign country to U.S. standards, I would suspect that in the vast majority of cases that there is an inspection in the foreign country and in the U.S..

Is it to U.S. standards? Is it 100% tested? Probably not but the same goes for U.S. food and restaurants.

[20111004-03](#) 08:14 SteveB Re: "Flood of Food Imported to U.S., But Only 2 Percent Inspected"

Dear GaryC,

You know, meat (and dairy products in another way) works a little differently. I know from my work in the industry that every meat plant in the U.S. has to have a U.S.D.A. inspector on-site. He has to approve everything. It's a system that has served us well, I think.

Our problem is that our sauces keep getting hung up in Miami for long periods of time, even though, for 20 years or so, they have never found one problem. They just don't seem to have the resources to do their job.

When you look at thing like this and the status of our national infrastructure, education, etc., you gotta wonder how squeezing more dollars and jobs out of a shrinking economy is going to be able to turn things around or make anything better. Not that we even have much choice at this juncture. We have been put into such a difficult position by the Bush years. That's a fact. A fact Obama and the Democrats can use to re-educate the people with no memories.

[20111004-04](#) 12:53 Pam Re: Occupy Wall St.

Dear SteveB,

Actually, I wasn't out in the streets. I was even in Angel Flight, the girls who socialized and paraded around with the ROTC guys. I can't believe I ever did that, but I thought it was socially cool. I quickly woke up to reality after I graduated (DePauw was pretty conservative when I was there—one reason I "have issues" with it) and opposed the war. As I told you, we adopted a baby from Viet Nam in 1974. He just turned 38. I feel about Iraq and Afghanistan pretty much the way I felt about Viet Nam—such a waste of lives and money and for what? Kudos to you for taking a stand early on.

I have this overwhelming feeling that the whole engine of capitalism is grinding up the world. I've always been a capitalist (with qualifications), and I still am, I guess, but I think it's gotten way out of control. It's become as destructive an ideology as communism was. We don't have gulags yet (unless you count Gitmo), but Big Brother is gaining in power every day. Who has any secrets left, if the govt. decides it wants to poke around? Who controls the whole shooting match if not the corporations? I am so glad to see—finally—a protest movement gathering steam. It's amazing how long it took the mainstream media to finally start talking about it. I wonder why that could be? (Heavy irony.) The system needs to be changed, for sure, but once the genie of revolution is out of the bottle, you never know what will happen. I don't want a complete breakdown, and I fear that might happen. I can't imagine living under oppression or fearing for my life because of who I am or what I believe, as so many ordinary people are today in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Israel, etc. It feels today like anything is possible—and not all good, to say the least.

I'm so glad to be in touch with your group. It really does help me feel less alone. This is so funny (not ha, ha), as I actually have a great life. I took a long walk in our beautiful city garden this morning, and everything was green and lovely. It's a bit off-putting that most of the folks there are old, white-haired ladies. I don't want to think of myself as one of them, but it's wonderful to have the leisure and the energy to get out and enjoy the world. I'm trying not to be such a sourpuss, as you can see.

I must go pick up my grandson. Adorable doesn't begin to describe him.

[20111004-05](#) 13:02 Dennis "The Big Picture: A 40-Year Scan of the Right-Wing Corporate Takeover of America"

from SteveB:

I'm so happy to see this movement of dissatisfaction grow! I love it when things work logically. Maybe, finally, people will remember who really has the power, though you might think the Arab Spring would have reminded them. But are we that brave and ballsy? Well, that remains to be seen. We appear to be nothing more than a nation of complete pu*sies, in every way, to me right now...people, government, business...all of it. Something's wrong!

Dear SteveB et al.,

Here's a good discussion of how and why we've gotten to where we are now.

"The Big Picture: A 40-Year Scan of the Right-Wing Corporate Takeover of America" by Don Hazen and Colin Greer, AlterNet

Oct. 3, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/152605/>)

At this moment, there are growing protests on Wall Street in Manhattan, in Boston at the Bank of America, and in cities around the country. These embryonic and creative efforts are targeting the greed of the banks, the collusion of the corporate class with their corrupt elected officials, the high level of unemployment, the huge burden of student loans in a time of diminished opportunities, the increasing numbers of poor and hungry people, and much more. These protests, along with those earlier in Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio, are signs of revival of a long tradition of popular revolt against excesses of wealth and the corporate class.

The new protests come after a long dark period—specifically the last 11 years of George W. Bush and Barack Obama—during which time conservatives have gained more power and ability to control the national debate than they have in the past 75 years. The current right-wing power presence, spiked by the corporate media's obsession with Tea Party protests, came most immediately as a result of the Great Recession caused by the housing bubble and obscene corruption of the banks. This crisis was exacerbated by large-scale anger about the subsequent bank bailout, and corporate-backed attacks on the health care reform package passed by Congress. But that is just part of the latest political news.

The conservative ascendancy is hardly an overnight phenomenon. Rather, it represents a dynamic shift in American politics that has taken place over more than 40 years, beginning in the 1970s. During this time, conservative billionaire donors, corporations and the Chamber of Commerce, all invested in conservative think-tanks and communications infrastructure, while Fox News, Rush Limbaugh and a broad and deep media network of right-wing pundits have come to dominate the public discourse.

Subsequently, the liberal/progressive side of the political equation has lost much of its influence from the period of the 1970s and early '80s. How this has happened over time is little understood. In fact, the lack of protest and effective organizing against the right wing during the Tea Party ascension especially has been a mystery to many, and a source of great frustration.

Colin Greer, a transplanted Brit, has observed and engaged in every phase of progressive politics. Greer is the author of a number of books (with his best-known being *The Great School Legend*), has been a professor at Brooklyn College of CUNY, and for many years has served as president of the New World Foundation, known in the philanthropic world for its commitment to supporting grassroots organizing and providing seed money for many of the most effective progressive political efforts over the last decades. Over this long period, Greer has had a cat-seat view of all the forces that have shaped our last 40-plus years. He has a big-picture take on the turmoil and politics of this period, as major shifts—globally, economically and culturally; the tectonic plates of change and reaction—have reshaped our world in ways we have yet to fully understand. AlterNet sat down with Colin Greer in his office in New York in late September.

Don Hazen: Why have conservatives succeeded so dramatically in this period, and liberals and progressives are arguably the weakest in decades?

Colin Greer: There is no single causal factor. The shaping of these two divergent paths begins in the 1980s when you had the last flourish of an expansive society. But the last three years of the '70s were characterized by stagflation and disappointment and took a great toll, forfeiting a real sense that the constant growth of openness in American society and economy was endlessly sustainable. Fast-forward to the present and we have the twin dominance of *austerity*, i.e.

eviscerating public spending as the solution to economic crises; and *aristocracy*, represented by the protected tax and profit oasis of the wealthiest 1 percent.

It's instructive to note that events in the U.S. are not in isolation. Back in the '60s and '70s when progressive movements were in ascendency, the liberation themes of the time were part of a global anti-colonial uprising, and broad disgust at the war in Vietnam. Today, trade policies and globalization means that the other major economies of the world are also in the grips of a greed and hyper-profit which is in the process of discarding hard won values, rights and decent living conditions.

DH: That was Carter and also the hostage crisis too at the end of the '70s, yes?

CG: Yeah, it's about how social and economic consciousness changed. Carter's inability to act effectively in the hostage crisis or to defeat stagflation reinforced a national feeling of malaise and weakness. That's why Reagan campaigned on "hope in America" versus Carter's kind of dismal, high-standing morality, an apparent inability to act from strength. It was the beginning of a long term of undermining the presumption of multi-dimensional social and economic expansion, which had flourished since World War II.

So in the 1980s you had Reagan, along with the last flourish of direct political action on the left and the last gasps of the global social change that characterized the 1960s and '70s; i.e. the fight against apartheid, which succeeded in turning the Reagan administration around to support the anti-apartheid/ divestment movement, and you had the Nuclear Freeze movement.

DH: These were the last grassroots successes of the left?

CG: Yes. Although one can never do a one to one equation, the Freeze was a factor in Reagan's shift in nuclear arms negotiations with the Russians and the anti-apartheid divestment strategies, fueled by a popular movement with strong student leadership, which created shantytowns on campuses throughout America, helped win that struggle.

But then there was a dramatic change in direction when the air traffic controllers went on strike. Reagan seized the moment, and fired the air traffic controllers, destroying PATCO, their union. That was the beginning of the end of the labor deal with capital; a deal that was carved out in the Cold War in which labor got negotiated settlements here at home for its support for the Cold War abroad. In a sense it was anti-red internationally and social democratic here in the United States. And that deal went through the beginning of the 1980s, until Reagan, responding to the conservative base, changed the ground rules. And with it, labor's guaranteed negotiating strength ended.

We have seen a diminishing power of labor since. And we've also seen a shrinking power of popular movements on the left as well, so that by the time we got to the invasion of Iraq, a million people in the street could be ignored. How different that was from the last gasps of enduring popular protest against Reagan's contra-aid and its illegal processes.

DH: Those demonstrations against the Iraq invasion seemed like a big deal at the time, a major accomplishment, and around the world as well.

CG: Yeah, but for only one day. What is required is the ability to constantly bring people out and not end it when there's no popular response. You need to get the news story, and push the politicians to shift. We're up against the kind of new politics in which they didn't shift and we didn't come out with continual resistance, and that inability to resist played out in the 1990s when you have a Democratic president who was disappointing over and over, with no popular mobilization against his deregulation of the finance industry or his welfare reform initiative.

DH: Is it possible to have a popular movement against a disappointing Democratic president?

CG: I think it was in 1992, but only theoretically; it didn't happen. By the 1990s, because progressives in a sense had been disciplined by the reduced power of labor, by the new power of the right, the visceral fear that Republicans would be worse, and the fact that a certain amount of administration figures came from progressive organizations and might still influence policy, all contributed to a lack of action against Clinton policies. And there is another crucial point: by the time we get to late 1980s and 1990s, social movements on the left were essentially demobilized into NGOs and legislative agendas, so progressive politics became more about winning elections, seeking legislative reform, and building not-for-profit institutions that represented progressive vision and options. There no longer was a base beyond labor, which was itself shrinking.

DH: How sudden was this shift from more popular movements to foundation-funded projects?

CG: It happened over time. The trends were growing in the early '70s because progressives had control over a lot of federal spending, and a lot of activists had access to all the major agencies. There was a kind of flourish of success and even progress under Nixon. Legislative efforts were working. We especially got environmental legislation, and it looked like the courts were on our side. Meanwhile the right, in earnest, started building both its base and its options, with think tanks, organizations and communications capacity. But by 1990, the left so to speak, except for labor, had become almost entirely dependent on foundation support, which was based in the IRS 501 (c) (3) tax structure which required grant recipients to be non-partisan. But it was influential at the level of government and so it felt like it could deliver through the lobbying capacity of NGOs and by winning in the electoral, legislative and judicial spheres.

In the '80s, when they saw the right-wing agenda through Reagan taking serious root, many groups worked on voter registration to expand the electorate, but were constrained again by the IRS rules. It took a Jesse Jackson presidential campaign as a reminder that you need a popular base to move an agenda and to build a popular base to undercut the climate of low taxes, high profits, and the growing transfer of public assets into private control. Jackson created a social movement—he went to organized farm workers, he worked with gay activists, he really did see that campaign as a progressive, social movement campaign.

But after Jackson ('84 and '88) that kind of campaign mobilization didn't happen again until Obama. And Jackson did exactly what Obama did. He demobilized his campaign agency. He turned into a kind of not-for-profit organization, and Obama turned it into the Democratic Party. But they are two moments—and it's interesting that both black figures produced the sense of a national movement. But the end of the Jackson campaign coincided with end of '80s, and that was where the Democratic Leadership Council, that Clinton led, emerged strongly and represented the shift to a "new progressive politics" where they made progressive mean something else. Imagine if the Jackson campaign had remained mobilized in relation to the Clinton administration and/or if the Obama campaign had remained live going into the 2010 elections when victories on the right were won by small margins.

DH: I assume when you say progressive came to mean something else, it meant moderate?

CG: In a sense once you had Murdoch and Fox and a growing conservative infrastructure, it labeled the DLC—transfused Democratic party—as the left. Any real left was marginalized into virtual invisibility and anonymity, the center was moved significantly to the right, and progressives increasingly pushed into protecting eroding rights and benefits, without a political infrastructure or national leadership of its own. In the electoral arena, in the media, and in the mainstream foundation world, moderate was called left or liberal, and leaders in pursuit of public office more and more have eschewed the liberal label by moving ever so profoundly to the right.

DH: So the middle became the left, and the conservatives keep moving successfully to the right—a trend we have seen reach the present moment of the far, far right influencing the political process. And there has been no pendulum swinging back, that's for sure.

CG: Yes, and one of the critical ingredients in this huge shift rightward over the last few decades, as I inferred earlier, was the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union had a profound effect on two things: 1) the idea that there was a left alternative, and that there was a path to reform that had the best interest of the public at large as its highest priority, and had the "state" involved directly in business and the interest of public; and 2) the shift of states in the Soviet orbit to capitalism basically made capitalism the world model. So then it was a question of what you did in the framework of capitalism, not challenging its framework. That's been the umbrella for China, India, Brazil. All over, left groups moved into the electoral arena, and didn't challenge the capitalist model. As a result, we now have a global context that advances austerity and aristocracy in support of a global capitalism that has declared war on the social contract.

In the Scandinavian model, they're more responsive to public conditions, but not to challenging capitalism itself. I'm not arguing that we need a left to challenge capitalism because it isn't clear that we do have that option. But what we're faced with now is that any system that has monopoly status moves toward tyranny. So we're now seeing that 40 years of the rogue rise of the right has produced a tyrannical right. All of the conditions, the improvements around tolerance and cultural openness and responsibility for the poorest of the poor, the perspective that a healthy society is one that has a priority to care for all its people—those standards have so diminished so that you have candidates now talking about the fact that people may have to starve. And that's now a legitimate thing to say. Killing gets cheered by the GOP grassroots. The four Republican debates so far are really interesting because they indicate something really seriously bad.

DH: The rise of the Tea Party, aided by its intense promotion by the corporate media, has given the public the sense that there is a powerful angry grassroots movement underway. How does that play out?

CG: Tyranny grows first of all in the establishment of a legitimization of its point of view, even on the margins. You can see it in Swift Boat attacks on John Kerry, a war hero, and with Murdoch and Roger Ailes growing Fox. There is the constant testing of a model that is very similar in tone to the most successful moment of progressives in the 1960s. It reaches into high levels of rhetorical hysteria. When we were on the streets 40 years ago there was a kind of hysteria—police were the enemy. There's a similar level of hysteria now. What that means is basically that on the road to power, most people committed to power will use the "crowd"—they construct a crowd. You need the crowd, even if it's only a tiny fraction of the population. If the crowd is visible through spectacle then you start conditioning the public's readiness to act, and you encourage readiness of others not to act.

So in the present political reality, you have the convergence of the crowd's mentality, with the readiness to be tyrannical in leadership, with leaders in Congress like Jim DeMint, Eric Cantor, and of course funding for it all from the Kochs. This tyrannical style of leadership has grown through the Bush years to a dramatic level, and has not been effectively challenged by Obama. You have the growth of the crowd and the paralysis of public at large. When you look at poll data there is no way in which the public agrees with the Tea Party or with right-wing political figures, but it is paralyzed, and paralyzed serially over time.

A million people on the street didn't get listened to over the Iraq invasion, or the defeat of Kerry through usurping of the public stage by Swift Boat in 2000. Then the inability of Gore to fight for his election followed by the Supreme Court decision which gave us eight years of Bush. The choice to fight or not is rarely a popularly held prerogative until the public bursts forth as perhaps in the Arab Spring. Until such moments, leadership is top down, especially in the electoral arena, where money and incumbency determine authority and good judgment.

The Tea Party is the latest in a series of experiments—remember the Promise Keepers and the Christian Coalition back in the '80s—to advance right-wing politics from the margins to a new center. We've been holding them off time and time again but not by producing anything for the future. Instead we have benefitted from the cultural victories of the '70s and '80s that have become enshrined in entertainment conventions and interpersonal lifestyles. In both realms we have taken great strides to persuade Americans that young people should have the vote at 18, that women are equal, that abortion is pretty much something you can argue rhetorically but hard to lose practically, but now we're losing ground on everything. The death penalty for a while looked like we were humane, we don't just kill people—we've lost ground on that. We didn't go to war casually—we've lost ground on that pretty disastrously.

DH: Without tension of competing systems, is there an inevitable march to the extreme? Is there a theory that most extreme seems to always win out?

CG: The fact is, a society grows into tyranny over time as the most powerful cultivate extreme crowd behavior, which, unless resisted can have a contagion effect into the public at large, paralyzing resistance and recruiting frightened supporters. While clearly minority politics, the Tea Party zealots who cheered at death and execution in the Republican debates much as Sarah Palin once called on us to "Drill, baby, drill!" ought to be a reminder and a warning. But I don't know any mainstream media that treated the cheers for the death penalty and barbarous inhumanity to the sick as a story truly worth engaging. The crowd is the critical thing that tyranny requires eventually—the mobilization of the crowd. With recessions every 10 years, the circumstances periodically creates the possibility for angry people to be organized into a crowd. Progressives did that. The New Deal was about using the circumstance of the depression to organize a progressive crowd.

DH: Mostly organized by the Communist Party. But we have no capacity to do that now?

CG: and the Socialist party. But there was a plethora of organizations. And no, we have no apparent capacity do that now, although we desperately need it. New protests and organizing efforts are definitely sparks of hope. But that kind of action is primarily on the right.

DH: It's a resource question, too?

CG: Yes, and it's also a planning and leadership question. The Socialist party, Catholic Workers, Communists—they were planners, they had an agenda not limited by electoral and legislative politics, and not dependent on foundation resources for scale. Forty years ago a dozen small progressive foundations could help support strong action and analysis. The big

checks now come from professionalized, very mainstream foundations that do not, as was the case with the earlier funders, institutionally identify with a progressive world view.

DH: The Kochs write the big checks for the right today. So is the weakness primarily an issue of class—resources staying in the educated class?

CG: No. It is that and it is something deeper, more psychological. When I was in England a bit ago, I was talking to a Syrian cab driver, this was in the middle of the Arab Spring. I said, why is it that you've got (this was before the riots) English kids protesting at Trafalgar Square against tuition increases? You've got women in Rome—a million people—protesting against Silvio Berlusconi. The next day they've all gone home, the kids have gone home. In America we had the resistance against the Iraq war, they went home. But in Egypt they came back every single day. In Yemen they come back every day. And he said, "Well, we in the West have freedom. They don't have the freedom."

So there is some way in which we have the consciousness here that we have something that could be lost that we don't want to risk. In the Middle East, there is nothing left to be lost.

DH: So fast-forward to the present. How has the right-wing philosophy which has dramatically increased its influence, changed the nature of government?

CG: What we are up against is the constant reduction of compassion as the highest priority in how you make public policy and deliver public goods. The right wants to take public space. They want to take public resources. In response, progressives get lost in the message of trying to re-instill belief in government. With the government argument, I think we're missing the point, both in terms of compassion but also that it's not about belief in government. It's about who owns government and what it's for. Despite the right's anti-government rhetoric, their practice is pro government. But it is government for them. So we must challenge the principle of who owns government. We are saying they've diminished the belief in government, but why does Rick Perry want to become president of the United States and, in effect, CEO of the nation's investment engine, that is, government.

It's not because he doesn't believe in government, it's because he wants to control government. They want to control and privatize government resources. Capitalism is exhausted here. It needs more public money. It's always needed public money, it needs more now. When you look at the growth of capitalism in America from railroads all the way to the computer, it's publicly funded. I say to people what do Velcro and GPS have in common? They were both created by the military. And who is making a profit from that? Does the public get any return for its investment?

But if we had a conception of government that was not only tax agent, service deliverer, but also an investor in the economy like a bank, and it was entitled to a return just the way a bank gets return, we'd have plenty money. But we don't treat ourselves as the investor. But every major technological growth has been publicly invested in. If we were a shareholder in Microsoft because we invented the computer, it would be a very different terrain. So the reinvention of capitalism is the issue, and the reinvention of government is what is happening. So capitalism is directly claiming public investment now.

DH: Can you provide a current example of the privatization impulse?

CG: Charter schools are a very good case study for the impulse. Forget anti-unionism; forget whether or not they work, because they don't. But even if they did they are not cheaper. Charter schools are simply the transfer of public money to profit-making activity. That's the system they are steadily building—prisons, schools, public parks, there's a conversion of the whole system into an investment of capital which is a major extension of what's always been true.

It's a way of government supporting the expenditure of money, but it has been organized so that it stays in private control. And in private control it's become increasingly privileged in how the decisions are made. So you've got hedge fund people now funding charter schools—they are the largest engine behind charter schools. And so they care about education. Some of them even believe public schools are so bad we need this alternative.

But there's not a lot of thinking about whether profit is compatible with learning. If profit is the major goal and keeping costs down is the major goal, then how do you have learning be the major goal? That's exactly the contradiction. If you're going to have learning be the major goal, you have to invest in it like you would a war. You don't in a war say the major goal is how to make profit and we'll only fight the war according to the profit.

DH: With the enormous investment in military arms, and more recently mercenaries, it seems like we are headed there.

CH: Well, that is one reason we have more war. But in the end hopefully you can't sell to the public that the measure of our success here is profit. And in education, we're saying basically you can trust profit. The market will give you better results. There's no reason to believe that. The public hasn't accepted it, although it's getting pushed on them because of the power that's established in the state houses. Also, what's not well understood, is there are three kinds of charters. So the privatization has three identities and they're being merged. One is public school experiments with the charter system. The second is not-for-profit charters run by not-for-profit organizations are closer to the base. The third is the for-profit charter.

The first two models are perfectly fine. We have private schools and parochial schools which have tax exemptions so they're only quasi private. Those two forms are part of the American education fabric, so having another thing called charters wouldn't be a problem. It's nice to experiment with different forms of government organization and curriculum. But the for-profit charter is a very different entity and to allow it to be conflated with the other two is basically to let the Trojan horse in.

DH: As a longtime foundation executive, how has philanthropy exacerbated the progressive weakness?

CG: Foundations mostly gave money according to sociology or class, so people gave money to organizations led by people most like them, or slowly there was entry of people who were not like them but were being identified by people like them, and also very little money when you think about it. If you take the most successful community based organization in philanthropy at community based building level, it's probably SCOPE in Los Angeles.

And they went from a \$5,000 grant to its founder from New World Foundation to a \$3 million, maybe a \$4 million budget, which took 25 years to get to. We have a number of very strong local and state organizations that have built powerful bases to influence local politics, pioneering such inventions as "living wage," and "community benefits." But to date this is a record of policy reform and some electoral victories for local leaders, all of which is very important. It is, however, not yet a coherent, comprehensive and compelling base for challenging the structural realignment of capitalism in our time.

DH: What are the consequences of that lack of a base to challenge the excesses of capitalism?

CG: So middle-income workers and people in impoverished communities are all under serious attack by this realignment, and are not yet organized in an aggressive agenda of their own within a worldview they share. I think there's a sense that we have more to lose than to gain in such action at this time, but time may be running out on that one. Most people do have a certain level of freedom, they have a lot of harassment—but they have a certain level of freedom. And for the average African American who is now 25—they have family that experienced the change so they are freer than they were.

They don't get off the street curb when they're coming up to a white person. They can be on the street with a white date or partner. There have been significant changes, not necessarily lasting changes, but changes that make you feel you've got something. The real danger is now that the economy can't produce the benefits it was producing, and the greed in capitalism has gone to such an extreme, that the Captains of capitalism seem not to be concerned about the social order dangers that the extreme inequalities create, which opens the gates to fascism.

When you have the a tyrannical crowd, you have the tendency to tyranny, you have the crowd behaving the way they did in those four Republican debates. So while they're only a minority, they're setting a tone. In the first debate nobody was willing to say that a dying child, a very ill child, should get medical care. In the second debate you've got cheering for the death penalty. In the third debate you've got the call to kill, for a young man who's on life support. And in the fourth debate the gay soldier is booed. So you've got this extreme hysteria that is not being challenged.

DH: So you can imagine serious political repression here in the U.S.? Where is the hope?

CG: I think we know what's going to come down. I think people know. People are afraid. There's an implicit fear. And also there are moments when spontaneity breaks out. Who knows, we may be lucky enough that spontaneity e.g. at Occupy Wall Street that will help produce a social movement. And all that's been funded and developed will be ready to move. We don't have that now. There was a kind of serial violence that you couldn't have predicted, when Martin Luther King was assassinated. The Nuclear Freeze movement was not predictable when it suddenly flourished. You can't predict them. But it's obvious why after they happen.

So we don't know that we don't have the ground for something major to happen. In almost every state, strong organizations have been developed that might well be the basis for movement capacity when forces outside of their own terrain call them to new and unified action. If one looked at the black churches before the Civil Rights Movement flourishes of the 1960s, they probably would not have looked as strong one by one as they did when called to unified action. So too with their leaders. Indeed, so too with the Tea Party and right-wing movements. The external call for the latter has been heavy duty private money and a driving corporate agenda that is committed to reversing the deals it made since the 1930's.

But what's observable is the right has established an ideology and a worldview, a sense of what's right and what's wrong that has captured enough of public to dominate news with visible activism, and to paralyze public at large. That doesn't mean they can hold onto it, but that's the phenomenon were facing. The economy has no ability to buy the public back into the equation. This recent disaster relief controversy is an example. We are unable to buy back into the equation of what looked like we had won forever—that is the public good. We've lost a major piece of the ideology that was built over 40 or 50 years—that we care about people in pain. If we don't have the ideology that we care about people in pain as your basic ethical compass, then you have the kill mentality. Because we're always balancing between compassion and fear. If compassion doesn't dominate and you don't have resources to feel you can be compassionate without paying a high price yourself, then you're going to turn to fear to protect what you've got, or reach your hand out for what you can get.

I think the health care debate is an interesting case to consider in all this. Obviously, the social benefit is intrinsic to a progressive perspective. The kind of health care reform we've received is, for a variety of reasons, insufficient and insecure. Foundation funding for advancing public education and lobbying ran to the millions of dollars but it was all silo policy oriented and for the most part, top down. If that kind of money could have been used to help build a comprehensive foundational commitment to social welfare and organizational capacity, a partial achievement might well have helped produce a powerful movement advance.

DH: Does that loss of the moral compass, along with the fear, have to translate into passivity? How do we combat that?

CG: Well, I don't know that were not doing some of what is necessary. We have to reinvest in the ideology... lots of organizations have gotten lost in the idea that you have to invest in resurrecting belief in government. This is about messages. Elections may be fought on messages. Social movements are about consciousness. We have still to invest psychically, financially and organizationally in rebuilding a shared consciousness for a threshold number of Americans that is characterized in the idea that we want a compassionate society and that government is the best vehicle to deliver that.

One thing I didn't mention about the '80s that the assault on government that Reagan led, the left created earlier. We talked about problems of welfare system, about the ineffectiveness of the education system—that was us. Cloward and Piven, me, everybody. We undermined that system. We didn't have a sense, probably because we were young, that you win a victory and then you evolve the maturity of that victory. We wanted it to be correct, and the right will suffer the same hubris—they're moving way beyond their ideological reach, beyond the ability to deliver it.

DH: So, what happens in the interim? What about political repression?

CG: As Eric Cantor said, "People could starve." He said, "If you haven't saved for a rainy day yourself, that's your responsibility."

That's the opposite of compassion; that generates fear. And if you have violence on the street, they will have their own excuse for political repression. If there is an excess of even the right-wing on the street you could have the excuse of police intervention that looks like it's in public interest. But we have work to do, not least is to protect the moment. By that I mean, we should give serious thought about the impact of colluding in the electoral defeat of this president by undermining him publicly and reducing his viability as a candidate. The alternative is truly dangerous.

At the same time, we must think of ourselves in a political era that calls for breaking from the conventions of recent political discourse that has narrowed our social and political vision. It's time to name what is happening in our country without hysteria, but to be clear that the next elections are part of a struggle for a social and cultural threshold that will determine the quality of life and democracy in this country.

And we need to keep in mind what's always been true in the politics of social movements—they are the province of the young. Just look for example at how the brave young people in the Dream Act campaigns have actually won victories

against inhumane ICE practices. They took and they take risks. Now, as other young people are stepping up to make powerful statements, take risks, try new tactics, they need our support and understanding.

(Don Hazen is the executive editor of AlterNet. Colin Greer is president of the New World Foundation in New York. Among his books is *A Call to Character* (HarperCollins, 1995).)

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20111004-06 16:26 SteveB Re: "The Big Picture"
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from "The Big Picture: A 40-Year Scan of the Right-Wing Corporate Takeover of America" by Don Hazen and Colin Greer, AlterNet, Oct. 3, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/152605/>)

...we must challenge the principle of who owns government. We are saying they've [the Republicans] diminished the belief in government, but why does Rick Perry want to become president of the United States and, in effect, CEO of the nation's investment engine, that is, government?

It's not because he doesn't believe in government, it's because he wants to control government. They want to control and privatize government resources. Capitalism is exhausted here. It needs more public money. It's always needed public money, it needs more now. When you look at the growth of capitalism in America from railroads all the way to the computer, it's publicly funded. I say to people, what do Velcro and GPS have in common? They were both created by the military. And who is making a profit from that? Does the public get any return for its investment?

But if we had a conception of government that was not only tax agent, service deliverer, but also an investor in the economy like a bank, and it was entitled to a return just the way a bank gets return, we'd have plenty of money. But we don't treat ourselves as the investor. But every major technological growth has been publicly invested in. If we were a shareholder in Microsoft because we invented the computer, it would be a very different terrain. So the reinvention of capitalism is the issue, and the reinvention of government is what is happening. So capitalism is directly claiming public investment now.

We don't even get the public royalties from mineral rights and minerals that almost all other countries demand from corporate exploiters. We don't tax imports created with near-slave labor and dreadful pollution. Instead, we shutter our own factories. We give the rich a free ride, essentially. These are now our public policies, even with Obama as President.

Such a perilous slope we have descended, my friends...

20111004-07 18:14 Dennis "Top Five Reasons Why the Occupy Wall Street Protests Embody Values of the Real Boston Tea Party"
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Getting the facts straight about Tea Parties...

"Top Five Reasons Why the Occupy Wall Street Protests Embody Values of the Real Boston Tea Party" by Lee Fang, ThinkProgress

Oct. 4, 2011, (<http://www.truth-out.org/top-five-reasons-why-occupy-wall-street-protests-embody-values-real-boston-tea-party/1317739240>) (<http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/10/03/333925/top-5-reasons-why-the-occupy-wall-street-protests-embody-values-of-the-real-boston-tea-party/?mobile=nc>)

In recent years, the Boston Tea Party has been associated with a right-wing movement that supports policies favoring powerful corporations and the wealthy. As ThinkProgress has reported, lobbyists¹ and Republican front groups² have driven the current manifestation of the Tea Party to push for giveaways to oil companies and big businesses.

However, the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations picking up momentum across the country better embody the values of the original Boston Tea Party. In the late 18th century, the British government became deeply entwined with the interests of the East India Trading Company, a massive conglomerate that counted British aristocracy as shareholders. Americans,

upset with a government that used the colonies to enrich the East India Trading Company, donned Native American costumes and boarded the ships belonging to the company and destroyed the company's tea. In the last two weeks, as protesters have gathered from New York to Los Angeles to protest corporate domination over American politics, a true Tea Party movement may be brewing:

1. The Original Boston Tea Party Was a Civil Disobedience Action Against a Private Corporation.

In 1773, agitators blocked the importation of tea by East India Trading Company ships across³ the country. In Boston harbor, a band of protesters led by Samuel Adams boarded the corporation's ships and dumped the tea into the harbor. No East India Trading Company employees were harmed, but the destruction of the company's tea is estimated to be worth up to \$2 million⁴ in today's money. The Occupy Wall Street protests have targeted⁵ big banks like Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, as well as multinational corporations like GE with sit-ins and peaceful rallies.

2. The Original Boston Tea Party Feared That Corporate Greed Would Destroy America.

As Professor Benjamin Carp has argued⁶, colonists perceived the East India Trading Company as a "fearsome monopolistic company that was going to rob them blind and pave the way maybe for their enslavement." A popular pamphlet called *The Alarm* agitated for a revolt against the East India Trading Company by warning that the British corporation would devastate America⁷ just as it had devastated South Asian colonies: "Their Conduct in Asia, for some Years past, has given simple Proof, how little they regard the Laws of Nations, the Rights, Liberties, or Lives of Men. [...] And these not being sufficient to glut their Avarice, they have, by the most unparalleled Barbarities, Extortions, and Monopolies, stripped the miserable Inhabitants of their Property, and reduced whole Provinces to Indigence and Ruin."

3. The Original Boston Tea Party Believed Government Necessary to Protect Against Corporate Excess.

Smithsonian historian Barbara Smith has noted⁸ that Samuel Adams believed that oppression could occur when governments are too weak. As Adams explained in a Boston newspaper, government should exist "to protect the people and promote their prosperity." Patriots behind the Tea Party revolt believed "rough economic equality was necessary to maintaining liberty," says Smith. Occupy Wall Street protesters demand⁹ a country that invests in education, infrastructure, and jobs.

4. The Original Boston Tea Party Was Sparked by a Corporate Tax Cut for a British Corporation.

The Tea Act, a law by the British Parliament exempting tea imported by the East India Trading Company from taxes and allowing the corporation to directly ship its tea to the colonies for sale, is credited with setting off the Boston Tea Party. The law was perceived as an effort by the British to bailout the East India Trading Company by shutting off competition from American shippers. George R.T. Hewes, one of the patriots who boarded the East India Trading Company ships and dumped the tea⁷, told a biographer that the East India Trading Company had twisted the laws so "it was no longer the small vessels of private merchants, who went to vend tea for their own account in the ports of the colonies, but, on the contrary, ships of an enormous burthen, that transported immense quantities of this commodity." Occupy Wall Street demands¹⁰ the end of corporate tax loopholes as well as the enactment of higher taxes on billionaires and millionaires.

5. The Original Boston Tea Party Wanted a Stronger Democracy.

There is a common misconception that the Boston Tea Party was simply a revolt against taxation. The truth is much more nuanced, and there were many factors behind the opposition to the East India Company and the British government. Although the colonists resented taxes levied⁸ by a distant British Parliament, in the years preceding the Tea Party, the Massachusetts colony had levied taxes several times to pay for local services. The issue at hand was representation and government accountable to the needs of the American people. Patrick Henry and other patriots organized the revolutionary effort by claiming that legitimate laws and taxes could only be passed by legislatures elected by Americans. According to historian Benjamin Carp, the protesters in Boston perceived that the British government's actions were set by the East India Trading Company. "As Americans learned more about the provisions of the new East India Company laws, they realized that Parliament would sooner lend¹¹ a hand to the Company than the colonies," wrote Carp.

Links:

¹[http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2009/04/14/37536/lobbying-clients-teaparties/.](http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2009/04/14/37536/lobbying-clients-teaparties/)

²[http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/09/06/312478/koch-admits-tea-party-gop-gotv/.](http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/09/06/312478/koch-admits-tea-party-gop-gotv/)

³http://books.google.com/books?id=XvAQAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA374&lpg=PA374&dq=charleston+east+india+company+rot&source=bl&ots=Fu29FF4zpl&sig=zBJN4qsS1Ddm1-S_XJs1Czk-7nU&hl=en&ei=KMaITrrCLK3diALqtbyLDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1∓ved=0CB4Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=charleston%20east%20india%20company%20rot&f=false.

⁴<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703673604575550510314664790.html>.

⁵http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/01/bank-of-america-protests_n_990100.html.

⁶<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2031687,00.html>.

⁷<http://www.thomhartmann.com/blog/2009/04/real-boston-tea-party-was-against-wal-mart-1770s>.

⁸<http://hnn.us/articles/134859.html>.

⁹<https://occupywallst.org/forum/proposed-list-of-demands-for-occupy-wall-st-moveme/>.

¹⁰<https://occupywallst.org/forum/specific-demand-and-action-list-for-washington-dc/>.

¹¹<http://books.google.com/books?id=upd6d3UDfTgC&dq=benjamin+carp+tea+party+corrupt&sitesec=reviews>.

20111005-01 03:11 SteveB "Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"
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Maybe it's time to re-think the wars...

Obama, where are you, dude? Why do you always have to do Bush's dirty work? Stop!

"Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes" by Robert Burns, AP

Oct. 5, 2011, (<http://news.yahoo.com/poll-1-3-vets-sees-iraq-afghan-wars-040253311.html>)

(http://www.northjersey.com/news/international/100511_Poll_1_in_3_vets_sees_Iraq_Afghan_wars_as_wastes.html)

(WASHINGTON) One in three U.S. veterans of the post-9/11 military believes the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were not worth fighting, and a majority think that after 10 years of combat America should be focusing less on foreign affairs and more on its own problems, according to an opinion survey released Wednesday.

The findings highlight a dilemma for the Obama administration and Congress as they struggle to shrink the government's huge budget deficits and reconsider defense priorities while trying to keep public support for remaining involved in Iraq and Afghanistan for the longer term.

Nearly 4,500 U.S. troops have died in Iraq and about 1,700 in Afghanistan. Combined war costs since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks have topped \$1 trillion.

The poll results presented by the Pew Research Center portray post-9/11 veterans as proud of their work, scarred by warfare and convinced that the American public has little understanding of the problems that wartime service has created for military members and their families.

The survey also showed that post-9/11 veterans are more likely than Americans as a whole to call themselves Republicans and to disapprove of President Barack Obama's performance as commander in chief. They also are more likely than earlier generations of veterans to have no religious affiliation.

The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan organization that studies attitudes and trends, called the study the first of its kind. The results were based on two surveys conducted between late July and mid-September. One polled 1,853 veterans, including 712 who had served in the military after 9/11 but are no longer on active duty. Of the 712 post-9/11 veterans, 336 served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The other polled 2,003 adults who had not served in the military.

Nearly half of post-9/11 veterans said deployments strained their relationship with their spouses, and a similar share reported problems with their children. On the other hand, 60 percent said they and their families benefited financially from having served abroad in a combat zone. Asked for a single word to describe their experiences, the war veterans offered a mixed picture: "rewarding," "nightmare," "eye-opening," "lousy."

There are about 98,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, where the conflict began with a U.S.-led invasion on Oct. 7, 2001. Obama campaigned for the presidency in 2008 on getting out of Iraq and ramping up the military campaign in Afghanistan. He is on track to have all U.S. troops out of Iraq by the end of this year, and in July he announced that he would pull 10,000 troops out of Afghanistan this year and 23,000 more by next September.

The Pew survey found that veterans are ambivalent about the net value of the wars, although they generally were more positive about Afghanistan, which has been a more protracted but less deadly conflict for U.S. forces. One-third of post-9/11 veterans said neither war was worth the sacrifices; that was the view of 45 percent in the separate poll of members of the general public.

Fifty percent of veterans said Afghanistan was worth it, whereas the poll of civilians put it at 41 percent.

Among veterans, 44 percent said Iraq was worth it. That compares with 36 percent in the poll of civilians.

Of the surveyed former service members who were seriously wounded or knew someone who was killed or seriously wounded, 48 percent said the war in Iraq was worth fighting, compared with 36 percent of those veterans who had no personal exposure to casualties.

Exposure to casualties had an even larger impact on attitudes toward the war in Afghanistan. 55 percent of those exposed to casualties said Afghanistan has been worth the cost to the U.S., whereas 40 percent of those who were not exposed to casualties held that same view.

Pew said its survey results found "isolationist inclinations" among post-9/11 war veterans. About 6-in-10 said the United States should pay less attention to problems overseas and instead concentrate on problems at home. In a Pew survey conducted earlier this year, a similar share of the general public agreed.

The survey also reflected what many view as a troublesome cultural gap between the military and the general public. Although numerous polls have shown that Americans hold the military in high regard, the respondents in the Pew research acknowledged a lack of understanding of what military life entails.

Only 27 percent of adult civilians said the public understands the problems facing those in uniform, and the share of veterans who said so is even lower—21 percent.

20111005-02 08:44 SteveG Re: "Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"
--

Dear SteveB,

Random thoughts bring out the facts that the costs of rebuilding, the cost of other nations, the cost of Iraq and Afghan citizen lives, the cost of paying contractors, the cost of no mechanism established to account for expenditures. No plan for getting out of either country, no plan for provision of medical care of the wounded, no provision for retraining of returning servicemen. The list could on and on. We learned nothing from the Russian 10 year experience in Afghanistan. We learned nothing from our experience in Vietnam. As a nation I don't think we are very bright.

The economy and housing market falls apart in 2008. As people of the nation we do nothing. Unemployment rises. We watch Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, etc. and their demonstrations and their results. So we decide to do something thus Occupy Wall Street, etc. Last night I watched the news on ABC, NBC, and CBS and saw no mention of the demonstrations. Oh yeah, I forgot they are all owned by large corporations.

It was time to re-think the whole thing years ago—why are we so late in starting the discussion? Oh yeah I forgot, there is a lot of money to be made in war.

20111005-03 12:49 SteveB Re: "Poll: 1 in 3 Vets See Iraq, Afghan Wars as Wastes"

Dear SteveG,

Just what Eisenhower warned us about. You know, he was kind of a modern George Washington, only in a more international way. And what he and our parents helped give birth to after WWII should have worked better and lasted longer than this. You're right, years ago we let them (our enemies, the uber-rich, the military-industrial complex) take the prize.

But if Bush had done a good job, if he had been intelligent and aware, it was during his critical 8-year watch, that the solving of problems could have begun or been accomplished, but everything was only made much worse. That was really such a crucial historical time, we know now. Nothing was that difficult to fix or unfixable before then.

Now they want us to elect another Republican President. LOL!

20111006-01 06:31 SteveB "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest One Percent of Americans"

Money money money...

This is originally from Dennis, but I thought everyone should see this up close and personal...

Now, I'm not prejudiced against the rich...why, some of my best friends are rich... We need rich people. Some people even deserve to be rich.

But the rich, as a group, are out for only themselves. They don't remember that they are the mere product of a society, not the creator and owner of that society. It's about time they were identified as a group...as the enemy of the working class people of America. They don't want to preserve the American way of life...our educational system, our disappearing freedom, our limited opportunities, our very minimal safety net, our dream of a better life for our children, a little health care, maybe just a job that can actually support a person. Do you think the poor welfare recipients of America shipped all the jobs to other countries? The rich don't even think they should have to pay their fair share of taxes. They don't even want to pay what the middle-class pays.

And the masses of poor people who result from this selfishness...well, f*ck them! Right?

Maybe it's about time we let the rich and the government know who the boss is?

"5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest One Percent of Americans" by Zaid Jilani, ThinkProgress

Oct. 4, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/152601/>)

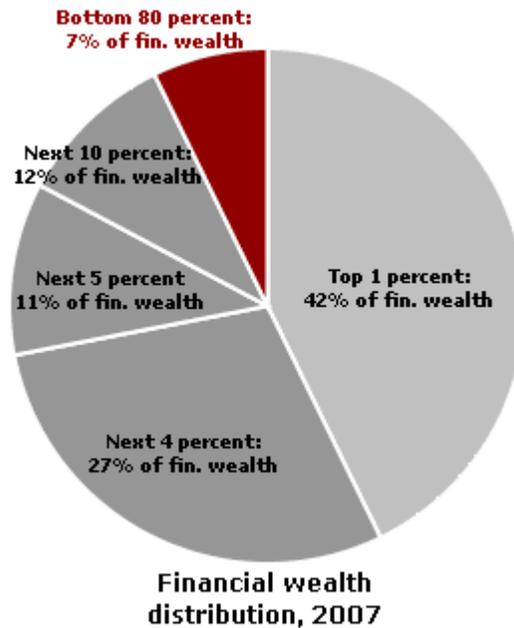
(It may shock you to learn exactly how wealthy this top 1 percent of Americans is.)

As the ongoing occupation of Wall Street by hundreds of protesters enters its third week—and as protests spread to other cities such as Boston and Los Angeles—demonstrators have endorsed a new slogan: "We are the 99 percent." This slogan refers to an economic struggle between 99 percent of Americans and the richest 1 percent of Americans, who are increasingly accumulating a greater share of the national wealth to the detriment of the middle class.

It may shock you to learn exactly how wealthy this top 1 percent of Americans is. ThinkProgress has assembled five facts about this class of super-rich Americans:

1. The Top 1 Percent of Americans Owns 40 Percent of the Nation's Wealth.

As Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz points out, the richest 1 percent of Americans now own 40 percent of the nation's wealth. Sociologist William Domhoff illustrates this wealth disparity using 2007 figures where the top 1 percent owned 42 percent of the country's financial wealth (total net worth minus the value of one's home). How much does the bottom 80 percent own? Only 7 percent. As Stiglitz notes, this disparity is much worse than it was in the past, as just 25 years ago the top 1 percent owned 33 percent of national wealth.



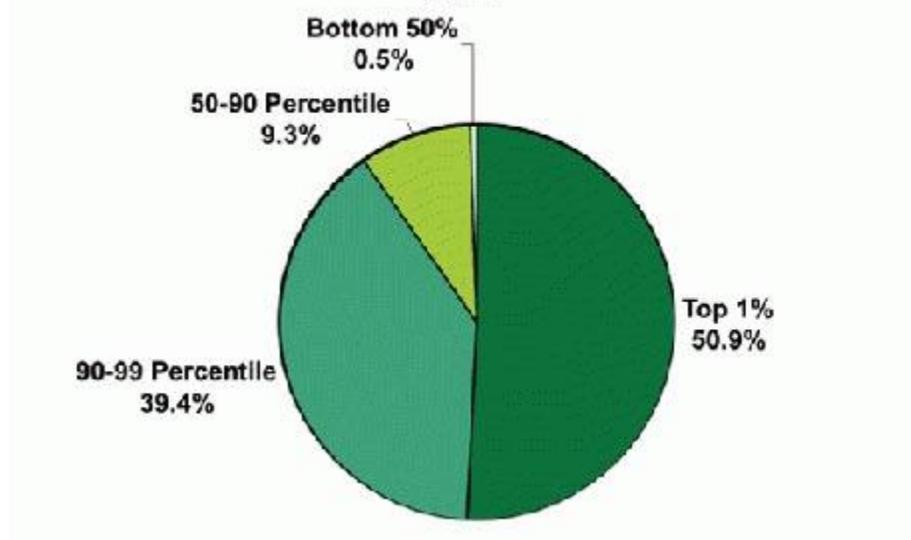
2. The Top 1 Percent of Americans Take Home 24 Percent of National Income.

While the richest 1 percent of Americans take home almost a quarter of national income today, in 1976 they took home just 9 percent—meaning their share of the national income pool has nearly tripled in roughly three decades.

3. The Top 1 Percent Of Americans Own Half of the Country's Stocks, Bonds and Mutual Funds.

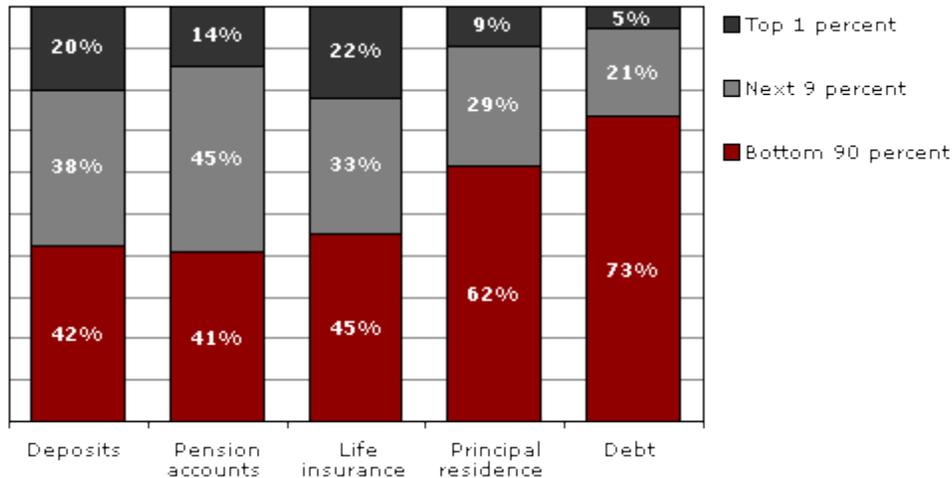
The Institute for Policy Studies illustrates this massive disparity in financial investment ownership, noting that the bottom 50 percent of Americans own only .5 percent of these investments.

Distribution of U.S. Stock, Bond and Mutual Fund Ownership, 2007



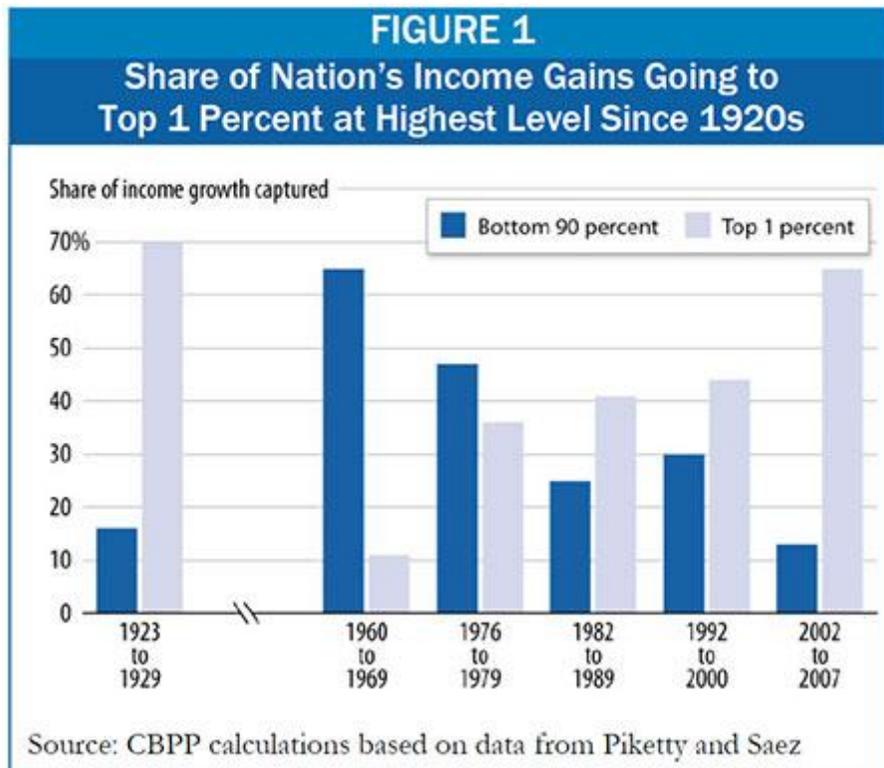
4. The Top 1 Percent Of Americans Have Only 5 Percent of the Nation's Personal Debt.

Using 2007 figures, sociologist William Domhoff points out that the top 1 percent have 5 percent of the nation's personal debt while the bottom 90 percent have 73 percent of total debt:



5. The Top 1 Percent are Taking In More of the Nation's Income Than at Any Other Time Since the 1920s

Not only are the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans taking home a tremendous portion of the national income, but their share of this income is greater than at any other time since the Great Depression, as the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities illustrates in this chart using 2007 data:



As Professor Elizabeth Warren has explained, "There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody... Part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along."

More and more often, that is not occurring, giving the protesters ample reason to take to the streets.

20111006-02 09:19 Pam Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"

The more Fox News mouthpieces squawk about how the Wall Street protesters are just hippies who hate capitalism, freedom, and the American way, the more idiotic they show themselves to be. When did fairness become un-American? When did a decent standard of living become the privilege of the wealthy? When did workers' having some control over their lives become greed and selfishness? When did going into massive debt to purchase an education your leaders convinced you you had to have become acceptable? When did medical care become a luxury item? I am so very pleased that the country seems to be waking up. I've heard that once people take to the streets the change is already in the works. I sure hope that's right. Thank god for people like you all.

Keep spreading the word.

20111006-03 11:03 SteveB N'ifttt'y!

I thought some of you might be interested in this useful web application.

Ifttt: The cool tool that allows you to link together your Facebook, Twitter, Google+, weather, Gmail, and practically everything else you use on the Internet

This will make it easier for the FBI, CIA, and IRS to keep track of you.

<http://www.ifttt.com/wtf>

http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2011/10/ifttt_the_cool_tool_that_allows_you_to_link_together_your_facebo.html

20111006-04 11:30 Pam Re: N'ifttt'y!

Dear SteveB,

It's gratifying to know that I'm not the only one who thinks like this. Only it's probably too late now. I doubt if the FBI would have trouble finding any of us. Chilling thought.

20111006-05 12:48 SteveB Re: N'ifttt'y!

Dear Pam,

They might have a little trouble finding me (or, at least, retrieving me), especially if all of you can keep your traps shut.

20111006-06 13:37 Pam Re: N'ifttt'y!

Dear SteveB,

Aw, I wouldn't know how to find you if my life depended on it. I guess you're safe. We can joke about this, but just imagine what life would be like if we truly were in danger for speaking our minds. I shudder to think of it.

20111006-07 14:43 SteveB "Does Evil Exist? Neuroscientists Say No"

"Does Evil Exist? Neuroscientists Say No" by Ron Rosenbaum, Slate

Sept. 30, 2011,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/the_spectator/2011/09/does_evil_exist_neuroscientists_say_no_.3.html)

(The End of Evil? Neuroscientists suggest there is no such thing. Are they right?)

Is evil over? Has science finally driven a stake through its dark heart? Or at least emptied the word of useful meaning, reduced the notion of a numinous nonmaterial malevolent force to a glitch in a tangled cluster of neurons, the brain?

Yes, according to many neuroscientists, who are emerging as the new high priests of the secrets of the psyche, explainers of human behavior in general. A phenomenon attested to by a recent torrent of pop-sci brain books with titles like *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain*. Not secret in most of these works is the disdain for metaphysical evil, which is regarded as an antiquated concept that's done more harm than good. They argue that the time has come to replace such metaphysical terms with physical explanations—malfunctions or malformations in the brain.

Of course, people still commit innumerable bad actions, but the idea that people make conscious decisions to hurt or harm is no longer sustainable, say the new brain scientists. For one thing, there is no such thing as "free will" with which to decide to commit evil. (Like evil, free will is an antiquated concept for most.) Autonomous, conscious decision-making itself may well be an illusion. And thus intentional evil is impossible.

Have the new neuroscientists brandishing their fMRIs, the ghostly illuminated etchings of the interior structures of the skull, succeeded where their forebears from disciplines ranging from phrenology to psychoanalysis have failed? Have they pinpointed the hidden anomalies in the amygdala, the dysfunctions in the prefrontal lobes, the electrochemical source of impulses that lead a Jared Loughner, or an Anders Breivik, to commit their murderous acts?

And in reducing evil to a purely neurological glitch or malformation in the wiring of the physical brain, in eliminating the element of freely willed conscious choice, have neuroscientists eliminated as well "moral agency," personal responsibility? Does this "neuromitigation" excuse—"my brain made me do it," as critics of the tendency have called it—mean that no human being really wants to do ill to another? That we are all innocent, Rousseauian beings, some afflicted with defects—"brain bugs" as one new pop-neuroscience book calls them—that cause the behavior formerly known as evil?

Are those who commit acts of cruelty, murder, and torture just victims themselves—of a faulty part in the head that might fall under factory warranty if the brain were a car?

The new neuroscience represents the latest chapter in a millennia-old and still divisive cultural conflict over the problem of evil, the latest chapter in the attempt by science to reduce evil to malfunction or dysfunction rather than malevolence. It's a quest I examined in *Explaining Hitler: the way the varieties of 20th-century psychological "science" sought to find some physiological, developmental, sexual, or psychoanalytic cause for Hitler's crimes*. (One peer-reviewed paper sought to trace Hitler's evil to a mosquito bite—to the secondary sequelae of mosquito-borne encephalitis which were known to cause profound personality changes as long as a decade after being contracted in the trenches of World War I.)

It would be consolatory if not comforting if we could prove that what made Hitler Hitler was a malfunction in human nature, a glitch in the circuitry, because it would allow us to exempt "normal" human nature (ours for instance) from having Hitler potential. This somewhat Pollyannaish quest to explain the man's crimes remains counterintuitive to many. I recall the late British historian and biographer of Hitler Alan Bullock reacting to the claims of scientism by exclaiming to me vociferously: "If he isn't evil, then who is? ... If he isn't evil the word has no meaning."

Indeed recent developments demonstrate that evil remains a stubborn concept in our culture, resistant to attempts to reduce it to pure "physicalism." To read the mainstream media commentary on the Breivik case, for instance, is to come upon, time after time, the word "evil." Not just that the acts were evil, but that he, Breivik was, as a Wall Street Journal columnist put it, "evil incarnate."

But what exactly does that mean? The incarnation of what? Satan? The word "incarnation," even without explicit religious context, implies, metaphorically at least, the embedding of a metaphysical force in a physical body. One can understand the scientific aversion to this as a description of reality. But evil as a numinous force abides. It is not surprising that Pope Benedict issued a statement following the attacks in Norway calling on everyone to "escape from the logic of evil." (Although what exactly is that "logic"?)

Even if it was not surprising for the Pope to invoke evil thus, it was surprising to see a devout atheist such as my colleague Christopher Hitchens invoke "evil" in his "obituary" for Osama bin Laden. Hitchens admits wishing he could avoid using "that simplistic (but somehow indispensable) word." But he feels compelled to call whatever motivated bin Laden a "force" that "absolutely deserves to be called evil."

But what is this "force," which sounds suspiciously supernatural for an atheist to believe in? Some kind of Luciferian Kryptonite? Where is it located: in the material or nonmaterial world?

That is the real "problem of evil" (or, to use the technical term philosophers employ for conscious, freely-willed, evil-doing: "wickedness"). We tend to believe it exists: Popular culture has no problem with it, giving us iterations from Richard III to Darth Vader; politicians use it promiscuously ("the axis of evil"). But even religious thinkers continue to debate what it is—and why a just and loving God permits evil and the hideous suffering it entails to prevail so often, or even—if they shift the blame to us (because God gave man free will to sin)—why God couldn't have created a human nature that would not so readily choose genocide and torture. (For the record, I'm an agnostic.)

This argument has been going on for more than a millennium, at least since Augustine proclaimed that evil was in the realm of "non-being," which seems to some a great evasion. Meanwhile pop neuroscience—and its not-very-well-examined assumptions—has taken center stage in the struggle to put evil in its place under the thumb of science.

One person whose work on these matters has received considerable attention lately is the British Professor of Psychopathology, Simon Baron-Cohen. (Yes, cousin of Sacha Baron-Cohen aka Borat, but highly regarded as a serious scientist.) He's the author of *The Science of Evil*, which seeks to dispose of the problem of evil in part at least by changing its name.

"My main goal," says Baron-Cohen, "is replacing the unscientific term 'evil' with the scientific term 'empathy.'" What he means is that instead of calling someone evil we should say they have no empathy.

Baron-Cohen goes to great lengths to posit an "empathy circuit" in the brain whose varying "degrees" of strength constitute a spectrum, ranging from total, 100 percent empathy to "zero degrees of empathy."

This empathy circuit, he tells us, consists of 13 specific regions of the brain involved in the generation of non-evil choices, among them "the medial prefrontal cortex," "the inferior frontal gyrus," and "the posterior superior temporal sulcus."

Ideally all of these act together empathetically to defeat "single minded focus," which appears to be Baron-Cohen's explanation for what was previously called evil. Single-mindedness is the inability to "recognize and respond" to the feelings of others. A healthy empathy circuit allows us to feel others' pain and transcend single-minded focus on our own. This theory does, however, seem to carry a presumption that when one "recognizes and responds," one will do so in warm and fuzzy ways. But what about those who "recognize and respond" to others' feelings with great discernment—and then torture them? It happens.

One troubling aspect of Baron-Cohen's grand substitution of a lack of empathy for evil is the mechanistic way he describes it.

He characterizes those who lack empathy as having "a chip in their neural computer missing." He tells us "empathy is more like a dimmer switch than an all-or-none switch." The big problem here is that by reducing evil to a mechanical malfunction in the empathy circuit, Baron-Cohen also reduces, or even abolishes, good. No one in this deterministic conceptual system chooses to be good, courageous, or heroic. They just have a well-developed empathy circuit that compels them act empathetically—there's no choice or honor in the matter.

And so evil for Baron-Cohen is just "zero degrees of empathy." And I'm left with the non-empathetic feeling that his boast that he is "replacing" evil with non-empathy is more a semantic trick than a scientific discovery. It's another instance of what one of the authors in an important collection of academic papers from MIT Press called *Neuroethics*, calls "Brain Overclaim Syndrome."

A number of papers in *Neuroethics* pour cold water on the triumphalism of the giddy new pop-sci brain books. It makes clear there is a debate within the neuroscience profession about what exactly all those impressive-looking fMRI images tell us. And these "neurocritics" or "neuroskeptics" warn about the consequences for acting too quickly on these claims. (There is a valuable British website called *Neuroskeptic* that offers the general reading public these critiques and correctives from the point of view of someone within the profession. People need to know!)

The "Brain Overclaim" paper by Stephen Morse of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Neuroscience and Society is a tongue-in-cheek "diagnostic note" on the grandiosity of the assumptions of the brain-book fad, mainly concerned about the way they have been creeping into jurisprudence. fMRIs have made their way into a Supreme Court opinion this year, for instance; Justice Stephen Breyer cited "cutting edge neuroscience" in his dissent to a ruling denying the right of

California to ban violent video games, because the otherwise-pro-free-speech justice was alarmed at neuroscientific studies that claim such games could create mental pathways for actual violence.

But Morse's critique extends beyond the jurisprudential and goes to the heart of the failure of current neuroscience to explain or "replace" evil. Popular neuroscience has claimed to find the neural locus of love and God and evil, but Morse points out a fundamental flaw in their logic:

Despite all the astonishing advances in neuroscience, however, we still know woefully little about how the brain enables the mind and especially about how consciousness and intentionality can arise from the complicated hunk of matter that is the brain. ... Discovering the neural correlates of mental phenomena does not tell us how these phenomena are possible.

In other words, correlation doesn't always equal causation: We may know the 13 regions that light up on an fMRI when we feel "empathy" (or fail to light up when we choose evil) but that doesn't explain whether this lit-up state indicates they are causing empathy or just reflecting it.

The problem of evil—and moral responsibility—is thus inseparable from what is known in the philosophical trade as "the hard problem of consciousness." How does the brain, that electrified piece of meat, create the mind and the music of Mozart, the prose of Nabokov? Where is consciousness, anyway?

Many neuroscientists, confronted by the "hard problem of consciousness," evade it by citing a quarter-century-old experiment by one Benjamin Libet, which purported to reveal that apparently conscious decisions are actually made unconsciously—preconsciously—some 500 milliseconds (half a second) before the illusion of a conscious decision is made conscious. (A recent paper puts it at a full second.) But Libet's study fails to explain how the initial unconscious decision is made by the electrified piece of meat—he just kicks the can into the preconscious, you might say—or why we have the illusion of consciousness at all. It does suggest that those who purport to study the science of the brain do themselves—and science—a disservice by failing to learn from the contexts of history, logic, and very basic philosophy.

Those neuroscientists who disdain the idea of consciousness or free will and believe that Libet has disproved it all ought at least to give some attention to Francis Crick. Crick, whose co-discovery of DNA earned him a Nobel Prize and who recently daringly proposed a scientific locus for free will, offers his candidate for its neural coordinates. In his 1994 study *The Astonishing Hypothesis* Crick places it somewhere in or near the area called "the anterior cingulate sulcus" which is "next to Brodman's area 24. This is on the inside surface [of the skull] ... toward the front ... and near the top" of the brain. If that's the center of free will it's the center of evil as well. But even if Crick has trumped Libet, neither has dealt with the most disturbing implications of the new research that purports to find neural explanations for evil.

One can find some of these troubling possibilities laid out in a paper by Jonathan Marks of Harvard's Safra Center for Ethics and Pennsylvania State University in the *American Journal of Bioethics*. The paper is called "A Neuroskeptic's Guide to Neuroethics and National Security," and in it Marks references a growing resistance to "brain over-claims" within the profession. His objections are technical and ethical. He criticizes both the fetishizing of fMRIs, and their misuse. He reminds laymen looking at all the impressive fMRIs in pop-psych brain books that they are not actual images of individual brains in action, but rather composites based on statistical compilations of images of multiple brains, overlaid with special effects lighting he compares to "Doppler-weather radar images."

"Would it be going too far to call this Photoshopping?" I asked Marks in a phone conversation.

"Photoshopping isn't the right word, but in one sense, it doesn't go far enough," he said. The images are "constructed from the start."

Marks' paper warns of "aggressive marketing" of fMRI scans by intelligence-contractor types as "lie detector" substitutes that could be used to select candidates for "enhanced interrogation" if their fMRI indicates potential deception under ordinary interrogation.

And he offered what I thought was one of the wisest responses to the debate over the existence of evil (and thus free will):

What he suggested is that we ought to act as if we had free will to choose good or evil.

And his warnings against the consequences of believing otherwise are validated by the fantasies of some fMRI enthusiasts. Consider, for instance, one of the more prominent new brain books: David Eagleman's *Incognito*.

In an excerpt in the *Atlantic's* "big ideas" issue, Eagleman depicts an Orwellian future in which fMRI scans will be used to preemptively identify those who have the potential to commit acts formerly known as evil, and prescribes for such possible malfeasants a regimen of "prefrontal workout[s]" to "better balance" those selected (how? by whom?) for brain remodeling.

He actually goes so far as to say, "Some people will need to be taken off the streets," on the basis of their fMRIs, "for a longer time (even a life time)." Neuroscientific totalitarianism invades your brain! The ultimate panopticon. No one seemed to notice or to care. It's science!

No mention of constitutional rights or preemptive detention or the Orwellian implications of this for radical dissenters, say, those whose rage against injustice might need to be toned down in the brain gyms.

I hesitate to say it, but these are evil ideas. Indeed, reading Eagleman, and returning to this debate about evil, led me to think about something that had occurred to me in examining the fallacious attempts to scientize Hitler. Evil does not necessarily inhere in some wiring diagram within the brain. Evil may inhere in bad ideas, particularly when they're dressed up as scientific (as Hitler did with his "scientific racism").

As for evil itself, the new neuroscience is unlikely to end the debate, but it may cause us to be more attentive to the phenomenon. Perhaps evil will always be like the famous Supreme Court pronouncement on pornography. You know it when you see it. I don't like its imprecision, but I will concede I don't have a better answer. Just that we can do better than the mechanistic, deterministic, denial of personal responsibility the neuroscientists are offering to "replace" evil with.

I recall an exchange in my conversation with one of the original neuroskeptics, Daniel S. Reich, now head of a research division on nerve diseases at the National Institutes of Health. Reich was one of the first to critique "neuromarketing"—the promotion of fMRI technology to help pushers of commercial products and political candidates learn what words and images lit up what buttons in the brains of consumers and voters.

Toward the end of our conversation I asked Reich if he believed in evil. He was silent for a bit and then started talking about Norway. About degrees of evil. About the difference between the typical suicide bomber and the Oslo killer. How the former has only to press a button to accomplish his murderous goal and never has to see the consequences.

But on that summer camp island in Oslo, Reich said, Breivik was stalking victims for hours. He'd shoot one or more and, according to survivors, not register anything, just continue trudging forward, looking for more.

"He saw the consequences, the blood gushing, heard the screams. He just kept going." Some will try to say this is sociopathy or psychopathy or zero degrees of empathy and other exculpatory cop-outs. But fueled by his evil ideas Breivik kept going. To echo Bullock, if we can't call him evil who can we?

20111006-08	17:26	SteveB	Re: N'ifttt'y!
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Dear Pam,

Several times during the Arab Spring, I have thought about how our government would react to such actions by the people.

I don't know how such a tragic series of events would end-up, but I have a feeling there would be a blood bath first.

We are permitted to bear arms for this very reason, but not cannon, or grenades, or bombs, etc., etc., etc.

We/they would be crushed mercilessly (at least at first) all in the name of...you remember, I bet, "law 'n order". (Why do such usually Republican terms have such a Southern ring to them?) I have already seen attempt to sort of de-humanize the Wall St. protesters by making them seem stupid and misguided.

Not that I'm not all for law and order. We are only talking about some hypothetical situation which we both pray can be prevented by our astute government servants in our nation's capitol. And my things never get that bad.

(I think I'll stop using my address as my, like, "by-line", just in case the CIA is watching. :-)

Ironically, right now in Bolivia there is a huge, interesting dispute going on between an Indian group and the government over the building of a transcontinental highway through their allegedly protected primitive jungle homeland. It has been stopped for now only because the government killed (probably) some demonstrators. But the Bolivian government tapped the phones of the Indians and found them communicating with the U.S. government, instructing them how to conduct their protest more effectively. The U.S. may also have provided some money. This is a good thing, really, because the road would be a disaster and also greatly increase, again, the supply of cocaine. (google "TIPNIS Bolivia")

In Bolivia, protests and marches are a way of life and sometimes effective, sometimes not. It's a little unruly at times (not usually), but in this near dictatorship of a country, people take their democracy very seriously. I kinda like that.

20111006-09

17:30

Mary

Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%" & "The Problem with 'Tax the Rich': It Won't Work"

Dear SteveB,

I know it's hard to let facts get in the way of good slogan especially as our new find Marxists, including the one hiding out in Bolivia, but a little research shows that the poor don't pay income tax and the rich are paying the most of the taxes to begin with.

[I'll state the "fairness doctrine" for taxes one more time: The last dollar of tax paid should cause an equal amount of pain, for rich or poor. We never achieve this, so the rich always come out better, but it's a worthy goal for fair and equitable taxation. —SteveB]

from "The Problem with 'Tax the Rich': It Won't Work", by Charles Hugh Smith, OfTwoMinds.com

May 28, 2010, (<http://www.oftwominds.com/blogmay10/tax-the-rich05-10.html>)

The top-earning 25% of taxpayers (AGI over \$62,068) earned 67.5% of the nation's income, but they paid more than four out of every five dollars collected by the federal income tax (86 percent). The top 1% of taxpayers (AGI over \$364,657) earned approximately 21.2% of the nation's income yet paid 39.4% of all federal income taxes. That means the top 1% of tax returns paid about the same amount of federal individual income taxes as the bottom 95% of tax returns.

My conclusion is this: by heavily taxing earned income, the system extracts the highest taxes from the most productive citizens, leaving the less-productive with essentially no income taxes and the super-wealthy with the huge tax break offered to capital gains and other unearned income.

To the consternation of the unearned income crowd and their politico flak-catchers, it seems baked in that the 15% long-term capital gain tax rate will rise to 20%. Given that the nominal tax rate on significant amounts of earned income is about 40%, that represents a 50% "discount" on what wage earners have to pay.

As I noted in "Tyranny of the Majority, Corporate Welfare and Complicity" (Apr. 9, 2010): In essence, this is a vote-buying scheme by the Status Quo: the top 1% control the policies of the State in alliance with the State's own Elites, and together they buy the complicity of the bottom 60% to passively accept their dominance.

In other words, the bottom 60% are recipients of Central State largesse and the top 1% who "own" the political, and thus the taxation, process limit their taxes by favoring unearned income (what they collect from sales of securities, stock options, rents, etc.). Thus the productive quintile (top wage earners) pay the highest tax rates and most of the taxes.

It's a partnership of "Tyranny of the Majority" and "Outsized Influence of Elites." If the political status quo alienates the majority by making them pay more taxes, they risk losing power in the next election. If they alienate the top 1% who fund their multi-million-dollar campaigns, then they will also lose power. So they heap the tax burden on those "rich" who are actually earning their money rather than clipping coupons.

There are deep structural problems with any scheme to "tax the rich." One is that it appears to be impossible to collect more than about 20% of all income as Central State taxes: The Revenue Limits of Tax and Spend: taxes never rise above 20% of GDP. While this is an academic study, the explanation for this is commonsensical:

1. High wage earners tend to be smart people, and they are adept at "gaming the system" to lower their taxes.
2. At some point, high wage earners are incentivized to opt out of higher tax rates by voluntarily reducing their taxable earnings and/or moving their income offshore to nations with lower effective rates such as Switzerland.
3. The super-wealthy simply "buy" tax credits or loopholes via millions of dollars in campaign contributions.

If you set a higher tax rate at, say, \$249,000 per household, smart people will make sure their taxable income is \$248,900. Many of these high wage earners either control their workload or own small businesses, and thus it is well within their powers to simply pay themselves less, work less or simply sell off their assets/business and retire.

I know a number of readers of this blog who fit this description. At some point, usually when you're paying 50% or more in total income taxes, business license fees, property taxes and a host of junk fees, then it's not worth it to work so hard. Rich people (the self-made variety, not the inheritors of wealth) also tend to be thrifty, so bailing out is often a plausible alternative to grinding away at keeping the business afloat. The super-wealthy buy loopholes and tax credits as a regular "cost of business." Hence the generous "depletion allowances" for owners of oil wells, and the immense tax breaks offered by family trusts, which enable the sheltering of millions of dollars for relatively modest legal fees.

The other structural problem is the Federal deficits are now so large that they exceed even the most extractive tax schemes. Many observers have noted that Federal corporate tax collections have declined for decades. What they fail to note is that this how this tracks the globalization of U.S. corporate earnings.

You only have to pay taxes on income in one country, so if you have a choice (and global corporations and the truly wealthy always do), then why declare income in a high-corporate tax nation like the U.S.? It makes no sense.

We can rant and rave all we want about evil corporations who don't pay enough Federal taxes, but in the globalized economy where many U.S. firms make most of their sales and profits overseas, high corporate tax rates simply drives income overseas. If we want to collect more corporate taxes, then we should set them below equivalent rates in China, Japan, the EU, Switzerland, etc.

You cannot control the flow of capital and earnings in the current global economy, and every attempt to tighten the screws on capital and earnings will simply drive more of it overseas.

Even on a local-government level, the politicians who raise taxes and junk fees in breathless anticipation of higher revenues find that revenues fall when taxes are raised.

But let's say we managed to collect the vast majority of Corporate America's earnings: let's say we collected a cool \$1 trillion. Unfortunately, the Federal deficit is now structurally set at \$1.5 trillion a year. That's how much the Central State has to borrow just to maintain the status quo. So we would still be "short" a half-trillion dollars. The same can be said of doubling the tax rate on the top 25% who pay almost 90% of the Federal taxes. That would raise another \$900 million. Oops, we're still \$600 billion short.

The truth is that raising taxes will never be able to reduce the gaping Federal deficit. That is a pipe dream. As I noted in "Tyranny of the Majority, Corporate Welfare and Complicity" (Apr. 9, 2010): Meanwhile, the slow poison of gargantuan deficits is eating away the soul of the nation. The Federal government gets \$900 billion in individual income taxes and borrows \$1.56 trillion each year. That is a rather stark number: the government borrows almost double what it collects in individual income taxes.

The "deal" is obvious: the costs of borrowing that \$1.5 trillion are hidden from both the bottom 60% who are recipients of government funds and also from the top 1%, who believe that socializing risks and bailouts and privatizing profits is the ideal system of governance.

The people paying most of the taxes will opt out when taxes get too oppressive, and the super-wealthy will just buy more loopholes and credits or move their earnings overseas. We cannot collect more than 20% of the nation's earnings in Federal tax. Thus the only fiscal solution is to spend no more than 20% of the nation's income at the Federal level.

Borrowing \$1.5 trillion a year is a "solution" only until the dollar loses its value or the interest payments overwhelm revenues. There is no other endgame to borrowing 11-12% of GDP every year just to maintain the status quo.

Here is the source document: Summary of Latest Federal Individual Income Tax Data, (<http://www.taxfoundation.org/news/show/250.html>)

[Interesting. Mary, this article seems to argue my side of the issue (he thinks the rich don't pay enough), though he is obviously wrong about higher taxes lowering revenue. Higher taxes gave us budget surpluses in the 90's! And the Bush tax cuts have clearly not raised revenue. —SteveB]

20111006-10	17:37	Dennis	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
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from Mary:

I know it's hard to let facts get in the way of good slogan especially as our new find Marxists, including the one hiding out in Bolivia, but a little research shows that the poor don't pay income tax and the rich are paying the most of the taxes to begin with.

Dear Mary,

Oh, so you want some facts:

In 2010, the average middle-class family took home \$49,445, a drop of \$3,719 or 7%, in yearly earnings from 10 years earlier. In other words, that family now earns the same amount as in 1996. After peaking in 1999, middle-class income dwindled through the early years of the George W. Bush presidency, climbing briefly during the housing boom, then nose-diving in its aftermath.

In this lost decade, according to economist Jared Bernstein, poor families watched their income shrivel by 12%, falling from \$13,538 to \$11,904. Even families in the 90th percentile of earners suffered a 1% percent hit, dropping on average from \$141,032 to \$138,923. Only among the staggeringly wealthy was this not a lost decade: the top 1% of earners enjoyed 65% of all income growth in America for much of the decade, one hell of a run, only briefly interrupted by the financial meltdown of 2008 and now, by the look of things, back on track.

20111006-11	17:48	SteveB	Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"
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Dear Mary,

Good to hear from you, my old friend! Bet you're sorry Mitch dropped out so quickly...I have to admit he's a lot better than these bozos we have left (at least minus Sarah!).

Why is anyone always a Marxist, communist, or socialist if they aren't extreme right wingers? I'm really, really, honestly very conservative and freedom and free-enterprise oriented and loving. That being said, I'm not about to throw the non-rich under the bus and destroy the country.

I think we are all on the same side. We realize that, at this moment in history, though we can debate the cause and solutions, America is in great peril. Our very way of life is in great danger. I believe this and so do many others, even the Tea Party. They are simply wrong about the facts.

Now, why don't we just all come together for the love of our country and try to reasonably discuss solutions? The guy(?) in your article below seems to be searching for solutions that stray from the Tea Party and uber-rich line, and that's a good thing to be trying to do.

Let's actually do a little work together to find the truth, then the solutions. I'm willing to try. I really do want to have all opinions represented in our little group, because that keeps it so much more interesting, and, I believe, increases our chances of discovery.

I do not happen to believe that sacrificing the poor for the benefit of the rich is the solution to our problems, and neither is the opposite (if the rich were to be sacrificed as completely, to have everything taken from them, as so many of the poor have).

Oh, they aren't as smart or productive as Steve Jobs? Well, aren't they just the worst, laziest, most worthless a-holes around!

[20111006-12](#) 18:07 SteveB Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"

Please allow me to add that a lot of evidence has been presented in this forum of the catastrophic effect the Bush years had on our country. The Republican lies trying to smear Obama with this mess just don't cut it around here. We know better than that. We also don't judge the success of an entire country based only on increasing wealth of the richest 1%. Neither do any Republican politicians, apparently, or they'd be telling us how great things are right now. Look at world history? When has it ever been a good thing for the wealth of a nation to be concentrated in the hands of a few? Germany in the 1930's? Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iran, or Yemen at the present time? Do you see what happens? War and instability...not what we want for our children.

I have yet to see one shred of evidence presented by the right that America and its long-vaunted middle class is doing better now than when we were kids, or, especially, since 2001. Do you have such evidence you are withholding? We agree the rich pay more taxes than the poor. Duh? What do you expect? The opposite? I guess that's what the Republicans want and lament. We just think the rich should pay what the rich used to pay, at which time they didn't complain any harder than they do now, so how painful could it have been?

Or...you could try to squeeze blood out of a turnip like Greece is trying to do...

[20111006-13](#) 18:30 Mark Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"

Dear Mary,

Gee whiz, there really is another person that shares my POV! Hallelujah!

[20111007-01](#) 06:38 SteveB "Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow"

OMG—another militarist!

How far behind the times can you possibly be? Just what we need, more military spending and adventures. These Republicans just don't get it—we're broke! We gotta scrape some money together and fix ourselves somehow, not fight more wars!

And, even more dangerous—HE KNOWS WHAT GOD WANTS! (Hey, maybe he could ask God what happened to those golden plates Jesus gave the Mormons that they somehow managed to "lose".)

I guess "better than the rest" [of the field] doesn't mean much, huh? Now, Mitt, let's go out there in the world and dominate! hahaha This is not what we need at this point in our nation's history, in my humble opinion.

"Romney: God Wants U.S. to Lead, Not Follow" by Bruce Smith and Steve Peoples, AP

Oct. 7, 2011, (<http://news.yahoo.com/romney-god-wants-us-lead-not-081157082.html>)

(CHARLESTON, SC) Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is calling for a century of American dominance in his first major foreign policy address, outlining plans to strengthen the U.S. military while rejecting multilateral institutions like the United Nations when necessary.

The former Massachusetts governor also condemns the isolationist policies supported by some tea party members in a speech to be delivered Friday at The Citadel, South Carolina's iconic military college.

"This is America's moment. We should embrace the challenge, not shrink from it, not crawl into an isolationist shell, not wave the white flag of surrender, nor give in to those who assert America's moment has passed. That is utter nonsense," Romney says in prepared remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

The leading GOP presidential contender offers no clear direction for the war in Afghanistan, but says he would conduct a full review of the situation in his first 100 days in office to determine "the presence necessary to secure our gains and successfully complete our mission."

"This century must be an American century. In an American century, America has the strongest economy and the strongest military in the world," Romney says. "God did not create this country to be a nation of followers. America is not destined to be one of several equally balanced global powers. America must lead the world, or someone else will."

While he served as a Mormon missionary in France more than four decades ago, Romney has limited foreign policy experience. As he says in nearly every campaign stop, he has spent the majority of his life in the business world. But Romney has been critical of President Barack Obama's foreign policy, particularly the president's aggressive timeline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

At a campaign stop in Mount Pleasant on Thursday, Romney previewed some of the themes for Friday's speech. He called for 100,000 new troops, increased military spending and a larger Navy.

"You would think that the president and the people in Washington would recognize the importance of the United States military and the need not to shrink our military budget but strengthen it," Romney told veterans on the hangar deck of the World War II-era aircraft carrier U.S.S. Yorktown.

The former governor acknowledged waste in defense spending and "my life in the private sector taught me to go after waste and economize, and there is an opportunity to do that." But he said he wouldn't, as European nations have done, reduce defense to bolster social programs.

Romney also released the names of 22 advisers he will consult on foreign policy issues.

The Citadel speech comes three days before his rival Jon Huntsman, the former ambassador to China, delivers a foreign policy address of his own. And it comes as Romney has jumped back into the lead in national polling following Texas Gov. Rick Perry meteoric rise and fall in recent weeks. The location of the speech, in the early voting state of South Carolina, is of course no coincidence.

Romney calls for working with the United Nations when appropriate.

"But know this," he says. "While America should work with other nations, we always reserve the right to act alone to protect our vital national interests."

20111007-02 09:43 Pam Re: "5 Facts You Should Know About the Wealthiest 1%"

One of the problems I see with this analysis is the assumption that corporations and the wealthy will always find ways to get their money off-shore. If our laws permit such actions, why can't we amend those laws to keep more revenue here? That would require regulation and enforcement, which, done right, would be a good thing. Of course, incentives would perhaps be better, and I can see that favorable tax rates would be a big one. Still, isn't it a matter of balance?

It seems to me there is a more fundamental issue involved in our current dilemma. I read recently that in the 18th c. most people thought most about observing the proper deference to the different ranks in society. In the 19th c. the improvement of one's character was uppermost in everyone's mind. In the 20th c. (in America) having a decent standard of living was the priority. What will the 21st c. be known for? When future generations look back, how will they describe us?

The Soviet Union under Lenin & Stalin believed it was beneficial to sacrifice the current generation(s) in order to ensure a more glorious future. The IDEA of communism was more important than mere individual people. So far, what I see in this century in the U.S. is an overwhelming obsession with money, whether it be taxes, investments, IRAs, having it, or not having enough. We don't think about beauty or compassion or social responsibility or fairness or sacrifice. In the end,

everything boils down to MONEY. How much does a person need to be happy? How much should a person give so that others can be happy too? How responsible is the social contract to each individual, including the weakest?

This morning I heard Herman Cain say that if you're successful, you're deserving; if you're a failure it's your own fault. He really said that. Hobbes said that human life is "nasty, brutish, and short." That it's a war of all against all. I'd say, rather, life in America today is about the rich against the poor. It was ever thus. Most of human history has been divided up this way. I find it more than a little disturbing that living in a dog-eat-dog world is acceptable to so many of us. Compassion, simple humanity, empathy, gratitude—I see very little of these on the public stage. We teeter on the edge of barbarism.

"European socialism" is the monster in the closet; the welfare state makes life cushy for slackers. Americans have been sold this bill of goods for too long. I can think of many countries that put the welfare of ALL their citizens first, Canada being the one I'm most familiar with. I cringe when I hear politicians (Romney) brag about how America is—and OUGHT to be—number one in the world. Who made us the chosen people? and don't you dare say God. Wouldn't it be better to fight against our tribal instincts, to avoid thinking in terms of US and THEM?

Selfishness is not a virtue and greed is not good, even if they might seem so in the short run. A healthy society is a fair society, not equal but fair, and we're a long way from fair these days. We can argue about taxes and hedge funds and mortgage derivatives all day long, but what's really important is what we've lost sight of: compassion for our fellow man. We shouldn't keep asking, Who's to blame (well, maybe we should); we should ask, How can we help?

It's been unfashionable in university English departments for years to talk about "beauty" in literature, but beauty, expressed in art, is what makes life tolerable. I believe compassion is even more important, even though I may sound squishy and new agey to say so. I forget who it was who called Joseph McCarthy out by asking if at long last he had no simple, human decency, but he articulated what every moral American was privately thinking. America has stopped caring about its "huddled masses." It's survival of the fittest now, and if you can't keep up, well, tough sh*t. It's time for those "better angels" Lincoln appealed to show themselves in these days of uncertainty.

20111007-03	11:00	GaryC	"Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
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"Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive" by John Bussey, *The Wall Street Journal*

Oct. 7, 2011, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB20001424052970204294504576615251485073540.html>)

A few years ago in Hong Kong I met a furniture manufacturer from South Carolina who had outsourced production to China and then been crushed by his Chinese partners, who bumped him aside and started selling directly to the U.S. market.

He no doubt would be intrigued to see the tide turning again today.

In the Great Game of global wage and cost arbitrage, bits of some rather surprising industries are drifting back to U.S. shores, and the pace could quicken. Furniture making—usually labor intensive and low-skilled—is just one shocker. On Tuesday Ford said it will build some auto parts in the U.S. that have traditionally been sourced in China. And there's more.

Currency hawks in Congress are this week promoting legislation to penalize China for manipulating the Yuan. They might want to take note of this trend: The jobs they want to bring home may already be trickling back to the U.S.—emphasis on the trickle.

Bruce Cochrane is emblematic of the incipient shift. He's opening a furniture factory in Lincolnton, N.C., a rare event in a region and industry that have been walloped by outsourcing. Employment in U.S. furniture factories fell by 60% over the last decade.

Mr. Cochrane says furniture made in China and sold in the U.S. previously had a price advantage of up to 50%. That's often down to 10% to 15% now, in part because wages in China are soaring—up 15% or more a year in some locales. Shipping costs, he says, have doubled from a few years ago.

"About 2006 I saw a pivot point, especially with labor costs," says Mr. Cochrane, who has spent time in China.

Certain jobs have been dribbling back to the U.S. for a few years. But now the sectors most likely to repatriate production may be coming into focus.

Hal Sirkin of Boston Consulting Group has identified seven industry categories that are most susceptible to relocating production aimed at the U.S. market (production for the Chinese market would stay chiefly in China). They are furniture, transportation goods, computers and electronics, electrical equipment and appliances, plastics and rubber products, machinery, and fabricated metal products.

Mr. Sirkin says products in these categories may be cheaper to make in China now. But with labor, materials and shipping costs rising, the advantage will tip to the U.S. in four years or so.

In a study he's releasing Friday, Mr. Sirkin calculates that production that returns to the U.S. could add 800,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, and up to three million altogether if service-sector support jobs are included.

There have been optimistic prognostications of this sort in the past that fell flat. But a number of forces at work today suggest that this time could indeed be different.

Among the forces: those ever-rising costs in China; more flexibility from some U.S. unions, resulting in fewer work rules and lower labor costs; more subsidies from some state governments; far higher productivity in the U.S.; and pressure from retailers to shorten turnaround time and cut inventories, prompting more manufacturers to abandon long supply chains to China.

And the Yuan. After considerable jawboning by governments around the world, Beijing has allowed its currency to rise roughly 30% against the dollar since 2005. Since a stronger Yuan makes China's exports more expensive in foreign markets, that's bad for U.S. manufacturers who serve their global customers from factories in China—and for U.S. consumers hooked on cheap Chinese products.

But for those who want to reclaim production to U.S. shores, it's a plus.

"We're in the process of bringing everything back from China," says David Gil, marketing director for Sleek Audio, which makes high-end tunable earphones. Along with rising costs in China, quality control proved a headache.

The company sells its SA Six earphones for \$250, and the price won't change when production moves to Palmetto, Fla., though costs will rise about 20%. Mark Krywko, the chief executive, says better quality control and less lost inventory will offset those increases. "Profits will go up," he says.

No one in North Carolina's furniture industry, meanwhile, is expecting a return to the flush times. Patricia Bowling of the American Home Furnishings Alliance, the furniture makers' trade group, says some companies that kept production in the U.S. are seeing an uptick in demand because of the rising cost of imports. But she says new factories like Mr. Cochrane's are rare indeed.

As for Mr. Cochrane, he's buying state-of-the-art saws, routers and other machinery for his facility, exemplifying why productivity is robust in the U.S.

The flip side, though, is employment. When North Carolina's newest furniture factory is up and running, Mr. Cochrane expects to accomplish with 135 employees what it took 250 to do in the past.

20111007-04	14:57	SteveB	Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"
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Dear GaryC,

Well, one has hope, but we don't seem to have the will to win any economic war with anybody, or to even compete well. Let me give you an example from close to home—Bolivia. Right now, we're having a flood of Chinese cars. We have BYD, Zxauto, Great Wall, Geely, and Autoplaza (at least). I don't know if they're any good, but they're cheap. Until recently (and maybe still) Toyota ruled here with the Koreans coming on strong in all goods, not just vehicles.

If these Chinese cars are allowed into America, even with modest import duties, I'm afraid the American car companies and most American manufacturing will be history. Remember too that the Chinese control 90% of the world's rare earth elements necessary for many of the cars of the future.

Meanwhile, what American products do we have here in Bolivia? A couple of enterprising souls, who love American food, manage to bring in Hellman's, Kraft, Heinz, and a few other food brands—on their own. Marlboro and Camel cigarettes abound. No American beer. The American car companies still try a little, but their prices are so high! Bolivians love used and reject American clothes...now all made somewhere else. Other American brands are manufactured in Brazil or Chile, etc. People love America and things from America, but can't get them or can't afford them. Mainly, they don't even exist here. Think about it, what does America make? Not much. As in China, nearly all music, movies, software, and even books are sold for almost nothing in the street. CD's and movies are about \$1 each and of plenty good enough quality. No money to the U.S. for that stuff in Bolivia.

And this is here in our back yards, on our turf. We should own the Latin American market. But companies were too lazy to do it. Maybe they were intimidated by the language thing, having complicated labels, who knows. They have to cope with that anyway now that America has sort of joined the Latin world. What were we afraid of that made our businesses stay at home and allow the Japanese, the Germans, the Koreans, the Brazilians, the Indians, the Arabs, and now the Chinese to make fortunes here and send them home to their people?

American business needs to address its disadvantages in world trade. If we need to adjust currency, do it. If we need less free trade, do it. If we need to teach a second language to all students from kindergarten on, do it. If we need to cultivate more of a world view, do it. If we need to get tough about international intellectual property rights, then do it. There's a good use for the Army, in my book. We need to work, work, work to get our products on the world's shelves. We have not done that.

Otherwise, if we want to be isolationist, we'd better figure out how to rebuild our factories (just when there's no money to do so), do without foreign goods, and live like we used to in a more dangerous world.

But the path backwards to isolation looks very, very difficult to me. If we were to suddenly stop buying Chinese goods, they might see it as economic warfare, attack us, defeat us (probably easily), and simply impose their slavery-produced goods on us. Make us consume.

Gee, the Republicans might really like that, because then the government would be very efficient.

20111007-05 15:14 Dennis Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

from SteveB:

Meanwhile, what American products do we have here in Bolivia?

Dear SteveB,

How about American financial products? Got any of those nifty Wall Street derivatives available there? Seems to be all America has been able to export in the last few years.

20111007-06 15:20 Pam Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

Dear SteveB,

LOTS of good points here. I hadn't really thought about these things, but you make sense to me. I ask myself over and over, How can intelligent people be so stupid? No one ever seems to have a Plan B.

20111007-07 16:02 Dale Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

Dear Dennis,

You bring up a good point. Our economy and our U.S. companies are so screwed up that millions of dollars flow in weekly from overseas to be invested in these firms. Miami is the primary hub for financial transactions with Central and South America and there are complete brokerage offices devoted to satisfying the demand from southern foreign clients looking to invest, not hide mind you, money in U.S. companies. European investors just want to try to get their money out and into a safe haven.....the U.S.. You don't see them pouring the money into China where the books are cooked, the courts are rigged and the economy is controlled. For all the success stories that are leaked by the controlled press in China, there are massive abuses and broken people who lost out when it wasn't their business that was chosen for special treatment.

20111007-08 16:32 SteveB Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

Dear Dennis,

Hey, you can buy any of that stuff anywhere, right?

You know, now that I think about it, the one export that is ubiquitous in the entire Caribbean, Central and South America, even Canada (I bet Iraq and Afghanistan) is the almighty U.S. greenback. They're everywhere in huge supply.

Now, I'll never know how we can have so much money everywhere that it's part of the money supply, even often official, of so many countries, yet we fail so miserably at commerce. Somebody's taking advantage of us?

I wonder how much of the Arab and China problems come from the fact that they are so much better dealmakers, maybe better at money, than we are...???

When we had all the power, why didn't we make sure we had a solid oil supply at low prices? Why haven't we forced China, and Japan before them, to play fair with international trade? Why didn't we protect, nurture, and grow our mighty industries and keep them at home (especially their profits)?

Weird, huh?

20111007-09 16:50 SteveB Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive"

Dear Dale,

If you have numbers that show we are doing so darned well, I'd love to see them. Maybe you're talking about money that only goes to the Bernie Madoffs? None of this seems to result in positive balance of payment, GNP, or personal income statistics over the last 10 years in question.

Funny this flood of money you talk about doesn't seem to be creating many jobs or bringing about what anyone could call prosperity, except for a very few.

I disagree about investment in China, though I am certainly no defender of China. Money is pouring into China (still) and Brazil right now. Even into Chile, Peru, India, Indonesia, and Africa.

20111007-10 18:31 Dale Re: "Buck Up, America: China Is Getting Too Expensive" & "Corporate Profits Surge to Record High in Q2"

Dear SteveB,

Try to focus. You are on a rambling rant. [Remark resented. —SteveB]

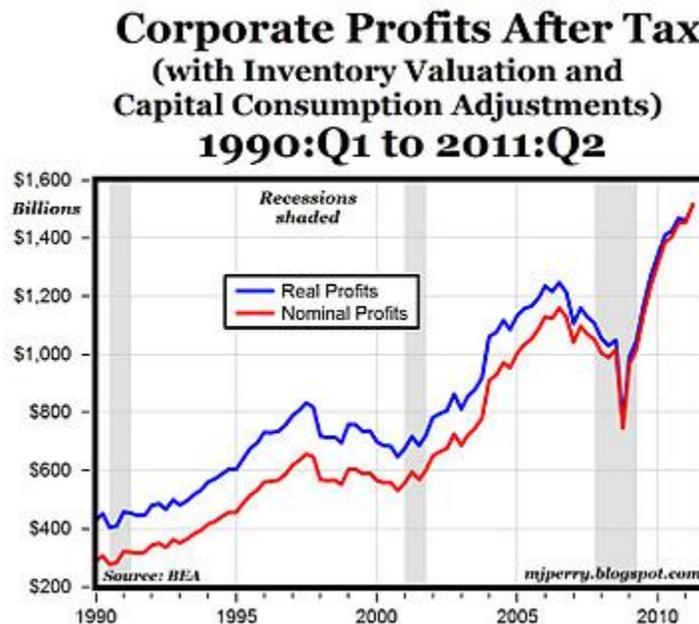
You asked for numbers, read economist Mark Perry's report from Aug. 26, 2011.

I didn't comment on the state of the economy, which is lame to say the least, but on the FACT that many people from around the world who want to invest their own money choose to do it in U.S. companies, both the stocks and the corporate bonds.

There are companies and the China government who are investing money in plant and equipment in China, but most rational individual and institutional investors are wary of the pitfalls with investing in China stocks. The judicial system doesn't exist, the accounting rules the rest of the world follows are a sham in China and there is a total disregard for patent protection. Would you invest your money in a stock market and legal system set up like that?

"Corporate Profits Surge to Record High in Q2" Mark J. Perry, Carpe Diem

Aug. 16, 2011, (<http://mjperry.blogspot.com/2011/08/corporate-profits-surge-to-record-high.html>)



Corporate profits in the second quarter (both nominal and inflation-adjusted using the business sector price deflator) reached all-time record highs during the April-May period of this year, according to today's BEA report on GDP and corporate profits for the second quarter (see chart above). Real GDP growth in the second quarter was revised down from the previous estimate of 1.3% to 1%, based on more complete data. While overall economic growth remains weak as measured by real GDP, the record level of corporate profits shows that American companies are financially healthy and strong, and can easily weather the current spring-summer "soft patch."

Compared to the cyclical low of \$770 billion in the fourth quarter of 2008, real corporate profits have almost doubled to the current record level of \$1,540 billion, which confirms the fact that corporate profitability has made a full recovery from the effects of the Great Recession. Based on post-war history, the U.S. economy has never experienced a recession that is not preceded by sharp declines in corporate profits, so I think we can safely say we're definitely not headed for a double-dip recession in the near future.

20111007-11	18:42	Dale	Trend Hunter
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Dear SteveB,

On a lighter vein, you might want to subscribe to this. It is a hoot and has unending mind expanding stuff.

<http://www.trendhunter.com/popular>

20111007-12	18:46	GaryC	Re: Trend Hunter
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Dear Dale,

I am guessing that the Poop Powered Motorcycle would give him [SteveB, probably. —SteveB] an outlet for his prolific amount of excrement while being environmentally friendly.

20111007-13	18:52	SteveB	"Twisted Government Accounting Behind Postal Service Woes"
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Thieves, Liars, and the USPS...

Learn how Congress has stolen the money from the Post Office just like it has stolen the money we paid into Social Security.

Now the government tries to blame their bankruptcy on your mailman, Social Security recipients, and the New Deal...as if they aren't a bunch of damned thieves and liars.

"Twisted Government Accounting Behind Postal Service Woes" by Bob Sullivan, MSNBC

Oct. 7, 2011, (<http://redtape.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/10/07/8191425-twisted-government-accounting-behind-postal-service-woes>)

You might have heard that the United States Postal Service is in trouble: that it's losing billions, that it will have to end Saturday service and close branches—and most inflammatory, that it might need a government bailout. Perhaps you heard that the Postal Service couldn't pay \$5.5 billion bill that came due Sept. 30 and that only an emergency postponement saved it from the government's equivalent of default.

In fact, it's the Postal Service that's currently bailing out the U.S. government. Politicians have been raiding Postal Service revenues for years, using them to make the federal deficit appear smaller than it really is. The fiscal gyrations are so twisted that the Postal Service is right now forced to pre-pay health care benefits for employees the agency hasn't even hired yet—in fact, for many future employees who haven't even been born yet—all to artificially shrink the federal deficit.

It's these crushing accounting tricks, not the cost of delivering mail, that has pushed this 200-year-old institution to the brink.

Welcome to the wacky world of Washington, D.C., accounting.

There's a long and a short story to the tragic tale of Postal Service financial trouble. I'll start with the short one. Right now, the Postal Service is being forced to pre-pay health benefits for the next 75 years during a 10-year stretch. In the past four years, those prepayments have totaled \$21 billion. The agency's deficit during that time is about \$20 billion. Remove these crazy pre-payments—a requirement that no other government agency endures and no private industry would even consider—and the Postal Service would be in the black.

Of course, it's not quite that simple. And no one denies that the rise of e-mail has meant the fall of first-class mail, creating a real long-term challenge to USPS relevancy. But the current fiscal "crisis" is entirely manufactured by the Washington way—in fact, the payment missed on Sept. 30 represents this year's tithe to the federal deficit, disguised as health care benefits layaway for a mail carrier the agency might not hire until the year 2060.

The controversy over the future of the post office has been slowly coming to a head, and it reached a fever pitch around the Sept. 30 payment, meant to satisfy this year's health care pre-payment costs. The agency begged for a delay, which it received—but that led to detractors' calling for immediate reforms, such as post office closings and the elimination of Saturday delivery. But supporters have rallied to the agency's side—about 500 rallies were held last week all around the country in support of the agency.

Meanwhile, some advocates are desperately trying to call attention to the USPS's unique budget situation, which is not quite the crisis it appears.

"It is clear that these prepayments for future retiree health care benefits are—at this point—the primary reason for the U.S. Postal Service's financial crisis," Ralph Nader wrote in a letter to Congress last week. "In fact, simply looking at the numbers reveals that the Postal Service's 'financial crisis' is in fact an entirely manufactured crisis.

Why would the Postal Service find itself in this crazy arrangement, bleeding red ink today so it can pay for employees' health benefits 50, 60, or 75 years from now? Believe it or not, there is an explanation, but it's not so simple—delivered with fair warning from Jim Sauber, chief of staff of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

"It takes a long time to explain how crazy and complicated it is," he said.

But a quick tour into this fiscal crisis is incredibly instructive as to the ways of Washington, and failing to understand it might mean someday soon you won't get mail at your house any longer.

First, it's important to note that the USPS is financially self-sufficient. Since the 1970s, it has been mandated by Congress to operate entirely on its own revenue, with no taxpayer money. It's an enormous agency—with \$65 billion in annual revenue, it would be a Fortune 50 company if it were a private entity. As a quasi-government agency, it enjoys privileged fiscal status—its revenue and expenses are "off budget," meaning Congress isn't supposed to be able to toy with them. It shares this privileged state with only one other government entity: the Social Security Trust Fund. But as you know, Congress finds a way to toy with everything.

In 2006, Congress passed the "Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act" to modernize the agency's stamp-price-setting tools and a host of other elements of mail delivery. That law set up this seemingly crazy health care prepayment fund.

To bean counters at the U.S. Treasury Department, however, the fund made perfect sense. It was a crazy arrangement to cover for another crazy arrangement the Postal Service escaped in 2006.

When former members of the U.S. military take a government job, their military service counts as annual credits toward pension eligibility. This holds true when service members take postal jobs—but who pays for the value of those credits? In 2006, the Postal Service was shouldering that cost on its balance sheet, even though there was general agreement that the Treasury Department should be responsible for pension credit earned prior to employment with the Postal Service. The 2006 law shifted the burden from the USPS, but that meant an addition burden on the Treasury—that is, it would have added to the federal deficit. So to balance out that negative on Treasury's balance sheet, the Postal Service was ordered to make health care pre-payments equivalent to the cost of the pension cost shift.

The problem of military pension credits itself was a creation of just such a deficit-hiding accounting trick. In 2002, an audit of the USPS budget found it had overpaid into the federal government's pension plan by roughly \$80 billion. Postal Service officials lobbied hard have its pension payments readjusted. They were, in 2003, but in order to make the shift revenue neutral, military pension credit costs were shifted from Treasury to the USPS.

The 2006 law passed by Congress was designed to put an end to this fiscal football. In the middle part of the last decade, the Postal Service was so awash in operating cash that the 10-year tithe to the federal government seemed a small price to pay for a promise that the crazy cost shifting would be over in a decade. In the meantime, the cash played a small but measurable part in reducing the federal deficit.

"But it became very clear that these payments were unaffordable once the economy tanked," Sauber said. In short order, the health care prepayments became "a million pound weight" on the Postal Service budget.

Sauber and other Postal Service advocates say the Postal Service would have no trouble balancing its own budget if Congress and the Treasury Department stopped adding billions to its annual expenses through fiscal maneuvering.

Still, powerful forces have gathered in an attempt to use this budget bickering as an excuse to reform the post office dramatically. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.), the Republicans' top government cost-cutting advocate in the House and head of the powerful Committee on Oversight, has introduced legislation that would dramatically alter the agency. His Postal Reform Act of 2011 would end Saturday delivery, create a commission to study post office closings and create a Solvency Authority that could break union contracts if the agency fell into the red.

Last month, President Barack Obama proposed that the Post Office end Saturday delivery. His proposal offered some relief from health care prepayments, but it merely by spreading the costs out over a longer period of time. Issa

responded by calling Obama's plan a "thinly veiled attempt to offset continued operating losses with a taxpayer-funded bailout."

Others have advocated complete dismantling of the service, turning mail delivery over entirely to private industry. Rarely do those arguing against mention that the Postal Service starts its year in a hole designed to hide a portion of the federal deficit.

A Heritage Foundation report published last month called "You've Got (No) Mail: Is the End Near for the Post Service?" indicated that the agency "barely avoided default" and was down to "a week's worth of cash."

"Congress should act quickly to address this not-so-slow-motion postal train wreck. The goal, however, should not be to 'save' USPS or even to save mail delivery," the report said. It mentioned the pension overpayments but made no mention of the health care costs prepayment, and it concluded that the USPS cannot survive unless supported by "tens of billions of dollars in subsidy."

Sauber says it's hard to counter such arguments with a long discussion of Washington accounting tricks.

"It's so much easier to say, 'Oh, it's the Internet.' That seems obvious, but that's not really what's going on," he said. "It is frustrating for letter carriers to have to deal with all this misinformation. ... It's easy to demagogue on this, for people who don't like government workers to say the Postal Service is failing because it's a government agency. But in this case the easy explanation isn't the right explanation."

The postal workers' union favors legislation proposed by Reps. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., and Stephen Lynch, D-Mass., that would allow the agency to access overpayments to the federal pension system, and to restructure its health care prepayments, to solve its immediate budget woes.

It's also hitting back at critics with an aggressive TV ad campaign that began running last month.

"Congress created this problem, and Congress can fix it," the ads say.

Sauber doesn't deny that the Postal Service has problems. Revenue shrank from \$74 billion to \$67 billion from 2008 to 2010. Mail volume plummeted from 202 billion to 170 billion pieces during that same stretch, a 22 percent fall. While the drop parallels the recession, common sense dictates that even a robust economic recovery probably won't lead to an increase in handwritten love letters.

But Sauber says the rise of the Internet has created almost as many opportunities as problems for the Post Office—package delivery from online shopping has soared, for example. Meanwhile, the agency has shrunk full-time employee ranks from 663,000 to 583,000.

The Postal Service hasn't always done itself any favors—long lines, unhelpful employees and stories of double-dipping by pensioners feed the public's notion that change is needed.

"We know we have to change. But the right way to do that is to clear up this artificial fiscal crisis now, survive the recession and then see where we are," he said, "not to gut the Postal Service now based on misinformation and budget politics."

20111007-14	20:41	Ben	Re: "Twisted Government Accounting Behind Postal Service Woes"
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Dear SteveB,

So this is really not crazy at all: it's a well-orchestrated scheme to privatize yet another properly running service so that profit-oriented "businessmen" can squeeze out a huge chunk of change for themselves.

Crazy: right. Just another kind of hazily legalized graft.

Privatization is even in theory a dirty word to me. How can one possibly inject a new layer of profit-taking into any business or institution and expect it to operate at the always-promised lower cost? Every time I hear "privatization will improve quality and lower cost" I want to barf. I cannot recall a single instance where either has resulted.

20111008-01 08:06 GaryC "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Why don't they legalize and tax the stuff. As a fiscal conservative, social liberal this is the kind of stuff that makes me hate both parties.

"Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop" by John Stossel, FOX

Oct. 7, 2011, (<http://www.foxbusiness.com/on-air/stossel/blog/2011/10/07/feds-announce-obama-flip-flop>)

Yesterday, dozens of California medical marijuana dispensaries got letters like this one from Obama's Department of Justice that warned they must shut down "even if such activities are permitted under state law."

This afternoon, four DOJ attorneys held a press conference and said this:

We are making these announcements together today so that the message is absolutely clear—that commercial marijuana operations are illegal under federal law, and that we will enforce federal law.

That's a shame. I don't doubt that many customers of pot dispensaries have no medical need. But who cares? Our drug laws do more harm than good.

Don't campaign promises mean anything? On the campaign trail, President Obama promised: "I'm not going to be using Justice Department resources to try to circumvent state laws on this [medical marijuana.]"

Then, once he was in office, a spokesman confirmed that: "The president believes that federal resources should not be used to circumvent state laws."

Never mind, I guess. It's one of a long list of Obama's broken promises.

20111008-02 09:15 Pam Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop / Our Group"

One thing I like about this group is that we each bring something different to it. I keep learning things I never knew and seeing things in a new light. Very interesting.

20111008-03 09:45 Pam Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB,

Wow. No wonder it's hard to know what to think; I never have enough information. I suppose if someone knew EVERYTHING, he'd be able to figure out what to do. As it is, I think it's important to keep an open mind and be ready to change it if the facts seem to warrant it. Dogma is dangerous.

20111008-04 10:16 GaryC Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear Pam and SteveB,

Well, Jimmy Carter was one of the smartest Presidents ever elected. I voted for him and expected big things. However, he suffered paralysis by analysis and was one of the worst Presidents ever. I expect the history books will show that Obama suffered the same fate, thinking he is smarter than everyone else and getting nothing done, except destroying the economy.

20111008-05 10:58 Pam Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear GaryC,

I heard someone on NPR talk about what it takes to be a good President, and it's not necessarily intelligence. This person (I think he wrote a book about it) said that some of our best Presidents have been of average intelligence. This is pure speculation, but it's interesting, I think. I agree with you about Carter, and you may be right about Obama too. A bulldog with a simple agenda might work better.

20111008-06 14:11 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear GaryC,

Get serious one minute. We all know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Obama did nothing to destroy the economy. It was destroyed when he got there, remember?

We also know that the actions Bush finally took and Obama continued kept us at least temporarily from dropping off the precipice in 2008. The precipice had been created mainly during Bush's term. I've seen no evidence that we were in bad shape when Bush took over. All of us, I believe, would gladly have those days back and call them the "good times" even though the mortgage crisis, etc., were slowly brewing, and brewing in a pot provided by the government during Clinton's watch. Bush did nothing but make everything far, far worse.

Obama has made nothing worse. He has simply made nothing better, but how much help has he had from Congress? If you think I'm wrong, please prove it or at least mention what specific actions of his have destroyed the economy.

This will be very very new news to me!

20111008-07 14:54 Pam Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB and GaryC,

I agree, SteveB. Obama inherited a train wreck, and he did keep a worse depression at bay, even if it was done with the lesser of two evils. I just wish that when the banks get bailed out, regular folks could catch a break too. The unfairness of that makes my blood boil. The Republicans in Congress wouldn't throw a drowning man a life raft if he was a Democrat. They will do everything possible to obstruct everything Obama tries to do. That is obvious to everyone. The Republican leadership has said as much. I like Obama, and I think he's trying to do his best in dreadful circumstances. I feel sorry for him, to tell the truth. I don't know how he keeps it all together. I just remember Lyndon Johnson, a son of a b*tch perhaps, but he got a lot of good things done just by the force of his personality. At least, that's how I remember it.

20111008-08 15:15 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear Pam and GaryC,

I suspect you're both right about this guy being too intellectual, patient, considerate, and deliberative in some weird way.

I guess a leader has to always make everyone think that they know exactly what they're doing. Good leaders do this instinctively.

If we can't find one guy out of 300 million who has the right qualities, then our electoral system is flawed. Boy, is it!

But I'll still pick an intelligent, compassionate man every time I can.

20111008-09 15:28 GaryC Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB,

The electoral process is a mess. The election process begins way too early. The primary process is flawed beyond belief. Hilary was the best candidate for the liberals. McCain was also worthless. But, Obama was and is a joke. He is not qualified to be a community organizer.

Look at his record. What has he done. I don't care if the guy is black or white or Democrat or Republican. This guy is not qualified to be the leader of the U.S. In my opinion, he was elected only because he is black. I agree that we need intelligent leaders. However, the operative word is leader. Obama is a follower. And, of flawed theories.

I know you hate Republicans but I honestly believe we need some adults running the country so we can create jobs for all U.S. citizens (even union people). The middle and lower class have been hurt the most by Obama's (and Reid and Pelosi's policies) far more than the upper class. Most of my liberal friends (not the socialists, of course) see that Obama was a big mistake.

I just hope to hell we don't get a God-squader in there that will push religious social issues when JOBS are the problem. Plus, who the hell cares if gays marry, or marijuana is legal (and taxed) or gambling on the internet is legal (and taxed).

[20111008-10](#) 15:34 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear GaryC and Dale,

I can think of a million things he has not done to make things better. Most of which you probably wouldn't want done. Name one important thing he has done to sink the economy? Not health care. Not implemented yet. I can name many for Bush, and of course there is an inherent inertia to your car or General Motors. A mass as titanic as the American economy obviously has a little more. I've never heard of anyone denying this...

[20111008-11](#) 15:58 GaryC Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB,

Even Obama has admitted that the U.S. is worse off now than when he was elected. He is like you and blames Bush, hurricanes, Europe, earthquakes, tsunamis, China, Republicans and everyone else. Unemployment, U.S. debt, bankruptcies, foreclosures etc. are all up since the Messiah took over. Using your train of thought, I can only assume when the economy recovers under a new President that you will say it was all because of Obama.

Unlike you, I will state that no U.S. President can control the economy in a good way or a bad way when other factors have created the mess. However, everything Obama has done is make the situation worse and the recovery longer.

[20111008-12](#) 16:23 GaryF Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Remember, in the general election you basically have to choose between two candidates, is there actually anyone out there who really thinks we'd be better off if McCain and Palin had won?

[20111008-13](#) 16:31 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

I wonder if McCain would still be claiming we have no economic problems at all? Then suspending his Presidency while he takes part in an Indian vision quest to search for the solution.

The only good thing about their administration would have been that McCain is still alive, so maybe he would have made it through at least four years without turning over the reins of power to one of the stupidest, most inappropriate candidates for anything in the history of the world. Wait, let me think...no, that's stating it too mildly.

[20111008-14](#) 16:58 Dennis Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

from GaryC:

I expect the history books will show that Obama suffered the same fate, thinking he is smarter than everyone else and getting nothing done, except destroying the economy.

Dear GaryC,

I think the 2008 election was about the desire for "hope and change" and not necessarily about the candidate who was elected. That's why so many people, including many who voted for Obama, are disappointed in the lack of change, especially from Bush economic and other policies. Obamacare was a disappointment, but will be a plus for the economy if the right wing of the Supreme Court doesn't suppress it. Dodd-Frank is also much weaker that it should have been and won't do much to correct the abuses of Wall Street bankers run amok (Clinton gets a lot of credit for that mess since Glass-Steagall was repealed by his administration). So if you have some facts about what Obama has done to "destroy the economy" other than allow the same people to try to correct the problems that got us into the mess in the first place (Summers, Geithner, et al), then I would like to hear them spelled out.

Republicans have made a lot of accusations about the failures of Obama but have offered no specifics and no real ideas for improvement (and don't say by making government smaller since the **Republicans have proven they really love big government as long as they are in charge**).

20111008-15 17:45 Jim Collective Bargaining

Dear SteveB,

Just wanted to share something from my own experience forty years ago. I was president of the Mishawaka Education Association in 1971 which was the first year state law was going to make school boards bargain with teachers' unions.

We had been bargaining before the law for salaries and some fringe benefits like group insurance but had no standing to bargain any other conditions of work. And after "discussions" the Board really was free to do whatever they wanted to do.

They did not have to sign any kind of a master contract with the teachers representatives. Each individual teacher was given a contract and in some corporations they did not use a uniform salary schedule and township trustees bargained with each teacher to pay what would keep them there or encourage them to look for another job.

The administration and board were used to arguing money. They knew we would ask for more than our final number and they would come back with less than theirs and we would meet somewhere in between.

In trying to bargain about working conditions and classroom conditions it was a different story. It took a long time to get them to figure out how to do it. We would start out by saying we had a problem and we were offering a change that we thought would solve the problem for us.

They would just say "no" After many sessions and a few years they got to the point where they could say "yes, we see the problem exists, but we have a problem with your solution. Here is what we think we could do to solve the problem." Then we would look at their plan and try to modify it to work better. We got pretty good at working together later. The first year I had to lead a strike to break the ice.

Now forty years later there is a joint administration-teacher committee that meets monthly and solves a lot of problems without waiting for contract renewal.

In Congress now there do not seem to be any Republicans who can say anything but NO and they are not interested in solving any problems that people are interested in like jobs or protecting the environment just in getting rid of Obama and ordinary people.

Will these people ever grow up or do we just have to take them out of government since they cannot govern this way?

20111008-16 18:17 SteveG Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

LBJ got a lot of social issues through, and as I remember, he did most of the domestic issue governing during Ike's terms, as Ike attended to foreign policy.

When the statement was, "Our goal is to make Obama a one term president," and that has not altered, I believe it hasn't mattered what he has done. The Republicans would block it—anything to make him a one termer.

20111009-01 06:11 SteveB Re: Collective Bargaining

Dear Jim,

Thank you so much, Jim. This story is certainly a great illustration of what workers, management, and government have to do to actually function.

But, of course, despite our long labor history in America (which evidently students have not been learning well enough), the Republican leadership evidently feels that workers should have no unions, hence, they should not have a say in anything. Workers should have no rights, I guess.

And, as you say, they aren't even willing to talk about it.

Amazing to me that the progress I hoped to see in my lifetime has turned into decline, especially of government.

Always great to know your thoughts and feeling. Have a great fall and please stay in touch.

20111009-02 06:31 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear GaryC,

It does seem like a weird move at a weird time and I'm totally against it. Like Ron Paul, I say legalize the stuff, tax the hell out of it, guarantee its quality, then really crack down on the Mexican border and the Mexican drug cartels.

What a stupid, stupid, wasteful failure the policy of both parties has been in the "war on drugs". I think what they needed instead was a war on sending jobs out of the country. Maybe a war on greed, though that's a fine line, because greed can be good if harnessed and controlled—hence, the U.S.

I agree and have always agreed with Rick Perry about one thing—"without border security, there is no security." Someday, we will probably learn that the hard way.

Obviously, few of us are really happy with Obama...for very different reasons. But I'll pick him a million times with glee before I will pick another Republican lying dog puppet!

20111009-03 07:50 SteveG Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB,

Washington has medical pot laws and it seems that each person gets a permit and is allowed to grow a certain number of plants for their own use. There were I believe 6 people with their licenses posted growing the proper number of plants in a small area, minding their own business in accordance with Washington law. The Feds came, tore out all the plants and arrested one individual.

The other interesting part of pot growing in this area is that a lot is done on large scale within federal forests and within vineyards. They have found areas of 10,000 plus plants growing. Usually Mexican nationals get arrested.

Hemp has been shown to be better than cotton for making clothes. Start the farming and tax/regulate the THC portion and let us have better clothes. I have seen some hemp made clothing, usually imported from Central America.

The Yakama Nation has their own cigarette manufacturing plants and get around state and federal taxes for those products. They also have a few gas stations that gets around federal and state taxes on gasoline.

[20111009-04](#) 08:47 Pam Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

I'm a child of the 'sixties, but I'm proud to say I've never once used recreational drugs of any kind, unless you count wine and caffeine. That said, I do support the legalization of marijuana. It can't be worse than beer and cigarettes, and it's responsible for a lot of social disorder, and not because of its effects. Think of the money that could be raised if it were sold legally and taxed. If people get high and commit crimes under the influence, then prosecute those crimes. But if someone wants to smoke a joint in his own living room, then where's the harm? Even if it were legal, I still wouldn't use it; I wouldn't even encourage it, but I do think those who want it should be able to get it without risking jail time. About cocaine, I'm not as sure. As I understand it, cocaine does do harm and can really mess people up. Heroin is off the table. But maybe if marijuana were legal it wouldn't be a gateway drug so much as a final destination. I love my wine, but it hasn't led me on to whiskey and gin. (Not ruling it out, mind.)

[20111009-05](#) 09:14 Pam Re: Collective Bargaining

I'm dismayed by the flak teachers get. The debacle in Wisconsin should make us all ashamed. It just goes to show how little Americans really think of education—or intelligence for that matter. To treat teachers like greedy slackers is outrageous and self-defeating.

Education is IMPORTANT. Like good medical care, good education is necessary for the health of a nation and builds a foundation for its future.

I spent a career teaching in a public university, where I was underpaid but loved my job. I also spent two years teaching in a public high school—a very nice one—and I don't think I've ever worked harder or endured so much stress. Teaching kids is hard work, and it takes a special person to do it well. Why do so many people assume that the teaching profession is larded with lazy bozos? The less than good ones usually drown and leave. It's the dedicated, strong ones who keep getting back on the horse. Anyone who thinks teaching is a cushy job needs to spend a week—just a week would do it—in a classroom. The discipline alone is enough to drain your batteries, and woe unto you if you haven't sufficiently prepared for every class every day. Then pile on the energy and creativity it takes to keep 20 or 30 squirmy kids or teens paying attention and maybe even enjoying the lesson, and you have one exhausted teacher at the end of the day. Sure, lots of jobs are hard. But doctors and lawyers get respect and compensation. Teachers too often have to beg for scraps and put up with lousy working conditions. When I taught high school back in the day, there was a teachers' union at my school, but I didn't join. I didn't think it was right for teachers to strike, and I didn't want to support something that might call for that. I have since changed my mind.

Teachers aren't sacrificial lambs; they deserve to be treated fairly. Labor unions have not always been clean and pristine, but they are responsible for an incalculable amount of progress and worker security. Every cause needs a critical mass to make itself felt. Unions are a way for teachers to have the power of a large organization, and they need it. Sorry for this rant, but you can tell how passionate I am about this subject. Thank you, group, for putting up with my vents.

[20111009-06](#) 09:21 Lianne Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop / Our Group"

Dear SteveB,

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Why don't you start an interactive blog that one can choose to go to.

[20111009-07](#) 09:36 Mary Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop"

Dear SteveB,

Agreed w/ you till your last paragraph...Democrats don't lie? I'm against blind faith which you obviously have w/ Mr. O, who bowed to the King of Saudi Arabia, promised you hope and change (are you seeing it yet? oh, I know, it's still Bush's fault....poor Mr. O can't follow thru w/ promises), didn't deal w/ immigration or close GITMO, promised no drilling, yet did, openly lied about how much "the rich" are paying in taxes, shovel-ready were NOT shovel ready....AND asking you: did the stimulus program really work?

At your own admission, you vote for the party and not the man [Don't believe I admitted any such thing. — SteveB].....shame on you....and I thought you liberals were more open-minded. Pam's the smartest one of all. [Well, this may be true. —SteveB]

20111009-08 10:22 GaryC Re: Collective Bargaining

Dear Pam,

My wife was a teacher in a private school for 30 years and was underpaid by at least 30% yearly. But she would never trade it for her public school experience with higher pay but stupid rules and requirements. I could not disagree with you more on the unions for teachers. First, teachers are protected by federal and state law which obviates the need for most of what the union is supposed to be doing. Second, study after study has shown that the unions are bad for the kids and bad for the teachers. Even Obama's Secretary of Education says that public schools have failed and is promoting charter schools. New Orleans is on the way to an entire system of charter schools. And, the effort in New Orleans is being led by senior teachers and administrators fed up with the failure of the system including their own union, who is opposing the plan.

There is a lot of evidence also that union officials use the dues money to "bribe" politicians and feather their own nest with lavish trips to conferences etc.

Unions screw the teachers and screw the children. Teachers, for the most part, are not the problem. But I am sure you know that not all teachers are of the same caliber as you are. There are many that should be ruffed as they do not care one wit about the kids. I was an attorney representing IPS for many years and the process we had to go through to get bad teachers fired was unbelievable. These were teachers who were doing drugs in the school, child molesters, child abusers etc. Yet, even when the teacher had been charged by the police for crimes, it took months if not years to get them fired even after they had been convicted and incarcerated. The union would continue to support these bums when their energy and resources should have been directed to helping the good teachers and students.

20111009-09 10:50 SteveB Re: Collective Bargaining

Dear GaryC,

Great! We're all agreed that education is important. Even vital.

I thought Republicans were fervently for deregulation, free enterprise, the free marketplace, lack of government interference, right?

I don't think the state legislatures or the national Congress should be dictating every detail of education, teacher working conditions, salaries, or even student performance. Or providing the money with so many strings.

I think there have to be some state, even national is OK, standards and some equality of funding. Sorry, but one or both of these bigger governmental entities has to provide this function. Other than this, I think education works best on a local level, with administrators, teachers, parents, and even students working together to solve problems in creative, fair, intelligent, even different ways. Education thrives on experiment, just not too much experiment.

Unions have proven to be a vital force to magnify the voice of individual teachers. Things work better— even in Japanese car factories—when workers have a say in their work. I know of no work where that is more important than teaching.

And a free, unfettered marketplace established between the unions and management and the capitalist system itself can be trusted to provide fair wages and costs.

This is the way all you Republicans want it to work for CEO's. This is the way it does work with CEO's except that they don't need unions, because they're powerful enough without them. But if they needed them, believe me, they'd have them!

Let's have it your way. Let's get big government (including state legislatures) out of education as much as possible. But let's leave a level playing field.

I say, what's fair for CEO's is fair for our fine, overworked, underpaid teachers who have my deepest admiration and appreciation.

From my upfront, inside view of having been a public school teacher myself for a while, I appreciate the teachers' unions too!

[20111009-10](#) 10:58 SteveB Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop / Our Group"

Dear Mary,

Just wanted to say thanks for writing. I hope you'll stay with us. And I never mean to offend, even though I have a very direct, sometimes provocative, way of stating things. I just want to wake people up. If I've offended you, I am sorry.

I agree that I am disappointed in Obama too.

That being said, I did not say I was going to vote by party. I never do that. I don't like either party that much. All my comments and questions reference a very small, specific sphere in this forum...searching for solutions to our specific problems, and the specific people who are running for, especially, the office of President in 2012.

There are a lot of Republicans I like and vote for who are more practical and less dogmatic than many of these Presidential candidates seem to be.

[20111009-11](#) 16:26 Mary Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop / Our Group"

Dear SteveB,

I appreciate your humility.

[20111009-12](#) 23:14 Mary Re: "Feds Announce Obama Flip-Flop / Our Group"

Dear SteveB and Pam,

Like Pam, I like stimulating conversations, as long as there is no name-calling, or mocking of values. [Personal content removed. —SteveB] You are wrong, SteveB....I always seek the truth, and yea, sometimes it disappoints, but I couldn't be happy w/ a lie, nor should you even if it betrays your liberal views. My major point thru all of this is I'm against big government, which I believe Mr. O pushes. If someone can show me I'm wrong I'm all ears, but please don't do what Dennis has often done w/ me....."best defense is a good offense". I'm not a zealous student of history, but I believe that at times when our country was the most productive, good economy, etc. it was when the government wasn't running things. (just got back from a long road trip, so signing off and again, agreeing w/ Pam!)

[20111010-01](#) 06:41 Pam "Where's Your \$50,000?"

I love Alan Grayson. I hope he runs for Pres. in 2016. He is the ONLY politician I can think of who tells it like it is. Straight out.

"Where's Your \$50,000?" by Alan Grayson, Huffington Post

Oct. 7, 2011, (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-alan-grayson/gao-bank-bailout_b_1001009.html)

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) says that our Government has handed out \$16 trillion to the banks.

Let me repeat that, in case you didn't hear me the first time. The GAO says that our Government HAS HANDED OUT \$16 TRILLION TO THE BANKS.

That little gem appears on Page 131 of GAO Report No. GAO-11-696. A report issued two months ago. A report that somehow seems to have eluded the attention of virtually every network, every major newspaper, and every news show.

How much is \$16 trillion? That is an amount equal to more than \$50,000 for every man, woman and child in America. That's more than every penny that every American earns in a year. That's an amount equal to almost a third of our national net worth—the value of every home, car, personal belonging, business, bank account, stock, bond, piece of land, book, tree, chandelier, and everything else anyone owns in America. That's an amount greater than our entire national debt, accumulated over the course of two centuries.

A \$16 trillion stack of dollar bills would reach all the way to the Moon. And back. Twice. That's enough to pay for Saturday mail delivery. For the next 5,000 years.

All of that money went from you and me to the banks. And we got nothing. Not even a toaster.

I have been patiently waiting to see whether this disclosure would provoke some kind of reaction. Answer: nope. Everyone seems much more interested in discussing whether or not they like the cut of Perry's jib.

Whatever a jib may be.

In the next few weeks, I'm going to be writing more about this. But right now, I wanted to keep this really simple. Just give folks something to talk about when they're standing next to the coffee maker.

The Government gave \$16 trillion to the banks. And nobody else is talking about it.

Think about it. Think about what that means.

Courage, Alan Grayson

20111010-02	06:45	SteveB	Re: Our Group
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Dear Mary,

I agree that things work so much better when people are respectful of each other. At the same time, I may, at times, not show much respect for certain political candidates I don't personally know. If you do the same thing, with Obama or anyone, I will not mind or take offense and hope you won't either.

I've decided Obama is too much of a professor-type (though I love him dearly). Like Jimmy Carter. Very smart, but not exactly connected in just the right way with the practical world. Somehow able to become President, then not able or willing to lead. Strange. I guess Woodrow Wilson was the last President before Carter who was the professor-type and I think he did OK.

There was a post from someone in this group the other day with numbers showing there are fewer government employees now than there were during the Reagan administration. I checked it out and it seemed to be true.

I'd love to know the truth for sure, but I suspect the government was running things just as much if not more in those days. Remember, we've had lots of deregulation and tax cuts since then.

The repeal of the banking regulations in the 90's allowed the housing bubble to happen—aided and abetted by both parties—in the opinions of even some conservative economists I have read.

The truth is not always easy to find, which is why I am pleased and encouraged if you are one of those that help all of us to find it and know it.

20111010-03 07:16 SteveB Re: Our Group

Dear Pam,

You are a good ally and I'm so happy to have you as a friend. Things will settle, thanks in large part to you. I loved your long comments the other day, and you seem to have woken some people up in a good way.

I'm so interested to know if anybody can be convinced by anything or anyone to actually change their minds if the facts warrant.

If we all agree, why bother... And I think we have such a smart group...

Thank you! Give that little boy a hug today. (If I don't remind you, you probably won't. Haha!)

20111010-04 08:30 GaryC Re: Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I was going to respond in kind. I have no issues with any of your correspondence or comments. WE have different opinions, but I would fight to the death your ability to express them in a civilized discourse. I don't think some of the people understand you and are funning with each other at times. [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

I was not trying to assassinate you with my comments. Sometimes an email can be taken out of context and not understood by all. I apologize if I offended you or caused your reputation to suffer.

What is interesting to me is how two people with similar backgrounds and experiences can look at facts and arrive at different conclusions. I have always believed that life is like a pendulum that swings back and forth. It really doesn't matter what concept you look at, there are always ebbs and flows with the direction of play, perception or outcomes. In baseball, we have gone from pitcher domination, to lowering the strike zone and steroids for higher run production, and now back to more pitching. In politics, we go from anti war, to job creation incentives, to environmental concerns, to religious nut bags, to government intrusion. As a whole, I think most people want security, safety, jobs, property rights, religious freedom, fairness and a future for their children. How we get there is always a matter of interpretation. I hope that I have learned something through these discussions. I know I form my opinions through reading, observation, listening to others and discussions like this. I certainly don't always agree with the comments but it does help me to understand the opinion of others and why they have them. I really don't believe in a one track approach to solving problems.

You and I agree on a lot of issues, but we just don't see the cause or the solution in the same way. I really don't feel that unions are evil but they are just as abusive and corrupt as government and corporations.

On a personal note, I am sorry to hear about your son. Nothing can be worse in my opinion than to lose a child early in their life. My friends who have had the same experience all have a void in their life. I have seen way too many divorces because of early deaths like Aaron's.

As to the consequences of the legalization of Marijuana, I know our drug policies (Dem or Repub) have been failures and always will be. I prefer to spend the money policing the border and stopping heavy drugs. Taxing the stuff and providing safe outlets for its purchase and production MIGHT stop kids from drifting into harder drugs through their association with dealers. The results in Holland are a mixed bag. Usage is up but violent crimes are down. I know Holland is planning a shift in their policies based on years of study but I can't remember the direction. I think those people with addictive traits will migrate further and further down the ladder regardless of how they get started.

Again, MY BAD for offending you and your delicate sensibilities!

20111010-05 11:44 SteveG The Sluggish Economy

Dear Mary and Pam,

The actual number of federal government employees compared to the size of the population is the smallest it has been in decades.

The economy is sluggish at best; banks are reluctant to loan money even though the interest rates are at a record low; banks have somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1 trillion on hand; companies have a \$1 trillion or so sitting around but won't expand, hire, because the economy is sluggish/unstable. Unemployment is high, you can probably pick any number above 9% and be right. If banks won't loan money to businesses to expand and companies won't use their money to expand, how is unemployment to decrease? How is the economy to grow?

20111010-06 11:53 Bill Re: The Sluggish Economy

Dear SteveG,

Well stated. This is the conundrum. There is a wonderful article on John Maynard Keynes in the current issue of *The New Yorker*, touching on this problem and relating Keynes statement that "animal spirits" are involved in resolving the question of resurgence in lending and investment. No kidding: "animal spirits." It was just Keynes's way of describing the non-quantifiable and amorphous psychological dimension of economic activity.

20111010-07 12:12 GaryC Re: The Sluggish Economy

Dear Bill,

I agree with Keynes on this observation, which begs the question "Why are governments involved in trying to stimulate the economy when they have no idea what the results will be?" Sort of like the "Law of Unintended Consequences". Or, our wonderful stimulus plan creating jobs at the cost of over \$1,000,000 per job.

20111010-08 12:48 Dennis Re: The Sluggish Economy

from GaryC:

Or, our wonderful stimulus plan creating jobs at the cost of over \$1,000,000 per job.

Dear GaryC,

This is one of those wonderful statistics made up and spread by the right wing lamestream media. If there is something to back it up, I'd like to see it.

20111010-09 15:37 Pam Re: Our Group

I'm glad there is some diversity in this group. When I was teaching, the university was always holding "diversity workshops," I guess in the effort to get people with different ethnicities, religions, and political opinions to talk to each other. I applauded the effort (it was well-intentioned), but I found those workshops kind of ridiculous. What's necessary isn't an hour doing diversity exercises with strangers or semi-strangers. What's necessary is friendship—and love.

I have an adopted black-Vietnamese son. I love him. How could I possibly, then, hate black people? My dearest friend is a conservative Christian; I am a liberal atheist. We've been friends for nearly 30 years. We've worked together and watched each other's children grow up. When we taught together, we were the poster-children for mutual respect between people with very different ideas about some important things. I think it was good for our students to see us in action. I think making a trivial cliché out of "Some of my best friends are _____" is too bad. When your best friend is somehow "different," it's harder to carry around prejudices.

I just want to say, I love this group.

[20111010-10](#) 16:06 Pam Re: The Sluggish Economy

Dear Mary, SteveG, and Bill,

I heard someone (yes, on NPR) say that if we're not careful we'll talk ourselves into another recession. It does seem that fear plays a large part in our troubles. I'd like to know why those corporations that have so much money lying around don't unlock their vaults and get things going. You'd think it would be in their best interest to do so. If just one corp. would take the first step, mightn't the others follow? I agree that economics is the "dismal science." And I admit most of what's going on is beyond me; it took me forever to figure out what mortgage-backed securities are. But I hear everyone saying the corporations have so much money, and if they'd just spend some of it and hire some people, the whole engine could start up again. Don't the CEOs listen to the same news? What are they waiting for?

I've wondered for a long time when people would take to the streets. No surprise there. I have to say I'm glad people are finally taking a stand. It's too bad a lot of the protesters look like wild and crazy hippies rather than nice respectable middle-class homeowners, but at least they're bringing some attention to a problem that is affecting millions of us.

I am fighting hard not to become a conspiracy nut, but I can't help wondering whether everything isn't ALL about making money. I don't think six guys sat down in a room and planned to rip off an entire class of Americans, but that is, in fact, what has happened. Someone did it. And someone is protecting those responsible. Bernie Madoff was just one they couldn't ignore, though even there it took years of warnings to get the govt. to move in on him. Sometimes I wonder if we aren't all being pacified with material goods, television, big-time sports (read the article in the Atlantic), and full to bursting supermarkets. Bread and circuses in other words. I, for one, don't want to risk what I have unless there are tanks rolling down my street. Violence breaks out when people feel like rats backed into a corner, and I don't think we're there yet. But the young have less to lose. Revolutions are sparked by the young who are most often the ones—like today—who are over-educated and underemployed. Family values are important not least because a young man with kids and a mortgage is less likely to burn the barn down. Freud said the two necessary things for happiness are love and work. We really do need to get a handle on unemployment. Ideas anyone?

[20111010-11](#) 16:23 Pam Re: Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I have come to really love this group. I find the conversations incredibly interesting. You're right, it's a smart group of people. I worry sometimes that I mouth off too much; I don't want to drown out anybody else. I do find, though, that when I can write my thoughts to this group I feel less depressed and hopeless. I'm pretty introverted, so while I enjoy interacting with other people (especially ones I know well), it takes me a long time to get really close to someone. In person, that is. Somehow, when I write I can be more forthcoming. Writing gives me energy, while the best cocktail party in the world exhausts me. I'm glad you found me and opened this door. Thanks.

[20111010-12](#) 17:08 SteveG Re: The Sluggish Economy

Dear Pam and Mary,

Well put. Where I currently live is about 50% Hispanic and some of the surrounding communities are 50% Hispanic and 25% Native American. Diversity is everywhere, if you look. I grew up poor, but didn't know it and enjoyed my life, still do. Some friends are religious, some go to church and think they are religious, others do not believe in traditional religions, and others do not believe. Some of you I have gotten drunk with, others I haven't; some I have made corn liquor with, others I haven't; some of you I have never met.

The important thing at the moment is finding a way or ways to get the economy, country moving in a positive/future direction for mankind—neither party alone can do that. Working together seems to be a lost art. How do you get cooperation going, how do you get mutual respect; how do you establish common goals, etc.?

20111010-13 17:32 GaryC Re: Our Group

Dear Pam,

Another issue I have with the U.S. citizenry, we are myopic. Most of us don't understand other cultures because we don't really travel abroad and embrace new cultures. I have been embarrassed so many times when I have taken customers to Asia who will not eat the local food, go out to see the local monuments or museums or engage in conversations with everyday people to see what is up in their lives.

I am sure that really well traveled people like Dennis and SteveB would agree. Well, maybe not, since I proposed the concept!

20111010-14 18:07 SteveB Quotes: Aristotle & William Shatner

"It appears necessary that there should be a limit to all riches, yet in actual fact we observe that the opposite takes place; for all men engaged in wealth-getting try to increase their money to an unlimited amount."

—Aristotle, a while ago

"This country is being torn apart by people with great passion who believe in their point of view and to disparage that point of view is to lose the argument. We are approaching a crisis where people see not just the necessity [of cooperating], but the Armageddon of not cooperating. Hopefully the people we elect will see it as well. —William Shatner, Oct. 5, 2011

20111010-15 18:21 Mark Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

I'd say that Obamacare helped destroy the economy.....it certainly didn't help it.....I also think that it's helped to nurture the public's feelings of doom.....he's runnin' up the country's charge card with no means of paying it back.....I hope it's repealed asap.....there, that ought to ruffle a few feathers.....all in good fun and discourse of course.....

20111010-16 18:47 GaryC Quotes: Aristotle & William Shatner

Dear SteveB,

Well played! But what is the incentive for these clowns in Congress to work for the common good?

20111010-17 21:24 Dennis Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

from Mark:

I'd say that Obamacare helped destroy the economy.....

Dear Mark,

Considering that most of Obamacare (aka Romneycare) hasn't even been implemented yet, I'd like to hear an explanation of how this could be.

I think you should look at the repeal of Glass-Steagall for the real reasons of why the financial system was turned into a casino and allowed Wall Street banks to almost take down the capitalist system. That, in case you don't remember, was during the Clinton administration. Obama was in the Illinois Senate at the time.

20111010-18 22:15 SteveB Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

from Mark:

I'd say that Obamacare helped destroy the economy...it certainly didn't help it. I also think that it's helped to nurture the public's feelings of doom. He's runnin' up the country's charge card with no means of paying it back.

I think the cost of "Obamacare" (unimplemented, so far) has been zero, but is projected by the budget office to save billions over the next 10 years. So how has it "destroyed the economy"? I believe our problems all come from greed.

20111011-01	06:26	SteveB	"America Is Getting Soft"
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"America Is Getting Soft" by Fareed Zakaria, CNN

Oct. 9, 2011, (http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/09/america-is-getting-soft/?hpt=po_r1)

Barack Obama has apparently committed blasphemy. In an interview in Florida last week, he dared to say that America had gotten "soft." The denunciations came in fast and furious from the right.

Rick Perry said, "Americans are plenty tough. What we've got is a soft President."

Romney added, "It's not that we have become soft. It's that he's on our shoulders and is too heavy."

If you watch the clip, here's what the President really said:

The way I think about it is, you know, this is a great, great country that had gotten a little soft and, you know, we didn't have that same competitive edge that we needed over the last couple of decades. We need to get back on track.

Isn't this self-evidently true? And isn't this what conservatives have been saying for decades? The evidence on the topic is pretty clear. The United States is slipping by most measures of global competitiveness. In category after category—actual venture capital funding, research and development—America has dropped well behind countries like Japan, South Korea and Sweden.

The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation measures 39 countries on their efforts to improve competitiveness over the last decade. America comes in next to last. Perhaps the most crucial measure of our ability to compete in a global economy is our educational levels, especially in science, math and engineering. A generation ago, America had the highest percent of college graduates in the world. Today we're ninth and falling. In 2004, only 6% of U.S. degrees were awarded in engineering, which is half the average for rich countries. In Japan it's 20% and in Germany it's 16%.

The great scholar, Daniel Bell, once summed up the essence of the Protestant ethic that had spawned industrial civilization—delayed gratification. The ability to save and invest today for a better tomorrow has been at the heart of every society's leap from poverty to plenty. America was a country marked by this ethic. I'll give you three examples.

1. In the 1950s, household debt was just 34% of disposable income; today it is 115% of disposable income.
2. Over the same period, investments in infrastructure and R&D spending are both down by a full percent of GDP.
3. Today, the federal government spends four dollars on every adult over 65. Compare that with what we spend on children under 18—just one dollar. Every level of government now spends less of its money investing for the future and more and more on consumption for the present.

Conservatives used to believe in confronting hard truths, not succumbing to comforting fairy tales. Some still do. In a bracing essay in the right-wing National Review, Peter Thiel, the co-founder of PayPal and a politically active libertarian, describes how America has, well, gone soft. He notes that the economy hasn't been performing well for decades and that median wages have been stagnating. He argues that the country's innovation culture has begun to decay, corroded by a widespread search for "easy progress" and quick fixes. "In our hearts and minds," Thiel writes, "we know that desperate optimism will not save us."

That's just what the feel-good mantras you hear so often these days sounds like—desperate optimism.

20111011-02 06:47 SteveB Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Dear GaryC,

Dennis is 110% correct on this one! On "Obamacare" and on the repeal of Glass-Steagall, which had protected us at least somewhat since 1933. The repeal (in the name of deregulation to produce a flourishing economy—haha) left us all vulnerable to...GREED!

20111011-03 12:00 Pam Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

What juicy can of worms do we have here?

I imagine each of us has a pet issue; SteveB's would be immigration; I won't try to speak for the rest of you. My pet issue for over 40 years has been healthcare. I can hardly wait to dig into this email from Dr. Mark. (I assume you're a medical doctor?)

As has already been pointed out, Obamacare has barely gotten out of the starting gate. The economy was in the toilet long before health care reform was under much discussion. As the great novelist Anthony Trollope would say, "As the world knows," most of our economic woes stem from the housing bubble and its attendant corruptions.

I agree with Robert Reich that what the economy needs now is more spending to lubricate the economy in the short term. This is not to say that the deficit isn't important, just that a frozen, jobless economy is worse. We need to shake out some of those corporate profits that are just sitting there and get credit moving again.

Capitalism depends on credit. Credit depends on confidence. What we are deficient in is trust. When bank deposits were insured by the federal government, people no longer kept their money under a mattress. They put it in banks that could then use that capital to support growth. I am a very risk averse person. I would rather save \$100 than take a 50/50 chance on winning \$500. When the banks were divided into institutions where people could safely park their money and different institutions that specialized in investment, a person could choose where to go. Now we're all in the pot together, like frogs in a tub of increasingly hot water. I'm telling you, I'd be one of the first frogs to leap out. Those risk-taking frogs are gonna get boiled. Back in the days when I was actually poor, I didn't pay much attention to the stock market, because I had nothing in it. I was poor, but I wasn't worried about losing anything.

Now I am invested—through my retirement plan—and I do pay attention and I do feel vulnerable. Doesn't it make sense to back up a little, look at what was going on when our economy was doing well, and maybe return to our more reasonably cautious behavior?

OK, now health care. (Thank you, thank you, thank you for being an audience. I'd feel I'm imposing on you except for the fact that I know you have a delete button.) I would like to see universal health insurance with a single-payer plan. I am not now, nor have I ever been, a socialist!! Universal health care is no more socialistic than public education. (I, for one, do not suffer the vapors when the word "socialism" comes up, but I won't go there now.) Insurance works because risk is shared. If only healthy people are insured (insurance companies like those folks best), then the cost of care for the sick and uninsured becomes prohibitive—and people will die. If we all contribute (as we do with Social Security), then the burden is shared by and lessened for all. If we insure everyone, we will have to ration care—and people will die. The outcome for all of us is the same, whatever kind of insurance we do or do not have. Some huge proportion of health-care dollars are spent on the last few months of life. No one wants to die, but we live as if we were in denial of our own mortality. We want life forever (or as long as possible), no matter the cost. If I had to choose between aggressive treatment for an 85-yr. old who's at death's door and treating a curable childhood leukemia, there is no doubt which one I'd choose. Even if that 85-yr. old was me. That, to me, seems a reasonable choice, not some sort of Nazi death-panel diktat.

Single-payer, universal care has worked in other countries (Canada, Sweden, England, to name the most obvious) for over half a century. Ask any citizen in Great Britain if he'd like to trade their system for ours, and you'd get a resounding "No."

There are so many arguments in support of universal care that I hardly know where to begin, but since money is what everybody seems to care about most, we should look at that first. Follow the money. Are insurance companies in business out of altruism and a desire to take care of people, or is their first obligation to make money? We all know the answer to that. Sometimes, no, all the time, it seems to me decisions of policy are decided solely on the basis of economic exigency.

Instead of saying we can't afford to take care of everyone, why don't we ask how we can make sure everyone has full access to a decent level of care? I lived in Canada for four years. My daughter was born there. My hospital bill was \$40.00, and that was because I had a private room. All I ever had to do when I went to a doctor was show my OHIP card. I went to whomever I wanted and never had to wait. Most doctors' offices had only one, maybe two, administrative personnel, who handled all the paperwork, which was pretty straightforward. True, physicians probably made a lot less money than American doctors, and many of them fled south where the pickings were better. But most stayed, in no small part I would imagine, because of the quality of life in Canada. Why do so many of England's finest actors remain in England, when they could make pots more money in the New World? Maybe they prefer life in England. Which is more necessary to happiness: way more money than you really need or the security of knowing you have enough?

We're seeing what happens when society gets too lopsided, when a small elite gets all the cake, and the majority scrape by on the crumbs. The riots of the 'sixties were awful, but would African-Americans be equal under the law without them? Racial equality was a just cause. I believe that even the most ardent bigot deep down knows that. But there were so many ostensibly good reasons why the country couldn't afford change, the country wasn't ready, yadda, yadda, yadda. Justice could have been served without the looting and burning—but it wasn't. We could devise a fair, comprehensive health-care system without the protests on Wall Street, but I doubt we will. Healthcare for all is a just cause. We should support Obama's efforts (which don't go far enough), not become hysterical because we think being able to get treatment is at odds with being free.

20111011-04	12:17	Pam	Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich Exposing 7 GOP Lies?"
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Dear SteveB,

Could you send this to your group? I don't know how to. I trust this guy.

[Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich Exposing 7 GOP Lies?" by Angie, MoveOn.Org](#)

Oct. 11, 2011, (<http://bit.ly/nFXUy8>) or (http://front.moveon.org/what-if-everyone-saw-this-clip-of-robert-reich-exposing-7-gop-lies/#.TpRsBu_00j4.email)

20111011-05	12:19	Dennis	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy & "Doctors Avoid Penalties in Suits Against Medical Firms"
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Dear Pam et al.,

Here's a related article about health care costs. It's an issue that my rheumatologist and my pharmacist son both feel strongly about:

["Doctors Avoid Penalties in Suits Against Medical Firms" by Tracy Weber and Charles Ornstein, ProPublica](#)

Sept. 16, 2011, (<http://www.propublica.org/article/doctors-avoid-penalties-in-suits-against-medical-firms>)

(This story was co-published with the *Washington Post*.)

Two years ago, drug maker Eli Lilly pleaded guilty to illegally marketing its blockbuster antipsychotic Zyprexa for elderly patients. Lilly paid \$1.4 billion in criminal penalties and settlements in four civil lawsuits. But a doctor named as a co-defendant in one suit—for allegedly taking kickbacks to prescribe the drug extensively at nursing homes—never was pursued.

Last year, Alharma paid \$42.5 million to settle federal allegations that it paid kickbacks to doctors to prescribe its painkiller Kadian.

"Health-care decisions must be based solely upon what is best for the individual patient and not on which pharmaceutical company is paying the doctor the biggest kickback," Rod J. Rosenstein, U.S. attorney for the District of Maryland, said in a statement announcing the settlement.

But the doctors accused of trading prescriptions for paid speaking gigs faced no consequences.

At least 15 drug and medical-device companies have paid \$6.5 billion since 2008 to settle accusations of marketing fraud or kickbacks. However, none of the more than 75 doctors named as participants were sanctioned, despite allegations of fraud or of conduct that put patients at risk, a review by ProPublica found.

Reporters reviewed hundreds of pages of court records and interviewed current and former federal prosecutors, state medical board officials, attorneys for whistleblowers and, when possible, the doctors. For each doctor identified in a suit, ProPublica checked for state medical board discipline, penalties from the Medicare program and federal criminal charges.

In many of the cases, it appears that not even a cursory investigation was done to see whether the physicians had behaved inappropriately.

"Doctors have kind of gone under the radar," said Tavy Deming, a Philadelphia lawyer who represents drug company whistleblowers.

Amid concerns about the influence of drug company money on medicine, whistleblower lawsuits have emerged as a headline-grabbing tool for holding manufacturers accountable.

Yet, despite their power to secure large settlements from drug makers, the suits have failed to resolve the culpability of physicians. Doctors often are not named as defendants, even though descriptions of their alleged misconduct are used to bolster the suits. And even when settling, many companies, including Alharma, continue to deny the allegations.

After cases are resolved, the internal company documents used as evidence remain confidential, preventing further exploration of the physicians' behavior. Patients have no way of knowing whether their doctor's judgment has been compromised, and doctors may be tarnished by spurious accusations.

Medical boards, which normally pursue tips or complaints of wrongdoing, do not routinely scan for such cases. Justice Department lawyers, wary of spending more time and effort on a case, usually are not interested in going after lesser players.

Tony West, the assistant attorney general who oversees civil litigation nationwide for the Justice Department, declined through a spokeswoman to discuss the issue. In announcing settlements with the drug companies, however, West has said that kickbacks undermine doctors' credibility.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley (Iowa), the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, said in a written statement that it takes "two sides to perpetuate this fraud" and that both need to be held accountable. "Otherwise, regardless of how big of a civil settlement a drug company makes, the incentive to cheat the taxpayers will still be in place for those willing to take part," said Grassley, who has led investigations into conflicts of interest in medicine.

Doctors less-attractive targets

In recent years, pharmaceutical and medical-device companies have been barraged by whistle-blower lawsuits detailing how the pursuit of profit allegedly fueled fraud and corruption.

The suits are typically filed by former employees who say that the companies promoted drugs for unapproved uses or paid doctors to prescribe drugs or use medical devices. The suits seek to recover millions—even billions—of dollars spent on these products by government health programs.

The Justice Department joins the cases—known as "*qui tam*" suits, from Latin—if it believes they have merit. Whistle-blowers and their lawyers get a cut of any money collected. The government has come to rely on such cases to police companies' conduct.

For Justice Department lawyers, big drug companies make attractive targets. They are flush with profits and determined to avoid crippling legal defeats. Their bureaucratic sprawl often leaves an inadvertent trail of incriminating email and memos. The massive financial settlements they are willing to pay are often modest in light of their annual sales and profits.

Zyprexa, for example, had U.S. sales of nearly \$3 billion in 2010 alone. Kadian, Alpharma's painkiller, brought in nearly \$263 million, according to IMS Health, which tracks prescription drug sales.

Also, the rules governing drug and device companies are strict: They are banned from pushing their products for uses not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Doctors, on the other hand, make particularly unattractive targets. Fearful of losing their licenses—and perhaps going to prison—they will devote every penny to their legal defenses. And juries like to think the best of physicians.

"It's a scorched-earth battle" for a doctor, said Michael Loucks, a former federal prosecutor in Massachusetts who led some of the nation's biggest health-care fraud investigations. "If he's convicted, it's not only a federal prison sentence, but he loses his license."

Rules governing doctors are less strict than those for drug companies. Doctors are permitted to talk about unapproved uses of drugs or prescribe them when they believe a patient will benefit. To secure a conviction, prosecutors must show that doctors knowingly traded their prescription pads for money or perks.

Of course, doctors can be and have been held accountable in other circumstances for negligence and malpractice if they prescribe the wrong drug for a patient or quantities that are harmful.

Another factor weighing against prosecution is burnout. After spending years taking on a drug company, many government attorneys are loath to tack on more time for a relatively minor victory.

Take the case of Maryland psychiatrist Peter Gleason. In 2006, federal prosecutors in New York charged him with pushing the narcolepsy drug Xyrem, also known as GHB or the "date-rape drug," for unapproved uses such as depression and fibromyalgia, a condition marked by chronic pain and fatigue.

Gleason vigorously challenged the charges, saying he believed in the benefits of the drug. He ultimately pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor count of misbranding a drug for interstate commerce. In 2010, he was given one year of probation.

In July, Florida's health department filed an administrative complaint against him based on his conviction, apparently unaware that Gleason had committed suicide in February.

Evidence sealed at settlement

For concerned outsiders, the whistle-blower suits are often troublingly vague. Many don't provide enough specifics about physicians' roles to allow assessment of their veracity. Some offer only worrisome hints of doctors' misconduct.

But the case against Lilly and Florida psychiatrist George Jerusalem, unsealed in 2009, was rich with detailed allegations. While purportedly receiving money and gifts from Lilly from 2001 to 2003, Jerusalem favored its antipsychotic Zyprexa, according to a case filed in federal court in Pennsylvania by Steven Woodward, a former Lilly sales representative.

Jerusalem was a consulting psychiatrist at more than 100 nursing homes in Florida's panhandle, treating 3,000 to 5,000 residents. According to the lawsuit, he prescribed more than \$1 million worth of Zyprexa a year to them even though it was known to be potentially dangerous for older patients.

Jerusalem had a change of heart, the suit said, when Lilly balked at hiring his son as a sales rep.

"As he had threatened, Dr. Jerusalem retaliated by immediately starting to switch his thousands of patients from Zyprexa" to a competitor's drug, the suit said. Sales of Zyprexa among Jerusalem's patients plummeted by 33 percent in one month, the lawsuit alleged.

Jerusalem did not return calls seeking comment. His wife, Tessie, who was also named as a defendant, said the accusations in the suit about trading prescriptions for favors are "not true."

Tessie Jerusalem, who managed his home office, said her husband gave only a few talks about Zyprexa over the years. If Woodward "can prove that Dr. Jerusalem made \$50,000 from the company, oh my goodness," she said. "Where did he get that amount is beyond me."

Lilly settled this and three similar suits for \$1.4 billion in 2009 and pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge for promoting Zyprexa in elderly populations as a treatment for dementia. Although Jerusalem was named as a defendant, the case against him was dropped when Lilly settled and there was no response from him in the court file. His case shows how hard it is for outsiders to get to the bottom of such allegations.

Once the Justice Department joins a case like this one, government lawyers have access to any evidence the whistleblower brings. With their subpoena power, they also can secure patients' medical records, a breakdown of the drugs prescribed and a listing of a company's payments to physicians.

When a case is settled, however, any evidence typically remains confidential, is sealed or even returned to the drug company. The public is effectively left in the dark.

ProPublica's effort to substantiate the allegations against Jerusalem was inconclusive. Reporters sought Medicaid-prescribing data from Florida for Jerusalem. Those records show he had prescribed only a small amount of antipsychotics during 2003.

But the data might not reveal his true impact on the prescriptions of his patients. State records showed he had treated at least 1,557 patients enrolled in both Medicare and Medicaid (mostly nursing home residents) in 2003 alone.

It is common for consulting psychiatrists such as Jerusalem to recommend drugs for patients, while the actual prescriptions are then written by physicians who work as medical directors for the nursing homes. Assessing the allegations against Jerusalem would require a review of confidential patient medical records to show that he recommended a drug that was later prescribed by another doctor.

Prosecutors could conduct such a review with a subpoena, but federal patient privacy laws would shield the records from reporters.

Asked for substantiation, attorneys for Woodward said his claims were based on memory because he was not allowed to take his records when he was fired. They said the government found him to be a trustworthy source. Woodward did not return calls for comment.

Two government lawyers involved in the case wouldn't comment on it but said the Justice Department typically focuses on whether the allegations in a suit support a pattern of behavior by the company. The department does not vouch for whistle-blowers' specific claims about individual doctors.

Brian Kenney, a Woodward attorney, said he pushed prosecutors to pursue the psychiatrist because his conduct was "egregious," but they were not interested.

"Dr. Jerusalem's conduct is tantamount to elder abuse," the suit alleged.

Medical boards don't follow up

When physicians are accused of sexual misconduct, medical malpractice or criminal behavior, medical boards typically launch investigations and impose public discipline if justified.

Medical-board officials in several states, however, said they could not recall any cases in which a doctor had been sanctioned for taking a kickback from a drug company or being part of a company's plan to market drugs "off-label"—for uses that are not approved by the FDA.

Russell Aims, chief of staff for Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine, said such cases are hard to prove because physicians can always claim they are prescribing and promoting a drug because they believe in it—not because of the money they are being paid.

"It's not like a wrong-site surgery, like sexual misconduct, like getting popped for a DWI," where the evidence is clear-cut, he said.

Further, many whistle-blower suits are filed in federal courts and never referred to state officials. Some former federal prosecutors said such suits should be routinely forwarded to state medical boards.

Attorney Marcella Auerbach, whose Florida practice represents whistle-blowers, said she is struck by the lack of interest in the cases by boards.

"There is absolutely no follow-up by any medical organization—not an email, a phone call—ever that we've received in the office," she said. "No one's asked the question."

The federal government can fine doctors or strip them of their ability to bill federal health programs. But none of the physicians named in the suits settled since 2008 have faced such actions, according to a review this summer of a list of physicians excluded from billing Medicare and Medicaid.

In an earlier round of cases, the inspector general at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sanctioned three Florida doctors for seeking or receiving kickbacks from hip- and knee-device makers. One was banned from Medicare and Medicaid for three years and fined \$65,000. The others were fined \$650,000 and \$101,000, respectively.

None was disciplined by Florida's medical board.

Lewis Morris, chief counsel to the HHS inspector general, said doctors need to know there are repercussions. "If you don't focus on doctors, this is a problem that will never end," he said.

He also acknowledged that he only has the resources to focus on the most glaring cases.

"I don't have a logical defense," Morris said. "We have a finite number of people to do a hell of a lot of work, so we can't get to every case we'd like to."

Doctors say they're unfairly labeled

Some doctors named in the suits say they've been unfairly branded. The inclusion of allegations in an official court document gives them a ring of truth, they say.

A 2008 whistle-blower lawsuit against Pfizer, for instance, names Delaware psychiatrist Neil Kaye as "one of the key champions of this nationwide fraudulent marketing scheme" involving the antipsychotic Geodon.

At least one of Kaye's PowerPoint presentations, the suit alleged, promoted the drug to treat a host of conditions for which it was not approved by the FDA.

Pfizer paid Kaye \$4,000 a day plus expenses, said the suit, filed in Massachusetts. He even used his private helicopter to fly to speaking gigs "all at Pfizer's expense," the suit said.

Pfizer paid the government \$2.3 billion in 2009 to resolve this and 10 other civil suits and a criminal case. As part of the settlement, a Pfizer subsidiary pleaded guilty to felony charges relating to the painkiller Bextra, which was pulled from the market in 2005. Kaye was named as a co-defendant but said he was never served with the suit nor was a party to the settlement.

A Pfizer spokesman said the allegations against Kaye are false. In an interview, Kaye said, "I've never off-label marketed. I never would."

Kaye said people have mentioned the suit to him. "I sometimes try to convince people that not everything that is on the Internet is the truth."

Jeffrey Bostic, a child psychiatrist in Boston, similarly was accused of being a cog in Forest Laboratories' marketing of its antidepressants Celexa and Lexapro for children. The drugs were not approved for that use.

In court papers filed in Massachusetts, the government said Bostic gave more than 350 Forest-sponsored talks and presentations.

"Dr. Bostic became Forest's star spokesman in the promotion of Celexa and Lexapro for pediatric use," the complaint said. The firm paid Bostic more than \$750,000 in honoraria for his presentations on Celexa and Lexapro between 2000 and 2006, it said.

Bostic, who was not named as a defendant, said he was paid for his speeches but not \$750,000. He said his talks were based on his experiences treating depressed children at a community mental-health center where he worked in southern New Hampshire.

Forest settled criminal and civil cases for \$313 million in 2010. One of its subsidiaries pleaded guilty to a felony count of obstructing justice involving the thyroid hormone Levothyroid and separate misdemeanor counts of off-label promotion of Celexa as a treatment for pediatric patients and distributing Levothyroid even though it was not approved.

The misdemeanor counts did not allege that the company intended to violate the law, the company said in a statement at the time.

"I've never had difficulty sleeping at night feeling I did anything inappropriate," Bostic said. "Maybe I'm deluded. There were no kickbacks."

[20111011-06](#) 14:31 Pam Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

I think it was Mortimer Adler who said that during the course of history institutions have improved (the Catholic church no longer burns heretics) but individuals haven't. This article seems to bear that out. Unless you count cheating drug companies as institutions.

The thing about democracy is it doesn't work without an educated and basically honest populace. Without trust, it just doesn't work. When a society is corrupt, every enterprise gets tainted. But what is society? It's us. I am appalled by the idea that a doctor, a person his patients entrust with their very lives, would place personal gain above his patients' welfare, but there must be a lot of them out there. If "reputable" companies like Eli Lilly take every advantage they can lay their hands on, and the FDA fails to act against them, and Medicare is forbidden to negotiate drug prices, where's the trust?

I wonder if anyone has done a study of the relative trustworthiness of various societies. I assume that politics in Italy is more corrupt than it is here. I know that in Afghanistan nothing gets done without bribes all around. I bet Denmark is trustworthy. I'm ashamed that a venerable profession like medicine has so many rotten eggs in it. Where do things go wrong? What causes these moral lapses in people who look on the surface like everyone else? It's an age-old question, I know. No wonder we remember Demosthenes with his lantern, looking in vain for an honest man.

[20111011-07](#) 16:18 SteveG Illegal Immigration

There cannot be 50 different immigration policy, one for each state. There needs to be one for the country and it needs to be enforced in all states. Typically we talk of illegal immigration through the Mexican borders, yet there is a lot of illegal immigration through the Canadian border—eastern Europe, Middle East, etc. Increased undocumented immigration from South and Central America is coming through Puerto Rico.

We have had the War on Drugs since the 1960's. So far drugs have won. A lot of states have prescriptions for medical marijuana. In this area the mountain forest areas and the vineyards are prime growing spots for pot—one spot was found with 10,000 plants.

16 states currently offer in-state tuition for undocumented students while documented students have to pay out of state tuition. Where is the fairness?

20111011-08 16:25 GaryC Re: Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveG,

It's all about power. Illegals vote in many states and vote Democrat. If you want to get votes, then you don't enforce the laws. It's very simple. Republicans do the same thing in other areas. I still say reform of the primary system and term limits would reduce this pandering.

20111011-09 18:28 Dennis *The End of Loser Liberalism: Making Markets Progressive*

Here's a free book you can download that is worth reading.

The End of Loser Liberalism: Making Markets Progressive, by Dean Baker

2011, (<http://www.cepr.net/index.php/publications/books/the-end-of-loser-liberalism>)

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Chapter 1—Upward Redistribution of Income: It Didn't Just Happen

Money does not fall up. Yet the United States has experienced a massive upward redistribution of income over the last three decades, leaving the bulk of the workforce with little to show from the economic growth since 1980. This upward redistribution was not the result of the natural workings of the market. Rather, it was the result of deliberate policy, most of which had the support of the leadership of both the Republican and Democratic parties.

Unfortunately, the public and even experienced progressive political figures are not well informed about the key policies responsible for this upward redistribution, even though they are not exactly secrets. The policies are so well established as conventional economic policy that we tend to think of them as incontrovertibly virtuous things, but each has a dark side. An anti-inflation policy by the Federal Reserve Board, which relies on high interest rates, slows growth and throws people out of work. Major trade deals hurt manufacturing workers by putting them in direct competition with low-paid workers in the developing world. A high dollar makes U.S. goods uncompetitive in world markets.

Almost any economist would acknowledge these facts, but few economists have explored their implications and explained them to the general public. As a result, most of us have little understanding of the economic policies that have the largest impact on our jobs, our homes, and our lives. Instead, public debate and the most hotly contested legislation in Congress tend to be about issues that will have relatively little impact.

This lack of focus on crucial economic issues is a serious problem from the standpoint of advancing a progressive agenda. Mainstream economic conservatives already have an enormous advantage in national politics because they control most of the money that finances political campaigns. To add to that, they also use their money to buy directly into the national debate by funding organizations and projects intent on undermining important programs they don't like — as investment banker Peter Peterson has done with his decades-long crusade against Social Security and Medicare. But all the money in

the world will hardly matter if progressives do not understand how basic, conventional economic policy militates against the interests of working people and the disadvantaged. If they don't even know what winning would look like, then the prospects for a progressive economic agenda are bleak.

For the most part, progressives accept the right's framing of economic debates. They accept the notions that the right is devoted to the unfettered workings of the market and, by contrast, that liberals and progressives are the ones who want the government to intervene to protect the interests of the poor and disadvantaged.

But this view is utterly wrong as a description of the economy and competing policy approaches. And it makes for horrible politics. It creates a scenario in which progressives are portrayed as wanting to tax the winners in society in order to reward the losers. The right gets to be portrayed as the champions of hard work and innovation, while progressives are seen as the champions of the slothful and incompetent. It should not be surprising who has been winning this game.

In reality, the vast majority of the right does not give a damn about free markets; it just wants to redistribute income upward. Progressives have been useful to the right in helping it to conceal this agenda. Progressives help to ratify the actions of conservatives by accusing them of allegiance to a free-market ideology instead of attacking them for pushing the agenda of the rich.

For the last three decades the right has been busily restructuring the economy in ways that ensure that income flows upward. The rules governing markets, written by the rich and powerful, ensure that this gravity-defying outcome prevails. The right then presents the imposition of rules that it likes as the natural result of unfettered market forces.

Rarely does this upward flow of income require a government check to the wealthy. But when the checks are necessary, they come. The Treasury and the Federal Reserve Board gave trillions of dollars in loans, at below-market interest rates, to the largest Wall Street banks at the peak of the financial crisis in 2008. These loans kept Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, and most of the other major Wall Street banks from collapsing, and the subsidies implied by the loans and guarantees to the world's largest banks were in the tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars. Yet somehow this massive intervention on behalf of these banks' executives, shareholders, and bondholders — some of the richest people in the country — is not viewed as interference with the market.¹

While the bank bailouts were big news, there is no shortage of less-visible instances in which conservatives have long been eager for the government step in to support the interests of the wealthy. We'll quickly discuss seven examples here: continued support for too-big-to-fail banks, patent and copyright protection, restrictions on organized labor, corporate liability limitations, Federal Reserve monetary controls, trade and dollar policy, and housing policy.

Too-big-to-fail banks

To start with an easy one, how many "free market fundamentalists" have rallied behind efforts to break up "too-big-to-fail" banks? This one should be a no-brainer for any genuine believer in free markets. A too-big-to-fail bank is a bank that everyone expects will be bailed out by the government if it gets in trouble, as happened in 2008. Because investors can assume that the government will back up the bank, they are willing to lend it money at a lower interest rate than if they thought the bank was standing on its own. How could any believer in the virtue of free markets support the existence of large financial institutions that borrow at a lower cost than their competitors because of an implicit guarantee from the government?

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The fact that most of those claiming to be "free marketers" have overwhelmingly been on the side of the too-big-to-fail banks tells the world as clearly as possible that their motivations have nothing to do with a commitment to market fundamentalism and everything to do with a commitment to serving the interests of the rich and powerful. This is disguised as a commitment to the market for the obvious reason that doing things out of a commitment to free market principles sounds better than explicitly claiming to pursue policies that redistribute income from the vast majority of the population to the rich.

Patent and copyright protection

Patents and copyrights offer another example of how conservatives quietly support massive intervention by the government. Though we tend to think of them as integral parts of the free market, patents and copyrights are anything but.

Patents and copyrights are both explicit government policies to promote innovation and creative work. They reward inventors, musicians, writers and other creative workers with government-enforced monopolies for set periods of time, and these monopolies allow the holders to charge prices far above the free-market price. For example, the nation will spend close to \$300 billion in 2011 on prescription drugs.² In the absence of government-enforced patent monopolies, the same drugs would cost around \$30 billion, an amount that implies a transfer to the pharmaceutical industry of close to \$270 billion a year, or about 1.8 percent of gross domestic product. It is close to 15 times current federal spending on the main government welfare program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and it dwarfs the money at stake from a main goal of progressives: eliminating the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

Restrictions on organized labor

Yet another area where the government intervenes in the market at the behest of the well-off to diminish the well-being of workers and the disadvantaged is labor-management policy. The accepted view is that progressives want the government to intervene to protect workers, while conservatives would rather let workers and management sort things out for themselves. That's not quite the story.

Though labor law provides protections to workers and their unions, it also constrains workers' power in important ways. For example, it is illegal to organize or honor a secondary boycott. If the workers at a restaurant go on strike and then arrange for the Teamsters to refuse to deliver food to honor the strike, the restaurant can enlist the government to deliver injunctions and impose fines against the Teamsters. If Teamsters officials ignore the injunction (e.g., they don't tell their members that they cannot refuse to deliver food to the restaurant), they can face imprisonment.³ This is not the free market; this is the government intervening on behalf of employers.

Another example of how labor-management policy is rigged away from market forces is the fact that 22 states currently deny workers freedom of contract with their employers. Under "right-to-work" laws, workers are prohibited from signing contracts with employers that require workers covered by a union contract to pay their share of the union's costs. The law requires that everyone who is in a union bargaining unit — regardless of whether they are actually in the union — gets the same pay and benefits. The law also requires that the union represent workers in disputes with employers on issues covered by the contract, whether or not a worker is in the union. This means that if a worker who does not pay to support the union is fired, the law requires that the union represent the worker through any appeals process established under the contract.

While the law requires unions to provide the same benefits to all workers covered by a contract, right-to-work laws prohibit unions from signing agreements with employers that would require workers to pay for the benefits they are receiving. It in effect guarantees representation without taxation. This restriction of freedom of contract is not consistent with a free market. "Right-to-work" laws are just another way in which the right uses the power of the state to reduce the power and income of workers. Free marketers are perfectly willing to deny the freedom of contract to accomplish this end.

Corporate liability limitations

The modern limited liability corporation is another example of interference with a pure free market. Corporations do not exist in the natural world or in the free market; they have to be chartered by a government. They are artificial entities that can inflict damage on the public without the individuals at fault being held fully accountable. Limited liability means that the government allows corporations to harm individuals — for example, by allowing toxins to get into a community's drinking water — without the corporation's top management or shareholders being obligated to pay compensation. The victims (those drinking contaminated water in this case) are entitled to whatever assets are held by the corporation, but they cannot take the personal assets of the top managers or the shareholders.

By creating limited liability corporations the government is allowing the individuals who form a corporation to take the property (or even lives) of others without compensation. This is not a free market.

Federal Reserve monetary controls

A government policy with tremendous influence over economic outcomes is the power of the Federal Reserve Board in determining the level of employment. The Fed can foster growth and employment with low interest rates and expansionary monetary policy. But it can and often does deliberately raise the unemployment rate by raising interest rates. Moreover, the Fed's policy on holding assets like government bonds has an enormous impact on the government's debt burden, which in turn has redistributive implications.

Yet Fed policy receives little attention from progressives. We spend far more time arguing over jobs bills that will have a trivial impact on employment compared to the Fed's monetary policy. And we devote major lobbying efforts to tax or budget items that don't have a tenth of the impact on the debt as the Fed's decisions on its asset holdings.⁴

When the lost output from the Great Recession, an event that could have been averted with competent Fed policy, is compared with revenue that would be gained over the years 2011-2020 from eliminating the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, the lost output from the Great Recession is more than five times as large.

The right is happy to keep the Fed out of public debate since, as things stand, the right largely controls it. Conservatives promote an image of the Fed as an august institution, managed by high priests who are unsullied by the dirty back-and-forth of partisan politics. This view works out great for conservatives, since policy decisions by the Fed and for that matter other central banks typically have far more impact on the economy than most of the issues debated by Congress. The right manages to stir up big debates over relatively small matters, leaving it to control one of the most important levers of power in the economy. And this, the right would have us believe, is the work of the free market.

Trade and dollar policy

Another example of an area in which the right has almost completely controlled the debate, and therefore the policy outcome, is trade and dollar policy. The right has pushed a trade (and immigration) agenda over the last three decades that has had the explicit goal of putting non-college-educated workers in direct competition with low-paid workers in the developing world. The predicted and actual effect of this policy is to reduce the wages of non-college-educated workers relative to the wages of more highly educated workers and to increase corporate profits.

The trade deals negotiated over the last three decades have left highly educated workers largely protected from this competition; the agreements mostly focus on subjecting workers without college degrees to international competition. This policy has been carried through under the guise of free trade, but it has nothing to do with promoting free trade: a genuine free trade policy would be designed to place all U.S. workers, not just those without college educations, in competition with their lower-paid counterparts in the developing world.

The value of the dollar is another key policy lever that has been largely kept out of public policy debates. The Federal Reserve Board and the Treasury have enormous ability to influence the value of the dollar. A high dollar makes U.S. goods and services less competitive in the world economy. It makes our exports more expensive to people living in other countries, and it makes imports cheaper for people in the United States. As a result, a high dollar will reduce our exports and increase our imports, creating a trade deficit.

A trade imbalance matters hugely for the distribution of income in a context where some workers are exposed to international competition and others are protected. The high-dollar policy redistributes income from the workers who are exposed to international competition (non-college-educated workers) to those who are largely protected from such competition (primarily highly educated professionals, like doctors and lawyers). The high dollar means that the non-college-educated workers, in the face of competition from lower-cost imports, have to work for less to keep their jobs. On the other hand, those who are protected from this competition keep their good jobs and salaries and get to buy lower-cost imported products.

Is dollar policy just an esoteric, econometric issue? Hardly. Moving the value of the dollar up or down against other currencies by 10 percent has the impact on U.S. employment and wages of a hundred North American Free Trade Agreements. Yet how often might the dollar move that much without a peep from the press or progressive policy makers?

Of course, the hand that controls dollar policy is not the invisible hand of the free market. Business and financial interests have the upper hand at the Treasury Department and the Fed, but almost no one is talking about this important lever of economic power.

Housing policy

Though it is not hard to follow and appreciate Fed policy or the ups and downs of the dollar, we ignore these important economic policies at our peril. Instead, many progressives take the lead of conservatives and focus on the easy-to-see ups and downs of the stock market as a measure of economic health. Yet a mainstream economics textbook would tell us that the value of the stock market is supposed to reflect the value of future corporate profits. Rising profits could mean that future growth will be stronger and that wages as well as profits will be higher. On the other hand, the stock market might rise because investors believe that profits will rise at the expense of wages, or as a result of lower corporate tax payments. In the latter, redistributive case, only those who hold lots of stock would have reason to be happy about the prospect of higher stock prices. Higher stock prices ought not to provide any more cause for celebration than higher corn or zinc prices — it's good news for corn and zinc producers, but bad news for everyone else. Thus, there's little benefit from rising stock prices to give progressives cheer.

The same confusion about who benefits extends to rising home prices. Higher home prices do not make society as a whole wealthier; they just increase the share of society's wealth that can be claimed by homeowners. Those who own the most expensive homes are the biggest gainers.

Since homeowners as a group tend to be wealthier than non-homeowners, it is hardly progressive to support the upward redistribution of wealth implied by higher home prices. Higher home prices also have the effect of making it more expensive for current renters to become homeowners. In other words, a policy that leads to higher home prices can be thought of as an unaffordable housing program, a plan for an upward redistribution of income that is 180 degrees at odds with progressive policy.

Most economists, even progressive ones, would no doubt take the arguments presented above in different directions — for example, by arguing that the Fed must restrain employment growth to keep inflation in check, or that patent policy is essential to promote the development of new drugs. But they would not dispute the basic points: the Fed indeed has enormous ability to influence the economy through its control of interest rates and patents are government-granted monopolies that cause drugs and other items to sell for prices far above the free-market price.

If progressives can come to grips with the basic economics of the big issues of the day, then it will at least be possible to make real progress in policy debates. Without this knowledge, it is impossible to even know when progress is being made. When progressives applaud a run-up in the stock market, as many did in the Clinton years, they are rooting for the other team. When progressives devise policies to keep a housing bubble from deflating, they are plotting to use taxpayer dollars to allow the better-off segment of society to benefit at the expense of the less-well-off, the ones who don't own homes or own homes of little value.

The political system and the "free market" are rigged to the advantage of the rich and powerful, which makes it difficult for progressives to make headway in pushing policies that advance the interests of everyone else. However, this mission goes from difficult to achievable if we pay attention to the basic economics. There are enormous obstacles in our path, but if we don't know where we are going, then we can be absolutely sure that we are not going to get there.

Chapter 2—The Economic Crisis: Where We Are and How We Got Here

There is no cause for progressives to be on the defensive as the United States and most other wealthy countries struggle to recover from the worst downturn since the Great Depression. The economic disaster was entirely the result of conservative economic policies, pursued with reckless abandon. If a progressive government had driven the economy off a similar cliff, progressives could expect to spend at least 40 years in the political wilderness. No one would want to go near such discredited policies.

But progressives are on the defensive. A reinvigorated right is openly attacking Social Security and Medicare, looking to take back economic gains that date from the New Deal. It is also doing everything in its power to undermine unions in both the public and private sectors because it recognizes their importance as bulwarks of the Democratic Party and progressive politics more generally. It is even taking steps to roll back the right to vote by pushing measures that will make it more difficult to vote and will explicitly disenfranchise particular groups of people.

How could progressives have allowed themselves to be beaten back? The root of the problem is that President Obama and the leadership of the Democratic Party backed away from telling the truth about the economic collapse. By refusing

to “demonize” Wall Street and the rest of the financial industry for the damage inflicted on the economy and the nation, the president and his party left a huge void that has been filled with alternative stories.

Those who rely on the *Washington Post* and National Public Radio for their news might think that the economy fell into this downturn because reckless government spending sent financial markets into a panic, causing businesses to lay off millions of workers. They are also likely to believe that there will be no hope of recovery until the president and Congress agree on a credible plan to bring spending under control in the decades ahead.

The truth is, this story makes as much sense as blaming the downturn on an attack by space creatures, but in Washington debates it is not necessary that a narrative be grounded in reality. Despite the fact that the budget deficit holds center place in news accounts, it is not the cause of the economy’s current problems. The large deficit is rather the result of the economic downturn that began in late 2007, a fact that can be easily shown by examining the Congressional Budget Office’s analysis of the budget.⁵

Going into the downturn in 2007, the budget deficit was a relatively modest 1.2 percent of GDP, and it was projected to get smaller in the years ahead. It is arguable that even the 2007 deficit was too large — that with the economy near full employment the government should have been running budget surpluses — but it would be a stretch to equate a deficit equal to 1 percent of GDP with runaway borrowing that poses a threat to the government’s finances.

The downturn increased the deficit for two reasons. First, government tax revenue and spending responds automatically to a weakening economy. When the economy slows, the government takes in less money in tax revenue. Unemployed workers stop paying Social Security taxes and pay less in income tax. In addition, a higher rate of unemployment means that more money will be paid out in various forms of benefits like food stamps and unemployment insurance. Although budget deficits increase every time we have a recession, the increase this time was larger than most because of the severity of the downturn.

The other reason that the deficit increased in the downturn was that the government enacted various stimulus packages to boost the economy. It is possible to identify at least three distinct stimulus packages since the downturn began. The first consisted primarily of a tax cut. President Bush signed this package into law in February 2008 at a time when the unemployment rate was just 4.8 percent. President Obama proposed the second package just as he was taking office in January 2009, and Congress approved roughly \$700 billion in new tax cuts and additional spending, mostly over calendar years 2009 and 2010.⁶ The third stimulus, approved at the end of 2010 at a point when most of the money from the second stimulus had been spent, extended President Bush’s 2001 tax cuts for another two years, reduced the payroll tax by 2 percentage points for a year, and continued extended unemployment benefits through 2011.

These stimulus packages were explicitly designed to offset the effect of reduced private-sector spending. The resulting rise in the deficit stemming from the stimulus packages was not an accident — it was a deliberate goal of the policy. Together the packages added more than \$1.5 trillion to the deficits over the fiscal years 2008-2011. However, the spending almost certainly boosted the economy; it increased growth and created jobs.⁷ A smaller deficit in these years would have meant slower growth and fewer jobs. In this sense, the deficit is part of the solution, not the problem.

If the deficit were impeding the economy’s recovery, it would be through its effect on the interest rate. This is the story of government borrowing pulling money away from the private sector. However, the interest rate on long-term bonds has remained extraordinarily low throughout this period. At the height of the financial crisis, when investors fled to U.S. bonds as a safe asset in a dangerous world, the interest rate on 10-year Treasury bonds hit a low of 2.2 percent. It has remained under 4.0 percent since then and in the summer of 2011 was back down to about 2.2 percent when the threat of the break-up of the euro again panicked financial markets and has been close to 3.0 percent most of the time.

Assuming a 2.0 percent expected inflation rate puts the real interest rate (the actual interest rate minus the inflation rate) at under 2.0 percent and often under 1.0 percent for these high-deficit years. This is a historically low real interest rate that is not consistent with a story of investors panicking over the ability of the U.S. government to repay its debt. When lenders worry about the solvency of their borrowers, they demand real interest rates of 6, 8, or even 10 percent.

If investors are willing to hold vast amounts of government bonds at very low interest rates, it is clear that the people who actually have money on the line are not worried about the creditworthiness of the U.S. government, even if the politicians and the pundits are telling them that they should be. In short, the deficit is not the country’s problem right now. The problem is a lack of demand, pure and simple. The deficit is hyped as a problem by people who have an alternative agenda of gutting important government social programs, such as Social Security and Medicare.

The cause of the economic crisis: The collapse of the housing bubble

There continues to be enormous confusion about almost every aspect of the economic crisis. The first point that needs to be clarified is that the main story of the economic crisis was not the financial crisis. The picture of banks collapsing and a chain reaction of defaults and bankruptcies made for exciting news stories and provided the basis for several bestselling books, but this panic was secondary to the collapse of the housing bubble. The housing bubble drove demand in the years since the 2001 recession, and when the trillions of dollars of bubble-generated housing equity disappeared, there was nothing to take its place. This is the complete story of the downturn to date.

The story is not complex or mysterious. It is a simple story that should be widely known, at least by economists, if not the general public. The bubble in housing led to near-record rates of residential construction over the years from 2002 to 2006. Builders rushed to build new homes to take advantage of record-high home prices. The boom also generated an enormous amount of employment in the financial industry, which issued mortgages not just for new homes but also to refinance homes people already owned, as tens of millions of homeowners sought to take advantage of the run-up in prices and low interest rates to take equity out of their homes.

This "housing wealth effect" is well-known and is a standard part of economic theory and modeling. Economists expect households to consume based on their wealth. At its peak, the housing bubble generated more than \$8 trillion in home equity on top of what would have been generated had home prices continued to rise at their historic pace. Recent estimates of the size of the wealth effect put it at 6 percent, meaning that homeowners will increase their annual consumption by 6 cents for every additional dollar of home equity.⁸ If so, then the equity generated by the housing bubble at its peak in 2006 would have led to almost \$500 billion a year in additional consumption.

A bubble in nonresidential real estate led to a building boom in that sector that followed on the heels of the boom in housing; as construction of housing began to trail off at the end of 2005 and into 2006, construction of nonresidential projects like office buildings, retail malls, and hotels exploded. This boom led to enormous overbuilding in the nonresidential sector, and so when the recession kicked in, and especially after the financial crisis in the fall of 2008, nonresidential construction plummeted.

The impact of the collapse of these two bubbles on the demand for goods and services in the economy was enormous, and continues to be felt. The residential housing sector fell from a peak of 6.2 percent of GDP in 2005 to just 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2011. The loss of \$7 trillion in housing equity (the bubble had not yet fully deflated by the spring of 2011, so there was still about \$1 trillion to be lost) led to a sharp fall in consumption. As a result of this lost housing wealth, the savings rate rose from near zero in the years 2004-2007 to over 5 percent by the first quarter of 2009.⁹ This corresponds to a loss of more than \$500 billion in annual consumption (and reinforces the similar estimate derived from a calculation of the housing wealth effect). It is worth noting that this reduction in spending (and implied increase in savings) has little to do with consumers being pessimistic or wary about the future, though they likely are. Rather, consumers are spending in line with their wealth. Now that their wealth has been hugely reduced by the collapse of the bubble, they have adjusted their spending accordingly.

The overbuilding and collapse of the bubble in nonresidential real estate led to a further loss in annual demand of roughly \$250 billion. Adding together the \$600 billion in lost residential construction demand (the 4 percentage-point drop in GDP noted above), the \$500 billion in lost consumption demand, and the \$250 billion in lost demand in nonresidential construction gives a total drop in annual demand of \$1.35 trillion.

It didn't end there. State and local governments sought to cut spending and raise taxes when the recession sent their tax collections plummeting. Most state and local governments have balanced-budget requirements, which means that they had no alternative but to raise taxes and cut spending. Their actions had the effect of further reducing demand in the economy by roughly \$150 billion a year, bringing the total loss of demand in the economy resulting from the collapse of the housing bubble to \$1.5 trillion a year.

President Obama's first stimulus package, created to counteract this lost demand, injected roughly \$300 billion a year into the economy in calendar years 2009 and 2010.¹⁰ It should not be surprising, and dozens of policy makers and economists warned of it at the time, that this stimulus was inadequate to bring the economy back to anything resembling normal levels of employment and output. It simply was not large enough.¹¹

The collapse of the real estate bubbles as the cause of our continued economic weakness stands in contrast to the financial crisis stories we keep reading and hearing about in the news. These stories hinge on the idea that the problem in the economy is the improper working of the financial system following the financial crisis of the fall of 2008. This story

has an obvious problem: the reason we have a financial system is to allocate capital, and it doesn't seem that anyone is having difficulty getting capital.

Homebuyers who seek mortgages seem to be getting them; we know this because there has been no appreciable increase in the ratio of mortgage applications to home sales. The Mortgage Bankers Association issues an index every week that tracks the number of mortgage applications received by its members.¹² The banks included in this survey account for well over half of the mortgages issued in the country.

If banks were more hesitant to issue mortgages, we would expect to see the ratio of applications to home purchases skyrocket, because many creditworthy customers would have to make multiple applications just to get a single one approved. Some potential homebuyers would make multiple applications and still not be able to get a mortgage. Since there has been no rise in the ratio of applications to sales, we can assume that access to mortgages is not a big problem in the economy. For the most part, creditworthy homebuyers are still able to get mortgages, generally at historically low interest rates.

There undoubtedly are stricter mortgage standards in place than in the housing bubble years, but this should be expected. During those years, banks issued mortgages whether or not they could be repaid because they were selling them immediately in the secondary market. This is not a sustainable model. It was necessary to return to something resembling the lending patterns of the pre-bubble years.

In the case of businesses, a large portion of corporate America has direct access to credit markets. Large companies routinely go around the banking system by selling bonds and commercial paper directly on credit markets. In this way the United States is fundamentally different from Japan, where banks are far more central in providing finance to the business sector. For this reason, the often-used comparison to Japan's lost decade following the collapse of its bubbles is inappropriate. Whatever problems may still persist in the banking sector, they are likely to have little impact on the investment and hiring behavior of large corporations.

Looking at the credit markets directly, the interest rates on corporate bonds have been at historically low levels since early in the crisis. From the summer of 2009 through the summer of 2011, the interest rate on high-grade corporate debt was about 5 percent, and the interest rate on Baa debt (lower quality, but still investment grade) averaged less than 6 percent. If we assume a 2 percent average inflation rate going forward, these translate into real rates of 3 percent and 4 percent, respectively — much lower than at most points in the last two decades. These low rates suggest that large corporations with direct access to credit markets — corporations whose output accounts for close to half of private sector GDP — have had little difficulty obtaining capital. In other words, lack of capital has not been a factor restraining their investment and hiring.

What about small businesses? If large corporations had access to credit markets but smaller businesses were unable to pursue investment opportunities because they could not get bank credit, then we would expect to see large corporations expanding aggressively in order to gain market share at the expense of their credit-constrained smaller competitors. Yet we see nothing of the sort. Almost all of the major chains, such as Wal-Mart and Starbucks — which would be expected to expand rapidly in this situation — have sharply curtailed their expansion plans in the wake of the downturn. And the reason is weak demand, pure and simple, not any major issues with the banking and financial system.

In any case, access to credit also does not seem to be a problem for small businesses either. The National Federation of Independent Business surveys small business owners to ask what their biggest problem is at the moment. Very few answer that it is difficult for them to borrow money. In the August 2011 survey, 92 percent of small business owners said either that they had ample access to capital or that they had no interest in borrowing.¹³ The biggest problem cited by these small business owners was "poor sales" — in other words, inadequate demand.

In addition, business investment in equipment and software has actually held up fairly well in this downturn, suggesting that access to capital is not the problem. Figure 2-5 shows investment in equipment and software as a share of GDP over the last decade. While the levels reached at the end of 2010 and the start of 2011 are still below their pre-recession levels, they are surprisingly high given the large amounts of excess capacity in most sectors of the economy.

We also hear over and over again the claim that uncertainty about tax or regulatory policy is impeding hiring and causing continued economic weakness. If this were true, we would expect to see firms increasing average hours per worker and/or hiring more temporary workers to meet demand. Through these strategies, firms could get more labor without making the commitment to hiring new permanent employees.

Yet there is no evidence of either trend in the economy. While average weekly hours have risen slightly from their low point of the downturn (from 33.7 hours per week in June 2009 to 34.4 in June 2011), the average work week is still below its pre-recession peak of 34.7 hours per week. The uptick in average weekly hours thus far has been fairly typical of what would be expected in a recovery. The same applies to the hiring of temporary employees. Temporary employment fell by more than 30 percent at the start of the downturn, as firms reduced the number of temporary workers by more than 800,000. Less than 500,000 of these workers have been rehired thus far in the upturn, leaving temporary employment almost 13 percent below its pre-recession level.¹⁴

Moreover, if uncertainty about regulations and taxes were a major factor impeding hiring, then its impact should be uneven between sectors with high and low turnover. In sectors with high turnover, like retail and restaurants, it is difficult to see how regulatory uncertainty could be an issue, since firms could quickly get back to their desired employment level through attrition. This would mean that, if the economy were fine and the problem was regulation, we should expect to see high-turnover sectors growing rapidly, while sectors with low turnover, like manufacturing, would have very slow employment growth. There is no evidence of this sort of shift in job gains in the recovery, providing yet another reason for rejecting the argument that uncertainty about the future is a serious factor slowing employment growth.¹⁵

In short, the basic story of the economic downturn approximately four years after the start of the Great Recession is a simple one. The economy suffers from a shortfall in demand. Whatever problems may persist in the financial system are not substantially impeding growth. Larger firms have little difficulty getting access to capital at historically low interest rates. Smaller firms do not identify access to capital as one of their biggest problems. And homebuyers appear undeterred in their attempts to secure mortgages.

Finally, it is worth putting to rest one of the most pervasive myths that came out of the worst days of the financial crisis in late 2008 and early 2009. This myth is that the country was saved from the risk of a second Great Depression only by the quick action of the Fed and the Treasury.

According to the story, the lending approved by Congress in the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) along with special lending facilities created by the Federal Reserve Board prevented a financial collapse that would have precipitated another Great Depression. While these measures deserve credit for preventing a financial collapse, there is no reason to believe that a financial collapse would have led to a second Great Depression, defined as a decade of double-digit unemployment.

The first Great Depression was not just the result of mismanagement of a banking crisis in its early days. The failure of the Fed and the Treasury to take steps to backstop the banking system undoubtedly led to a more severe downturn for the economy and to financial disasters for millions of families who lost their life's savings in failed banks. However, nothing about this initial failure to act decisively doomed the economy to a decade of double-digit unemployment. Rather, the extended depression was the result of persistent policy failures over the course of a decade.

The United States ultimately emerged from the depression as a result of the massive deficit spending associated with World War II. The spending associated with the war can be seen as a beneficial accident from the standpoint of an economy that desperately needed a massive dose of government stimulus. However, nothing in principle would have prevented massive government spending for domestic reconstruction efforts at a much earlier point. In other words, there was no economic reason that the government could not have made the same commitment in terms of spending and hiring for projects to rebuild the country's infrastructure, to build up its housing stock, and to improve education and training that it eventually made to fight World War II. Had it made this commitment in 1931 rather than 1941, the government would have spared the country a decade of depression.

This sort of increase in spending could have pulled the country out the Great Depression at any point after the initial financial crisis. The obstacles to going this route were political, not economic. The same would have been the case had the financial crisis in 2008 actually led to the collapse of the financial system and the need to pick up the pieces from scratch. Today, having learned the lessons from World War II, we know how to re-inflate the economy. While a full-scale financial collapse — with the destruction of tens of trillions of dollars of wealth overnight — would be devastating to the economy and the people who suffer the losses, it would take a decade of failed policy in addition to this collapse to give us a second Great Depression. There is no reason to believe that the country would have repeated the policy mistakes of the thirties even if the Fed and the Treasury had failed to check the financial panic at the start of the crisis.

This point is relevant in terms of how we view the conduct of the Bush and Obama administrations and the Fed under Chairman Ben Bernanke. If it is really the case that a second Great Depression was only narrowly averted, then we all should be grateful, even if the cost was to largely leave the financial system in place, with the too-big-to-fail banks even

bigger than they were before the crisis. After all, giving taxpayer money to the top management and shareholders of Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley is a price worth paying if it was necessary to prevent a second Great Depression.¹⁶ However, such handouts may look different if even the worst-case scenario did not look anything like the Great Depression.

We have high unemployment because we lack the political will to get the economy moving again.

We know how to get out of this trough: we need to spend much more money. However, the current political situation precludes this option. Politicians and the national media have become fixated on reducing the budget deficit and have largely decided to ignore the problem of unemployment and underemployment.

In the current political environment it is somehow responsible to push spending cuts, even though the main impact of these cuts is to slow the economy and raise the unemployment rate further. But logic has little place right now in national policy debates, just as arithmetic played little role in economic policy in the buildup of the housing bubble.

Deficit reduction has become an end in itself. In this scenario, "serious people" propose large spending cuts, but only "crazy ideologues" talk about measures that would boost economic growth and reduce unemployment.

Chapter 3—The Great Redistribution

The U.S. economy has been driven by asset bubbles since the mid-1990s, but this is not the ordinary source of our economic growth. In the three decades following World War II, the economy had strong growth driven by wage-led consumption. Throughout this period, productivity growth translated into wage growth at all points along the income ladder. Those at the bottom saw their wages and income rise as fast, or faster, than those at the top. This created self-sustaining growth, since most workers spent most of their income and ensured that demand kept pace with productivity growth. Firms would then invest in new plant and equipment, which would lead to further increases in productivity, and in turn to additional wage growth.

Apart from some brief recessions, this cycle continued until it was derailed by the oil price shocks of the 1970s. The price of oil more than tripled between 1972 and 1975, shaking an economy that was already facing high inflation. Then, during the Iranian revolution at the end of the decade, oil prices rose by more than 150 percent.¹⁷ Both shocks coincided with, and possibly caused, a sharp slowdown in productivity growth that, combined with high inflation, brought an end to the period of broadly shared growth of the prior three decades.

When President Reagan took office in 1981, he had an explicit policy of putting the country on a different sort of growth path, and he largely succeeded. While President Reagan's tax cuts — which disproportionately benefited higher-income taxpayers — are widely remembered, they are the less important part of the story. The upward redistribution of before-tax income in the years since 1980 has had far more impact on inequality and the living standards of the bulk of the population than the changes toward a more regressive system of taxation.

Making money flow upward

This upward redistribution was not the result of the natural workings of the market. President Reagan and his successors put in place a variety of measures that had the effect of weakening the bargaining power of ordinary workers. Together these measures had the effect of driving down the wages of those at the middle and the bottom of the income distribution, to the benefit of those at the top.

Heading this list of policy changes was the tighter monetary policy pursued by the Federal Reserve Board in the years after 1980. Fighting inflation became the Fed's overwhelming concern, and it was willing to tolerate high unemployment rates to reduce inflation to levels it considered acceptable. This was clearly demonstrated by Paul Volcker in 1982 when he pushed the unemployment rate to almost 11 percent in order to rein in inflation. His successor, Alan Greenspan, was similarly committed to low inflation. The modest acceleration in the inflation rate at the end of the 1980s was sufficient to prompt a round of interest rate hikes that eventually led to the 1990-1991 recession. The current Fed chairman, Ben Bernanke, has committed the Fed to a 2.0 percent inflation ceiling, implying that he would raise interest rates and push up unemployment if he believed that core inflation might exceed this level.

This focus on inflation represents a sharp shift from the Fed's policy in prior decades. While the Fed was always concerned about inflation and had brought on recessions in the past as part of its effort to control it, Volcker began a new

era in which fighting inflation became a much greater priority than sustaining high employment, the other half of the Fed's mandate.

The policy of raising unemployment to fight inflation has the effect of redistributing income upward because it is overwhelmingly less-educated workers who lose their jobs when the unemployment rate rises. The unemployment rate for all categories of workers rises during a recession, but the largest increases will be for workers with less education. The percentage of factory workers and retail clerks who lose their job in a downturn is far higher than the percentage of doctors and lawyers. As a result, the workers who end up taking the biggest pay cuts in a downturn are those without college degrees and especially those without high school degrees.¹⁸

High unemployment is a class-biased mechanism for fighting inflation. In effect it forces the less-advantaged groups in society to sacrifice to ensure that the more-advantaged can enjoy price stability — and a ready supply of low-cost labor to provide household help or serve them in hotels and restaurants.

Weakening unions

As another element of this process of upward redistribution, President Reagan took a number of steps to weaken the power of unions. Foremost was weakening the enforcement of labor laws that protect workers' right to organize. While labor laws that protect management are still vigorously enforced (a union engaged in a secondary strike¹⁹ can expect to have its officers jailed and its bank accounts seized), the enforcement of rules protecting the right to organize has become a joke. Employers routinely fire workers for organizing²⁰ and they know that they are unlikely to lose a case at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) or that in any case penalties will be inconsequential.

The Reagan administration not only placed more management-friendly officials in the NLRB, it also deliberately underfunded the board, allowing an enormous backlog of complaints to build. At its worst, the backlog was more than two years, meaning that employees fired during an organizing drive might have to wait more than two years before they could have a hearing. In this case, even if the NLRB ruled for the workers and gave them their jobs back, any organizing drive in which they had participated would almost certainly be long over.

The strike as a weapon to protect workers' rights has become less effective because employers now routinely hire replacement workers. This became a common practice in the private sector after President Reagan fired the air traffic controllers who went on strike in the summer of 1981. While the strike was illegal and Reagan had the authority to fire and replace striking workers, until then the usual practice at all levels of government had been to try to reach an accommodation with striking workers.

Major firms in the private sector — notably Eastern Airlines and Greyhound — quickly emulated Reagan's hard-line stance. In the wake of the controllers' strike, hiring replacements became a standard response to strikes and seriously reduced the value of strikes as a union weapon. The fact that there are large numbers of potential replacement workers readily available for hire is the result of both the sharp decline in unionization rates over the last three decades and also the difficulty that most workers have in finding decent-paying jobs.

Deregulation of major sectors like airlines, trucking, and telecommunications was another route to weaken labor unions. Together the transportation and utility sectors employed more than 6.4 million workers in 1979, 8.6 percent of the private-sector workforce.²¹ Prior to deregulation (which began in the Carter administration), these sectors were heavily unionized, with workers sharing in the gains from the protection that regulation afforded. Deregulation both opened these sectors to non-union competitors and also put serious pressure on the wages of workers in the unionized firms that survived. While there were clear benefits to deregulation in these industries, one of the major outcomes was a sharp reduction in the size of the unionized workforce.

Together these policies had the effect of sending the unionization rate in the private sector plummeting. It had been close to 20 percent in 1980 when Reagan took office, but it was down to 12 percent by 1990, had fallen to 9 percent in 2000, and was below 7 percent in 2010.²² This drop in the unionization rate not only weakened the bargaining power of non-college-educated workers, but it also substantially reduced their political power.²³ In political campaigns, unions had been an effective counterweight to corporate interests and the interests of the wealthy more generally. As their membership has declined over the last three decades, they have become less able to play this role.

The high-dollar policy

The high dollar, coupled with U.S. trade policies of the last three decades, is also an important tool for redistributing income upward. A conscious goal of trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is to make it as easy as possible for U.S. manufacturers to relocate their operations to Mexico and other developing countries. This has the effect of putting U.S. manufacturing workers in direct competition with low-paid workers in the developing world. The predicted and actual result of this policy is to eliminate jobs in manufacturing in the U.S. and to put downward pressure on the wages of the workers still employed in the sector.

It is important to realize that these deals have nothing to do with free trade, even though all the pacts are called free trade agreements to make them sound more appealing to the general public, or at least to the pundits who like to think of themselves as supporters of free trade. These agreements do little to undermine the legal and professional barriers that protect highly educated professionals from competing with their lower-paid counterparts in the developing world.

Just as trade models show that U.S. consumers can benefit from having work performed by low-paid manufacturing workers in the developing world, the same models show that U.S. consumers can benefit from having access to low-paid professionals from the developing world. The developing world has an enormous pool of highly educated workers, some of whom are already trained to U.S. standards, and many more of whom could and would be trained to U.S. standards, if there were a reason. Because these workers live in countries that are much poorer than the United States, they would be willing to work for wages that are far lower than their professional counterparts here, just as in the case of manufacturing workers in the developing world.

However, free-trade agreements are not designed to free trade in professional services. In drafting NAFTA, U.S. trade negotiators eagerly sought out the opinion of manufacturers, asking them to identify obstacles that prevented them from relocating operations to Mexico and other developing countries, but there was no comparable outreach to hospital administrators or law firms to determine the barriers that prevented them from hiring low-paid (but highly qualified) doctors and lawyers from India or Mexico. This apparent discrepancy was again the result of a conscious decision to design policy in a way that redistributes income upward.

The impact of current trade policy is amplified by the overvaluation of the dollar. A higher-valued dollar makes U.S. exports more expensive to the rest of world and makes imports from abroad cheaper for people living in the United States. These price differences increase the downward pressure on the wages for workers in sectors subject to international competition while actually benefiting those who are protected, since the latter will be able to buy imported goods more cheaply. Over most of the period since 1980 the United States has had an overvalued dollar, often quite deliberately, further contributing to the downward pressure on the wages of less-educated workers.

Many large manufacturers were pushed to the edge of bankruptcy or beyond in the mid-1980s, the first period of major dollar overvaluation. Millions of manufacturing jobs disappeared in the late 1990s and 2000s, even before the recession, as a result of a second surge in the value of the dollar starting in 1997. This has all had the effect of weakening unions — once heavily concentrated in manufacturing — and putting downward pressure on wages in major sectors such as the auto and steel industry.

Corporate governance

The rules on corporate governance also play an important role in the upward redistribution of income. As the practice stands now, the top management of major corporations is in a position to pick the board of directors, who then decide the salaries of top management. To ensure that directors will be loyal, they are offered annual compensation in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to attend four to eight meetings a year. Few directors will jeopardize such a plush deal by making an issue out of management pay. Of course, likely troublemakers are unlikely to be picked for a board in the first place.

The result is that top corporate management in the United States has come to be paid far more than its counterparts in Europe and Asia, primarily over the last three decades. Essentially, the structures (either dominant shareholders or social norms) that had previously placed a check on the pay of top management broke down. With no policy response to create new checks on management pay, top managers have been freed to write their own paychecks at the expense of the employees, shareholders and other corporate stakeholders.

Patent monopolies

Finally, the number of patents has exploded in the last three decades, as patent protection has become both easier to obtain and stronger. Patent monopolies allow firms to charge far more than the competitive market price for their

products. This price advantage can be seen most clearly in the case of prescription drugs. In 2010, spending on prescription drugs amounted to almost 2 percent of GDP, compared to less than half a percent in 1980. The higher expenditures are almost entirely a function of patent protection. Then, as now, drugs are cheap to produce, and it is only patent monopolies that make them expensive to buy.

The main beneficiaries of patent protection are invariably more highly educated workers. A recent study of wealthy countries by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) found that the number of patents per capita was the most important factor determining the extent to which income was redistributed upward from those at the middle and bottom to those at the top over the last three decades.²⁴

Wage-led versus bubble-driven consumption

The upward redistribution of income since the early 1980s laid the basis for the bubble economy. This can be seen by looking at two important implications for the larger economy which had resulted from the broad sharing of the benefits of productivity growth in the three decades after World War II. First, since most workers could be counted on to spend most of their income, the pattern of distribution ensured that demand would keep pace with productivity growth. The income generated by productivity growth was spent rather than saved. When ordinary workers stopped sharing in the gains of productivity growth, inadequate demand became a problem.

The second implication was that rising wages could lead to inflationary pressures. If wages generally rise in step with productivity growth, there is always a risk that wages will occasionally outstrip it. For example, if a contract provides for real wage increases of 2 percent, but productivity growth is only 1 percent, firms will either see a reduction in profit margins or be forced to raise their prices by more than the overall inflation rate. This response can lead to the sort of wage-price spiral the country experienced in the 1970s, when productivity growth lagged real wage growth for a short period.

However, in a climate where workers have considerably little bargaining power, a wage-price spiral is a less serious threat. This diminished risk was the reason Alan Greenspan felt so comfortable in the 1990s with allowing interest rates to remain low and for the unemployment rate to fall to levels unseen since the 1960s. With the weak bargaining position of workers in the 1990s, inflation simply was not a problem, and Greenspan was an astute enough observer of the economy (unlike most academic economists) to recognize this fact.

Low interest rates have a positive but limited impact in increasing demand. They do lead to somewhat higher investment, but a large body of research shows that investment is not very responsive to lower interest rates. Low interest rates can lead to a fall in the dollar, which would boost net exports, but there were other factors keeping the dollar high during this period. In fact, the main effect of the low interest rates sustained through the late 1990s and the 2000s was to create the possibility for the bubble economy, the dynamics of which are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 4—The Bubble Economy

There is a frequently told tale in Washington of the 1990s prosperity, and Bill Clinton is its hero. In this story, President Clinton performed the hard work of bringing down the deficit and balancing the budget. He raised taxes and contained spending, but the pain was rewarded by low interest rates and a growth boom that delivered the lowest unemployment rates in more than three decades. It's a great morality tale, but it has little to do with the actual economic history of the decade.

During the first half of the Clinton era, the economy experienced very modest growth. Workers saw little benefit because wages were essentially stagnant. Then, in the late 1990s, a stock bubble emerged, and growth took off and real wages started to rise. This extraordinary period of bubble-driven growth was the main factor in flipping the government's budget from deficits to surpluses.

The Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) projections from May 1996 (after all the tax increases and spending cuts had been put into law) showed the government running a deficit of 2.7 percent of GDP in 2000. Instead, that year saw a surplus equal to 2.1 percent of GDP, which translated into a shift from deficit to surplus of more than 5 percentage points of GDP (about \$750 billion in 2011 dollars). Not one dollar of this shift was attributable to fiscal restraint. According to CBO, the net effect of legislated changes over this period was to increase the fiscal year 2000 deficit by \$10 billion. Rather than higher taxes or spending cuts, the entire cause of the shift from deficit to surplus was better-than-expected growth and lower-than-expected unemployment. In its 1996 projections, CBO assumed that the unemployment rate

would be 6.0 percent in 2000, which was its estimate of the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU) at the time. It was only because the stock bubble drove demand much faster than expected, and Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan allowed the unemployment rate to fall below the generally accepted estimates of the NAIRU, that the deficit turned into a surplus.

There is another important chapter of the Clinton morality tale that turns out to be more fiction than fact. Nominal interest rates indeed fell, but the decline in the real interest rate from the high-deficit years of the 1980s was quite modest. And the small decline had little effect on investment. The investment share of GDP at its peak in the 1990s cycle (which was in 2000) was somewhat higher than it had been in the 1980s but was still below its 1970s' peak.²⁵ Furthermore, the uptick in productivity growth in the 1990s, which many associate with an "investment boom," began before investment had recovered even to the 1980s level.

In short, the good economic news in the 1990s had little to do with the deficit reduction measures of the Clinton administration. The fuel for the business cycle was consumption, not investment, which was in turn the result of the wealth effect attributable to \$10 trillion of stock bubble wealth. This ephemeral wealth increased annual consumption by \$300-400 billion a year, or 3 to 4 percent of GDP. The household savings rate fell to what were at the time record lows. Net national savings actually hit their lowest levels of the postwar period, in spite of the large budget surpluses at the end of the decade. In fact, the switch from federal deficits to surpluses was more than offset by a reduction in private-sector savings. By the end of the decade, the country was engaged in large-scale borrowing from abroad, even as it was running huge budget surpluses.

The overvalued dollar of the Clinton era

If the story of the virtues of President Clinton's fiscal austerity is often oversold, the story of his overvaluation of the dollar is rarely told at all. A major part of the standard story of deficit reduction is supposed to be a decline in the value of the dollar. The lower interest rates that result from reduced government borrowing are supposed to make it less attractive for foreign investors to hold dollar-denominated assets, like government bonds and the bonds of private corporations. If foreign investors buy fewer dollar assets, then the value of the dollar should fall relative to the value of other currencies.

This is a good outcome in the context of deficit reduction because a lower-valued dollar makes our exports cheaper for people living in other countries, and so they buy more of them. A lower-valued dollar will also make imports more expensive for people living in the United States, leading us to buy fewer imports and more domestically produced goods. The result is that we export more and import less, thereby reducing the trade deficit and possibly even turning it into a surplus.

In the first half of the Clinton administration, to some extent, this process played out as the textbook would dictate, but the tables turned when Robert Rubin became Treasury Secretary in January 1995. Rubin was openly committed to a strong dollar. When he first took office this may have just been words, but in 1997, during the East Asian financial crisis, he had the opportunity to put some serious muscle behind them.

The United States used its de-facto control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to impose harsh conditions on the crisis countries. The IMF effectively acted as an enforcement agent for the banks that had made loans to the companies and countries in the region. To repay these loans, the countries had to run massive trade surpluses, which required a sharp decline in the value of their currencies against the dollar in order to make their exports hypercompetitive and to discourage imports.

The impact of the IMF's policies extended well beyond the countries directly affected by the crisis. Other developing countries took their cue from the experience of East Asia and realized that they did not want to be in a similar situation where they might be forced to turn to the IMF for assistance. Protecting themselves meant accumulating huge amounts of currency reserves as an insurance policy. And the way to accumulate reserves is to run large trade surpluses. This in turn means lowering the value of your currency relative to the dollar.

These moves gave Robert Rubin the strong dollar he wanted. A strong dollar helped to keep inflation low by keeping import prices down. It also meant running a huge trade deficit, an inevitable result of an overvalued dollar. At the end of the Clinton boom, the U.S. economy was fueled by an unsustainable stock bubble and was running an unsustainable trade deficit. Neither was good long-term policy, but together they created several years of prosperity in which unemployment fell to lower levels than most economists thought possible, and most workers experienced healthy wage growth.

The end of the stock bubble and the 2001 recession

Bubbles inevitably burst, and the stock bubble in the United States did so in dramatic fashion beginning in 2000. The tech sector was the leading edge of the bubble; it had seen the biggest run-up and eventually endured the deepest plunge.²⁶ The NASDAQ, which is dominated by relatively new firms in the tech sector, rose from 925 at the end of 1995 to 3740 at the end of 1999. After peaking at 5148 in March 2000, it fell below 4000 by the summer. It had some further ups and downs, but it eventually bottomed out at just over 1100 in September 2002, losing more than 75 percent of its value.

The stock market plunge affected the economy in two ways. First, the bubble years were extraordinary in that they were a period in which firms sold stock on a large scale to finance new investment. (More typically new firms sell off stock to allow entrepreneurs to cash out some of their profits, whereas older firms sell off stock to pay down debt.) However, the plunge in the market ended this channel of investment finance. Investment fell by 14.2 percent between the fourth quarter of 2000 and its bottom in the first quarter of 2003.

The more important channel through which the plunge in the market affected the economy was through its impact on consumption. The savings rate had fallen to 2.9 percent at the peak of the bubble in 2000. The destruction of \$10 trillion in paper wealth would theoretically lead to a reduction in annual consumption of \$300-400 billion, as mentioned above. Consumption did in fact fall sharply in response to the drop in the stock market. The adjusted savings rate rose by roughly 3 percentage points between 2000 and 2002, corresponding to a drop in annual consumption of more than \$250 billion.²⁷

The result of the drop in investment and the fall in consumption due to the wealth effect was the 2001 recession. Officially and by most accounts this recession was short and mild; it is dated as running from March to December 2001, almost as short as a recession can possibly be. However, the economy had considerable difficulty recovering from it. Job losses continued through 2002, and the economy didn't start creating jobs again until September 2003. It was not until February 2005 that the economy finally regained all the jobs it lost during the recession. Until the current downturn, this was the longest stretch that the United States had gone without creating jobs since the Great Depression.

The recovery was slow and weak because the 2001 downturn was not like prior postwar recessions. The Federal Reserve Board had engineered the previous recessions by raising interest rates to combat inflation. The intention of higher rates was to slow the economy through reduced demand for interest-sensitive items, like houses and cars. When demand fell, growth would slow, leading to fewer jobs. Fewer jobs translate into a higher unemployment rate, which in turns puts downward pressure on wages, thereby alleviating the threat of inflation. This is the standard Fed formula.

When the Fed determines that the threat of inflation has been eliminated, it lowers rates again. Since the recession period of high interest rates creates pent-up demand for housing and cars, the lowering of interest rates usually triggers a flurry of home buying and new construction as well as a surge of car sales.

However, this was not the story in the 2001 recession. The recession was the result not of the Fed raising interest rates but of the collapse of the stock bubble. Thus, there was no pent-up demand to be triggered by a decline in interest rates. The Fed did push the overnight federal funds rate down to 1.0 percent, the lowest level since the early 1950s, but the response was limited.

It is worth emphasizing how constrained the Fed was at this time. It had not pushed the federal funds rate below 3.0 percent since the early 1960s, so the 1.0 percent rate was truly extraordinary. For practical purposes, the federal funds rate was pretty much at its lower bound, since the marginal impact of going all the way down to zero from 1.0 percent is likely to be minimal. The European Central Bank has never lowered its overnight rate below 1.0 percent in the post-2007 downturn even though it engaged in quantitative easing and other extraordinary measures to boost the economy.

The Fed's response to the 2001 downturn belies the notion that the recession was short and mild. Though that may have been the case officially, and the unemployment rate did not rise strongly, the consequences for the economy and especially the labor market were severe.

One aspect of the weak recovery is the pattern followed by the trade deficit. Usually the trade deficit shrinks in a downturn, as the country buys fewer imports along with less of everything else. The trade deficit declined modestly in 2001, but it began to rise rapidly in 2002 and continued to rise until 2006. This outcome was more fallout from the overvalued dollar.

The turnaround that eventually allowed the economy to grow fast enough to create jobs was primarily due to the growth of the housing bubble. Like the alcoholic who recovers from the effects of a hangover by drinking again in the morning, the economy used the growth generated by the housing bubble to recover from the collapse of the stock bubble.

By 2002 it was already possible to recognize that the housing market was in a bubble.²⁸ In the years since 1996, home prices had risen by more than 30 percent after adjusting for inflation. This rise followed a 100-year trend in which nationwide home prices had just tracked the overall rate of inflation.²⁹ The U.S. housing market was valued at more than \$14 trillion in 2002, making it the largest market in the world. When there is a longstanding trend in an enormous market, it is reasonable to expect it to persist unless some large change in the fundamentals justifies a departure from the trend.

A quick examination of the fundamentals showed there to be no plausible explanation for the sharp run-up in prices. On the demand side, neither population growth nor income growth provided helpful explanations. Population growth had actually slowed considerably from prior periods. It might have been reasonable to expect some pressure on home prices when the huge baby boom cohort was first forming its own households, but this would have occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, not 2002, when the youngest baby boomer was already 38 and the oldest was 54.

The story on the income side was no better. The country had experienced healthy income growth in the late 1990s, but it was not extraordinary — no better than the average income growth the country had experienced over the long boom from 1947 to 1973. Home prices had already increased in real terms over that period, and so there is no reason to expect that four years of good growth in the late 1990s would lead to a 30 percent rise in home prices. Furthermore, the recession in 2001 brought this income growth to an end, with real incomes flat or declining subsequently, yet home prices continued to rise.

The supply side also offered no plausible explanations. In testimony before Congress in 2002, the Federal Reserve Board chairman commented on the run-up in home prices and mentioned the limited supply of available land and environmental restrictions on building.³⁰ Neither of these seemed plausible as explanations for an increase in home prices beginning in the mid-1990s. There had always been a limited supply of land in especially attractive places to live; this was not a new feature of the housing bubble. As far as environmental restrictions on building, Republicans had taken over Congress in 1994 (and many state houses as well), so the late 1990s could hardly be viewed as the heyday of environmental legislation. Furthermore, it was only necessary to look at the data on construction, which showed housing starts at a near-record rate. While there may have been obstacles to building, they were not impeding supply in any important way.

Lacking any explanation for the price run-up on either the supply or demand side of the market, it was also possible to turn to rents for evidence that fundamentals were not responsible for the rise in home prices. If the rise were being driven by the fundamentals of the housing market, there should be a comparable increase in rents, since owning and renting are loose substitutes. If the fundamentals of the housing market were driving up sales prices, then they should also be driving up rents. But rents showed no remotely comparable rise. They did outpace the overall inflation rate by about 1 percentage point annually from 1996 to 2000, but from that point forward they were flat in real terms until the bubble finally burst. This should have been a big warning sign that the run-up in prices was driven by a bubble.³¹ One other item that economists could have checked to determine whether home prices were driven by fundamentals was the vacancy rate. The Census Bureau publishes data on vacancy rates every quarter,³² and these data are a very basic measure of the slack in the housing market. If the run-up in home prices had been due to a shortage of housing, then vacancy rates ought to have been at very low levels. In fact, the opposite was true: the vacancy rate had already hit a record high by 2002 (and it continued to rise through the later bubble years).

The fact that the big increase in vacancies was in rental units, not ownership units, still reflected an excess supply of housing that could be expected to exert downward pressure on rents, which would in turn also put downward pressure on sale prices as people opted to take advantage of cheap rents rather than buying. In addition, if rents are falling while sale prices are rising, landlords will convert rental units into ownership units. This can be costly in some cases (many cities have laws protecting renters from being displaced), but if the gains are large enough, landlords can and do find ways to make these conversions. Furthermore, almost a third of rental units are single-family homes that require little work to convert to ownership units.

In sum, by 2002 the housing market was experiencing a bubble that should have been apparent to policy makers. Instead, all the people in top policy-making positions ignored the evidence and insisted that everything was fine with the housing market and the economy.

The second phase of the housing bubble: 2002-2006

The housing bubble was already visible and large enough in 2002 that its collapse likely would have led to a recession in that year. However, rather than take any steps to rein in the bubble, the Federal Reserve Board and others in policy-making positions almost cheered it on.³³ Greenspan applauded subprime mortgages as a financial innovation that allowed moderate-income families who could not otherwise afford a home to buy one.³⁴ In early 2004, he even suggested that people could save money by taking out adjustable rate mortgages, in spite of the fact that the interest rate on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages was near a 50-year low.³⁵

As tends to be the case in the later phases of bubbles, all the excesses of the early stages became ever more exaggerated. Weak lending standards became weaker. In its 2005 survey of homebuyers, the National Association of Realtors found that 43 percent of first-time homebuyers had made down payments of zero or less.³⁶ Banks were happy to make loans that were highly risky because they knew they could quickly sell them in the secondary market. In fact, many of the most aggressive subprime initiators, like Countrywide and Ameriquest, frequently filed inaccurate information for borrowers to allow them to get loans for which they were not qualified. Since they could sell these loans in the secondary market, they had little concern about the default risk.³⁷ The secondary market for subprime issuers was the major investment banks, which were eager to buy up as many mortgages as possible and resell them as mortgage-backed securities. These securities, as well as derivative instruments based on them, like collateralized debt obligations, could then be sold all over the world.

The investment banks cared little about the quality of the mortgages they stuffed into these securities, since they knew they could get an investment-grade rating on almost anything they put together. (The bond rating agencies are paid by the issuers, so the agencies had a major financial stake in keeping Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, and other major investment banks happy.) In this context, questionable mortgages and even outright fraud provided little reason for concern.

The federally chartered Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac), identified as the main culprits in the housing debacle by many on the right, clearly contributed to the bubble by happily supplying mortgage credit throughout the run-up. Housing is their business, and they should have been able to recognize that prices had grown out of line with the fundamentals of the housing market. An explicit restriction on lending by one or both of these giants — for example, by basing loans on price-to-rent ratios instead of just appraised sale prices — likely would have been sufficient to deflate the bubble, especially if the agencies had aggressively argued their case in public. However, they followed along with everyone else.

But Fannie and Freddie were followers, not leaders. They were not the buyers of the worst subprime loans. This role fell to the major investment banks, which eagerly seized on a market that Fannie and Freddie had shunned. As a result, Fannie and Freddie's share of the secondary market plummeted in the years 2002-2005. They entered the subprime market in 2005, but did so to retake market share. As Moody's commented in a section labeled "Upcoming Challenges" in its 2006 assessment of Freddie:

Freddie Mac has long played a central role (shared with Fannie Mae) in the secondary mortgage market. In recent years, both housing GSEs [government sponsored enterprises] have been losing share within the overall market due to the shifting nature of consumer

preferences towards adjustable-rate loans and other hybrid products. For the first half of 2006, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac captured about 44 percent of total origination volume — up from a 41 percent share in 2005, but down from a 59 percent share in 2003. Moody's would be concerned if Freddie Mac's market share (i.e., mortgage portfolio plus securities as a percentage of conforming and non-conforming origination), which ranged between 18 and 23 percent between 1999 and the first half of 2006, declined below 15 percent. To buttress its market share, Freddie Mac has increased its purchases of private label securities. Moody's notes that these purchases contribute to profitability, affordable housing goals, and market share in the short-term, but offer minimal benefit from a franchise building perspective.³⁸

In other words, Fannie and Freddie followed the investment banks into the subprime market, rather than led the way. And their reason for getting in was first and foremost the desire to maintain market share and increase profits, just like any other private business. The potential for extending homeownership to more moderate-income families was an afterthought added for public relations.

Remarkably, as the housing bubble was growing ever larger and the quality of mortgages continued to deteriorate, the government responded by loosening regulation. There had been several important moves toward deregulation in the Clinton years, most importantly the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, which allowed for the merger of investment banks and commercial banks, and the Commodities Futures Modernization Act, which restricted the regulation of derivatives. In

the same vein, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 2004 changed its rules on valuing assets (its “net capital rule”) by allowing investment banks to value assets using their own modeling methods rather than standardized procedures. This change meant that these banks could conceal bad assets from scrutiny by regulators, as it appears Lehman was doing on a large scale at the time it went bankrupt.

It is not clear how much of a role the SEC’s rule change played in the process, but the investment banks did become much more highly leveraged following it. They went from leverage ratios of less than 12-to-1 prior to the change to as high as 40-to-1 in the case of Bear Stearns at the time of its collapse.

2006: The end of the housing bubble and the beginning of the collapse

Home prices peaked in the summer of 2006 and began to edge downward in the second half of the year. One widely used measure of home prices, the Case-Shiller 20 City index, was down by 3.5 percent from its summer peak by the end of 2006. It was inevitable that this decline would pick up steam. Once homebuyers no longer anticipated that prices would automatically rise every month, they became more cautious about buying.

The price declines created problems for lenders as well. As long as home prices keep rising, every loan is a good loan. If borrowers get in trouble they can always refinance based on the higher value of the home. Even if the borrower defaults, the bank gets possession of a property that is likely to be of greater value than the mortgage. All this changes once prices start falling. The subprime market began to freeze up in the second half of 2006, and by early 2007 it had become clear that there were major problems in the subprime market. It was in March 2007 that Fed Chairman Bernanke issued his famous comment that he expected the problems in the housing market to be contained to the subprime sector.³⁹

The price decline accelerated over the course of 2007, with prices dropping by 2 percent in the first six months of the year and another 7 percent in the second half. By December 2007, when the recession officially began, prices had fallen by almost 11 percent from the peak of the bubble, implying a loss of more than \$2.2 trillion in housing equity. With prices falling at the rate of 2 percent a month and the economy already shedding jobs due to the falloff in construction and weakening consumption as a result of lost wealth, it was inevitable that the bubble would continue to deflate.

At the point when the financial markets began to seize up in September 2008, home prices had fallen by almost 25 percent from their bubble peaks, corresponding to a loss of more than \$5 trillion in housing wealth. Given the extent of their losses and their extreme leverage, it was inevitable that major actors in the financial industry, including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, would take serious hits. The investment banks should not have been surprised since they had large amounts of mortgages, mortgage-backed securities, and derivative instruments that they had been unable to offload before the collapse of the market.

The financial crisis in the fall of 2008 undoubtedly sped up the pace of the downturn, and the economy went into a free fall until the spring of the next year. However, the economy’s main problems — massive overbuilding in both the residential and nonresidential sectors, coupled with the prospect of losing \$8 trillion in housing bubble wealth — were not the result of the financial crisis. These problems had pushed the economy into recession long before the financial crisis. It might have taken longer for their full effect to have been felt absent the crisis, but it is difficult to see any sector of the economy that would be stronger in the summer of 2011 than it is now had the financial crisis been averted. In short, this recession is the story of a collapsed housing bubble, not a financial crisis.

Chapter 5—Fulcrums of Power I: The Fed and Interest Rates

The two most important levers of economic policy are the Federal Reserve Board, through its control of interest rates, and the Treasury, through its ability to influence the value of the dollar in international currency markets. Both policies are far removed from democratic control by explicit design, so it is difficult for even a well-informed public to alter them. However, it is essential that people at least understand how these levers are controlled so that they understand the ways in which government policy determines economic outcomes. We’ll save the Treasury for Chapter 7 and focus on the Fed first.

The Fed’s control of interest rates cannot always lift the economy quickly back toward full employment, since interest rates take a long time to affect the economy. And in an economy in which consumers are already heavily indebted and in no position to borrow more, as is the case in the United States in 2011, the Fed finds its traditional tools to be of relatively limited value.

But the Fed is not so hobbled when it wants to move the economy in the opposite direction. If it raises interest rates enough in response to real or imagined inflation, it will slow growth and reduce employment. Furthermore, if it has an unemployment target that it does not want to see breached — for example, a 6.0 percent estimate of the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU) — the Fed can raise interest rates enough to ensure that the unemployment rate does not fall below this level.

Who rules the Fed?

The Federal Reserve Board is further removed from democratic control than any other institution of the federal government, with the possible exception of the Supreme Court. Nothing symbolizes this lack of accountability better than the Fed's budget. In contrast to the Supreme Court, which must have its budget approved by Congress, the Fed draws up its own budget. The budget outlines the major streams of income flows (e.g., interest on holdings of government debt, fees from check clearing and foreign exchange clearing) and the major categories of spending. It simply sends over a copy of this budget to inform Congress, not to get congressional approval.

Under the law, the Fed is a mixed public-private entity. The public portion of the Fed, the board of governors, is located in Washington. The seven members of the board are appointed to 14-year terms by the president and approved by Congress. The length of the term is intended to give the governors considerable independence from the president who appointed them and the particular Congress that approved them. (As a practical matter, most governors do not serve full 14-year terms, and the average period of appointment is considerably shorter.) The chair of the board of governors is appointed to a 4-year term, although he or she can serve as a governor for 14 years. (By custom, chairs have resigned from the board at the end of their term as chair.)

The 12 district banks are the private portion of the Fed. Each of these banks is formally controlled by a nine-person board of directors. There are three categories of directors. The three Class A directors are selected by the banks in the district and are supposed to represent the interest of the banking industry. The three Class B directors are also selected by the banks in the district, but are supposed to represent other portions of the business community. The three Class C directors are selected by the board of governors in Washington and are supposed to represent broader segments of the community. Historically, Class C directors have included individuals associated with labor unions, consumer and community groups, and nonprofits, as well members of the business community.

This process for selecting directors basically puts the banks in control of the district Federal Reserve Banks. They appoint the Class A directors, who are by far the most important directors under the law. Furthermore, by virtue of their knowledge of banking, these directors are likely to be far more effective in influencing decisions than the Class B or Class C directors, who often have little background in finance or economics. While they may occasionally be able to raise a point for consideration by the board, it is highly unlikely that the Class B or Class C directors would be able to push an agenda item over the united opposition of the bank-appointed Class A directors.

Each district bank board picks a president. In addition to overseeing the operations of the district bank, the bank president also sits on the Federal Reserve Board's Open Market Committee (FOMC), which is the Fed's main decision-making body. The FOMC votes every six weeks on interest rate policy and monetary policy more generally. All seven governors are voting members of this committee, as is the president of the New York District Federal Reserve Bank, by far the most important district bank because its venue includes Wall Street. The other 11 bank presidents rotate into 4 remaining voting slots. This means that at any point in time, 5 of the 12 voting members of the FOMC will be individuals who were essentially selected by the banks. In addition, the seven other district bank presidents, who were also effectively appointed by the banks, take part in the policy discussion.

This formal structure creates a strong bias toward the interests of the banks in setting monetary policy, but the informal mechanisms pushing in this direction may be even stronger. The Fed was originally established in 1913 to provide a government backup for the banks. The immediate impetus was the financial crisis of 1907, in which the banker J.P. Morgan acted as a backstop to the financial system and helped to prevent a complete collapse. The country's leading bankers, recognizing the need to institutionalize the role played by Morgan in this crisis, lobbied Congress to establish the Fed.

The Fed's banker-friendly organizational structure was not an accident; it was first and foremost intended to serve the banks and only secondarily to serve the larger public. The Fed's culture is thoroughly intermeshed with the financial industry. While its legal mandate from Congress places an equal priority on the goals of price stability and full employment,⁴⁰ the Fed has maintained a much greater commitment to the former goal than the latter. In fact, current Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke has openly committed the Fed to targeting inflation at 2 percent, a policy which implies that

the Fed would be willing to tolerate high jobless rates if it were concerned that more expansionary policy would raise the rate of inflation above its target.

Inflation is generally the main concern of the financial industry for the simple reason that its loans are fixed in dollar terms. If inflation reduces the value of the dollar, lenders lose money. This loss takes two forms. First, if inflation is running at a 5 percent annual rate, then the money paid back to lenders at the end of the year on loans they made at the beginning of the year is worth 5 percent less than the money they lent.

Of course if the banks had anticipated 5 percent inflation then they would adjust for this expectation in the interest rate they charge by adding into it this amount of expected inflation. If they were prepared to make a loan at 3 percent interest in a world with zero inflation, then they would demand 8 percent interest in a world where the inflation rate was expected to be 5 percent.

This brings up the second way in which banks lose money as a result of inflation. The bonds and loans they hold will fall in value in response to a rise in the rate of inflation. The price of bonds and long-term loans moves in the opposite direction of interest rates. If interest rates rise, then the price of these assets falls. And so if people come to expect higher rates of inflation, and then interest rates rise in response, the existing bonds and loans held by the banks will be worth less. For this reason, banks and other financial institutions typically face large losses if the rate of inflation increases.

This was the scenario that played out when many of the nation's savings and loan associations (S&Ls) became insolvent in the 1970s. S&Ls had issued low-interest mortgages in the low-inflation environment of the 1960s. When inflation reached double-digits in the late 1970s, the 30-year mortgages they had issued at 6 percent interest were suddenly worth much less. Since these mortgages were the primary asset of savings and loans (under the law, the vast majority of their lending had to be for residential housing), for many the losses on these mortgages exceeded their capital, making them insolvent.

It is not just the bank presidents who share the banks' concern about inflation. The governors of the Fed and most of its staff tend to share these concerns as well. They do not view the problem of high inflation and high unemployment as being symmetric.⁴¹ The social circle in which these people circulate includes the top management of the country's largest banks, as well as their economists and other professional staff. It does not include union members, small business owners, or other actors in society who may have a different view on the tradeoffs between the risks of higher inflation and unemployment and slower growth. Any Fed governor committed to making lower unemployment the top priority, especially in a context where the policy risked higher rates of inflation, would face an enormous uphill struggle.

Another way to address this question of „who rules the Fed“ is by asking what sort of failures would get a Fed chairman fired. The last Fed chairman to be effectively fired was William Miller in the summer of 1979. He had been in the post for only 19 months. During this period, the rate of inflation had continued to accelerate, a process that had begun with the end of the recession in 1975, but the U.S. unemployment rate was just under 6 percent. Jimmy Carter replaced Miller with Paul Volcker, who was determined to bring down inflation regardless of the cost in unemployment. By January 1980, Volcker had raised interest rates enough to push the economy into recession.⁴² After a brief reprieve in the second half of 1980, he began to push up interest rates again. The economy returned to recession in July 1981, with unemployment peaking at just under 11 percent. Volcker was clearly serious about fighting inflation, and he retains a legacy as “a giant of the financial industry” who “restored credibility to the Federal Reserve.”⁴³

In a similar vein, Ben Bernanke was chairman of the Fed when the housing bubble collapsed and the banking crisis threatened to bring down the financial system. Even though the resulting fallout has given the country the worst downturn since the Great Depression, almost no one in a position of authority has suggested that Bernanke be fired for this policy failure.

While it is true that Bernanke only took over as Fed chair in January 2006, after the housing bubble had already expanded to a level where it would have been almost impossible to deflate without causing serious damage, Bernanke had been in top policy positions since the summer of 2002. He was a governor of the Fed until the summer of 2005, when he became the chief economist in the Bush administration. He remained there until he took over as Fed chair. During this time, he never raised any concerns about the housing bubble or the questionable finance that was fueling it. In fact, like Chairman Greenspan, he glibly dismissed anyone who raised questions along these lines.

In short, if the Fed's responsibility to maintain high levels of employment was taken seriously, it is difficult to imagine how someone could be more deserving of dismissal than Bernanke. The policy failures by Bernanke and his colleagues had

disastrous consequences by this standard, yet neither he nor any of the other people in top positions at the Fed lost their jobs. In fact, their track record in leading the economy into disaster was never even raised seriously in policy debates.

We have to recognize that regardless of its legal mandate, as it stands now, the Fed is answerable to people who care much about inflation and little, if anything, about unemployment. Even modest increases in the rate of inflation are viewed as a high crime, despite the fact that there is little evidence that moderately higher inflation (e.g., 3 to 4 percent, as compared to 2 percent) causes any serious harm to the economy. By contrast, even sharp divergences from full employment, which cause enormous suffering and massive losses of potential output, are not viewed as a serious failure by the interest groups to whom the Fed is accountable.

However bad the situation with the Fed, it is worth noting that it is likely the most democratic of the world's central banks, both in its levers of control and its mandate. Most other major central banks operate with a single mandate, to maintain price stability, which is generally specified as a 2 percent inflation target. These banks make no apology for the persistence of high rates of unemployment. It is officially not their job.

In terms of democratic accountability, it is possible to see how the Fed could be restructured to pursue policies that were more favorable toward the working population. In principle, Congress could strip the banks of their special power in determining the Fed's agenda by making all the Fed officials in decision-making positions presidential appointees subject to congressional approval. A president committed to appointing governors who focused on employment at least as much as price stability could change the Fed's orientation.

It is much more difficult to see how the European Central Bank (ECB) could be restructured to force it to serve the interests of Europe's workers rather than its financial sector. The European political structure is sufficiently convoluted that there is not even a clear mechanism to change an institution like the ECB: it was established to be in its current form indefinitely. A political movement hoping to alter this structure would be paving new ground altogether.

Regaining control over monetary policy

The Fed has been deliberately designed to insulate it from democratic control and leave it instead to be a tool of the financial industry. It will be hard to unrig the process, but there is no alternative to trying, given that the stakes for economic outcomes are so high. The long-term goal must be to establish the same sort of accountability from the Fed that would be expected from any other government agency. The Fed must answer to democratically elected officials.

However, any change in the governing structure of the Fed is many years in the future. In the meantime, we can take shorter-term steps to influence the Fed's behavior.

First, progressives can take a lesson from the right's message machine. After the initial phase of the financial crisis, many right-wing politicians and some economists began beating the drums about runaway inflation. Their argument was that the Fed's huge expansion of the money supply would inevitably cause prices to skyrocket. In reality, there was little reason to believe that inflation would be a problem at all. With massive amounts of idle capacity in almost every sector of the economy and an extraordinarily high unemployment rate, the conditions did not exist for inflation to take off. Furthermore, there had been prior instances in which central banks had vastly expanded a country's core money supply⁴⁴ during severe slumps, most obviously the Fed during the Great Depression and Japan's central bank in the 1990s. In both cases the money went to excess reserves, since banks faced no demand for loans in a depressed economy. Inflation did not result.

However unrealistic they may have been, the complaints by the right had their intended result. They bolstered the inflation hawks on the Fed and almost certainly made Chairman Bernanke and other relative doves more cautious about pushing expansionary monetary policy. In effect, those warning about inflation were able to get at least part of what they wanted: a Fed that was more cautious in stimulating the economy than would otherwise be the case.

How would the media, Congress, and the Fed have responded to an aggressive push in the opposite direction? Progressive members of Congress and other prominent political figures could have made a point of complaining that the Fed was taking inadequate steps to meet the portion of its mandate requiring it to pursue full employment.

Progressives could have called attention to the fact that Bernanke was not even following his own advice, offered while he was a professor at Princeton. In a 1999 paper harshly critical of the Japanese central bank's response to that country's financial crisis, Bernanke argued that the Japanese bank should explicitly target a higher inflation rate in the range of 3 to

4 percent.⁴⁵ He argued that the higher rate would be desirable both because it would lower the real interest rate and also because it would reduce the debt burden of Japanese homeowners and corporations.⁴⁶

Had a chorus arisen from the left that was remotely comparable to the absurd inflation fears raised by those on the right, it could have at least neutralized the pressure to tighten up on interest rates and slow economic growth. It's at least possible that such an effort could have paved the way for Bernanke to take more aggressive steps to boost the economy.

To illustrate the importance of the Fed to the economy, suppose that more aggressive monetary policy managed to boost growth by just 0.3 percent over the course of a year, certainly a modest target. A proportionate increase in employment would translate into 400,000 additional jobs. Job numbers of this size should be worth the attention of progressives. There have been major fights over policies that would have much less impact on employment.

Another aspect to the Fed's policy remarkably has received even less attention. When the Fed earns interest on the assets it holds, it refunds the money to the Treasury. In fiscal year 2010, the Fed paid the Treasury almost \$80 billion as a result of the interest it earned on the government bonds and mortgage-backed securities it held.

Current budget projections assume that the Fed will sell off the assets it holds at present, so that the interest paid to the Treasury will diminish through time, even as interest rates rise when the economy recovers. But selling off these assets is a policy decision. The Fed could continue to hold its government bonds and refund the interest to the Treasury so that the interest does not pose as large a burden to the government in future years.

The potential impact of this decision is substantial. If the Fed held \$3 trillion in government bonds over the next decade (roughly its current asset level), it would reduce the interest burden to the government by a total of more than \$600 billion.

The potential reduction in the national debt over the next decade as a result of a Fed policy to hold \$3 trillion in assets compared to the impact of ending the Bush tax cuts on the richest 2 percent of the population would be virtually costless. Fed policy is comparable to that of one of the policies that most dominates public debate. Yet, the idea of the Fed holding its assets to alleviate the interest burden of the debt is almost never discussed.⁴⁷

If progressives were aware of the importance of the Fed in determining employment and other economic outcomes, they would almost certainly target more of their efforts on its policy decisions. The potential impact of the Fed on unemployment and wages dwarfs the impact of the vast majority of legislative items that garner attention from progressives. Even if the channels for directly changing Fed policy are limited, it is important for the public to understand the way in which Fed policy can hurt a person's ability to be employed and earn a decent wage.

This knowledge is also a necessary precondition for changing the structure of the Fed. As it stands now, most people have only the vaguest understanding of what the Fed is and very little idea of why it could be important in their lives. People recognize that the government can affect their well-being by raising or lowering taxes and cutting programs like Social Security and Medicare. There is almost no awareness that an agency of the government, the Federal Reserve Board, can pursue policies that will ensure that people remain employed or, alternatively, can maintain a sufficiently high rate of unemployment so that most workers will have little bargaining power with employers.

Opportunities suggest themselves for interesting and unusual coalitions in organizing to take on the Fed. Many grassroots libertarians are wary of the Fed, often because they view it as an instrument of Wall Street banks. Progressives can find allies among libertarians for at least some actions related to the Fed, most importantly measures that increase accountability.

In the last session of Congress, Ron Paul, one of its most conservative members, and Alan Grayson and Bernie Sanders, two of its most progressive, introduced bills requiring greater disclosure of the Fed's lending practices. Despite the opposition of the Democratic leadership, the Paul-Grayson bill won the support of the majority of the House, as most Republicans and about one-third of Democrats signed on as co-sponsors. Despite the strong opposition of the Fed, which predicted disastrous consequences if details of loan information were made public, a version of these bills was eventually attached to the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill and passed into law. (To date, the disastrous consequences have not been apparent.)

Other measures like the Paul-Grayson-Sanders bills, that shine a spotlight on the Fed's actions, are likely to gain the support of a substantial number of libertarians. Many libertarians would prefer to shut down the Fed altogether, a move that would take away an important instrument for supporting the economy.⁴⁸ Though this goal will limit the degree of

progressive cooperation with libertarians, on the issue of making the Fed more open and accountable, there is a clear common interest.

The long-term goal of Fed reform must be to strip the banking industry of its privileged role in determining Fed policy. The Fed should be restructured so that it operates in a similar manner to any other government agency, though even this change will not guarantee that it will act in the public interest. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent agency answerable to Congress, but it would be hard to contest the fact that it often is more responsive to industry concerns than the interests of the general public. But at least Disney and Comcast do not get to directly appoint members of the FCC.

Chapter 6—Full Employment Without the Fed

In principle, the Fed should vigorously pursue policies that promote full employment.⁴⁹ However, it does not do so now, nor is it likely to do so in the near future. Under its current structure, the Fed is primarily responsive to the financial industry's concerns about inflation, and full employment comes in a distant second.

A progressive agenda should include efforts to educate the public about the Fed's importance and its structure, for two reasons: to maintain pressure on the Fed to pursue the full-employment portion of its mandate, and to create support for legally restructuring the institution so that it is more accountable to democratically elected officials.

But even in a best-case scenario, the Fed will be controlled by financial interests long into the future. This raises the question of whether there are other steps that can be taken to move the economy back toward full employment even when the Fed is at best indifferent — if not outright hostile — to this effort.

Work sharing: The quickest route back to full employment

In the absence of a growing demand for labor that would increase employment, an alternative route is to divide up the existing work among more workers. While this may be an inferior path — there is enormous waste associated with an economy operating below its potential — it may be the only route available given that the possibility of further fiscal stimulus appears to be blocked by political considerations. Yet, in any case, work sharing might be a proper route back to full employment, since there is nothing written in stone about the current length of the work week or work year.

Work sharing is not a new idea. The idea of shortening work time to create more jobs has a long history. In the context of an economy that is at full employment, the approach might be misguided, since legislated reductions in work time can lead to increased inflationary pressure and economic distortions. However, in an economy that is operating well below its potential and that is projected to remain below potential output for much of the next decade, as is the case with the U.S. economy, work sharing may be the most viable way of bringing the nation back to full employment.

Germany is the model in this respect. It has aggressively promoted a policy of work sharing, along with other measures aimed at persuading employers to retain workers. As a result, its unemployment rate stood at 6.1 percent in June 2011, 2.1 percentage points below the rate at the start of the downturn.⁵⁰ This remarkable achievement was not due to superior economic growth. Through the first quarter of 2011, the growth rate of Germany's economy since the start of the downturn had actually lagged somewhat behind the growth rate of the United States. The nearly steady fall in Germany's unemployment rate — at a time when the unemployment rate in the United States sharply increased and then remained high (peaking at 10.1 percent in October 2009 and only falling to 9.2 percent by June 2011) — was entirely due to different labor market responses to the downturn.⁵¹

Germany's experience with reducing work hours as an alternative to unemployment has been remarkable. But it is important to note that most of the reduction in work hours was not brought about by the formal short-work program run by the government. The OECD estimated that 25 percent of the reduction in hours worked in Germany resulted from the formal short-work program, 40 percent from employer agreements with unions or work councils, 20 percent from reduced overtime, and 20 percent from tapping work-hour accounts (accounts that allow workers to bank paid time off by working extra hours).⁵² While the role of the short-work policy was important, it played out in the context of a larger commitment to preserving employment.

The overwhelming majority of the workers in short-work programs in Europe are men, disproportionately middle-aged, and tend to work for medium- and large-sized firms rather than smaller businesses.⁵³ The construction and manufacturing industries accounted for a hugely disproportionate share of participation in short-work programs, although they also

accounted for the bulk of the job loss in the recession; hence, the concentration of covered workers in these sectors may be more a function of the pattern of job loss than the nature of the programs. By education level, workers with college and advanced degrees were underrepresented, as were workers without high school degrees.⁵⁴ The experience of short work in Europe suggests that it has primarily benefited a relatively narrow group of workers: less-educated middle-aged men in manufacturing and construction. To some extent this undoubtedly reflects features of the programs. For example, the programs generally place lower limits on the size of firms that can qualify. Insofar as men are more likely to be employed at larger firms, men will be overrepresented among the beneficiaries of the program. However, the fact that manufacturing and construction, which disproportionately employ men without college degrees, were hit hardest in the downturn also was important in determining the mix of beneficiaries from short-work programs.

The United States has limited experience with work sharing. States offering the programs tend to tie them to unemployment insurance: a worker receives unemployment benefits to make up for the income sacrificed for the shorter hours. Eighteen states had a work-sharing program attached to their unemployment insurance systems prior to the start of the recession, and several more states began the process of starting programs after the recession began.⁵⁵ Most of the existing programs date from the late 1970s or early 1980s. While some of the largest states, including California and New York, make work sharing available, the programs have had relatively little impact nationwide on unemployment in the downturn. Participation in work-sharing programs peaked in 2009 at just over 150,000 workers, less than 0.2 percent of payroll employment.⁵⁶ In only two states, Rhode Island and Kansas, did participation in work-sharing programs exceed 1.0 percent of payroll employment.

Since the end of 2009, participation in work-sharing programs has fallen sharply, due to the fact that participants in work sharing in most states are ineligible for extended unemployment benefits and in no state are they eligible for the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program that provides benefits for jobless spells lasting more than 52 weeks. This means that, for the most part, because participation in the program is tied to receipt of unemployment insurance benefits, workers can be on a work-sharing compensation program only for 26 weeks.

At the start of the downturn, layoffs occurred disproportionately in manufacturing and construction, the sectors where workers were most likely to take part in work-sharing programs. By the beginning of 2010, manufacturing had stopped shedding large numbers of jobs and the rate of job loss in construction had slowed sharply. As a result, the number of new entrants in work-sharing programs would have been expected to fall while many of the workers enrolled in the program would have reached the maximum length of time in which unemployment benefits compensated them for their reduced hours.

As it exists in the United States today, work sharing has at best had a marginal impact on employment, affecting only a small sliver of the workforce. The next section discusses some of the implementation issues that could make the program more attractive to both workers and employers.

Issues of implementation

Work-sharing programs in the United States are little changed from the time they were first put in place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. They tend to be overly bureaucratic and not well publicized. Many employers in the states where programs exist do not even know they might have the option to take advantage of them as an alternative to laying off workers.

One of the basic issues of implementation is the closeness with which employers are held to a specific plan for work sharing. Most states require that an employer certify that the proposed reduction in hours per worker is an alternative to layoffs, and it then must lay out a plan for reduced hours, usually for specific workers. This procedure allows individual workers to claim unemployment benefits against the scheduled reduction in work time. For example, if a worker is scheduled to have a reduction in work time of 20 percent, he or she can claim an unemployment insurance benefit equivalent to 20 percent of the benefit that would be available if the worker were unemployed altogether.⁵⁷

This system has the disadvantage of both locking the employer into a specific pattern of hours reduction and requiring employees to individually apply for benefits. Drawing up a specific schedule of hours reduction and holding to it for a specified period may overly constrain employers operating in an environment where there is considerable uncertainty about demand for their products. The rigid scheduling can also be cumbersome, since any workplace will have some amount of turnover. If, for example, an employer moved a worker out of the work-sharing compensation system and into a full-time position elsewhere in the company, the firm could not replace the worker with another receiving work-sharing compensation without filing a new plan with the state employment agency.

These restrictions can be avoided if the employer is given more discretion over which workers are covered and how much work time is actually reduced. In this case, the state agency would probably make payments directly to the company rather than to the individual worker. The payments could be made based on scheduled reductions in hours and then adjusted in accordance with the actual reduction in hours on a quarterly or annual basis. While this system would leave more opportunities for abuse, the experience rating of insurance payments⁵⁸ should limit the extent to which employers have incentive to game the system. An employer that deliberately flouted the system would find itself faced with much higher payments into the system in subsequent years.⁵⁹

Two other important issues of implementation affect the willingness of workers to accept work sharing. First, there is the question of whether fringe benefits are still paid for the workers for the hours they are not working. The state programs are based on wage compensation, so in many cases workers seeing a 20 percent reduction in work hours will also see a 20 percent reduction in the portion of health insurance premiums paid by their employer as well as a 20 percent reduction in contributions to pensions or other benefits. This reduction in benefits could be a substantial disincentive to workers to take part in a work-sharing program.

The other issue is that work-sharing benefits generally count against regular unemployment benefits. If a worker has been in a work-sharing program for, say, 20 weeks with hours reduced by 20 percent, then upon being laid off the duration of work-sharing would reduce the eligibility period for conventional unemployment insurance by 4 weeks. Since firms that use work-sharing are experiencing shortfalls in demand almost by definition, there is a high probability that there will be layoffs at some point. The concern over the possibility of being laid off with a reduced period of eligibility for benefits could make workers reluctant to take part in work-sharing programs.

There is also the problem noted earlier that workers in work-sharing programs generally are not eligible for benefits beyond an initial 26-week period. This means that only those experiencing relatively short spells of reduced work hours will be able to take part in work-sharing programs.

All of these problems can be addressed in ways that are likely to increase the use of work-sharing with only a modest commitment of additional resources to the program. All else equal, when it comes to reducing their demand for labor, employers should be largely indifferent to whether it's by laying off workers or reducing hours for the existing workforce.⁶⁰ Since there is a clear public interest in keeping people employed, it would make sense to structure a work-sharing program in ways that make it more desirable than laying off workers from the standpoint of employers, even if it comes at a somewhat higher cost to the government than the current unemployment insurance system.

Specifically, it could be desirable to pay a premium of 25 to 30 percent to companies in excess of what their workers would receive in unemployment insurance benefits if a comparable reduction in work hours had to be accomplished through layoffs. This system would best take the form of an employer credit,⁶¹ so that workers would not have to individually file for the benefit and employers would have the freedom to alter work weeks as needed and change the specific workers who were receiving work-sharing compensation. The program could require that employers maintain their full contributions for health insurance, defined-benefit pensions, and any other benefits that are not easily divisible. The increased premium could also be used to cover an additional period of eligibility for conventional unemployment insurance if workers on work-sharing programs were laid off. This enhanced protection should make workers more willing to accept work-sharing plans.

The impact of work sharing on employment

There is evidence available for predicting the take-up rates for a more generous work-sharing program. With other policies, like wage subsidies, it is possible to derive a projected impact based on estimates of the elasticity of labor demand (i.e., the extent to which lowering the cost of labor leads firms to add workers). In the case of work sharing, demand is not really an issue since the immediate goal is not to increase the demand for labor but rather to change its distribution. The relevant question is the willingness of employers to take part in the program and to readjust patterns of work to meet its requirements. The answer will depend both on the extent to which employers view the program as advantageous to keep workers on the payroll and on the costs of making the necessary adjustments in the structure of work.

Based on the German experience, it is possible that employers will view shortening work hours as preferable to layoffs, even with little or no additional subsidy from the government. German employers have been supportive of the country's short-work policy in large part because they recognize the advantage of having workers on their payrolls whose hours can be increased quickly when demand grows, as opposed to the disadvantage of spending time and money hiring new

workers. However, there are other features of Germany's labor market, which do not exist in the United States, that make short work relatively more attractive there.

First and foremost, Germany has a far higher union coverage rate, with approximately 43 percent of its workers covered by collective bargaining agreements compared to about 13 percent in the United States.⁶² This means that German employers are more likely to have to negotiate layoffs with a union rather than unilaterally lay off workers. Second, firms with more than 250 employees are required to have a works council, which would play a role in any layoff decisions. In addition, employment protection rules in Germany do not allow employers to dismiss most workers at will. Thus, German employers have a strong incentive to develop plans for reducing work hours in ways that are acceptable to their workers.

At the same time, employers in the United States do recognize the benefits of keeping their incumbent workers on the job rather than being forced to hire new workers when demand increases. In the latest downturn the length of the average workweek fell substantially in every sector of the economy, an indication that employers did not adjust labor demand exclusively through layoffs. If a better advertised, more generous, and less bureaucratic system were in place, surely employers would be more likely to take advantage of the option of work-sharing.

A relatively simple calculation can tell us with some certainty the cost per job, if not the number of jobs saved. If the target is to increase the generosity of the unemployment insurance system by 30 percent by having the system cover non-wage benefits for workers on work-sharing and implicitly by extending the length of unemployment benefits through not counting the period of work-sharing against the benefit limits, then the cost per job saved would be roughly 30 percent of the average unemployment benefit. With benefits currently averaging \$300 a week or \$15,000 a year, a more generous system of work-sharing would cost roughly \$4,500 per job saved.

What would be the impact of this policy on employment by industry, assuming take-up rates by employers for job losses of 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent? (In other words, 10 percent, 15 percent, and 20 percent of the workers who would otherwise be dismissed are instead kept on as a result of work-sharing programs.) Assume that the average period that workers are in a work-sharing program is six months. An average hours' reduction of 20 percent would imply that the total number of workers in work-sharing programs is five times as large as the number of jobs saved.

If these assumptions are plausible, then the potential of work sharing on employment is substantial. A 10 percent take-up rate from a more flexible work-sharing program would increase employment by more than one million. With a 20 percent take-up rate, employment would rise by more than two million. Based on the pattern of layoffs by industry, the biggest impact would be in the professional and business service sector.⁶³ The next largest impacts would be in construction and the leisure and hospitality sector.

Two important factors are likely to cause the take-up rate by industry to be different from the rate of job loss by industry: firm size and pay rates. As noted before, smaller firms are generally prohibited from participating in work-sharing programs. The rationale for excluding smaller firms is that it would be difficult to monitor their compliance, and it would be more difficult for them to reorganize their workplaces to adjust to shorter workweeks.

Let's look at the percentage of job loss in the first two quarters of 2010 by firm size. Most of the job loss occurred in smaller firms during this period, with firms with more than 50 employees accounting for just 35.8 percent of the gross job loss. This means that if eligibility for participation were restricted to firms that employ more than 50 workers, then the take-up rate among eligible firms would have to be almost three times the levels shown in Table 6-1 in order to reach the same employment growth targets. Achieving a 10 percent take-up rate among all workers who would otherwise lose their jobs would require a take-up rate of almost 28 percent among firms that employed more than 50 workers; an overall 20 percent take-up rate would require a take-up rate of almost 56 percent among firms employing more than 50 workers. If the cutoff for participation were instead put at 20 employees, then there would have to be a 21 percent take-up rate among the eligible firms to reach the 10 percent target and a 42 percent rate to reach the 20 percent target.

Finally, the take-up rate is likely to be affected by pay levels. Since unemployment benefits are capped in most states at relatively low levels, the potential compensation provided through a work-sharing program will be a smaller share of the wages of highly paid employees than of relatively low-paid workers. Based on data from the Current Population Survey on the distribution of hourly wages by industry for 2010, by wage distribution—the retail sector, restaurants, and hotels would seem to have the largest proportion of workers who could benefit from a work-sharing program. Of course, these sectors also have many small employers that would likely not be eligible, and so the highest take-up rate could be expected to be among the larger establishments.

The longer-term benefits of work sharing

Work sharing offers the short-term benefit of allowing a return to something resembling full employment in a reasonable period. However, its potential long-term benefits could be at least as important. In 1980, the average number of hours worked by full-time workers in the United States was not very different than in other wealthy countries. But in the decades since 1980 most other wealthy countries have seen sharp reductions in work hours in favor of paid vacation days, paid family leave, and paid sick days. In many countries, the standard workweek is now considerably less than 40 hours. As a result, the typical full-time worker in Western Europe puts in many fewer hours than the typical worker in the United States; in some countries the gap in hours for full-time workers is more than 20 percent.

There are reasons to think it would be a good thing for the United States to follow the path of Western Europe in having shorter work weeks. The move to shorter work weeks in many cases was intended to ensure more family-friendly workplaces. Paid family leave means that workers in Western Europe can stay home to care for young children or elderly parents. Paid sick days mean that a parent doesn't have to worry about losing his or her job to care for a sick child. And paid vacation time means that workers are guaranteed some time off that they can spend with family and friends. These are all benefits that can be viewed as substantially increasing the quality of life.

Of course there is a tradeoff. The cost of working fewer hours is that per capita income in Western Europe averages more than 20 percent less than in the United States. There is little difference in productivity — output per hour — between Western Europe and the United States, and in effect workers in Europe have taken much of the benefits of productivity growth over the last three decades in leisure rather than income. (It is worth noting that the gap in incomes between the United States and Western Europe refers to average incomes. The gap at the median, if it exists at all, is considerably smaller.)

While Europeans no doubt appreciate the greater amount of leisure that they enjoy compared with their counterparts in the United States, it is not obvious that they suffer as a result of a lower average income. There is undoubtedly a substantial relative component in assessments of well-being, so if a job in Germany or Belgium pays a wage that is close to the median, it is likely that workers feel reasonably contented with their standard of living even if it leaves them with a somewhat lower material standard of living than a similar U.S. worker. Not being able to afford a new car every few years may be less of a concern if people buy new cars rarely compared with a country where workers buy new cars more frequently.

Another aspect of the labor-leisure trade-off is that there is a strong correlation between greenhouse gas emissions and income.⁶⁴ Essentially, wealthier people use more energy and therefore have more greenhouse gas emissions. Western Europe emits approximately half as much greenhouse gases per capita as the United States.⁶⁵ There are two obvious explanations for this gap. First, because people in the United States have more money, they are more able to afford items such as big cars or the cost of air conditioning their homes to very low temperatures in the summer. And if Europeans have more time, they may place less of a premium on driving their own cars, as opposed to taking public transportation or riding a bicycle, to get somewhere a few minutes faster. Because time is at much more of a premium in the United States, people are willing to pay a higher price in terms of money and energy to save time.

Thus, in addition to the benefits of making work more family friendly and improving the quality of life, there are also environmental reasons for preferring that people take the benefits of productivity growth in the form of more leisure rather than income. Yet to date, environmentalists have not taken much notice of the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants by promoting shorter work weeks or work years.

When considering measures that are designed to influence the length of the work week or work year, it is important to remember that it was not just the market that determined the work schedules we have today. One of the main reasons employers are reluctant to add more workers and reduce the hours of the current workforce is the overhead cost of hiring a worker, most importantly health care costs. Typically health care is a per-worker expense: employers pay a fixed amount for a worker's health insurance policy regardless of how many hours he or she actually works.⁶⁶

The structure of health care provision in the United States was not determined by accident. It dates back to World War II, when employer-provided health insurance became a mechanism for raising compensation while evading wartime wage-price controls. Also, the policy of exempting employer-provided insurance from the income tax (along with most other employer-provided benefits) gave firms an incentive to provide a substantial portion of workers' compensation in health care and other non-wage benefits.

This history is relevant because it means that the current length of the average work year is not simply the result of the workings of the market and the preferences of employers and employees. Government policy provided substantial

incentives for hiring fewer workers for more hours rather than more workers for shorter hours. Since policy got us here, there is no reason to be shy about using policy to set the economy on a different course.⁶⁷

Work sharing as a state-based way to get to full employment

One of the best things about work sharing is that it can be implemented largely at the state level, especially if the federal government provides some leeway in restructuring unemployment insurance. States could experiment with different structures to see which is most successful in maximizing take-up by employers and minimizing fraud.

While the political establishment in the United States is very effective at ignoring policy successes in other countries (how often have you heard about Germany's 6.1 percent unemployment rate?), it is more difficult to ignore successes at the state level. If Ohio or Washington State implemented a work-sharing program that pushed their unemployment rates under 5.0 percent, they would provide a model that other states would want to emulate. So even if gridlock at the national level prevents any major work-sharing initiative, there is nothing to prevent innovative action at the state level.

A successful work-sharing initiative can accomplish several goals simultaneously. First and most importantly, it will keep people at work, a hugely important objective in a context of high national unemployment. As people are out of work for longer periods, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find re-employment. Many of the long-term unemployed may never find work again. The devastation to individual workers and their families from this situation is enormous, as is the waste to the economy when qualified and willing workers are unable to find jobs. If work sharing can substantially reduce the number of unemployed, it will be a beneficial policy in both the short and long term.

Work sharing can be coupled with policies that make the workplace more family friendly. These include paid family leave, sick days, and paid vacation. The United States lags far behind other wealthy countries in providing these benefits to its workers. Incentives for shortening the work week or work year as opposed to laying off workers should help to offset the institutional factors that have led employers to prefer longer hours to the hiring of additional workers.

Furthermore, work sharing can be coupled with environmental benefits. Structuring incentives to encourage workers to take the gains of productivity growth partly in leisure rather than income would almost certainly lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. For example, if participants in a work-sharing program were to work four, instead of five, days per week, that would mean one less day per week per worker of the pollution associated with commuting.

As a final note, it is worth thinking about the labor market dynamics of promoting a reduction in hours through a system of work sharing as opposed to layoffs through unemployment insurance. The system of work sharing is most likely to primarily affect the less-educated portion of the labor force, both because less-educated workers are more likely to face unemployment, and because unemployment insurance benefits are capped, meaning that the program would pay a larger share of the wage package of a less-educated workers than that of more highly educated workers.

A reduction in the typical work year for less-educated workers would have the same effect on the labor market for these workers as a reduction in their supply, and reducing their supply would be expected to increase their bargaining power and their relative wages. In other words, if institutional changes led to a reduction in standard work years by 20 percent, this would have the same effect on the labor market as reducing the supply of workers by 20 percent. It is basic economics that wages are to a large extent determined by supply and demand. Most economists attribute the rise in wage inequality over the last three decades to the fact that the increase in the supply of less-educated workers has exceeded the increase in the demand for them. However, policies that have the effect of reducing the average number of hours worked would put upward pressure on the wages of less-educated workers in the same way as a reduction in the number of workers or an increase in the demand for their work. In other words, work-sharing is a policy that would structure the market in a way that reduces inequality.

Chapter 7—Fulcrums of Power II: The Treasury and the Dollar

The U.S. Treasury's ability to influence the value of the dollar in international currency markets might at first seem to be a trivial power that matters little to ordinary people, unless they travel abroad or happen to be employed in an import-export business. But it is a power that can and does have a major impact, not only on the unemployment rate but also on which workers become unemployed and how much employed workers earn. And it is a power exercised with little understanding or oversight by the public.

The Treasury has the authority to intervene directly in currency markets by buying or selling dollars, though it rarely uses this authority. (The Treasury can in principle coordinate its interventions with the Fed, which also holds a large amount of foreign currency.) Usually its efforts to influence the value of the dollar have been more subtle, such as making pronouncements about a "strong dollar," or indirect, through its control of the International Monetary Fund.

Nonetheless, the Treasury could intervene more actively in currency markets if it opted to do so. Acting in coordination with the Fed, the Treasury could choose to bring the value of the dollar down against other currencies, and thereby produce a huge improvement in the country's trade balance. In turn, this would create millions of new manufacturing jobs. A boost to manufacturing would increase the demand for non-college-educated workers and push up their wages relative to those of more highly educated workers. There is remarkably little awareness, even in policy circles, that the value of the dollar is a policy tool under the control of the government. This is striking because there have been major debates over trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA (The Central American Free Trade Agreement), primarily over concern about their potential impact on jobs in the United States. By contrast, the value of the dollar is almost never mentioned in policy debates. Even small changes in the value of the dollar are likely to have far more impact on trade and employment than the most important of these trade agreements. Typically, trade pacts comprise relatively small reductions in tariff barriers, coupled with changes in investment rules designed to facilitate the movement of manufacturing jobs overseas. Even the largest of the recent trade pacts involved only a relatively small portion of U.S. trade — for example, the entry of Mexico into NAFTA.

A rise in the value of the dollar against other currencies by, say, 10 percent is equivalent to giving a 10 percent subsidy on all the goods imported into the United States and imposing a 10 percent tariff on all the goods we export. This sort of increase in the value of the dollar could easily increase the trade deficit by more than 1 percent of GDP (about \$150 billion), an amount that would imply the loss of far more than one million jobs. Yet, such an increase in the value of the dollar could occur over a couple of months and get almost no mention outside of the business pages, and even then would not likely garner major headlines.

This works to the advantage of those who benefit from a high-dollar policy. At the top of this list would be the financial industry, which receives benefits of a high dollar through two channels. First, by making imports cheaper, a high dollar helps to keep inflation low, and stable prices are a financial industry obsession. Second, when the financial industry looks to move abroad, its dollar assets go much further when the dollar is overvalued.

Other industries have a more ambiguous view toward a high dollar. Domestic manufacturers should oppose a high dollar since it places them at a disadvantage relative to their foreign competitors. However, insofar as manufacturers are able to establish operations overseas, they are likely to be content with a high-dollar policy that disadvantages only some of their operations. Because they can shield themselves with their foreign operations, they can gain an advantage over purely domestic competitors.

Major retail chains like Wal-Mart are advantaged in a similar way. By contracting with suppliers in China and other countries with low labor costs, these chains enjoy a supply of low-cost imports that allows them to undercut retailers that pay higher domestic prices for their products. For this reason, major retailers are likely to oppose any effort to lower the value of the dollar.

There is also a peculiar class dynamic to the dollar debate. When American tourists travel to Europe or Asia, their money goes further when the dollar is high. While only a small portion of the population makes regular trips overseas, it is an important group for policy purposes. The people who staff congressional offices and the higher levels of the bureaucracies in Washington, the people who run and contribute to political campaigns, and the reporters who cover them all are likely to be among the group of frequent foreign travelers. For all these people, a decline in the dollar might be viewed as bad news because it means that their next trip to France or Italy will cost more.

The importance of this aspect of the policy debate should not be underestimated. Even the staffers of progressive members of Congress and journalists from progressive opinion magazines are far more likely to take vacations in Europe than the typical person. It is easy for them to understand that a high dollar makes their overseas trips less expensive. This fact can make it much harder for them to understand that a high dollar can also cause millions of workers to be unemployed or force them to work at lower wages.

While a substantial number of powerful special interest groups will benefit from an overvalued dollar, it is harmful to the economy as a whole in both the short run and the long run. In the short run, an overvalued dollar virtually guarantees a large trade deficit, and a trade deficit both reduces overall employment and changes the mix of jobs in a way that works against workers without college degrees. The jobs that are lost as a result of a trade deficit will be disproportionately in

manufacturing, which continues to be a source of relatively high-paying jobs for less-educated workers. For this reason, the trade deficit is an important factor contributing to the increase in inequality that we have seen over the last three decades.

It is also important to recognize how the dynamics of a trade deficit affect the overall economy. If the country has a trade deficit, then it is, on net, borrowing from abroad. In other words, someone must be lending us money in some form to allow us to buy more than we are selling. If the country as a whole is borrowing more than it is lending, then the culprit must be either the public sector or the private sector. (That's all we've got.)

Borrowing on the public-sector side corresponds to the large budget deficits that we hear so much about. A budget deficit means that the government is spending more than it pulls in as tax revenue and therefore must borrow the difference. A large budget deficit can be one result of a large trade deficit. The causation would be that the loss of jobs due to the trade deficit reduces tax revenues and increases payouts for unemployment insurance and other benefits. In this story, if we get the dollar down, then we can make substantial progress in reducing the budget deficit, since the jobs created by reducing the trade deficit will lead to more income tax revenue and lower benefit payments.⁶⁸

If the budget is near balance or in surplus, then the borrowing must be on the private side. This would be the story of extraordinarily low private savings that we saw during the years of both the stock and housing bubbles. In both cases, the inflow of foreign capital helped to inflate the bubbles. The wealth created by these bubbles led people in the United States to spend more and save less, yielding large negative private savings. This is not a sustainable course, since bubbles eventually burst.

Recovering from a burst asset bubble can be a long and difficult process, as the country is now experiencing. If the dollar does not fall enough to allow the trade deficit to get much closer to balance, then the government must run large budget deficits to sustain employment. The only alternative would be to create yet another bubble to drive the economy.

A high trade deficit means that we have either a large budget deficit and/or low private savings. This is what in economics and finance is called an accounting identity: there is no way around this fact.

Getting the dollar under control

The story with the dollar is similar to the story with the Fed. As with the Fed, there is little ability for the public to directly influence a policy that is set by the Treasury with no obvious mechanisms for congressional input. However, the Treasury is susceptible to public pressure, just like any other government agency.

The first step must be to raise awareness of the importance of the dollar in determining the trade balance and therefore both the number and mix of jobs in the economy. Although the topic is taught in every introductory economics class, few people in Washington policy debates understand the basics of the relationship between the value of the dollar and the trade balance. For this reason, the issue is, at best, part of a larger laundry list of concerns to be raised in the context of trade. Few recognize that lowering the value of the dollar will almost certainly have more impact than all the other items on the list put together.

In addition to understanding the economic impact of an overvalued dollar, the public should also recognize how interests divide on this issue. It is standard practice for politicians to treat dollar policy as something outside of the control of the U.S. government. Consider, for example, what we have read about the need for the U.S. to confront China over its currency "manipulation," that is, its practice of deliberately depressing the value of its currency against the dollar.

There are several aspects of this framing of the issue that are inaccurate. First, China has an explicit policy of pegging its currency to the dollar. This is not something it is doing in the dark when no one is looking, so the use of the term "manipulation" is not really appropriate. It is also worth noting that China is hardly the only country that pegs its currency to the dollar; many other developing countries do so as well. However, China is by far the biggest, and the others are likely to let their currencies follow the Chinese currency upward against the dollar.

Second, when the United States discusses currency values with China, it is in the context of a range of economic and non-economic issues. Because China is a great power, it does not just agree to whatever the United States demands from it. It makes concessions on some issues in exchange for concessions on other issues from the United States.

When U.S. negotiators confront China with their list of issues, one of which includes raising the value of the *renminbi* (RMB) against the dollar, they are not likely to get concessions on the RMB unless it is clearly identified as a top priority

issue — one for which the United States is prepared to make concessions on other issues. If the U.S. negotiators do not bring out the currency issue front and center, then the Chinese will understand that the U.S. government is not especially concerned about it.

In fact, the Chinese would likely reach the conclusion that the U.S. negotiators were just raising the currency issue for show; our negotiators could honestly claim that they had pressed the Chinese government to raise the value of its currency, but the Chinese refused to yield. This sort of charade has allowed both the Obama and Bush administrations to claim that they are concerned about the overvaluation of the dollar and that they are doing what they can to rectify the situation.

Yet the United States has the power to unilaterally take steps to lower the value of the dollar against other currencies. It can be difficult or even impossible to keep the price of a currency above the market-clearing level, but it is always possible to push down the value of a currency, through relatively simple mechanisms.

One route, which is completely legal under all U.S. trade agreements, would be to tax the interest earnings of a country that we believe is maintaining an undervalued currency against the dollar. For example, the United States could impose a 20 percent tax on all of the earnings on dollar assets held by China's central bank or state-owned enterprises. It could then raise the tax by 10 percentage points a year if China refused to reduce its dollar holdings and allow the value of its currency to rise.⁶⁹ This would eventually impose a sizable penalty on the Chinese government, making its high-dollar policy ever more costly.

The U.S. government has other, more extreme options available to force down the value of the dollar against the RMB. One would be to simply establish an exchange rate that set a much higher price for the RMB. For example, the U.S. could set a price of 4 RMB to the dollar instead of the rate of close to 6.6 RMB to the dollar set by the Chinese government. While it would be illegal, under Chinese law, for Chinese companies or citizens to sell currency to the Treasury at this U.S.-set rate, given the enormous potential gains, it is likely that many Chinese companies and wealthy individuals would find ways to evade the law. This could have the effect of making the U.S. Treasury rate the effective exchange rate in the rest of the world.⁷⁰

The existence of these sorts of unilateral steps to force down the value of the dollar against the RMB is important because it establishes that the United States is not helpless in its negotiations with China. If there were sufficient determination to bring down the value of the dollar, then the United States could pursue one of these channels.

In the real world, the sort of currency war that these measures might imply would never materialize. If the United States were prepared to take unilateral measures to push down the value of the dollar, then China's government would almost certainly look to negotiate an increase in the value of its currency. It would inevitably demand concessions in other areas, but it is difficult to imagine China insisting on maintaining a low value for its currency as a fundamental principle. After all, it is not being asked to cede territory to the United States.

Know how the game is played

At the end of the day, the U.S. Treasury has enormous ability to influence the value of the dollar. It is certainly capable of forcing the dollar down against the Chinese RMB and other important currencies, if this is a major goal of economic policy. So far, a lower-valued dollar has not made the cut. A high-valued dollar is in the interest of the financial industry and other powerful actors, and so the Treasury Department has not pursued a lower-valued dollar as major goal in negotiations with China or anyone else.

To this point, there has been little pressure to pursue a lower-valued dollar. The general public and many progressives are profoundly confused on this issue, as with so many others. We tend to view a high dollar as a point of pride, and feel it would be a humiliation if the dollar were to fall in value, or, even worse, lose its standing as the world's preeminent currency.

Deficit hawks, for example, routinely warn that a drop in the value of the dollar is a possible outcome of the failure to reduce the deficit. In fact, the standard economic models predict that a drop in the dollar is one of the outcomes of succeeding in the reduction of the deficit. This should be a desired outcome of a deficit-reduction policy, as net exports would displace government spending or consumption in generating demand.

In the case of the Treasury's power over the dollar, as with the Fed's control of short-term interest rates and its power to hold Treasury assets, progressives and the larger public are profoundly confused. There are few areas that are more

important in determining economic outcomes, yet they are hardly in the debate. This is sort of like playing football without knowing that the way to score points is to get the ball into the other team's end zone. It's hard to win when you don't know how the game is played.

Chapter 8—Trade in an Overvalued-Dollar World

Combining a U.S. trade policy that encourages firms to move production abroad and a Treasury policy that overvalues the dollar is comparable to blowing up a levee and shoving ordinary workers into the current. The overvalued dollar directly handicaps U.S.-made products in international competition by making imports relatively cheap and exports relatively expensive. Trade deficits are the result, and they appear in the sectors of the economy that are exposed to international competition.

It just so happens that the sectors that have been subjected to international competition through trade agreements — first and foremost manufacturing — disproportionately employ non-college-educated workers. The loss of relatively good-paying jobs for workers without college degrees puts downward pressure not only on the wages of manufacturing workers but on the wages of all workers without college degrees.

Alternative dollar and trade policies could relieve the pressure on wages, and state-level policy measures and even private initiatives could potentially circumvent the regressive currency and trade policies at the national level.

As a practical matter, it will be difficult politically to alter dollar policy so that the value of the dollar is brought down to a level that is consistent with balanced trade. Dollar policy is conducted outside any arena in which the public has much say.

However, it should be possible to restructure the contours of trade policy so that more than just manufacturing workers are subject to international competition. Trade can be restructured in such a way that the most highly educated and highly paid workers are forced to compete against lower-paid counterparts from the developing world, by making it easier for foreign-born professionals to work in the United States and for U.S. residents to go abroad to receive highly skilled services.

This policy shift would have a direct, positive outcome, since forcing down the wages of the most highly paid workers would reduce the costs of goods and services they produce, thereby raising the real wage to all other workers.

Bringing the threat of international competition to the most highly paid workers would also be beneficial for the future of U.S. dollar policy. A high dollar would then put downward pressure on the pay of doctors and lawyers and other high-paid workers and increase their risk of job loss. It is a safe bet that these powerful constituencies would act as important lobbies pushing for a lower-valued dollar.

In effect, subjecting these highly paid workers to international competition would also push them into the current created by the overvalued dollar. Disempowered manufacturing workers are not in a position to have much impact on the value of the dollar. But if large numbers of doctors and lawyers suddenly saw their incomes threatened by imported services made cheap by an overvalued dollar, these professionals would likely be far more effective in lobbying to bring the dollar down to a sustainable level.

A lower dollar would be an important side benefit of pushing these groups of more highly educated workers into the current where ordinary workers have been treading water for nearly three decades. While the United States is likely to be able to borrow substantial amounts of money from foreign investors long into the future, it is not going to be able to run trade deficits equal to 5 to 6 percent of GDP indefinitely. Switching back to domestic production at some point is likely to be a costly process, since in many cases the U.S. now lacks capacity to meet its domestic demand. This switch would likely involve some supply disruptions and higher prices.

However, the shift toward more domestic production will be more painful the longer it is delayed. Each year we lose more physical capacity in key areas, while unemployed workers lose their skills. Making the adjustment sooner rather than later, and bringing trade closer to balance, will help to get the economy on a sustainable growth path with less disruption.

The simple act of pushing more dollars overseas helps to increase pressure on the dollar. Other things equal, spending tens or hundreds of billions of dollars each year buying the services of foreign professionals will directly lower the value of the dollar and improve the competitive position of U.S. manufacturing.

Alternatively, countries that peg their currency against the dollar may opt to increase their purchases to offset this effect, but this will make their pegging policy even more expensive than it already is. These countries already stand to lose large amounts of money on their dollar holdings; if we start buying professional services from abroad, they will stand to lose even more. There is presumably a limit to how much money China and other developing countries are prepared to lose subsidizing the purchases of consumers in the United States.⁷¹

The economics and politics of beating up professionals

The idea of deliberately trying to reduce the wages of physicians, lawyers, and other relatively high-paid professionals may seem perverse to many progressives. After all, these people make good salaries, but they are not the really big winners from the upward redistribution of the last three decades. Besides, for many progressives some of our best friends (including economists) are in these highly paid professions.

But several important points on this issue are poorly understood. First, everyone's salary is a cost to someone else. Paying our doctors twice as much as those in other wealthy countries, which is roughly what we do, has the same impact on the living standards of non-doctors as if we imposed a tax of \$100 billion a year (about \$300 per person) to hand each doctor in the country a \$100,000 check. A policy of taxing truck drivers and school teachers so that doctors' pay can average more than \$200,000 a year would strike almost anyone as outrageous, but policies that protect U.S. doctors from effective competition with their foreign counterparts have the same effect.

As a practical matter, highly paid professionals tend to be conservative, especially on economic issues, and so measures that reduce their pay would have political as well as economic benefits. In addition to increasing the real income of nonprofessionals, lower pay for professionals would reduce their political power (less money, less power). It might also cause many of these professionals to become less conservative when they see that their lives can be made every bit as insecure as the lives of an auto or construction worker. While it is true that excessive compensation of doctors and lawyers is dwarfed by the extremes of corporate CEOs and Wall Street financiers, doctor and lawyer pay is nonetheless a substantial drain on the incomes of ordinary workers. A progressive agenda cannot support protectionist measures that continue to redistribute income upward to professionals.

Of course, measures designed to expose highly paid professionals to more competition will inevitably impact lower-paid workers within the same and related sectors. For example, a policy that facilitates medical trade (patients traveling internationally to receive medical services) will reduce demand not only for physicians but also for a wide range of workers in health care.

There is a view among many progressives that we have to structure our policies so that they don't harm anyone we care about. Yet, as a practical matter this is not possible. If we think that we have somehow protected all the affected parties, it is almost certainly because we have not fully considered the impact of the policy. For example, suppose we build a new airport or highway. These are great job-creating projects, but a new airport is likely to take away business and jobs from existing airports. Similarly, a new road will divert traffic from existing roads, and gas stations, motels, and stores along the older routes will lose sales.

Even if we create special funds to compensate affected workers, as has been proposed for coal miners in the case of restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions, the money must come from somewhere. The taxes needed to pay such displaced workers will lead to some job loss. The conservatives' argument about taxes having a negative impact on employment is generally true, though they typically overstate the size of the effect.

The point is that almost any policy that progressives want to promote will have losers among people whom we care about (the non-rich). That we choose to remain ignorant of those who lose out economically does not mean they don't exist. Ignorance is never good policy. We have to accept that there will be some losses and hardship and try to structure the economy in a way that ensures that those paying the cost will have other employment opportunities, and we need to structure the social safety net in a way that ensures those affected will be able to maintain a decent standard of living through any transition period.

If the right were as concerned about ensuring that no one in its ranks was ever harmed by its policies, it would oppose reductions in tax rates on the wealthy, since lower rates on high earners harm the accounting firms that specialize in creating tax dodges. Conservatives support policies that hurt particular segments of the business community all the time, but their expectation is that, on average, these policies will make the wealthy even wealthier. If progressives don't have

the same attitude, then we should just acknowledge that we are playing games and not doing serious politics. That strategy is guaranteed to lose.

The bizarre logic of the trade ideologues

There is a peculiar view among the “free trade” lobby that somehow workers in the United States, because it is a wealthy country, should not be doing manufacturing work. Rather, we should all be employed in professional jobs that require college or even advanced degrees.

While the desire to see U.S. workers obtain more education and move up the skill ladder is commendable, the logic in the argument is warped. The reason that the United States loses manufacturing jobs to the developing world is that, with the same machinery and infrastructure, workers in the developing world can be every bit as productive as U.S. workers. But because they live in much poorer countries, workers in the developing world are willing to work for a fraction of the pay. As a result, auto workers with pay and benefit packages reaching \$40 to \$50 an hour can find themselves competing with workers in China or Mexico who receive pay and benefits less than a tenth as much.

However, the developing countries are also generating a workforce of skilled professionals who are prepared to work for much less money than their counterparts in the United States. Many Chinese engineers, computer programmers, and architects are every bit as skilled and creative as their counterparts in the United States, but they are willing to work for salaries that are a fifth or a tenth as much because they live in a poor country.

There is no logic whatsoever in the view that somehow the United States will remain dominant in highly skilled occupations, exporting the services produced in these areas to the rest of the world while importing manufactured goods from the rest of the world. It is perhaps a racist conception to believe that workers in the developing world somehow lack the capacity to compete effectively in skilled professions with people in the United States.

This view is especially bizarre given that many of the people who fill jobs in areas like computer engineering, conventional engineering, and other technical fields in the United States are of Indian or Chinese ancestry or are immigrants from these countries. To imagine that the United States can maintain an advantage over these countries in international trade involving these occupations would require a view that these engineers and designers can be effective when working in Silicon Valley or Seattle but suddenly become 80 or 90 percent less efficient if they return to their home countries or the countries of their forebears.

The United States is destined to import major quantities of highly paid professional services in the decades ahead, just as it now imports major quantities of manufactured goods. The argument for the benefit from these imports is the same as the argument for the benefit of importing manufactured goods: it allows us to buy these items at lower prices than if we relied on domestic production. This frees up income to purchase other goods and services, making us richer and increasing growth.

This is the nearly two-hundred-year-old argument for comparative advantage. It just turns out that the comparative advantages for the United States will not be where many economists and policy analysts believe they will be. Our advantage will not be exclusively in highly skilled professional services, although we will undoubtedly continue to have a large sector of our economy devoted to these activities. It is likely that the United States will end up producing in a wide range of sectors for both its domestic market and exports. In addition to highly paid professional services, this mix will also include tourism (an important growth sector for exports) and of course manufacturing.⁷²

The outlook for currency policy

As noted in Chapter 4, the Clinton administration began to promote an overvalued dollar when Robert Rubin took over as Treasury secretary. The Treasury’s direction of the IMF bailout of the East Asian countries following the 1997 financial crisis put muscle behind this policy. While the dollar has come down considerably from the peaks hit at the end of the 1990s, it must come down much further to close the United States’ chronic trade imbalance.

Both the Bush and Obama administrations have tolerated moderate declines in the value of the dollar, but neither has opted to push for a lower dollar as a matter of policy. Given the powerful interests who benefit from an overvalued dollar, most importantly the financial industry, it is unlikely that any president will deliberately push for a lower-valued dollar in the near future.

This means that we should expect that the dollar will continue to be overvalued for some time to come. It may trend downward but, barring a major change in the constellation of power in the country, the interest groups pushing to maintain an overvalued dollar are likely to continue to get their way. This means that in designing policy, we can take an overvalued dollar as a given.

Trade policy and the employment mix

The reason that the overvalued dollar leads to an upward redistribution of income and disproportionately hurts workers without college degrees is that it has been a deliberate goal of trade policy to subject these workers to international competition. The main objective of trade deals like NAFTA is to make it as easy as possible for manufacturing firms to relocate their operations to other countries. The trade deals' success can be measured by the more than five million manufacturing jobs lost (almost one-third of total manufacturing jobs) in the last 15 years.

Large-scale national campaigns organized to counter this trade policy over the last two decades have garnered considerable grassroots support and to a large extent have won over public opinion. Polls generally show that the public opposes NAFTA-type trade deals and sees them as a threat to jobs.⁷³

These campaigns have had some success in slowing the Clinton-Bush-Obama trade agenda. Most of the bilateral trade deals have been delayed for years, and the Doha round of the World Trade Organization has now been delayed for more than a decade. To make trade deals more palatable to the U.S. public, negotiators have sought to include labor rights and other provisions that might reduce the negative impact that the deals would have on manufacturing employment in the United States and improve conditions for workers in our trading partners.

However, labor rights and worker protection provisions would have at best a marginal effect on reversing the extent to which trade policy redistributes income upward. As a result of current trade policy, U.S. manufacturers already have access to a vast pool of relatively low-paid workers in China, India, and elsewhere in the developing world. It will make little difference if they can also get access to low-cost labor in Colombia or Panama as a result of a new trade agreement.

It is almost inconceivable that this access to low-paid workers in the developing world, having once been granted, would be taken away by canceling or substantially altering existing trade pacts. And so, for the foreseeable future U.S. manufacturing workers will be forced to compete with the lowest-paid workers anywhere in the world and be disadvantaged further by an overvalued currency.

If we cannot restore protection to less-educated workers or reduce the value of the dollar to a sustainable level, we can at least redesign trade policy so as to place highly educated, high-cost workers — doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc. — into direct competition with their low-paid counterparts in the developing world. The key to such an effort would be to identify the factors that make it difficult for qualified professionals from the developing world, or even from other wealthy countries, to practice their professions in the United States. In other words, we would seek to eliminate the barriers to a free flow of professionals into the United States in the same way that NAFTA sought to eliminate the obstacles to manufacturers relocating their operations in Mexico.

These barriers take a variety of forms, immigration policy being one. Since the provision of professional services is generally facilitated by the professional being physically located in the United States, restrictions on immigration effectively serve as restrictions on free trade in these services. While restaurants and construction companies have little to fear from not following the law in hiring immigrant employees, a hospital would risk serious sanctions if it hired doctors without the appropriate visas, even if the doctors met U.S. licensing standards.⁷⁴

Getting trade agreements that allow free trade in professional services, and thereby put downward pressure on the wages of those at the top end of the labor market and reduce the cost of the services they provide to less-educated workers, will be a tough sell. The immediate obstacle is that these professionals are extremely powerful interest groups, wielding their influence both directly, through organizations like the American Medical Association and American Bar Association, which can be counted on to lobby against measures that increase the exposure of their members to international competition, and indirectly, through their control of public debate.

The categories of professional workers who are most protected from international competition overlap hugely with the categories of workers who write and report the news, staff congressional offices, and teach at colleges and universities. They are the people who shape the debate over policy issues like trade. And they use their control over this debate to prevent the notion of increased international competition in professional services from entering public debate.

In the mid-1990s there was a debate over efforts to tighten restrictions on the number of foreign medical residents entering the United States. The two sides in the debate were the physicians' organizations, who contended that foreign-born doctors were driving down the wages of doctors born in the United States, and community health groups, who argued that foreign-born doctors were serving underserved areas like rural areas, places where native-born doctors did not want to practice.⁷⁵

Remarkably, no one was cited in this debate who gave the standard economists' argument that increasing the number of qualified foreign-born doctors in the country would drive down the wages of native-born doctors. This outcome would be good for the economy, since it would reduce the cost of medical care to patients, but the argument was not on the radar screens of the people reporting on the issue because the idea that reducing the wages of doctors could be positive is simply an alien notion.

While reporters and their editors understand completely how reducing the wages of retail clerks, auto workers, and school teachers can provide savings to consumers or taxpayers, they have difficulty applying the same logic to the pay of highly educated professionals. This disconnect likely stems from the fact that they are closely connected and identify with these professionals. Probably someone in their immediate family is a highly paid professional. They live in the same neighborhoods as doctors and lawyers; their kids go to school with the children of doctors and lawyers. For reporters and editors, highly paid professionals are friends and relatives, not people to be viewed as a cost of production.

The extent to which this class controls public debate makes it difficult to organize efforts to change policy. When almost every written and broadcast news story conceals the ways in which policy is designed to transfer income from ordinary workers to the most highly paid professionals, it raises the policy bar considerably, and it makes it difficult for most of us to even conceptualize what it is taking place.

Of course, consumers also have personal relationships with professionals. Patients usually like their doctors; otherwise they would get a different doctor if they had the option. Most patients do not want to force their doctors to take a big cut in pay, especially since patients generally are not covering the bulk of the cost themselves, but instead have it covered by a private insurer or the government.

Patients might view the matter differently if they were told that an average family of four is effectively paying a tax of \$1,200 a year to allow doctors in the United States to enjoy higher living standards than doctors in other wealthy countries.⁷⁶ The savings from eliminating these excess physician salaries far outweigh the revenue to be gained from ending the Bush tax cuts on the wealthy.

It is essential that people understand that the income of professionals is a cost to them, and that immigration and trade policies that restrict access to lower-cost alternatives is government intervention in the market. Conservatives understand fully that the pay of an ordinary worker is money out of their pockets, which is why they are so eager to use the levers of government to reduce it. However, few progressives seem to recognize the symmetry in the relationship: the money that goes to high-income individuals is money out of everyone else's pocket. This should be about as simple as it gets but, due to the bias in policy discussions, we rarely hear this obvious point.

Economists are almost completely useless in this respect because, like reporters and news editors, they belong to the same class of highly paid professionals. As a result, they bristle at the idea that anyone would apply trade theory to educated, accomplished people like themselves.⁷⁷

Economists have also been known to put forward the "Mexican Avocado Theory of International Trade." Under this theory, going to the grocery store and finding an avocado that was grown in Mexico is proof that the United States has free trade in agricultural products. This is obviously an absurd extrapolation. The United States has a wide range of restrictions on importing agricultural products; the fact that it is still possible to buy a Mexican avocado proves nothing. Yet economists often apply this theory to convince themselves that we have free trade in professional services. For example, when an economist encounters a professional who is foreign born (e.g., the family's physician or the economist in the next office), the economist assumes there are no restrictions on foreign-born professions working in the United States.

As a practical matter, almost no trade barrier ever leads to an absolute prohibition on trade. The point of barriers is that they raise the cost of importing items, causing us to import less of the protected item. The barriers to foreign-born professionals working in the United States do not completely exclude them from working in the United States; they simply make it more difficult than necessary. A certain number of intelligent hard-working foreigners will overcome these barriers in order to take advantage of the better conditions enjoyed by professionals in the United States than in their home

countries. However, the more typical foreign-born professional may not be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices. This leads to losses both for them and for consumers in the United States.

An economist once said to me, for the purpose of dismissing the notion that there were barriers preventing foreign-born economists from working in the United States, that "all the best economists I know were born in India." While this might well have been true, if the United States actually had free trade for economists then it is likely that the vast majority of the mediocre economists he knew would also have been born in India. It's not surprising that some of the best economists in India have been able to overcome the barriers to working in the United States. But if we actually had free trade, the typical economist in India would have the opportunity to work here too.

One of the misleading arguments often used to deny the existence of protectionist barriers that artificially inflate the salaries of professionals is to claim that foreign-born professionals are typically not trained to U.S. standards. This may be true in many cases, but it raises a chicken-and-egg question. If foreign-born professionals are largely excluded from working as professionals in the United States, why would they bother to train to U.S. standards? They would train to meet the standards in their home country. But if they knew there were an open door, offering the same opportunities as a professional born in New York or Los Angeles, then a huge number of foreign-born professionals would train to these standards. This is where trade agreements like NAFTA come in.

If the United States had wanted to open up professional services like medical care and the legal profession in the same way that it opened up trade in manufacturing goods, it would have written up clear guidelines for the standards that Mexican doctors and lawyers would have to meet in order to have free access to practicing their professions in the United States. The agreement also would have established testing systems within Mexico (by U.S.-certified testers) that would allow Mexican professionals the convenience of obtaining the necessary certification in their home country before committing themselves to the expense and disruption of moving.

Once they obtained their certification, Mexican professionals would have the same opportunity to practice their profession in the United States as native-born professionals.⁷⁸ This would be a situation where both the immigrant professionals and U.S. consumers come out as winners: the professionals would view themselves as better off, and the influx of a large number of qualified Mexican professionals would reduce the amount that people in the United States would have to spend on health care, legal fees, and a variety of other services.

It will be important to structure this policy so that Mexico also benefits from having its professionals work in the United States. A tax on these professionals' wages that was repatriated to Mexico for the first 10 years would likely total enough money to train several professionals for each one who goes to work in the United States. This arrangement can help to ensure that Mexico doesn't suffer a shortage of doctors or other skilled professionals because they have all gone to work in the United States.

Getting around federal trade policy

The irony of free trade is that the market actually favors progressive outcomes. If the barriers that protect the most highly paid professionals can be weakened or eliminated, the bulk of the population will benefit. Essentially, progressives should want a free market.

While it is simple to envision policy changes that would ensure that trade benefits the bulk of the population rather than simply redistributing income upward, as a practical matter such policies have no chance in Washington for the foreseeable future. There is no organized constituency arguing for a forward-thinking trade policy that would benefit those at the middle and bottom, and the debate is completely controlled by people who benefit from the status quo.

However, there are arenas beyond Washington that might be more favorable.

One place where the battle could be contested is at the level of state licensing. States license doctors, lawyers, and most other professionals. While the point of licensing is ostensibly to ensure the quality of the services being provided and protect patients and other consumers, in reality professional groups use the process to protect their incomes. (Ask your state medical board how many doctors have lost their licenses because of malpractice over the last decade.)

It would be relatively easy to open up the licensing process to allow a far wider range of people to be admitted into the professions while still ensuring quality standards. For example, allowing doctors who have been licensed in countries with comparable standards to automatically be licensed in a given state could potentially give many more doctors the opportunity to practice in the state. Major hospitals, clinics, and other employers of large numbers of doctors ought to be

natural allies in such a campaign, and insurers should welcome the opportunity to pay lower reimbursement schedules to doctors and other highly paid professionals.⁷⁹

Businesses looking for attorneys and universities seeking teachers ought to welcome the opportunity to hire foreign lawyers and foreign professors who will work at much lower wages than the current workforce.

Outsourcing offers another means to take advantage of lower-cost professional services — just ask the manufacturers who have used outsourcing to employ workers at lower wages. In the case of medical care, the obvious mechanism is medical trade.⁸⁰ While it would not pay to go abroad for routine medical procedures (except for people living near the Canadian or Mexican borders), for more complex medical procedures, the savings can be so large as to cover travel expenses and an extended stay overseas for patients and their family members.

Table 8-1 compares the price of major medical procedures in India, Thailand, and Singapore with the price in the United States. The prices shown are taken from modern hospitals that have state-of-the-art medical technology and doctors who are trained to Western standards. There is no reason to believe that using these facilities would compromise the quality of the care received by the patient, although traveling halfway around the world to receive medical care is obviously a major inconvenience.

Table 8-1

Comparative costs of medical procedures, by country				
Procedure	U.S.	India	Thailand	Singapore
Heart valve replacement	\$160,000	\$9,000	\$10,000	\$12,500
Heart bypass	\$130,000	\$10,000	\$11,000	\$18,500
Spinal fusion	\$62,000	\$5,500	\$7,000	\$9,000
Angioplasty	\$57,000	\$11,000	\$13,000	\$13,000
Hip replacement	\$43,000	\$9,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Knee replacement	\$40,000	\$8,500	\$10,000	\$13,000
Hysterectomy	\$20,000	\$3,000	\$4,500	\$6,000
AMA-OMSS Governing Council (2007).				

While no one should be forced to go overseas to get care (unfortunately, some uninsured are already in this situation), insurers could nevertheless provide incentives to patients to get their treatment at a lower-cost facility overseas. By sharing the savings, insurers could vastly increase the number of people seeking lower-cost care abroad. If an insurer can save \$110,000 when a patient receives a heart bypass operation in Singapore rather than the United States, it could share perhaps \$50,000 of the savings with the patient. Both come out ahead.

Of course, ensuring the quality of care in facilities in other countries would be vital. An international licensing organization that could certify the quality of facilities in foreign countries could be valuable in this respect. There would also be the need for clear legal rules to allow patients redress in the event of malpractice. Ideally, the host countries would tax medical trade and use the revenue to build up their health care systems to the benefit of their own populations.

State and local governments can advance the growth of medical trade by taking the lead themselves. They can offer insurance plans to their own workers that allow patients to share in the savings from having major medical procedures performed in overseas facilities. They can also secure substantial savings by allowing for foreign medical care in state Medicaid programs. If governmental units take the lead, private-sector employers are likely to follow. Also, large governmental units may be better situated than most private companies to ensure that high-quality care is provided to the first large groups of patients that go overseas for medical care.

State governments can carry through most of the legal and regulatory changes necessary to facilitate large-scale medical trade, and as the industry gained size it would reduce demand for medical services within the United States. Salaries within the industry, especially among the most highly paid professionals, would fall,⁸¹ as would the cost of health care.

Traveling overseas for medical care may seem a perverse alternative to simply fixing the domestic health care system in the United States. It is. But as the debate over President Obama's health care reform bill made clear, there is no realistic prospect of fixing the domestic health care system given the current distribution of power in the United States.

From the beginning, the Obama administration negotiated deals with most of the major interest groups in the industry: the pharmaceutical companies, the insurance companies, and the physicians' lobbies. This strategy ensured that the final product would not be a plan that substantially reduced the profits/incomes of any of the big actors. And if the incomes of the big actors are not reduced, then health care will eventually be unaffordable to individuals and the government.

It's possible to criticize the Obama administration's approach as a moral failure, but this is irrelevant. Officials in high office are always going to respond first and foremost to political concerns. President Obama is much less likely to face serious political consequences from having pushed a health care plan that depended on deals with the major interest groups in the industry than he would have had he pushed a plan that threatened these groups' incomes.

By contrast, President Obama would have faced serious political risks had he taken the more progressive route. Unless advocates of more progressive health care reform can bring some symmetry to the political calculus, there is little hope that President Obama or any other elected official in a position to effect change will go the progressive route.

It is nevertheless difficult to envision a scenario in which the political balance moves much in a progressive direction on this issue in the foreseeable future. If this is the case, then fixing the domestic health care system within the current political framework is not a viable path. There have to be ways to alter the structure of the debate so that more extensive reform becomes possible.

The experience of the U.S. auto industry provides an interesting, if painful, lesson in this respect. The control of the U.S. auto market by the Big Three automakers through the late 1970s allowed for secure employment with good wages and benefits for a large group of workers with limited education. Moreover, the factories provided a solid tax base for the governments where auto plants were located. Several generations of auto workers were able to attain a comfortable middle-class status. They were able to raise their children in decent neighborhoods, send them to good schools, and pay for their college.

The downside of this picture is that the limited competition among the Big Three meant that the industry became complacent. It produced cars of mediocre quality, and it was slow to innovate. Foreign competition changed that. This first became a major issue for the auto industry in the early 1980s, when high oil prices sent consumers to look for more fuel-efficient imports. The high dollar of the mid-1980s provided a large cost advantage to imports, which placed further pressure on the domestic manufacturers.

The pressure from import competition continued to build through the 1990s and into the last decade, eventually leading to the bankruptcy of General Motors and Chrysler. As a result of these bankruptcies and the continuing pressure on industry profits, the United Auto Workers (UAW) accepted large cuts in pay and benefits. The new starting wage for union auto workers under the most recent contract is just \$14 per hour, an amount that would certainly not provide sufficient income to maintain a middle-class lifestyle and put children through college.

Gains in living standards that the UAW built up over many decades were wiped out when the survival of the domestic industry was called into question. However, it is important to recognize that this victory over the auto workers was not the result of a head-on confrontation. Rather, it was the result of several decades in which their position was eroded by the growing presence of foreign manufacturers with lower-cost structures.

The same sort of structures can be put in place to weaken the power of the domestic health care industry. Buying lower-cost health care services elsewhere will gradually erode demand for services from domestic health care providers in the same way as the growing presence of foreign manufacturers in the U.S. market eroded the demand for U.S. cars. However the big losers in this case will be highly paid physicians, not middle-income workers.

A side benefit of people taking advantage of lower-cost health care in other countries is that it would undermine much of the mythology that has grown around the U.S. health care system. Politicians who make grand statements about how the United States has the best health care system in the world should be greeted with howls of laughter, because it is

obviously untrue. Yet they tend to get away with it. If a substantial portion of the population had direct experience with the health care systems in other countries, politicians would have to choose their words more carefully.

While state governments can attempt to remove barriers to private insurers taking advantage of other countries' health systems, there is a relatively simple measure that could be implemented at the national level. The federal government could allow Medicare beneficiaries to buy into the health care systems of countries with longer life expectancies than the United States. Per-person health care costs in other wealthy countries average less than half as much as in the United States. In fact, the bulk of the long-term deficit problem at the center of budget debates stems from the fact that this enormous gap in per-person health care costs is projected to grow over time.

This big cost difference means that there are enormous potential savings from allowing Medicare beneficiaries to receive their care in Canada, Germany, or other wealthy countries rather than in the United States. If Medicare beneficiaries, and dual beneficiaries of Medicare and Medicaid got their care in Canada and split the savings with the government, the gains to beneficiaries would easily dwarf the average Social Security benefit in the decades ahead, according to the government's projections. Splitting the savings would both provide beneficiaries with a substantial boost to their retirement income and allow the government to address its deficit.⁸²

Allowing for international Medicare vouchers does require action from Congress, which is an enormous obstacle. However, the usual conservative arguments against any policy that might benefit ordinary working-class people at the expense of the wealthy hold no water in this case. The proposal does nothing to disrupt the existing system of health care in the United States. Plus, it saves the government money and gives people a choice — exactly the sort of policy that any honest conservative would favor. The only real argument against the policy is that domestic medical and pharmaceutical industries would lose money. In other words, conservatives' inevitable opposition to the policy will illuminate the fact that the right's goals have nothing to do with small government or promoting the market and everything to do with redistributing income upward.

Free trade in professions other than medical care

It should be easy to make progress toward free trade in highly paid professions beyond medical care and dentistry, since a smaller share of most others' work is likely to be location-specific. To a substantial extent, the transfer of services overseas is already taking place. In the case of software design, the United States is already a large net importer of software from India.⁸³ The deficit is virtually certain to grow rapidly in the years ahead, with designers in the United States still receiving pay packages 5-10 times greater than their counterparts in India. And it's far cheaper to send a computer program from India to the United States than to ship a car from the other side of the world.

The story is similar in engineering. A vast pool of low-cost engineering labor in India and China is willing to work for wages that are far lower than those that engineers receive in the United States, and so governments and private corporations will be able to save large sums by substituting engineers in these countries for engineers in the United States. The same is true for architects, biomedical researchers, and workers in most other professional and technical fields.

Outsourcing top management

It is not just highly paid professionals who work for less in other countries than they do in the United States. The CEOs and other top executives of major corporations in Europe and Asia generally receive much lower pay — to the tune of millions of dollars each — than do American executives.

This pay gap suggests the possibility of large gains to the U.S. economy and to groups of workers who are not in top corporate management from taking advantage of lower-paid top management at foreign companies wherever possible. The best recent example is the bailout of Chrysler, which saved the jobs of tens of thousands of manufacturing workers both at Chrysler itself and in its chain of suppliers. Chrysler's rescue was accomplished in part by outsourcing top management and engineering roles to Fiat, an Italian car manufacturer.

U.S.-based companies have been telling the public for years that their first obligation is to their bottom lines and not to the U.S. economy. This may not be entirely true — they seem to be operating to serve the interests of top management first and foremost — but corporate managers are being truthful when they tell the public that they should not be expected to operate in the national interest.

But on the flip side, the public has no patriotic obligation to favor contracts with U.S.-based companies simply because the companies have a headquarters in the United States. Where foreign-based companies like Fiat can offer lower costs, at least in part because their executives are lining their pockets much less amply at the company's expense, progressives should jump at the opportunity to bring them on board. And if U.S.-based companies with bloated executive compensation packages are frozen out of public contracts at the local, state, and federal level, it will be a good thing. We should care that work is done in the United States, not whether we support an overpaid U.S.-based CEO.

Chapter 9—Reining in Finance

The financial sector serves an essential economic purpose by channeling money from savers to those who want to borrow, whether to buy a home, start a business, or pay for a college education. An efficient, well-run financial sector accomplishes these tasks with the fewest possible resources, meaning that it employs a small share of the workforce and pays salaries comparable to those earned elsewhere in the economy.

This is not the financial sector that the United States has today. Our financial sector is hugely bloated, and it is a massive source of waste in the economy. Measured as a share of private-sector GDP, the financial sector more than quadrupled between 1975 and 2009.⁸⁴ The enormous expansion would be justifiable if it resulted in a better allocation of capital, so that promising start-ups, say, could more easily raise funds than they could in the 1960s. A better allocation of capital would also mean that hare-brained schemes like Pets.com or Webvan would be less likely to receive funding today than in prior decades. But neither seems to be the case, or at least not obviously enough to justify the quadrupling of the sector as a share of GDP. Moreover, productivity growth, the most direct measure of the rate of innovation, was more rapid in the 1950s and 1960s than in the last two decades.

Another indication that the economy was being well-served by its booming financial sector would be that people felt more secure in their savings than they did four decades ago. Here again, the sector falls short. Not only have we experienced extraordinary volatility in the stock and housing markets over the last 15 years, but we are also less secure because we are far less likely today to have defined-benefit pensions at our workplaces. In the 1960s and 1970s, roughly half of all private-sector workers had a defined-benefit pension; by 2011 the share was less than 20 percent and falling.

The financial sector thrives on a huge amount of economic rent, which means it makes money through tax and regulatory arbitrage that provides no real benefit to society. For example, it became common in the 1980s and 1990s for government agencies like transit departments to sell off equipment, such as buses and subway cars, to private companies, and then lease it back. The logic of these deals is that the private company can take the depreciation on the equipment as a tax write-off, whereas as the state or local government agency cannot. The value of the tax break gets split between the company buying the equipment and the governmental agency selling it, and the bank or insurance company that worked out the deal gets a cut.

This sale/leaseback arrangement engineered a way for the federal government to subsidize the purchase of capital equipment through a tax benefit. This might be good policy, but it would be much more efficient if the law were simply changed to allow governments to take the tax deduction directly instead of going through this unnecessarily elaborate routine.

A similar scam, the "dead peasant" insurance policy, gained prominence when it was featured in Michael Moore's film, "Capitalism: A Love Story." A dead peasant policy is insurance purchased by a company on the lives of its lower-level employees. Wal-Mart reportedly purchased life insurance policies on 350,000 of its workers. Under these policies the company is the beneficiary and the employees generally do not even know that a policy has been taken out on their behalf. In fact, the relatives of employees typically will not know of the policy even after their family member has died.

Moore focused on the morbid nature of the policies — companies profit from the death of employees who never even knew they were insured. However, the fuller story is even more disturbing. Wal-Mart and other companies taking out dead peasant policies do not directly profit from the policies, in the sense that Aetna or some other major insurer is paying them back more in benefits than they paid in premiums. Insurers are not charities, or dummies.

Rather, the benefit is that dead peasant policies allow companies to control the timing of their earnings. If a company wants to show lower profits in 2011 for tax purposes or just smooth a growth rate, the dead peasant policy can be the perfect tool. The payment on 30,000 insurance policies in 2011 will be a deduction from profits in 2011. With a relatively large pool of insured workers, Wal-Mart can be reasonably confident of the rate at which they will die, and so it can count on collecting benefits that will boost profits in future years.

The result is that the dead peasant policy is in effect another financial instrument that allows corporations to adjust earnings in ways that minimize their tax liability.⁸⁵ And of course some brilliant finance people thought this one up, making themselves and their employer large amounts of money as a result. This is the sort of activity that has quadrupled the financial sector's share of the economy. It is not about allocating capital to its best uses or making savings more secure, it's about finding clever ways to rip off taxpayers, productive businesses, and other actors. The economy will benefit from having less of this sort of inefficient rent-seeking behavior. While this may have seemed like a radical assessment a decade ago, even the IMF now recognizes that there are substantial rents in the financial sector and that governments should adopt policies to reduce the sector's size.⁸⁶

Tremendous waste in the financial sector is not the only justification for reducing its size. The sector has also been a major cause of instability. It fueled both the stock and housing bubbles, and restructuring it to make it less bubble-prone would be a huge boost to the economy.

Finally, the financial sector is potentially harmful simply because of its outsized political influence, which it marshals to support policies that stand in direct opposition to the interests of the bulk of the population. It favors very low inflation, even at the cost of higher unemployment, and prefers a high dollar so that it can be a bigger actor in international finance. In contrast, for workers a high dollar is a major subsidy to their foreign competitors.

For these reasons, reducing the size of the financial sector is both good economics and good politics. A smaller financial sector that is more directly focused on its economic function should be at or near the top of every progressive's agenda.

While it is good politics and good economics, what it is not is a battle between those wanting regulation and those wanting an unfettered market. The financial sector in its current form is heavily dependent on the government for its survival. The insurance provided by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and comparable government insurers is certainly not a market mechanism, and it can subsidize bank excesses if it is given without proper regulation.⁸⁷ In addition, banks enjoy the back-up liquidity guarantees provided by the Federal Reserve Board.

The largest banks also have the implicit support of the government's too-big-to-fail policy. Virtually no one believes that the government would allow J.P. Morgan or Goldman Sachs to simply go bankrupt. As a result, these huge banks are able to borrow funds at a lower cost than their smaller rivals, an arrangement that amounts to a substantial subsidy from the government to these large banks.⁸⁸

The elimination of these subsidies would be a genuine free-market approach, but the financial industry wants to maintain its insurance while removing restrictions that limit the risk to taxpayers. The banks' efforts do not represent a debate between those advocating an unfettered market and those who want government regulation. This is an argument with an industry that wants the taxpayers to provide it insurance but doesn't want to have to pay for the insurance and doesn't want to have any restrictions that prevent it from raising the risk to taxpayers. In other words, the industry wants to set up a fireworks factory in its basement and not even pay the standard homeowners' insurance rate.

While there was considerable rhetoric about reforming the financial sector and reining in its abuses following the collapse of the housing bubble and the ensuing financial crisis, little about the industry has changed as a result of the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill. The industry is still dominated by too-big-to-fail institutions that are now bigger than ever as a result of crisis-induced mergers.

In principle, regulators have expanded resolution authority that gives them a non-bankruptcy alternative to address a Lehman or AIG-type situation in which a systemically important nonbank financial institution faces collapse. However, few believe that regulators would use resolution authority to allow a Goldman Sachs liquidation that left its uninsured creditors out in the cold. For this reason, the country's largest banks continue to be able to borrow at much lower interest rates than their smaller competitors. The basic story is simple: it's cheaper to borrow when the government co-signs your loans.

The progressive agenda on finance

In dealing with the financial industry progressives would do well to think like economists. We need the financial industry to connect borrowers with lenders in an efficient way, meaning that the industry uses as few resources as possible. A financial sector that employs few people is better than a financial sector that employs many people, at least if the smaller sector is as effective at connecting lenders and borrowers as the larger sector. An economy is efficient when it employs its resources in productive tasks. We do not need people shuffling financial assets back and forth in make-work projects.

Breaking up the big banks is a necessary part of financial reform for both political and economic reasons. As noted above, treating an institution as too-big-to-fail effectively amounts to a government subsidy to its top executives and shareholders. It is difficult to see any rationale for providing such a subsidy.

However, big banks are also politically powerful banks. The major Wall Street financial institutions have an extensive network of connections with the Treasury and the White House and key members of Congress — regardless of which party is in power — and they use these connections to defeat or dilute regulatory efforts that threaten their profitability. While other countries may have a tradition of an independent civil service that can effectively regulate large financial institutions, the United States does not. There is little reason to believe that regulators will be any more successful at standing up to the large banks in the future than they have been in the past.

The technical issues associated with breaking up large banks are not nearly as difficult as the banks' defenders have argued. The government does not actually have to break up the banks; it just has to tell the banks to break themselves up. This point is important because it would undoubtedly be difficult for regulators to figure out how to best disassemble a J.P. Morgan or Bank of America into manageable chunks.

However, there is no reason for regulators to ever be in that position. They need only set size limits to be reached by specific dates, with severe penalties for failing to meet the deadlines. For example, each of the six large banks could be given a deadline by which time it must have assets of less than \$1 trillion, another deadline for getting its assets under \$800 billion, a third for getting under \$600 billion, etc. The bank would then face a penalty in the form of a tax on the assets it holds over the limit for the period of time it holds them. The top executives of these banks know the companies they manage and they know how to best divide the companies in a way that maximizes the value to shareholders.

In addition to reducing the size of the largest banks, we also need to re-introduce a Glass-Steagall-type separation between insured banking activities and speculative transactions. The public interest requires that we ensure the soundness of the banks that maintain the system of payments, and this is why we have deposit insurance and the protections afforded by the Fed and the FDIC. There is no comparable interest in protecting institutions like investment banks and hedge funds that are engaged in more speculative activities, and so banks that benefit from deposit insurance should not be engaged in such activity.

This wall between banking and speculation was the intention behind the Volcker Rule that was included in the Dodd-Frank financial reform law of 2010. The Volcker Rule prohibits insured banks from trading on their own accounts. While this is consistent with the original intention of Glass-Steagall, it is not clear that it will be possible to enforce a narrow restriction like the Volcker Rule as opposed to a broader Glass-Steagall prohibition on combining commercial and investment banks.

The enforcement problem stems from defining trading on a bank's own account as opposed to trading on behalf of clients. Banks that act as market makers in stocks and other assets will inevitably take positions for periods of time, buying an asset from clients who want to sell and arranging the purchase of an asset to fill orders for customers. Distinguishing trades that are necessary to this market-making role from trades transacted by the bank for its own gain will not be an easy job for regulators.

The public will always be at a disadvantage in this situation because the financial industry will heavily influence the rules set by regulators. The design of these sorts of rules requires specialized expertise in the nuts and bolts of the financial industry. Few people outside of the financial industry have this expertise. Since there are potentially tens of billions in profits at stake in the specifics of these rules, the industry is prepared to spend substantial sums to ensure that they are written in a way that is not overly restrictive. Comparable expertise on the other side is rare, and this creates a strong bias for regulators to adopt an industry-friendly position.

For this reason, a clear separation between conventional banking and investment banking, like the one imposed by Glass-Steagall, may be the only effective way to keep banks with insured deposits from taking excessive risks. It is worth noting that the repeal of Glass-Steagall did not contribute in any major way to the inflation of the housing bubble or the subsequent financial crisis. Most of the major investment banks did buy up commercial bank subsidiaries that fed them mortgages for securitization, but this was a minor part of the story. Investment banks acquired the vast majority of the junk loans they securitized during this period on the open market.

However, just because allowing banks with government-insured deposits to engage in speculative activity did not cause the last crisis does not mean it will not cause the next one. There is no obvious reason that a bank that receives

government insurance for a substantial portion of its operations should be allowed to take excessive risks in its other operations. The banks argue that they will keep the insured and speculative portions of their operations strictly separate. If this is so, then why operate them both? There are no economies of scale or scope achieved by bringing them together under a single corporate roof.

Even the supposed convenience of providing customers with one-stop shopping, where they can bank, buy insurance, and invest in the stock market, does not hold water on closer inspection. If consumers really want to be able to conduct business in all three areas at the same time, there is nothing to prevent an independent insurer or brokerage house from sharing a building with a bank.

Securitization and mortgage mayhem

The collapse of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac has left the future of housing finance wide open. Unfortunately, the solutions on the table are more likely to enrich the financial industry than promote homeownership.

Before considering the prospects for the reform of Fannie and Freddie, it is worth discussing the benefits of homeownership. Over the last seven decades, politicians from both parties have pushed homeownership as a ticket to the middle class. This view of homeownership ignores much evidence and shows sloppy thinking.

First, homeownership involves large transaction costs. The combination of realtors' fees, mortgage origination fees, inspection fees, and other costs associated with buying and selling a home are likely to push the combined purchase and sale costs to close to 10 percent of the home's price, or \$20,000 on a \$200,000 home. Averaged over a long period these costs will diminish, but for someone who lives in a home for five years or less they loom large. This means that anyone who is not in a stable employment or family situation in which they can expect to stay in the same place for five years or more would be best advised not to buy a home.

A second point is that home prices on average only rise with the overall rate of inflation. This means that owning a home is not necessarily a good investment. A standard 30-year fixed-rate mortgage is one way to effectively force people to save, since mortgage holders accumulate equity over time. However, other mechanisms for savings can offer higher returns. In many cases, people would be better off renting and placing money in a retirement fund than being a homeowner.

Third, homeownership can be a risky investment. This was not only true during the housing bubble, which made a home purchase an almost guaranteed losing investment at its peak, but also more generally. While in some areas home prices rise substantially more than inflation, in others they fall far behind inflation.

Furthermore, the prospect for home prices in many cases is likely to be highly correlated with the area's employment prospects. For example, home prices in Detroit have followed the ups and downs of the auto industry. The same is true for many other areas where a single industry or even a single employer dominates a city's economy. This creates a situation in which the value of a worker's major asset, his or her home, is dependent on the same forces that determine the health of the worker's employer.

Having your job and your home's value tied to the same thing is like putting all your retirement savings into the stock of the company you work for. If the company takes a downturn, you run the risk of losing both your job and most of your savings. This is roughly the situation faced by tens of thousands of unemployed homeowners in the Detroit area and hundreds of thousands around the country. They have lost their jobs and are also faced with the prospect of selling their homes at large losses.

While the specific situations that many workers find themselves in may have been unpredictable, the risk was 100 percent predictable. The idea that homeownership is somehow a secure investment immune to the ups and downs of the economy is nonsense. The fact that the downs are associated with periods of unemployment makes the risks even greater.

In spite of these cautions, one can still argue that the government has an interest in promoting homeownership as a way to provide secure housing and a mechanism for savings. However, this does not mean that homeownership is a sure ticket to the middle class or that more homeownership is always better than less.

The most obvious way that the government subsidizes homeownership is through the mortgage interest deduction. However, the deduction is an inefficient mechanism for helping low- and middle- income people buy homes because it is

worth less to families in lower income brackets, many of whom do not even itemize their deductions. The overwhelming majority of the benefit goes to the upper-middle class and the wealthy. A simple way to increase the subsidy to lower-income families would be to change the deduction into a refundable tax credit of some amount (e.g., 15 percent). The additional cost could be covered by reducing the availability of the subsidy for higher-income homeowners. In any case, a credit for mortgage interest can be used to make the subsidy as large as is desired.

This point is important in the context of restructuring Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, because having a government role in the mortgage financing process effectively amounts to a second source of subsidy to homeownership. It is not clear why it is necessary to create a second channel through which the government subsidizes homeownership. Fannie Mae's establishment in 1937 created a secondary market for mortgages, which ensured that banks in different regions could secure the necessary capital to issue new loans even if they had a large stock of mortgages. Fannie Mae was an important innovation that played a major role in promoting ownership in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

However, with a much more developed national financial system there is no obvious reason that the government needs to create a secondary mortgage market. Banks can both sell mortgages without government guarantees and tap the national (as opposed to regional) credit market to obtain additional deposits if they find themselves lacking money to lend.

In this context current proposals to recreate a Fannie/Freddie type system that would have the government guarantee mortgage-backed securities seem to be more a subsidy to the financial industry than to homeowners.⁸⁹ If the goal is to provide additional subsidies to low- and moderate-income homeowners, then a sizable tax credit for mortgage interest ought to do the trick. There is no reason to create a separate system of finance.

Put another way, a government guarantee of mortgage-backed securities is most directly a government subsidy to securitization and only very indirectly a subsidy of homeownership, and certainly not a subsidy that progressives should support.⁹⁰ A structure of securitization that arises through the workings of the market might be a good way to allocate capital, but creating such a structure should not be the explicit goal of government policy. There may be a public interest in subsidizing home ownership, but there is no public interest in subsidizing mortgage securitization.

Universal retirement accounts

Another way in which to downsize the financial sector is to reduce the fees associated with its management of 401(k)s and other types of retirement savings accounts. These fees average more than 1.0 percent of the assets held in the accounts and in many cases exceed 1.5 percent. This is a huge drain on workers' savings, and the money paid out in fees comes directly out of the return in these accounts. Over 30 years, a 1.0 percent annual fee will reduce total returns by almost 25 percent. If the fees average 1.5 percent, the reduction will be 35 percent. In addition, the financial industry typically charges fees of around 10 percent for turning an accumulation into an annuity when a worker retires.⁹¹

These sorts of fees are pure waste. The fees for the federal employee Thrift Savings Plan average less than 0.15 percent of the money in the accounts. Well-run private plans, like Vanguard, keep their fees under 0.25 percent of account balances. If the average savings on a well-run plan is equal to 0.85 percent of the money in the funds, the cumulative savings over the course of a decade could be more than \$900 billion.

The government could offer a major service by making a version of the Thrift Savings Plan available as an option to every worker in the country.⁹² This sort of voluntary system can also be put in place at the state level. Several states were close to implementing such a plan before the recession refocused policy makers' attention on other issues and made even the modest seed money needed for starting such a system unaffordable. (Once a plan is up and running, it would be fully paid for from fees charged to participants.)

There is widespread recognition across the political spectrum of the need to increase retirement savings,⁹³ and there is a great deal of evidence that a simple government-managed retirement account system can be more efficient than privately managed 401(k)s or IRAs. Why not give people the choice and let them decide for themselves?

The management of public pension funds

The financial industry makes a considerable sum from managing public pension funds, but there is good reason to question whether the industry is always acting in the best interests of the pension funds for which it works. For example, New York financier Steven Rattner, who also served a stint in the Obama administration overseeing the auto bailouts,

agreed to pay a \$10 million fine to end a suit charging that he made payoffs to gain oversight of \$150 million in New York State pension funds.⁹⁴

If investment fund managers are prepared to make payoffs to land contracts, then it is a safe bet that the state is not getting the best deal for managing its pension fund assets. This is a case where a little bit of transparency might go a long way. It should be possible to go to a pension fund website and see the exact terms of every management contract the fund signed, including the representatives of the fund who approved the contract. The pension fund should also show the returns, both before and after fees, of any money managed by private investors. Compiling and posting this information on the web every six months or each year should involve no more than a few hours of clerical work. Once it was posted anyone should be able to recognize any contracts that appear to be excessive or any returns that substantially underperform the market. Pension fund managers with a habit of directing investments to underperforming assets could be easily identified by any interested beneficiary or reporter.

Public postings may not completely prevent kickback schemes and sleazy deals, but the information should make such scams considerably more difficult to perpetuate. Furthermore, the cost is trivial, so there is no obvious reason for pension funds not to follow this practice.

Financial speculation tax

Another tool for downsizing the financial industry is a financial speculation tax of the sort the United Kingdom currently imposes on stock trades. This tax is a modest fee on trading stocks, bonds, options, futures, and other derivative instruments. It is both a revenue-raising measure and a way to discourage excessive speculation by raising its cost.

The sorts of fees involved with these trades would have almost no impact on normal financial activity. For example, the fee on stock trades in the United Kingdom is 0.5 percent on the purchase side of each trade. Since there has been a sharp reduction in trading costs over the last three decades as a result of computerization, a fee of this size would just raise trading costs back to their level of the mid-1980s, a time when the United States and the world had well-developed financial markets.

The potential revenue is substantial. The U.K. raises an amount that is close to 0.2 percent of its GDP (about 3 billion pounds per year, or the equivalent to about \$30 billion a year in the United States) from just taxing stock trades. A tax applied to a broad range of assets should raise close to 1.0 percent of GDP, or about \$150 billion a year in the United States and \$1.8 trillion over the course of a decade. These sums dwarf the revenue from eliminating the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy.

This money would come almost entirely at the expense of the financial industry as opposed to actors in the productive economy. Several studies have shown that trading is very responsive to changes in costs, which means that if a tax raised costs, the volume of trading would fall sharply. In other words, the higher cost per trade (including the tax) would be offset for most people by a reduced volume of trading. For example, investors with \$100,000 in a 401(k) who made \$20,000 in trades every year before the imposition of a tax might reduce the volume of their trading to \$10,000 a year after the tax. If the tax doubled the cost of the trade, then they would be spending no more on trading after the tax was imposed than they did before.

The only loser in this story is the financial industry. Money that had been going to the industry in fees would instead be collected by the government in taxes. The end result will be a smaller, more efficient financial industry, exactly what any good economist should want.

While a financial speculation tax would most likely have to be implemented at the national level, states could implement a financial activities tax (FAT) along the lines recommended by the IMF.⁹⁵ A FAT would be, in effect, a type of sales tax on financial activity of all sorts, most of which now goes largely untaxed. A 5 percent tax imposed on all financial-sector activity could raise more than \$115 billion a year. This tax would not be as well-targeted on wasteful speculative trades as a transactions-based speculation tax, but its ease of implementation means that a progressive legislature in any state could tap a major new source of revenue at the expense of the financial sector. It is unfortunate that the tax will also hit ordinary transactions by average people, but it's hard to see why it is okay (in many states) to tax food but not to tax checking account fees or credit card penalties.

Corporate governance, the much-overlooked cesspool

It is remarkable that conservatives, who are inherently suspicious of governmental institutions, tend to pay little attention to the structure of corporate governance. Just as governments at all levels offer the opportunity for corruption, so do corporations. The big difference is that corporate managers — unlike their counterparts in government — operate largely in secret, control many of the rules under which they are re-elected, and make payoffs (in the form of directors' fees) to the people who determine their salaries.

Former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich gained national notoriety over the tape recordings of his discussion of plans to sell the Senate seat vacated by Barack Obama after he was elected president. The chief executive officers running most major companies can be viewed as little Blagojeviches, but unlike the governor they don't have to go through the trouble of breaking the law to get more money into their pockets.

In most corporations, CEOs play a large role in selecting the board that determines their pay. If they decide they want more compensation, whether in straight pay or in the form of an increased bonus or pension, they are likely to have a receptive audience. After all, board members are typically paid several hundred thousand dollars a year for attending four to eight meetings, and they will naturally be grateful to the person who gave them this plum job and who could take it away from them if they prove uncooperative. The CEOs keep getting higher pay, the board members get to pocket \$200,000, \$300,000, or \$400,000 a year, and everyone is happy.

Where do the stockholders fit into this picture? It's difficult for ordinary stockholders to organize, just as it is difficult for average voters to unite to ensure that their elected officials act in their interest. In addition to facing the same problems in organizing as voters face in local, state, or national elections, shareholders also must deal with the fact that corporate managers can rig the election rules to make it more difficult for shareholders to overturn management decisions.

For example, it is standard practice to treat uncast proxy votes as votes cast in support of management's position. This rule can make it all but impossible to pass a shareholder resolution on an issue like cutting the pay of top management. Also, if top management can count on the support of one or two major shareholders, who might be mutual fund managers, then it will be almost impossible for shareholders to overrule decisions on executive compensation or anything else.

Shareholders can always just sell their shares, and undoubtedly this is a wise move if corruption in a company gets out of hand. But it rarely gets out of hand, relatively speaking. In major corporations annual profits can easily reach \$10 billion a year. If the CEO and top management overpay themselves by \$200 million a year, their greed might translate into just 2 to 3 percent of corporate profits. Just as with government waste, this may be a big sum to the individuals directly involved, but it generally doesn't make much difference to the bottom line. In both cases, it is usually more difficult to weed out the waste than it is worth, which means that managers are likely to get away with excessive pay under the current system.

This discussion is especially relevant to the financial sector because there is nowhere else in the economy where pay has diverged so sharply from performance for shareholders. The top executives of companies like Lehman Brothers, Fannie Mae, and Freddie Mac received huge paychecks based on short-term profits, which encouraged them to take outsized risks that, in effect, were one-sided bets. Every year that the bets paid off allowed the CEOs and other top managers to put huge sums in their pockets. But if the bets went bad the CEOs could simply walk away with their prior earnings, and perhaps bonuses and a severance. After the executives drove their companies to bankruptcy, shareholders were left with little or nothing while the CEOs walked away with fortunes.⁹⁶

It is not difficult to structure contracts so that incentives are aligned more closely with the long-term performance of the stock and so that top management doesn't do well unless the shareholders do well. (We may be concerned about corporate stakeholders other than shareholders as well, but it would be a big step forward to have a pay structure that at least protected shareholders.) But the boards that set pay are working for the CEOs, not the shareholders, and so outsized pay packages are likely to persist unless there are major changes in the rules of corporate governance.⁹⁷

The outlandish CEO pay packages of today are a relatively new development. While CEOs have always been well paid, the ratio of executive compensation to the average worker's pay was in the range of 25 or 30 to 1 as recently as the 1970s, which would put CEO compensation in the area of \$1.5-\$2.0 million. By contrast, multiples of 200 or 300 to 1 are the norm today. One would be hard-pressed to argue that CEOs as a group are doing a better job now than in the 1950s and 1960s, when the country enjoyed its most rapid rate of productivity growth.

Moreover, CEO pay in the United States is hugely out of line with CEO pay in the rest of the world. The top executives of big companies like Volkswagen, Toyota, and Sony are likely to have pay packages in the low millions, not the tens of

millions and certainly not hundreds of millions, like their counterparts in the United States. This level of compensation has not prevented these companies from finding executives who have been able to run the business profitably. The best guess to explain the huge difference in CEO compensation between the United States and other wealthy countries is that it is attributable primarily to the laws and norms of corporate governance, not the inherent workings of the market.

As discussed in Chapter 8, we should welcome other opportunities to find lower-cost top management. CEOs take this approach when they look for the lowest-cost workers, and the rest of us ought to take the same approach when it comes to top management.

We should also use every lever at our disposal, such as the power of pension funds, socially responsible investment funds, or socially minded individual investors to bring CEO pay back in line with international standards. This activism is not really a great leap in principle. CEOs are ripping off their companies. Why not use the market to overcome a problem of bad governance?

Chapter 10—Government-Granted Monopolies Are Not Small Government

One of the main problems facing progressives is that they do not control the terms of the debate. Nowhere is this more true than in the case of patents and copyrights. These are both government-granted monopolies and forms of interference in a free market. Yet these policies, under the guise of “intellectual property,” are treated as a natural part of the market. Enforcing them is treated as supporting the free market, whereas opposing them is viewed as government intervention.

Huge amounts of money are stake with these claims to property. We spend close to \$300 billion a year on prescription drugs that would sell for around \$30 billion in a competitive market. This difference of \$270 billion a year is more than five times as large as the annual cost of President Bush’s tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of the population. Computer software sales are more than \$80 billion a year.⁹⁸ Sales of recorded music, movies, and video material easily come to more than \$20 billion a year. Textbook sales alone total over \$9 billion a year.⁹⁹ Video games account for another \$25 billion in annual sales.¹⁰⁰ The patents and copyrights that protect these revenues are public policies, not individual rights. Intellectual property is actually mentioned in the Constitution, though it is not a right guaranteed to individuals by the Bill of Rights. The ability to convey monopolies for limited periods of time, like patents and copyrights, is one of the powers explicitly delegated to Congress, like the power to tax.

Furthermore, the power to grant patent and copyright protection is tied to a specific purpose: “to promote the progress of science and useful arts.” The language implies no individual right: the Constitution simply gives Congress the authority to create patent and copyright monopolies as a way to promote innovation and creative work. It does not require Congress to create these monopolies any more than it requires Congress to tax people. The policy question that needs to be addressed is whether patents and copyrights are the most effective mechanism for promoting innovation and creative work.

The case of drug patents

The serious issues that surround the efficacy of patents as a tool to promote innovation in a modern economy are especially striking in the context of drug patents.¹⁰¹ Patents tend to have a more pernicious impact in the case of prescription drugs than in most other sectors of the economy, for two reasons.

First, drugs are a standalone consumer product, rather than an innovation or a feature for which a company can negotiate with the patent owner to allow for its efficient use. For example, an auto manufacturer might negotiate for the use of a patented technology in the production of its cars. The efficient outcome is that the marginal cost of the patent is zero. In other words, the car manufacturer can either buy the patent outright or license it for a specific period of time, but its cost for using the patent on an additional car is zero. This is not possible with drugs, as the patented product is sold directly to patients.

The other major difference is that there is enormous asymmetry in knowledge about the product. The drug company will know much more about the effectiveness and safety of a drug than will the patient or even a well-informed doctor. The company has access to test results that are not in the public domain. This means that it is almost impossible to make a fully informed decision about the use of a particular drug.

It also matters that drugs involve people's health or even their lives. Most people will pay almost any price to protect their life or the life of a loved one. Giving the drug companies "monopoly control over potentially life-saving drugs is like allowing firefighters to negotiate their pay package with the homeowner when the house is on fire. Needless to say, firefighters would be very well paid under these circumstances, and drug companies raise enormous revenue under the patent system.

The importance of prescription drugs to our lives and health belies the fact that they are cheap. Few could not be profitably manufactured and distributed for less than \$10 per prescription. The reason that we face moral dilemmas about paying \$80,000 a year for a drug that may extend the life of an 80-year-old cancer patient by a few years is that we give drug companies patent monopolies that allow them to charge \$80,000 a year. If the drugs were sold in a free market, we could avoid the dilemma and pay about \$200 a year, making this a simple choice.

Of course, the research and testing necessary to bring a drug to market has enormous costs. But this expenditure has already been made when the drug comes on the market. The key goal of progressive policy should be to separate the payment for the research from the payment for the drug. If the payment for the research is made independent of the payment for the drug, then all drugs can be sold in a free market without patent monopolies, just as generic drugs are sold today.

The two main alternatives for financing research apart from the patent system are a prize system and direct public funding. Both would involve an expansion of public funding for biomedical research.¹⁰² Currently, the federal government spends \$30 billion a year on biomedical research through the National Institutes of Health. For an additional \$30 billion to \$80 billion it could replace the research currently funded through the patent system. Even taking the higher figure, the government would soon recoup this cost through savings on drug expenses in Medicare, Medicaid, and other public health programs.

A prize system would effectively buy out patents from drug companies, with the price determined based on some measure of a new drug's effectiveness and importance. After buying the patent, the government would place it in the public domain, where any manufacturer could use it.

A system of direct public funding would pay for research in advance. Companies would contract with a government agency, for example, a much-expanded version of the National Institutes of Health. A limited number would receive large long-term contracts (e.g., lasting 10-12 years) to support research into specified areas. As the end of the contract period approached, companies could reapply for a contract based on their track record of achievement.

All the results, both preclinical and clinical, would be public, a transparency that should allow researchers to make informed assessments of the relative efficacy of different drugs and determine if some drugs are better for specific groups of individuals.¹⁰³ The patents would be in the public domain, and so the drugs developed through this system would be sold at generic prices.

Getting from the current system of patent monopolies to a system of free-market drugs will be a Herculean task. The pharmaceutical industry is enormously powerful, and it can be expected to use all its resources to prevent any major changes to the patent system. In addition, overhauling the way the country finances prescription drug research will undoubtedly sound scary to many people.

An intermediate step that might make the shift less scary and certainly make it less expensive would be to have public funding for the clinical testing of drugs, which, according to the industry, accounts for close to 60 percent of research costs, while leaving the preclinical research supported by patents. In this scenario, patents would be bought out for testing, with the results placed in the public domain. This arrangement would put an end to the worst marketing abuses by the drug industry and still allow drugs to be sold at their free-market price.

Potential allies among industry groups for this sort of shift include the small innovative drug companies that tend not to do well in the current system. Generally, these companies race to find a valuable patent before they run out of funding, with most not succeeding.

Another potential ally is insurers who want to save money on drug costs, but a large-scale restructuring of a major health care sector might hit too close to home for their comfort. In principle, even the large pharmaceutical companies could be allies, since there is no reason that they could not profit as much under either a prize system or a system of direct funding as under a patent system.

The real expertise of the major pharmaceutical manufacturers at present is their marketing, not their innovation. They typically buy many of the patents for the drugs they market from smaller startups. For this reason, a system that effectively eliminated the huge profits from the marketing of drugs that can be sold at monopolistic prices would undermine the companies' whole way of doing business. As a result, the big pharmaceutical companies can be expected to strongly oppose any major reform of the patent system.

But this is a case where the market can be used to undermine the industry's position. A substantial number of drugs currently flow into the United States from Canada and other countries who, rather than grant pharmaceutical companies unrestricted monopolies, instead set limits on the extent to which drug companies can exploit their patent monopolies. As a result, drug prices in Canada are 30 to 60 percent less than prices in the United States.

Progressives should promote this trade wherever possible. For example, by organizing bus trips from neighboring states into Canada to allow people to buy low-cost drugs, or by supporting efforts by state and local governments to fight federal restrictions on their ability to buy cheaper drugs from other countries for their workers' health care plans, their state Medicaid programs, and their residents more generally.

Progressives should also actively oppose conditions in trade agreements that force other countries to impose U.S.-type patent rules. Patent restrictions could be a life-or-death matter for tens of millions of people in the developing world who may be able to afford drugs at their market price now but will find the patent-protected price impossibly expensive. In addition, by extending the reach of U.S.-type patent rules, these trade agreements eliminate potential sources of low-cost drugs for people in the United States.

It is important to understand what is at stake here. The pharmaceutical industry wants government-imposed monopolies to allow it to make huge profits. The rest of us want free markets. The amount of money involved in this sector dwarfs the amount at stake in most government programs. When conservatives talk about \$10 billion or \$20 billion a year for child care or family assistance programs, we should turn the discussion to the drug industry which is costing \$270 billion a year in higher payments for its patent-protected drugs. It is the pharmaceutical industry that wants big government and wants a powerful state that will arrest competitors who undercut its monopoly prices. Progressives should want a free market.

Copyright is big government in your bedroom, not the free market

Copyrights for books, recorded music, movies, video games, software, and other items present the same sort of issue as patent protection for prescription drugs. Items that would essentially be available at zero cost in a free market can instead command high prices because the government grants copyright monopolies. While the consequences of copyright protection are not as pernicious, — in the sense that people's lives generally do not depend on access to copyrighted material, — the cost to the public of copyright protection is enormous. Including software, the public spends more than \$100 billion a year for items that would be available at much lower or even zero cost in a free market.

In addition to the direct cost in the form of above-market prices, copyright enforcement in the Internet age also incurs enormous costs. And the government has eagerly assisted the publishing, entertainment, and software industries in their efforts to protect and extend their monopolies.

Many of the measures taken are absurd. For example, the government has repeatedly extended the period of copyright (now 95 years after the death of the author) and applied the extensions retroactively. This is bizarre: the purpose of copyright monopolies is to provide incentives for creative work, and it is impossible to provide incentives retroactively. These retroactive extensions are sometimes dubbed the "Mickey Mouse Law," since Disney, hoping to keep its copyright on Mickey Mouse in force further into the future, was a major proponent of the extensions.

Enforcement actions have involved police breaking into dorm rooms and high school kids' bedrooms in search of computers allegedly used to download copyrighted material without authorization. Police arrested a Russian computer scientist after an academic talk in Denver for work he had done on breaking encryption codes in Russia (where it was completely legal). Copying devices have been banned from the market because they did not have adequate safeguards to protect copyrighted material. In one civil prosecution, a young mother in Minnesota was fined hundreds of thousands of dollars for using her computer to share two dozen copyrighted songs. The Recording Industry Association of America has even developed propaganda courses on the evils of unauthorized reproductions (a.k.a. pirated copyrighted material).

This effort to enforce copyright is both very big government and very wasteful. No genuine "small government conservative" would support this sort of extraordinary intervention in the market and interference with people's lives.

Creative workers need to be compensated for their work, but copyright is an inefficient mechanism for accomplishing this goal. There are alternative mechanisms for supporting creative work, several of which are already in existence.

The most important alternative mechanism is probably the university system, in which faculty are expected to publish in their areas of expertise in addition to teaching. The work supported in this way is mostly designed for professional audiences, but a substantial body of work produced by university faculty is intended for general audiences. In addition to universities, private foundations support a large amount of creative work in writing, music, and the arts more generally. In the United States, the federal government supports a substantial amount of creative work through the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, and indirectly through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. State and local governments also provide limited support. Of course, in most other wealthy countries, the government provides considerably more support for creative work.

As it stands, the amount of work supported through mechanisms other than copyright is almost certainly less than what society would desire, which suggests the need to expand the existing mechanisms and/or create new ones. In the case of the United States, expanding the government's role is likely to meet considerable resistance, in part because people may object to having the government fund work they dislike and also because they may not like the idea of the government having a big hand in determining what creative work gets support.

It is not difficult to get around this problem. One way would be an "artistic freedom voucher," a refundable tax credit for a specific amount (e.g., \$100) that individuals could contribute to whatever creative worker/organization they choose.¹⁰⁴ The condition of getting this money would be that the recipient individuals/organizations would not be eligible to receive copyrights for some period of time (e.g., three years) after receiving the money. All the work they produced would be in the public domain so that it could be reproduced and circulated around the world.

One benefit of this structure is its low enforcement costs. Artists who had received voucher money and then tried to violate the rules and get a copyright would find their copyright unenforceable. Anyone would have the right to freely reproduce the material as though the copyright did not exist.

This mechanism is not very different from the current tax deduction for charitable organizations. As it stands, wealthy individuals can make large charitable contributions that are subsidized by the government through the tax deduction. If people in the top tax bracket give \$10 million to their local symphony, the government effectively subsidizes this contribution by reducing their tax liability by \$3,600,000.

In the case of the artistic freedom vouchers, the whole payment would come from the government, rather than just a fraction, but the sums involved would be much smaller. Instead of giving millions of dollars in subsidies to a small number of individuals, the system would give a modest subsidy to hundreds of millions of individuals. There would inevitably be some amount of gaming and fraud, as there is with the charitable deduction, but it would likely be limited, as the potential gains would be small relative to the opportunities that already exist with the charitable deduction.¹⁰⁵

The advantage of an artistic freedom voucher system is that it preserves individuals' choice in determining what creative work that they wish to support. It separates the decision to buy material from the decision to support a specific type of creative work. Presumably people will mostly support the type of work they actually enjoy, but they would have the option of supporting one type of work even if they don't enjoy it themselves. For example, they might support classical music even if they listen only to rock music. The important point is that it would be a matter of individual choice, not a decision made by a government agency.

The obstacles to moving from the copyright world we have today to the artistic freedom voucher world described above are enormous, but there are important market forces pushing in this direction as well as powerful potential allies.

The opponents of this sort of transformation include the entertainment industry, a large, politically powerful industry that will do everything possible to preserve and extend its copyright monopolies. The entertainment industry is also influential among many progressive politicians because it is one of the few pockets of wealth that have been a reliable source of support in political campaigns. The software and publishing industries are also quite powerful. In the latter case, the fact that newspapers weigh in on political campaigns is also likely to be a deterrent to elected officials who want to weaken copyright protections or propose alternatives.

As with patent monopolies, the market is a powerful force working against copyright monopolies. While the industry groups can be expected to continually invent new locks and search mechanisms to prevent the reproduction of

copyrighted material and to trace its transmission path, innovative software engineers will be equally energetic in designing ways to crack locks and avoid detection.

Progressives should be on the side of the free flow of material, which means opposing repressive legislation that increases penalties for reproducing and circulating copyrighted pieces. It also means opposing efforts to promote the spread and extension of copyright protection, such as those in trade agreements that force U.S. trading partners to impose stronger copyright laws. (This is the sort of issue that could lead to a productive trade agreement with China's government. We could tell them they can apply their own laws to Microsoft's software and Disney's movies, and they could agree to raise the value of the Yuan against the dollar.) Progressives should also oppose the use of propaganda courses in schools and universities that tout the virtues of copyrights.

In addition, progressives should support in every way possible the creation and circulation of free music, movies, software, and other creative material. This support can take a variety of forms. A vast body of material is already available on the web that is not subject to restrictive copyrights. It includes work that was always in the public domain, work that has fallen into the public domain because of the expiration of copyrights, and work that is subject to Creative Commons copyright. The latter is a less-exclusive form of copyright that can allow for free distribution of material.¹⁰⁶ The promotion of this material can further acclimate the public to work that is not protected by copyright.

Private foundations can also be sources of support for non-copyright-protected material. As part of an economic development strategy, state and local governments could create artistic freedom voucher systems involving some modest amount per resident, like the federal programs described above. However, a condition of receiving money could be that the musician, writer, singer, or other creative workers physically live within the state or city for at least eight months a year, in addition to forgoing a copyright. Musicians and other creative workers living in a state or city for eight months a year would almost certainly plan to perform there or in other ways practice their work, both as a way of earning money and making themselves more popular among the residents and thereby better positioned to get voucher money.

A state or city setting up this sort of system could become a cultural Mecca, where hundreds of musicians performed their music every night and theaters produced original plays. Writers could have workshops to train aspiring writers, and all manner of creative workers could receive lessons in their areas of specialization. A large inflow of visitors would take advantage of these offerings. For depressed areas with a good housing stock and scenic environment, this could be a promising development path.

It would be easier for a state or local government to follow this path if it received a grant from a foundation to pick up part of the expense. For example, an Albany-size city of 100,000 could have \$10 million to support artistic freedom vouchers if it received a \$5 million grant and could come up with \$5 million itself. The prospect of garnering some portion of this money could bring a large number of creative workers to the city from surrounding areas. This sum would be sufficient to provide \$25,000 to 400 creative workers, a substantial subsidy to the living standards of many workers struggling to get by.

Cities and states can explicitly promote free material in the textbooks they use in schools at all levels. A number of high school and college textbooks are already available for free downloads without copyright protection.¹⁰⁷ In many cases these books are perfectly adequate substitutes for expensive copyrighted textbooks. State and local governments could also contract with academics to write textbooks that will be available freely to their students online. These will almost certainly cost far less than having students buy textbooks individually through the copyright system, especially if the process can be coordinated among many governments. Several states have already gone this route.

As a basic principle, free material will drive out copyrighted material. If people have access to quality work for which they don't have to pay, why should they pay for copyrighted material? The model here is Wikipedia, which offers entries that are every bit as accurate as those available from traditional encyclopedias on a far wider range of topics. As a result, it has virtually eliminated the market for traditional encyclopedias.

A challenge will be to find mechanisms for ensuring that creative workers are paid decent wages. However, few creative workers are able to earn decent livelihoods under the copyright system, so we don't have a model that works now. We surely can do better.

The push for material unprotected by copyright should extend to software as well. Open and ideally free software is preferable to protected software. In this philosophy Google and Linux (originally GNU/Linux, in recognition of its roots in the free software movement) are preferable to Microsoft and Apple. Computers and other devices with freely available software should cost less. And any system that is constantly improved by tens of thousands of people will be far better

than a system designed in the closed confines of a corporate production process. (Is there anyone anywhere who would be using a Microsoft anything if the company had not used its market power to gain a dominant position in software?)

The move to a non-copyright-protected world should lead us to better and more widely available creative material and software, and put an end to some of the concentrations of wealth created by the copyright system. Microsoft could be the new Commodore, Disney could truly be a Mickey Mouse outfit, and Rupert Murdoch could retire as a less-wealthy patron of right-wing causes.

Chapter 11—Follow the Money: The Guiding Light for a Progressive Strategy

In the fall of 2007, as the collapse of the housing bubble was about to crash the economy, the biggest economic concern under debate in Congress was a budget deficit that at the time was equal to 1.2 percent of GDP, or roughly \$180 billion in the 2011 economy.

Then, as now, the political debate over economic policy was a sideshow to the real economic issues that most affected people's lives. The obsession over a relatively small budget deficit helped to drown out warnings about an economic tsunami that would soon throw more than eight million people out of work, cause millions to lose their homes, and cost the country more than \$4 trillion in lost output. The effects of this collapse will have added trillions of dollars to the national debt when all is said and done.

But no one in a leadership position in Washington wanted to talk about the housing bubble in 2007. There was a budget deficit to worry about. Obsessing about budget issues while ignoring fundamental economic issues led to a disaster with consequences for the budget that were far worse than any budget hawk could have feared in 2007. If the budget hawks really cared about the deficit and debt, they should have focused their efforts on the economy and ignored the budget, rather than the other way around.

Progressives have been similarly shortsighted by misdirecting their attention to the narrow realm of tax and transfer policy while largely ignoring far more important policies that determine the distribution of before-tax income. As a result, conservatives have gained control of the mechanisms that distribute income and used tax and transfer policy as a sideshow to divert public attention.

The arithmetic on this story is straightforward. Federal government spending averages roughly 20 percent of GDP. Adding in state and local government spending gets us a bit over 30 percent. This means that all levels of government spending account for less than one-third of the economy. If this is the exclusive realm for political debate, and we ignore the way in which the government structures the larger economy, then we have given up two-thirds of the game.

Even worse, this approach leaves progressives much less well-situated to contest the portion of income that is controlled by the government for both political and economic reasons.

Politically, the idea of taking money from the people who have lots of it and giving it to those who have not earned much is always going to be problematic, especially in the United States. The idea of government redistribution does not sell well.

It also poses economic problems. Conservatives' complaints about the economic distortions created by high taxes have some basis in reality, even if they are often hugely overstated. Progressives should steer clear of the potential for being seen as having an agenda that means slower growth and less job creation.

Shifting attention to before-tax issues of income means talking about the big policy items, most importantly the Fed and the dollar, that have the greatest impact on economic outcomes. Though the chance of achieving major policy changes in these areas in the near future is slim, the public should at least understand the importance of the Fed and the value of the dollar in determining economic outcomes. Continuing to pursue low-inflation and high-dollar policies will leave tens of millions of people unemployed or underemployed, and the public should understand that this path is a choice made by those in power.

It is also important to change the orientation of progressive thinking and rhetoric both to achieve success politically and to get better policy outcomes even on less consequential issues. A recent debate on restricting the government-subsidized student loans available to low- and middle-income students to pay tuition at for-profit colleges provides an excellent case in point. The right managed to turn this argument on its head, successfully portraying itself as the

protector of a free market and the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress as supporters of increased government regulation.

Proponents of restricting the availability of these loans argued that many students use the loans at schools where they often do not complete a degree or from which they fail to land a job even with a degree. This outcome leaves the students with large debts and little ability to repay them, and leaves the government on the hook since it guarantees the loans.

The intention of the new regulations was to ensure that students used the loans only at schools that provide their graduates with reasonable prospects for "gainful employment" (determined by graduates' debt-to-income ratios and loan repayment rates). This was a regulation of the loan program to prevent abuse and to ensure that the money was doing what was intended: helping low- and middle-income students get the education and skills they need to get a good job.

What position do you think an advocate of free markets would take in this debate? Obviously, a true free-marketer would eliminate the program altogether. It's a subsidy that interferes in the education market.

But for-profit colleges wanted and needed the subsidy (as up to 90 percent of their revenue comes from taxpayer-provided student loans and grants), and so in true conservative fashion they turned the debate into a battle between those who favored a "free market" (them) and those who wanted increased government regulation. The industry argued that it would be strangled and many colleges would be put out of business by the new regulations.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the absurdity of this position. Nothing being proposed would prevent the schools from doing whatever they wanted or prevent any students from choosing to attend any school they wanted. The debate was over the limitations applied to a government aid program. The for-profit college industry essentially opposed clamping down on fraud (bogus colleges); it wanted the freedom to rip off students and taxpayers and did not want the government to get in the way.

We can view this through another example. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and others have advocated that food stamp recipients be prohibited from using food stamps on soda and sugary drinks. Regardless of the merits of this policy, there is little doubt that it is being proposed as a limitation on food stamp recipients and what they can do with this government benefit.

While Mayor Bloomberg proposed this as a simple exclusion of certain items from the list of products that could be purchased with food stamps, it would almost certainly lead to a situation where there would be a substantial number of products that fell into a grey area (for example sweetened ice tea). This in turn would likely mean establishing standards that the industry would have to show that they met in order to avoid being excluded from the program. The requirement for meeting some set of nutritional standards would be comparable to the record-keeping requirements that the for-profit college industry claimed would be onerous. In other words, prohibiting food stamp beneficiaries from buying soft drinks with their food stamps would impose requirements on the food industry, just as restricting the use of student loans imposes requirements on the for-profit college industry.

In this event, would the makers of soft drinks manage to pitch their objections as a complaint about intrusive government regulation interfering with the free market? Would the proponents of increasing the restrictions on the use of food stamps be labeled as advocates of stronger government regulation? That seems unlikely but that is exactly what happened in the effort to prevent abuses of the student loan system.

The position of the for-profit colleges had nothing to do with the free market. Yet the progressives pushing for tighter regulation and accountability ceded ground, agreeing to a four-year-long "three strikes and you're out" examination before a school could lose eligibility for the government giveaway. "We believe that very few programs will be forcibly closed by our standards," Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said. "We want to give people a chance to reform. As a country, we need this sector to succeed. This is not about 'gotcha.'"¹⁰⁸ Of course, the issue is not "gotcha;" the issue is a pattern of abuses that borders on criminal fraud, and the secretary of education essentially committed the department to not taking them seriously.

It is interesting to ask whether the outcome of the student loan fight would have been different if the proponents of the new regulations had insisted on characterizing them as an effort to limit waste in a government program for low- and moderate-income people, which is in fact what the regulations were.

The caricature of conservatives as anti-government and progressives as pro-government makes arguments in support of huge government programs like Social Security and Medicare confusing and difficult. At least in the case of these two massive social insurance programs, the vast majority of the public — regardless of political affiliation — supports their purpose of providing necessary protections to the elderly and disabled. And, for this reason, conservatives who want to dismantle these programs almost never argue that we don't need a Social Security or Medicare-type system; they argue that their privatized system will be better than the current government-run system. (In nearly 20 years of policy debates in Washington and around the country I don't believe that I have confronted a conservative who advocated simply eliminating these programs.)

In this instance, we are debating not values but whether privatized systems can provide the protections — which both sides seem to agree are desirable — more efficiently. And the evidence is overwhelming that privatization adds unnecessary costs to providing retirement income security or health care. Part of the cost is the profits that private firms extract, but much of the increase is associated with the inefficiency of a decentralized system as opposed to a single centralized system.

In selecting most goods and services, we value choice, but there is not much value to individual choice in the way we receive our core retirement income. People want to know the money will be there — end of story. Marketing and creating 20 different flavors of the same product simply makes providing a secure retirement income more expensive.

Extensive experience with privatized systems throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world, as well as in some wealthy countries like the United Kingdom, bears this out. We also have the private retirement system in the United States if we need evidence that the debate over privatizing Social Security is a debate over whether workers want to see their retirement income reduced so that the financial industry can have more money. The only values question here is whether it is better for workers to keep their money or for the financial industry to have it.

The same story applies to efforts to privatize Medicare. The Congressional Budget Office's analysis of the Republican Party's voucher plan (which the House of Representatives approved) projected that the plan would raise the cost of buying Medicare-equivalent policies by \$34 trillion over Medicare's 75-year planning period.¹⁰⁹ The issue in this case is simply whether retired workers want to have \$34 trillion pulled out of their pockets and handed to the insurance and health care industries.

Framing this as a debate over values is a distraction. The right claims its goal is "to get government off our backs," but it would merely replace one method of providing retirement security and health care with another. It says its way of providing these services is better, but the evidence shows that's not the case. And that, pure and simple, is why the right makes this a values debate.

Bringing back the market

The cases of Social Security and Medicare are great examples of how the logic of the market leads to progressive outcomes. In these cases a simple centralized system is more efficient than a decentralized, privatized system. There is no need to contrast the logic of the government and the logic of the market: if we want efficient programs, we want ones that look like Social Security and Medicare.

In the same vein, we can structure the market more generally to produce progressive outcomes. The enormous growth of inequality over the last three decades did not come about as the result of the natural workings of the market; it came about through conscious design. The job of progressives is to point this out in every venue and in every way we can. It is not by luck, talent, and hard work that the rich are getting so much richer. It is by rigging the rules of the game.

From a political perspective it is much better to say that the progressive agenda is about setting fair rules for the market. The argument that highly paid professionals should face the same international competition as factory workers is a compelling one, and more arresting than the argument that we should redistribute money from the winners to the losers.

Since public debate is so badly misinformed on almost all economic issues, most people will be hearing these arguments for the first time. Few realize that an agency of the government, the Federal Reserve Board, actively throws people out of work to fight inflation. Few know that the loss of manufacturing jobs and the downward pressure on the wages of manufacturing workers are not accidental outcomes of trade agreements but rather the whole basis for them. (The enigma of trade is that it can make a whole country richer and yet most of its people poorer.) And hardly anyone understands that a higher-valued dollar intensifies the hurtful effect of trade by putting further downward pressure on the wages of workers subject to international competition.

Our Federal Reserve policy, trade policy, and dollar policy redistribute income upward from the less advantaged to those who disproportionately control the nation's wealth and political power. Each policy is designed for this outcome. Knowing this economic reality is not the same as changing it, but it is an important first step.

Progressives have to start playing hardball. The right is not just trying to win elections; it is working to destroy the basis of progressive opposition. Breaking private-sector unions in the 1980s was not just about getting lower-cost labor; it was also a deliberate effort to undermine one of the pillars of progressive politics in the United States. Recent efforts at the state and federal levels to weaken public sector unions are not about saving money for the government; they are a deliberate effort to destroy the strongest remaining segment of the labor movement.

Progressives must think the same way. When a Medicare patient has \$50,000 to put in her pocket after receiving a heart bypass operation in Singapore rather than Topeka (remember that the government also saves \$50,000), she is a walking advertisement for the waste and inefficiency of the U.S. health care system. Every person who takes advantage of these health care savings will make a mockery of the politicians from both parties who have the gall to say the U.S. health care system is the best in the world.

When we convince a state or local government to contract out its architectural or engineering design tasks to lower-cost firms in India or Brazil, to purchase open-source software and textbooks for its students, and to fill its Medicaid prescriptions through low-cost Canadian suppliers, we un-rig the protections set up for highly paid professionals, copyright holders, and pharmaceutical firms and demonstrate that the market can save ordinary people money.

Success will build on success, just as it has for the right. If a progressive state gets its unemployment rate down to 4 percent through work sharing, or cuts its Medicaid spending by 30 percent by using medical trade and foreign pharmaceuticals, others will follow.

These innovations will also have a cumulative effect that amplifies their impact. If work sharing brings the unemployment rate in a state down to 4 percent, then ordinary workers in that state will be far more likely to see wage increases. They also may feel more empowered to unionize, since the threat of job loss has much less consequence in a situation where it is relatively easy to find another job.

Moreover, the increased spending on foreign-sourced highly paid professional services will put downward pressure on the dollar. Sending enough dollars overseas to pay for foreign doctors, lawyers, and economists may push the dollar down to the point that our manufacturing goods become more competitive on world markets. This would create millions of new manufacturing jobs.

The right plots long-term strategies along these lines. Progressives must think along the same lines to have a hope of winning.

The fundamental structure of economic debates has been turned on its head to favor the right. Progressives cannot hope to win a political debate if we think that we have an interest in inflating stock and housing prices. Given everything that is stacked against the progressive side in economic debates, we must at least know which way is up. Hopefully this book has helped to point the way.

Footnotes

¹Supporters of the bailout have been eager to claim that the government made money on these loans. This is not honest accounting. The money was lent at rates far below the market rate at the time. No accountant would ever say that a below-market loan turned a profit because it was repaid. Providing a loan at below-market rates implies a government subsidy, and while Wall Street banks were able to get this subsidy from the government, millions of struggling small businesses across the country were not so lucky.

²Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (2011a), Table 11.

³The Teamsters generally negotiate contracts that include a provision to the effect that they do not have to cross a picket line if they fear for their personal safety. There have been many incidents over the years in which truck drivers have feared for their safety upon seeing a union picket line.

⁴The Fed currently holds close to \$3 trillion in mortgage-backed securities and government bonds. As long as the Fed holds on to these bonds, the interest on these assets is refunded to the Treasury: in 2010 the refund was almost \$80 billion. By continuing to hold these assets indefinitely, rather than selling them to the public (which would mean the Fed would no longer be able to refund the interest), the Fed would substantially reduce the government's interest burden in future years.

⁵The annual budget projections from the Congressional Budget Office, along with regular updates, are available at <http://www.cbo.gov/publications/bysubject.cfm?cat=0>.

⁶This stimulus package also included roughly \$80 billion for a fix to the alternative minimum tax (AMT) that prevented it from raising taxes on millions of middle-income families. This fix really should not be included as part of the stimulus because it is a measure that Congress has passed every year for two decades. No one ever expected to pay the higher AMT rate, so preventing this tax increase from going into effect could not have provided a boost to anyone's consumption.

⁷See Blinder and Zandi (2010), CBO (2011a), and Feyrer and Sacerdote (2011). It is important to point out that the Feyrer and Sacerdote study almost certainly understates the job impact of the stimulus because it looks exclusively at in-state effects. Much of the employment impact of stimulus spending is likely to spill across state lines. For example, spending on a major construction project in Manhattan is likely to involve subcontractors located in New Jersey. The materials are also likely to come at least in part from out of state. Furthermore, when workers on the project spend their wages, they will be creating jobs in other states if they don't live in New York. For these reasons a study such as this that only picks up the in-state effects will substantially underestimate the full jobs impact of the stimulus.

⁸Carroll and Zhou (2010).

⁹The official savings data are somewhat distorted by the mis-measurement of income. Capital gains from the housing market and the stock market appear to have been reported as part of normal income in the government data. (Capital gains are not supposed to count as income in the GDP accounts.) This led to a large shift to a negative statistical discrepancy in the years 2002 to 2007. See Rosnick and Baker (2011b).

¹⁰Roughly \$100 billion of the stimulus was scheduled to take effect in 2011 or later.

¹¹For instance, see Baker (2009a), Baker and Deutsch (2009), and Krugman (2009).

¹²The Mortgage Bankers Association index can be found on their website: <http://www.mortgagebankers.org/>.

¹³Dunkelberg and Wade (2011).

¹⁴These numbers refer to the somewhat larger "employment services" category that includes temporary help agencies as well as some employment leasing services that are not included in this category.

¹⁵It is also worth noting that the NFIB shows no rise in the percentage of firms that list regulation and taxes as major problem compared with the Bush presidency.

¹⁶It is worth noting again that taxpayers gifted tens of billions of dollars to the financial industry despite the oft-repeated claim that the government made money on TARP and the special lending facilities. The money that the government lent to banks like Goldman Sachs and Citigroup was made available at interest rates far below what the banks would have been required to pay in the market at the time. In the case of Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, the two surviving independent investment banks, the Fed allowed them to change their status in the middle of the crisis to bank holding companies that had the protection of the Fed and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. This change effectively told the markets that these huge institutions would be backstopped by the government, bringing to an end a run on both banks. An enormous premium was placed on liquidity at the time of TARP. The fact that the major Wall Street banks were able to borrow at near zero rates, at a time when they were insolvent and would have found it almost impossible to get private-sector loans at any price, was an enormous subsidy.

¹⁷At the time, Iran was the world's second-largest exporter of oil, and the revolution removed these exports from world markets. For a history of oil prices in the post-World War II era see http://www.inflationdata.com/inflation/inflation_rate/historical_oil_prices_table.asp.

¹⁸The differential effect of unemployment on the wages of less-highly paid workers is discussed in Bernstein and Baker (2004).

¹⁹Also known as a "secondary boycott," a secondary strike is "an attempt to stop others from purchasing products from, performing services for, or otherwise doing business with a company that does business with another company that is in the midst of a labor dispute."

See <http://www.nolo.com/dictionary/secondary-boycott-term.html>.

²⁰Schmitt and Zipperer (2009).

²¹Bureau of the Census (1980), Table 679.

²²Reinhold (2000) and Bureau of Labor Statistics.

²³While many college-educated workers and even workers with advanced degrees are unionized, unionization leads to much larger wage gains for less-educated workers (Schmitt, 2008).

²⁴OECD (2011).

²⁵It's worth noting that about 0.3 percentage points of the increase in investment in the 1990s is simply an accounting issue. There was a huge expansion of car leasing in the decade. A leased car counts as investment on the part of the car leasing company. By contrast, if a person buys a car it counts as consumption. The shift from purchases to leases increased annual investment by an amount equal to 0.3 percent of GDP at the end of the decade.

²⁶The bubble is often referred to as the "tech bubble" or the "internet bubble," implying that it was restricted to a narrow category of the stock market. While these sectors were most affected by the bubble, virtually all sectors of the market saw substantial price increases during the inflation of the bubble and experienced substantial declines when it burst. For example, Ford's stock rose from under \$29 in late 1995 to a peak of more than \$63 in early 1999. It eventually fell below \$9 in the fall of 2002. McDonald's stock rose from under \$20 in the summer of 1995 to a peak of more than \$45 in early 1999, and it eventually fell to under \$15 in early 2003.

²⁷The adjusted savings rate adds the statistical discrepancy in the national income accounts to income, under the assumption that most of the change in the statistical discrepancy through time is attributable to capital gains income showing up as normal income (Rosenick and Baker, 2011b). This explains the fact that the statistical discrepancy shifted from being positive through most of the postwar period to being a large negative at the peaks of the stock and housing bubbles.

²⁸The evidence is laid out in Baker (2002b).

²⁹The existence of a 100-year-long trend was uncovered in research by Robert Shiller (2006), which was not yet available in 2002. However, it was possible to use publicly available data sources to determine that nationwide home prices had just tracked inflation since 1953 (see Baker 2002b).

³⁰Greenspan (2002).

³¹There was the possibility that the gap between home sale prices and rent was driven by the extraordinarily low mortgage rates available at the time. This argument has two problems. First, home prices have not historically been very sensitive to interest rates, and for prices to fluctuate in major ways as interest rates moved up or down would amount to a sharp break with past patterns. The other, more important, problem with this story is that no one expected interest rates to remain at such low levels. If it was the case that the extraordinary run-up in home prices was due to the unusually low interest rates available at the time, then one would expect home prices to fall back to their trend level when interest rates rose back to more normal levels. Rather than being an argument against a bubble, this interest rate story would have in fact implied a bubble. For more on this, see Baker (2002a).

³²The Census Bureau's vacancy data are available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/hvs.html>.

³³While higher interest rates will eventually deflate a bubble, the Fed was right to keep interest rates low at the time, given the weakness of the economy following the collapse of the stock bubble. The Fed has many other tools at its disposal, most immediately its ability to direct attention to a bubble. If the Fed had focused its research on documenting

the evidence for a housing bubble, and Greenspan and other Fed officials had used congressional testimony and other public appearances to warn of the bubble, it is difficult to believe that they could not have curbed the irrational exuberance that was driving home prices higher. The Fed also has substantial regulatory power that it could have used to slow the tide of bad mortgages that was flooding the financial system.

³⁴Remarkably, Greenspan told the Washington Post that he had been unaware of the extent of the spread of subprime mortgages until January 2006, just as he was ending his tenure as Fed chairman (Klein and Goldfarb, 2008).

³⁵Kirchhoff and Hagenbaugh (2004).

³⁶Bishop, Hightower, and Bickicioglu (2005). Many people borrowed more than the purchase price of their homes, using the extra money to cover closing costs or other expenses.

³⁷See Hudson (2010).

³⁸Harris (2006) p. 6.

³⁹Bernanke (2007).

⁴⁰The Federal Reserve Act, Section 2A, Monetary Policy Objectives, available at <http://www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed/section2a.htm>.

⁴¹On one occasion, a governor of the Fed acknowledged to me that there was little risk of runaway inflation even if the unemployment rate fell slightly below the so-called non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment. He also acknowledged that there was little harm from moderate rates of inflation, meaning that if the Fed took this gamble and lost, there would be little cost associated with a rate of inflation that was stable, but slightly higher than the Fed's target. I asked why the Fed shouldn't take the virtually cost-free risk, and he responded by saying that the Fed is an institution that is committed to price stability. I pointed out that the Fed is also an institution that is committed to full employment, to which he replied that, "No one takes that commitment seriously." When I suggested that he then also doesn't need to take the commitment to price stability seriously, he responded, "Yes, I do."

⁴²As a separate measure to slow consumption, Volcker also restricted the use of credit cards. At the time, the Fed had the ability to impose this type of credit control, but it does no longer.

⁴³*New York Times*, Times Topics.

⁴⁴The core money supply refers to the reserves that the Fed uses to buy government bonds, mortgage-backed securities, and other assets. These reserves are the basis for broader measures of the money supply.

⁴⁵Bernanke (1999).

⁴⁶The real interest rate is the nominal interest rate minus the inflation rate. The nominal interest rate cannot go below zero. Once the central bank has set the nominal interest rate at zero (as both the Japanese central bank did in the 1990's and the Fed has done in the Great Recession), the real interest rate cannot go lower unless the inflation rate rises.

⁴⁷There is a concern that the bank reserves created by the Fed's holding assets could lead to inflation when the economy recovers. The Fed could head off inflation by raising bank reserve requirements, as an alternative to reducing the reserves of the banking system by selling assets. While this is a less-preferred tool of monetary policy, given the huge potential gains it is worth the risk. Scheduling the increases in advance could reduce any potential disruptions created by raising reserve requirements.

⁴⁸Rep. Paul wrote a book titled *End the Fed* so there is little ambiguity about the direction he would like to take.

⁴⁹An earlier version of this chapter appeared as Baker (2011).

⁵⁰This is the harmonized unemployment rate used by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which puts national rates on an internationally comparable basis.

⁵¹See Schmitt (2011) for an analysis of the policy responses of the United States, Germany, and Denmark during this period.

⁵²OECD (2010). When demand for labor fell in the recession, companies could cut back hours and maintain workers' pay by using hours in these accounts.

⁵³This discussion relies largely on data from EFILWC (2010, Chapter 2).

⁵⁴An analysis of firms' participation in short-work programs in Germany by the International Labor Organization (Crimmann, Wießner, and Bellmann, 2010, p. 26) found a strong correlation between firm size and participation in work sharing programs. The use of freelancers was negatively correlated with participation, as was the percentage of college graduates among the workforce. Being involved in an export industry was highly correlated with participation, although this could also be attributable to the sharp drop in exports at the start of the downturn as opposed to the specific characteristics of these industries.

⁵⁵President Obama's 2012 budget includes funding to support the establishment of work-sharing programs in states that do not already have them.

⁵⁶Email communication with Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Dept. of Labor, December 2010. See Woo (2011) for additional details.

⁵⁷This discussion follows that of Messenger (2009).

⁵⁸Experience rating is the comparison of the insured's actual loss against losses common to similar workers, or in this case, the work-sharing experience of a given firm compared to similar firms.

⁵⁹This situation involves two potential risks. The first is that a firm in a shaky position financially may opt to abuse the system, recognizing the likelihood that it will not survive long enough to ever repay more than a fraction of the excess benefits claimed, or that new firms may not stay in business long in any case. To limit this avenue of abuse, if a firm did not appear to be financially stable, then the state employment agency could be given the option to refuse a work-sharing plan on this basis. The other opportunity for abuse would be if employers claimed the benefit without actually reducing workers' hours. There could also be a requirement that employers post any approved work-sharing plans in a visible place at their workplace so that workers could easily find them and verify that they were actually seeing the reductions in work hours claimed by their employers.

⁶⁰Employers are likely to prefer work sharing to layoffs in many cases since it means that they can retain skilled workers. When demand increases they just have to raise workers' hours rather than find and train new workers.

⁶¹See Baker (2009b).

⁶²See Visser (2011). The U.S. figure here is Visser's "adjusted coverage." The German figure is Visser's unadjusted coverage; the adjusted figure for Germany is 63 percent.

⁶³This may be somewhat misleading, since business and professional services includes the temporary employment sector.

⁶⁴Rosnick and Weisbrot (2006).

⁶⁵United Nations Statistics Division (2010).

⁶⁶Firms often have a category of workers they define as "part time" who work less than 35 or 30 hours a week and therefore are not given health care, whereas full-time employees receive insurance. It is becoming more common for employers to pay a certain amount toward a worker's insurance policy (rather than paying for the policy itself). In some cases this sum would be paid on a per-hour basis, but this is more the exception than the rule. The vast majority of health care policies are still paid for as a fixed amount per worker.

⁶⁷It is worth noting that the higher marginal tax rates in European countries relative to the United States provide a greater incentive in these countries to take the benefits of productivity growth in leisure. If workers took the benefits in higher pay, they would see less gain after-tax than their counterparts in the United States.

⁶⁸Deficit hawks generally reverse this chain of causation, claiming that the budget deficit is responsible for the trade deficit. This can be true if the budget deficit leads to higher interest rates, which in turn raise the value of the dollar, as investors want to buy dollar assets to take advantage of high U.S. interest rates. No one ever opts to buy an imported product instead of a domestically produced item because of the budget deficit. They choose to buy the imported product because it is cheaper. However, if the dollar stays high, then reducing the budget deficit will not affect trade — unless it leads to a decline in GDP and employment. In short, if the goal is to reduce the trade deficit by reducing the budget deficit, then the intention must be to lower the value of the dollar or raise the unemployment rate. Anyone who wants to combine a low budget deficit and a high dollar, and still have a low trade deficit, wants a high unemployment rate. There is no plausible way to avoid this conclusion.

⁶⁹This route was first outlined in Gagnon and Hufbauer (2011).

⁷⁰Another possible route would be to have the U.S. government buy up huge amounts of futures of RMB in derivative markets. This could also have the effect of pushing up the value of the RMB in spot markets as wealthy Chinese and Chinese corporations attempted to hold RMB off the spot market to take advantage of selling them at higher prices in future markets.

⁷¹When other countries buy up U.S. government bonds or other dollar-based assets to prop up the dollar, they are in effect subsidizing our purchases of their exports. The higher dollar makes their exports cheaper. However, since they are likely to get paid back in dollars that are worth less than the dollars they bought (because the value of the dollar declines) they will take a loss on their dollar assets. This loss is the cost of the subsidy to these countries.

⁷²Tourism in the United States by foreigners is treated as an export in the national income accounts. In effect people from abroad come to the United States to buy services from the industry. These purchases have largely the same impact on the economy as if the services could be packaged and shipped overseas as physical products.

⁷³See for example Pew Research Center (2010).

⁷⁴Freeman (2003).

⁷⁵The “problem” of too many foreign doctors entering the country is discussed in Sun (1996) and Pear (1997).

⁷⁶Physicians in the United States earn on average more than \$200,000 a year, compared to close to \$100,000 a year in western European countries and Japan (Congressional Research Service, 2007). With 950,000 doctors in the United States, the savings if doctors in the U.S. were paid the same amount as in other countries is roughly \$95 billion a year, which is roughly \$300 per person or \$1,200 for a family of four. It is worth noting that a much higher share of doctors in the U.S. are specialists, who require more years of training, and therefore command higher salaries than family practitioners, than in most other wealthy countries. It is not clear that the greater number of specialists improves the quality of care, but it is likely that they are used in the United States in instances in which family practitioners would suffice. This sort of rent-seeking, with specialists inserting themselves into situations where their skills are not necessary, is exactly what would be expected when government interventions obstruct the normal workings of the market.

⁷⁷Once while on a panel discussing trade policy, I made a reference to the effort in the 1990s to tighten industry requirements in order to reduce the number of foreign-born doctors who could practice in this country. My fellow panelist, a prominent trade economist, said that he didn’t know anything about the restriction and acted as though it had nothing to do with his line of work. This should have been a hugely embarrassing admission for a trade economist. There is far more money at stake in the salaries of doctors in the United States than in the various trade agreements that have been the topic of much political debate, or in the few instances in which the United States has imposed special trade restrictions (e.g., the Buy America provision of the stimulus) to assist a troubled industry.

⁷⁸Those concerned about too many immigrants entering the country need not worry. There are about 4.5 million workers with doctorates or professional degrees in the United States. Even if foreign professionals equal to half this number entered the country over the next decade, the annual flow would total just 230,000 workers, or less than 20 percent of the projected flow of immigrants over the next decade. If there is a desire to keep the total flow of immigrants below some fixed level, then the number of people allowed to enter the country to work in construction, hotels, and restaurants can be reduced to offset the number of additional professionals entering the country.

⁷⁹Employers are already aggressively following this approach with regard to foreign nurses, pushing to ease immigration restrictions in order to bring in ever-larger numbers of nurses with the explicit intent of lowering their wages. If this effort

can be redirected toward doctors and others at the top of the pay ladder, then there is an opportunity for large economic gains that benefit nearly everyone.

⁸⁰Medical trade is often referred to as “medical tourism.” This is an unfortunate term because it trivializes what could be a life-saving trip in which a patient goes overseas to get an essential medical procedure that he or she could not afford in the United States.

⁸¹The downward pressure will be greatest for those at the top for the simple reason that these people enjoy the greatest economic rents. As much as physicians may complain about their inadequate pay, they have few choices since they are already at the top of the pay scale. Specialists earning \$300,000 a year have few comparable employment options. If their pay were cut to \$180,000 they would not do better by leaving medicine and going to work as clerks in a shoe store. On the other hand, those lower down the pay ladder have less to lose by leaving their professions. If pay were cut substantially for nurses, nurses’ assistants, lab technicians, and other lower- and middle-paying occupations, these jobs would more likely go unfilled.

⁸²This policy is outlined in Baker and Rho (2009). Since many Medicare beneficiaries are enrolled in the Medicaid program, the potential savings per beneficiary can run into the tens of thousands of dollars a year, using current projections.

⁸³The Commerce Department reported that in 2009 the United States imported \$8.9 billion of business and professional services from India, while it exported only \$1.3 billion (<http://www.bea.gov/international/xls/tab5a.xls>).

⁸⁴These figures come from the Commerce Department’s National Income and Product Accounts, Tables 6.2B and 6.2D. The securities and investment portion of private-sector employee compensation rose from 0.5 percent in 1975 (lines 55 and 89) to 2.4 percent in 2009 (lines 59 and 61).

⁸⁵Control over the timing of earnings may also be at the expense of shareholders. For example, this mechanism may make it easier for top executives to time earnings in ways that ensure that they will meet bonus targets.

⁸⁶IMF (2010).

⁸⁷Even in cases where deposit insurance is provided privately, there is still an expectation that the government will stand behind these insurers in a crisis, since the consequences of letting a major private bank insurance fund go bankrupt would be disastrous.

⁸⁸Baker and McArthur (2009).

⁸⁹See U.S. Departments of Treasury and Housing and Urban Development (2011).

⁹⁰An analysis by Zandi and deRitis (2011) was widely held up as supporting a proposal for a new system of government guarantees. Their analysis estimated that a system of government guarantees would reduce the interest rate on 30-year fixed-rate mortgages by approximately 90 basis points (0.9 percentage points). This reduction in interest rates would be almost fully offset by an increase of approximately 8 percent in average home prices, leaving typical homeowners paying almost the same amount in their monthly mortgage payment. The analysis didn’t show the full economic effects of this subsidy, but higher home prices would be expected to lead to more consumption through the wealth effect, implying reduced investment and slower growth.

⁹¹This is in addition to the payment reductions associated with adverse selection, where insurers reduce annual payments under the assumption that people who buy annuities have longer life expectancies than the population as a whole.

⁹²It can also be made a default option in which a portion of workers’ wages (e.g., 3 percent) is put into a savings fund every year, unless the worker opts out. If workers actively decided that they preferred to have the money to spend now or preferred some other savings vehicle, they need only decline the savings option (Baker and Rosnick, 2011). Several recent studies indicate that many workers will save more in situations where it is a default option. This proposal and others rely on this evidence.

⁹³For example, David John at the Heritage Foundation co-authored a paper advocating a government-managed voluntary system of defined-contribution pensions (Iwry and John, 2009).

⁹⁴See Popper (2010).

⁹⁵IMF (2010).

⁹⁶Remarkably, many of these CEOs continue to be sought-after executives. Daniel Mudd and Richard Fuld, the CEOs who, respectively, led Fannie Mae and Lehman into bankruptcy, both are again employed in high-paying jobs in finance.

⁹⁷The “say on pay” provision of the Dodd-Frank financial reform bill requires companies to have nonbinding shareholder votes on executive compensation packages. This is a step forward that will at least call greater attention to outlandish pay packages, but by itself is likely to have little effect on CEO pay.

⁹⁸This figure is derived from the industry’s claim that the value that it assigns to “pirated” software was \$59 billion in 2010 and that this was equal to 42 percent of total software shipments; see Business Software Alliance (2011).

⁹⁹Milliot (2010).

¹⁰⁰Newzoo (2011).

¹⁰¹There is a whole industry of “patent trolls,” individuals or firms that buy up patents with the hope of finding a major innovation that is arguably derivative of the patent in question. The profit comes from filing a patent infringement suit. The troll just needs to be able to make a plausible case so that it can threaten the company with the possibility of an expensive legal suit and/or an injunction denying the company the use of the technology. This is generally sufficient to force a settlement even if the case for actual infringement is weak.

¹⁰²These mechanisms are described more fully in Baker (2004).

¹⁰³Patients often have multiple ailments, so it would be important to know if a particular heart medication was likely to have bad effects for people who are being treated for arthritis. It is also likely that drugs might differ in effectiveness based on characteristics like sex, age, and weight. Typically drug companies will not provide the information necessary to make these sorts of assessments.

¹⁰⁴This mechanism is outlined more fully in Baker (2003).

¹⁰⁵Simple restrictions could go far toward eliminating some of the obvious opportunities for small-scale fraud. For example, requiring that an individual or organization get some minimal amount (e.g., \$2,500) would prevent any sort of simple trade-off scheme in which individuals exchanged their vouchers among themselves. Arranging for 25 people to give their vouchers to one person or organization in a kickback scheme might be possible, but it would involve considerable effort and risk for limited gain.

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¹⁰⁷Hundreds of textbooks available for free download can be found at Open Education Resources Commons: <http://www.oercommons.org/>.

¹⁰⁸Lewin (2011).

¹⁰⁹Rosnick and Baker (2011a).

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About the Author (and his dog)

Dean Baker is an economist and the co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research (www.cepr.net). He is the author of *Taking Economics Seriously*, *False Profits: Recovering from the Bubble Economy*, *Plunder and Blunder: The Rise and Fall of the Bubble Economy*, *The United States Since 1980*, *The Conservative Nanny State: How the Wealthy Use the Government to Stay Rich and Get Richer*, *Social Security: The Phony Crisis* (with Mark Weisbrot), and *The Benefits of Full Employment* (with Jared Bernstein). He was the editor of *Getting Prices Right: The Debate Over the Consumer Price Index*, which was a winner of a Choice Book Award as one of the outstanding academic books of the year. He appears frequently on TV and radio programs, including CNN, CBS News, PBS News Hour, and National Public Radio. His blog, "Beat the Press," features commentary on economic reporting. He received his B.A. from Swarthmore College and his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Michigan.

Biscuit is a 10-year old lapdog. He is retired from his career as unwanted pet. Biscuit's former owner surrendered him to the Washington Humane Society due to economic hardship. He went to foster care and was adopted quickly. However, his new owner returned him half a year later because of health problems. Biscuit quickly settled into his old foster home and this time was determined to stay. He succeeded. His foster parents adopted him after failing to find a home for him. Biscuit graduated from the Washington Humane Society's Learning and Behavioral Center with a degree in Well-Mannered

Dog. He is currently in training for his Canine Good Citizen certificate and would love to become a therapy dog working in retirement homes. He lives in Washington, DC with Dean Baker, Helene, and his two sisters Kiwi-the-shep-mix and Olive-the-Doberman.

[20111011-10](#) 19:41 Mary Re: Illegal Immigration

Dear SteveB,

I understand your "issue" is immigration, so I wondered what you thought about SB1070, and the fact that the federal government is suing AZ over it. I also understand, although I can't authenticate my source, that 1/3 of felons in AZ prisons are illegals. Looks like U.S. tax dollars are taking care of them one way or another, huh? How is it that Obama and Holder are on the side of the drug cartel? Guess I'm just old school, but I expect my government to protect its citizens against "foreign and domestic enemies". Just wanted to get y'all going again!

[20111012-01](#) 06:05 SteveB Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

So happy to see the healthcare / "Obamacare" issue debated. I don't know of anything more important.

I am absolutely appalled that anyone would think "Obamacare" is what has sunk the economy. Ludicrous (or Ludacris!)!

We have "socialized" medicine here in Bolivia, and it works very well. Doctors are happy and it doesn't break the bank of even a poor country (yet poor Bolivia has no national debt). I feel much more secure here than I would in the States as far as my medical care goes. I believe Pam is right about Canada being a model system too.

The numbers [partly obscured by the recession] show that Obama is doing a much better job than George Bush at border security and handling illegals, but it's still not nearly enough. It's not my biggest issue, but I think border security is important. And I don't share all this agony, guilt, or suffering over the issue. Regardless, given the relative performance of the last two Presidents, I don't see this as any issue to make me go running into the outstretched arms of Rick Perry or any other Republican candidate. But neither party has shown much courage in dealing with illegal immigration, have they?

To me, it's just one more area that is not being handled by our non-functioning government.

MY BIGGEST ISSUE IS THE CORRUPTION OF OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM VIA HUGE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS THAT MUST BE PAID BACK WITH FAVORS!!!! WE NEED REAL CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM TO EVER BE ABLE TO RETURN TO A WORKING DEMOCRACY.

And I must try to remember my morning mantra: The Founding Fathers did not want us to have a functioning government because of their extreme mistrust of government. (Now, if there was just a way for this extremist philosophy to help us solve our problems...)

[20111012-02](#) 06:12 SteveB Re: Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich..."

Dear Pam,

I certainly will (see it). Love it! Thank you. This is what we need, more clear talk. And I loved your last email about healthcare and couldn't agree more. When I think about all the children needlessly suffering and dying... I hate that this part of the political system is controlled by the greed of doctors and big corporations, to the detriment of patients and non-patients alike. Everyone knows the current system is broken, but the greed prevents the repair.

[20111012-03](#) 06:18 SteveB Re: Video: "What If Everyone Saw This Clip of Robert Reich..."

This is some clear thinking and talking from Pam and Robert Reich. The site was so busy this morning that I had a little trouble with the first link, so if it doesn't work, maybe try one of the others.

What are your thoughts?

<http://bit.ly/nFXUy8>

<http://front.moveon.org/what-if-everyone-saw-this-clip-of-robert-reich-exposing-7-gop-lies>

<http://front.moveon.org/>

20111012-04 06:26 SteveB Re: *The End of Loser Liberalism...*

Dear Dennis,

WOW!

20111012-05 06:27 Pam Re: Our Group

Dear Steve,

Question: Why are some people dropping off your list? It doesn't seem to me that anyone has been too ugly, though I suppose if this were a right-wing group I'd want off too. I just think that if people keep talking and not just shouting past each other, and if everyone truly wants what's best, regardless of politics, then eventually we could work our way out of this mess. I think there's something flawed in human nature itself that dooms us from the get go. Like hyena babies that when they're born the stronger one kills the weaker one right off.

Savage. That's us.

20111012-06 08:02 GaryC Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Dear SteveB,

If Socialized medicine is so great, why is your hero Cesar Chavez going out of country for treatments instead of staying in Venezuela? Is it because the facilities suck, the doctors are leaving the country in the middle of the night and normal people wait months for operations?

In fairness, (since I believe in the full story not half truths), he is going to Cuba for treatment. But, it is still ironic. Cuba can be explained by the fact that most of their resources go to the health care system and restoring old cars.

20111012-07 09:26 Clark Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Dear GaryC,

This is a total non-sequitor and red herring. You're confusing the health care system (most likely backward in Venezuela—did Venezuela have a good medical system before Chavez?) with access to health care, which is the problem in the U.S. The U.S. has top-flight facilities but millions of people effectively lack access to them due to lack of insurance or the money to pay even if they have insurance (which often sucks). Why do you think more and more Americans are traveling to India for their health care? Because it's cheap. World leaders can afford to go where the best facilities are, but many of our own citizens cannot. And the world leaders won't be turned away—or turned down for care by our stingy, profit-hungry insurance companies. And yes, Chavez did go to Cuba, which by your own admission has damn good socialized medicine—as well as access to it by its own citizens. And their auto repair shops are amazing. And their mojitos. Wouldn't want to be in prison there, though, or waiting in a food line. Why can't we have affordable health care access along with relative political and economic freedom?

20111012-08 09:50 Pam Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Dear Clark and GaryC,

That's the big question, Clark. Why can't we have both? I think it's because too many people are making money out of the system we have now, and they don't want to give it up. I don't know how the medical profession felt about socialized medicine in Britain in 1948, but they didn't have a choice. Now the Brits feel about the National Health the way we do about Social Security—keep your hands off! I know some will say their system has flaws; so does everything a human being puts his hands on. But overall, by every measurement, America is NOT tops when it comes to health care. Our infant mortality, to name just one indicator, is nowhere near the top. Sure, if you live in Boston or New York and have a Cadillac insurance plan, you can get the latest thing. But if you live in Podunk, U.S., or in a building covered with graffiti, you'd better have luck on your side.

It seems to me that our attitude towards money is a big part of what holds us back. The love of money is the root of all evil, and all that. I fully understand the anxiety felt by middle class people who, if they lost half their income, would be poor. But those who never have to count the cost of anything should give a little. I used to know a family in Indiana who were, at least to my eyes, rich, probably the richest people I've ever been close to. Here's what they did with all that money: adopted a Korean orphan, served in the Peace Corps, put two Ethiopian boys through Purdue, started and ran (in a specially designed room in their house) the county humane society, built that house by hand in a cornfield, supported an art gallery, and who knows what else. They lived a comfortable life, but they didn't sit on their wealth like a dragon sits on treasure. Great, you say, but people should be free to decide what to do with their own money. Well, past a certain point, I'm not so sure. If more people had jobs and good health care and a decent place to live and affordable education for their children, we wouldn't need Occupy Wall Street. Everyone could just get on with their lives. But too many of us don't have those things. Too many of us are like Charles Dickens, who as a hungry child stood outside a pastry shop with his nose pressed against the glass, wishing for what he couldn't have. I wish Dickens were alive today. He'd have a thing or two to say about Wall Street, Big Pharma, and the rest.

20111012-09	11:21	Pam	Re: Our Group
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Here I go again.

First, about this group. For months (years?) I went around boiling with anger at what was going on in our economy and our politics. I'm not an angry person, so I found these feelings very troubling. I didn't want to feel the way I was feeling and no amount of discussion with my like-minded friends seemed to help much. We expressed our anger and went home still feeling mad as hell.

Then I found this group—or it found me—and I started slowing down enough to think. Writing focuses my mind, perhaps because of my training, and leads me to clarify my arguments in such a way that I hope they have a chance of maybe changing somebody's mind. When I do this, I no longer feel so angry. All that emotion gets drained off in writing these posts. I feel less angry and troubled, and that's a good thing. I welcome different points of view, because I really do want to get as close to the truth as possible. This isn't "My dad can beat up your dad." We have serious problems, and it's foolish to waste our breath ranting when we need to be figuring things out. (The occasional rant is OK by me. We don't want to get too stodgy.)

Was it you, Dennis, who recommended the article in the *New Yorker* on Keynes? I just read it and found it most enlightening. If he isn't reasonable, I don't know who is. He was a pragmatist, not an ideologue. He saw through Marxism and communism when other intellectuals got sucked down a rabbit hole. I know argument by analogy proves nothing, but it can be illustrative. Compare an 18th c. physician to a 21st c. doctor. Both want to save their patient. The 18th c. doc opens a vein, weakening the poor slob gasping for breath. The 21st c. healer prescribes an antibiotic, and the patient is well in ten days. You can't say the 18th c. doctor didn't have good intentions. He wanted to preserve life, right here, right now.

Now compare Marxism or Stalinism to capitalism. Capitalism is meant to float all boats, make life better and richer for people alive today, without worrying about what creed or ideology they believe in. Stalin wanted to remake humanity. He wanted to cram that stepsister's foot into Cinderella's shoe, and he actually believed he could do it. BELIEF doesn't make things WORK. Capitalism is not a belief system. Everything I read tells me that when our gov't. has spent money to get us out of a recession, it has worked. You don't have to take antibiotics forever to get over pneumonia; you don't have to have a stimulus or a jobs bill forever to get things going. But letting nature take its course is not the way to go.

[20111012-10](#) 11:32 Mark Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Actually access to healthcare facilities in the U.S. is not the problem here.....my wife works in an emergency room.....anyone that can drag themselves to an emergency room in any small town or large city will be seen. They're seen and treated even if they don't have a dime to spend. That's a whole 'nother problem. Using an emergency room as a " family doctor" has become a common occurrence. I'm sure you've read some stories about hospitalized illegal aliens that are receiving rx. at a hospital and have run up costs in the millions.....the hospitals have attempted to repatriate the patient due to the costs...

[Yet access to healthcare is still a big problem. Try going to an Emergency Room for cancer treatment or dialysis. — SteveB]

[20111012-11](#) 11:35 Pam Re: Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I love getting email too, and most of it these days is coming from the group. I find our discussions very energizing. I don't know how to post to the group without clicking Reply though. Can you help me there?

I wondered if you were open to adding people. I know at least one person who might be interested. She's a dear friend, living in RI, who shares most, if not all, of my views. She's also very articulate. I will float the idea to her.

[20111012-12](#) 11:44 Clark Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy

Dear Mark,

True, as far as it goes. Rather than "facilities" I should have said the health care system as a whole, which includes necessary tests, preventative care and check-ups, non-emergency treatments and surgeries, prenatal care etc etc, all the things that go way beyond the emergency room for those who can't afford them or have inadequate insurance.

You've certainly identified one of the things most wrong with our system, the reliance on emergency rooms for medical care that often otherwise would be handled in a doctor's office. This is an expensive, wasteful system that taxpayers often pick up the tab for, or hospitals pass the costs along to other patients. It's insane, and one of the things Health Care Reform is attempting to address by making sure everyone has insurance.

[20111012-13](#) 13:19 Dennis "Something's Happening Here"

from Pam:

Capitalism is not a belief system. Everything I read tells me that when our government has spent money to get us out of a recession, it has worked. You don't have to take antibiotics forever to get over pneumonia; you don't have to have a stimulus or a jobs bill forever to get things going. But letting nature take its course is not the way to go.

Dear Pam,

With all due respect for Keynesian theory I think it is not more than an antibiotic to temporarily treat the symptoms of a hemorrhaging unsustainable capitalism. Thomas Friedman's column today spells it out. [below]

The right suffers from believing in an illusion of capitalism that doesn't exist. Their ideological solutions are even based on theories by Hayek, Milton Friedman, et al, that they don't even comprehend and then misrepresent. They believe that economics can be determined by political alchemy, sort of a version of Mao Zedong's "politics in command" theory that was so disastrous for China. That's why it's so futile trying to discuss these ideas with them. The whole capitalist system will implode around them and they will remain clueless.

"Something's Happening Here" by Thomas Friedman, *The New York Times*

Oct. 12, 2011, (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/12/opinion/theres-something-happening-here.html?_r=1&ref=thomasfriedman)

When you see spontaneous social protests erupting from Tunisia to Tel Aviv to Wall Street, it's clear that something is happening globally that needs defining. There are two unified theories out there that intrigue me. One says this is the start of "The Great Disruption." The other says that this is all part of "The Big Shift." You decide.

Paul Gilding, the Australian environmentalist and author of the book "The Great Disruption," argues that these demonstrations are a sign that the current growth-obsessed capitalist system is reaching its financial and ecological limits. "I look at the world as an integrated system, so I don't see these protests, or the debt crisis, or inequality, or the economy, or the climate going weird, in isolation—I see our system in the painful process of breaking down," which is what he means by the Great Disruption, said Gilding. "Our system of economic growth, of ineffective democracy, of overloading planet earth—our system—is eating itself alive. Occupy Wall Street is like the kid in the fairy story saying what everyone knows but is afraid to say: the emperor has no clothes. The system is broken. Think about the promise of global market capitalism. If we let the system work, if we let the rich get richer, if we let corporations focus on profit, if we let pollution go unpriced and unchecked, then we will all be better off. It may not be equally distributed, but the poor will get less poor, those who work hard will get jobs, those who study hard will get better jobs and we'll have enough wealth to fix the environment.

"What we now have—most extremely in the U.S. but pretty much everywhere—is the mother of all broken promises," Gilding adds. "Yes, the rich are getting richer and the corporations are making profits—with their executives richly rewarded. But, meanwhile, the people are getting worse off—drowning in housing debt and/or tuition debt—many who worked hard are unemployed; many who studied hard are unable to get good work; the environment is getting more and more damaged; and people are realizing their kids will be even worse off than they are. This particular round of protests may build or may not, but what will not go away is the broad coalition of those to whom the system lied and who have now woken up. It's not just the environmentalists, or the poor, or the unemployed. It's most people, including the highly educated middle class, who are feeling the results of a system that saw all the growth of the last three decades go to the top 1 percent."

Not so fast, says John Hagel III, who is the co-chairman of the Center for the Edge at Deloitte, along with John Seely Brown. In their recent book, "The Power of Pull," they suggest that we're in the early stages of a "Big Shift," precipitated by the merging of globalization and the Information Technology Revolution. In the early stages, we experience this Big Shift as mounting pressure, deteriorating performance and growing stress because we continue to operate with institutions and practices that are increasingly dysfunctional—so the eruption of protest movements is no surprise.

Yet, the Big Shift also unleashes a huge global flow of ideas, innovations, new collaborative possibilities and new market opportunities. This flow is constantly getting richer and faster. Today, they argue, tapping the global flow becomes the key to productivity, growth and prosperity. But to tap this flow effectively, every country, company and individual needs to be constantly growing their talents.

"We are living in a world where flow will prevail and topple any obstacles in its way," says Hagel. "As flow gains momentum, it undermines the precious knowledge stocks that in the past gave us security and wealth. It calls on us to learn faster by working together and to pull out of ourselves more of our true potential, both individually and collectively. It excites us with the possibilities that can only be realized by participating in a broader range of flows. That is the essence of the Big Shift."

Yes, corporations now have access to more cheap software, robots, automation, labor and genius than ever. So holding a job takes more talent. But the flip side is that individuals—individuals—anywhere can now access the flow to take online courses at Stanford from a village in Africa, to start a new company with customers everywhere or to collaborate with people anywhere. We have more big problems than ever and more problem-solvers than ever.

So there you have it: Two master narratives—one threat-based, one opportunity-based, but both involving seismic changes. Gilding is actually an optimist at heart. He believes that while the Great Disruption is inevitable, humanity is best in a crisis, and, once it all hits, we will rise to the occasion and produce transformational economic and social change (using tools of the Big Shift). Hagel is also an optimist. He knows the Great Disruption may be barreling down on us, but

he believes that the Big Shift has also created a world where more people than ever have the tools, talents and potential to head it off. My heart is with Hagel, but my head says that you ignore Gilding at your peril.

You decide.

[20111012-14](#) 14:07 Jim Re: Our Group

I just threw out all the old stuff that had accumulated on this title. At least half of it was a paragraph of addresses and a one or two line comment but the topics went back to Oct. 8 and ranged from the postal funding through several presidents, medical care or the lack thereof and immigration etc., etc.

It is convenient to hit reply all and keep the topic header but let's clean up after ourselves occasionally or start a new topic and actually type in addresses. Or you can reply with this one and delete my message. Thank you.

[20111012-15](#) 14:17 SteveB Re: Our Group

Dear Pam,

Well...the medium is not perfect...but I'm not sure blogs always are either. Mmmmm...

When I open one of my two main mailboxes in the mornings, I find a lot of email and I'm used to it. And I'm not counting the stuff in my Junk mailbox that wants to make my thing bigger and stronger and help me through menopause, rich from an incredibly great banking error in my favor in Nigeria.

I take a few seconds and delete the marketing stuff I'm not presently interested in.

Put the travel deals in the travel folder. Handle business. Then I'm happy to have a very few personal emails directly to me. Then I'm happy to have emails from my friends with jokes, satire, tips, links, articles, or whatever. And I'm very happy to have emails from our "group" about important subjects.

Some people don't like too much email and, for some reason, fight it tooth and nail. Some people don't like "politics". We'll get them weeded out. Their loss, in my estimation.

I think Jim's suggestion today of starting new threads more often and deleting stuff from existing threads to keep things smaller should help. I've been trying to do that for a while. And I need to ask everyone to think about and inquire of people on their email lists who might share our concerns if they might like to join the discussion. All my life I have always gone under the assumption that my friends' friends are my friends, and that has usually served me well. And it's a group I've always been impressed with.

Yes, I've already pretty much made up my mind. But I want to learn how we change people and how they went wrong in the first place. Hopeless, probably, but hope springs eternal.

[20111012-16](#) 14:24 Jim Re: Our Group

Dear Jim,

Excellent idea. I, for one, am going to start doing a better job with the cleanup. Thank you!

[20111012-17](#) 15:28 Pam Re: *The End of Loser Liberalism...*

Dear Dennis,

This is very good. I think Friedman has it right. I have no idea which view is going to prevail. Are we at the end of something and heading for the abyss, or is this the beginning of a brave new world? Whichever way it goes, a lot of

people are going to get chewed up in the process. I've never been much of an optimist; I wish I were. If the climate keeps getting ever more inhospitable, politics is going to be the least of our worries.

I just read another article in this week's *New Yorker*—about Art Pope, a conservative moneybags who is buying up the state where I live: North Carolina. I found the article as chilling as anything I've read lately, especially as I have seen firsthand the effects of his influence. He has decimated the state university system, just for a start. I can't help feeling that the Right is on a roll. I feel like we're being engulfed by ideologues who have forgotten or never knew what life was like in Britain during the 18th & 19th c. laissez faire market and industrial revolution. England avoided revolution in the mid-19th c. (in my view, at least) by instituting a series of Reform Bills that expanded the franchise. These reforms were not necessarily an attempt at fairness; they were a frightened response to the riots in the streets and the Luddites who were smashing up factories. William Blake wrote poems about little chimney sweeps dying of cancer of the scrotum caused by exposure to soot, and laws were enacted to protect workers from abuse, exploitation, and dangerous working conditions. Read Engels on the London poor if you want your hair raised. Sometimes it's been two steps forward, one step back, but over the last couple of centuries, we have made progress. Now I see it slipping away. An ugly mindset has become not just acceptable but popular.

Up until the 19th c. in England, charity was left to local parish churches. Gentlewomen took baskets of food to starving widows and orphans, which made those ladies feel good and the poor families beholden. Those who slipped too far down the economic ladder were sent to workhouses, where families were split up and children were put to work picking oakum out of rope—a nasty job. SteveG posted a video about the plight of migrant-worker children (either here or on Facebook), which shows that even today similar abuses are occurring. I know that when I buy out-of-season raspberries I am complicit in an unfair system, but I'm weak and I like raspberries. That's why fairness has to be socially implemented, not left up to personal caprice. I think that's why moral arguments, persuasive as they might be, are no match for self-interest. If our system collapses, the rich are going down just as surely as the rest of us.

20111012-18	17:34	GaryF	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
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This is the problem, if you don't have insurance you go to the emergency room, where you get trauma treatment at the very least. If we had universal health care the emergency rooms would not be so crowded because people could go to a doctor, and the hospitals wouldn't have to make up for the lost revenue by charging those of us with insurance.

20111012-19	18:23	SteveG	Fw: DCCC Petition: Call for an Immediate Investigation into Koch Industries' Business Dealings with Iran
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from DCCC:

Controversial Republican billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch — who have spent untold millions bankrolling right-wing candidates and causes — are now the subject of a new Bloomberg investigation that shows Koch Industries profited from business with Iran.

This is all despite American trade sanctions against Iran and the country's known links to financing terrorists. House Republican Leadership's response: Silence.

This is unacceptable. We can't let this stand.

Sign our petition right now calling for Speaker Boehner and House Republicans to immediately demand an investigation of Koch Industries' business dealings with Iran:

<http://www.dccc.org/pages/kochbrothers>.

20111013-01	07:25	SteveG	Why Republicans Like Cain's 9-9-9 Plan
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From comments at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/44881446>:

9-9-9. Really?

1. This is kiddy code for reducing (1) the highest marginal income brackets and (2) the capital gains rate. All while increasing sales and use taxes that would disproportionately impact those of us who spend all or most of our income (which would thus be subject to taxation).
2. Under 9-9-9, assuming you're like the 98% of Americas who spend basically all of their income, your tax would be 18%. you'd get taxed once when you made it and once when you spent it. Notably, since the rich spend only a very tiny portion of their income (think 10%), their effective tax rate would be somewhere around 10%.
3. One thing is for sure, the poor will pay more!
4. For the rich, the 9-9-9 tax plan would reduce taxes for most. For the poor, the 9-9-9 plan would increase taxes...devastating for the very poor. I assume charitable donation and mortgage interest deductions would cease...devastating to non-profit organizations and the Middle Class.
5. This is just another attempt to balance the budget on the backs of the poor...especially the poor brown and black brothers of one Herman Cain. Let me spell the real 9-9-9 plan for you: G-R-E-E-D!

20111013-02 07:45 SteveB Why Democrats Don't Like Obama

This is what Obama had to say on Tuesday:

I was mentioning to some of the basketball players who were here that this is like the second quarter, maybe the third, and we've still got a lot of work to do. But I want everybody to know I'm a fourth-quarter player.

I guess that explains why he hasn't done anything so far, including leading the country. He's saving himself until the very end! Now I get it. I just wish that during the last election, when we were in a state of national crisis, Obama would have mentioned to us voters that we shouldn't expect him to actually do anything until, maybe, his last few months in office.

(Though I still would never have been able to bring myself to vote for that old, senile guy and his ignorant sidekick. I guess I would have had to wait on the sidelines, hoping the 4th quarter would bring better candidates. But no such luck.)

20111013-03 08:18 SteveB "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

"What Should the White House Do? Panic!" by James Carville, CNN

Sept. 18, 2011, (<http://www.cnn.com/2011/09/14/opinion/carville-white-house-advice/index.html>)

(Obviously, the White House didn't listen...)

(Editor's note: James Carville is a Democratic strategist who serves as a political contributor for CNN, appearing frequently on CNN's "The Situation Room" as well as other programs on all CNN networks. Carville remains active in Democratic politics and is a party fundraiser.)

People often ask me what advice I would give the White House about various things. Today I was mulling over election results from New York and Nevada while thinking about that very question.

What should the White House do now? One word came to mind: Panic!

We are far past sending out talking points. Do not attempt to dumb it down. We cannot stand any more explanations. Have you talked to any Democratic senators lately? I have. It's pretty damn clear they are not happy campers.

This is what I would say to President Barack Obama: The time has come to demand a plan of action that requires a complete change from the direction you are headed. I don't know how else to break this down. Simply put:

1. Fire somebody.

No—fire a lot of people! This may be news to you but this is not going well. For precedent, see Russian Army 64th division at Stalingrad. There were enough deaths at Stalingrad to make the entire tea party collectively orgasm. Mr. President, your hinge of fate must turn. Bill Clinton fired many people in 1994 and took a lot of heat for it. Reagan fired most of his campaign staff in 1980.

Republicans historically fired their own speaker, Newt Gingrich. Bush fired Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. For God's sake, why are we still looking at the same political and economic advisers that got us into this mess? It's not working. Furthermore, it's not going to work with the same team, the same strategy and the same excuses. I know economic analysts are smart—some work 17-hour days. It's time to show them the exit. Wake up—show us you are doing something.

2. Indict people.

There are certain people in American finance who haven't been held responsible for utterly ruining the economic fabric of our country. Demand from the attorney general a clear status of the state of investigation concerning these extraordinary injustices imposed upon the American people. I know Attorney General Eric Holder is a close friend of yours, but if his explanations aren't good, fire him too. Demand answers to why no one has been indicted.

Mr. President, people are livid. Tell people that you, too, are angry and sickened by the irresponsible actions on Wall Street that caused so much suffering. Do not accept excuses. Demand action now.

3. Make a case like a Democrat.

While we are going along with the Republican austerity garbage, who is making the case against it? It's not the Democrats! We are allowing the over-educated, over-explanatory bureaucrat by the name of (Congressional Budget Office director Douglas) Elmendorf do all the talking. Do not let him make your case. Let us make your case. Is it any wonder that we were doing better in the middle of the stimulus-spending period than we are doing with the austerity program?

4. Hold fast to an explanation.

Stick to your rationale for what has happened and what is going to happen under your leadership. You must carry this through until the election (never say that things are improving because evidently they are not).

As I watch the Republican debates, I realize that we are on the brink of a crazy person running our nation. I sit in front of the television and shudder at the thought of one of these creationism-loving, global-warming-denying, immigration-bashing, Social-Security-cutting, clean-air-hating, mortality-fascinated, Wall-Street-protecting Republicans running my country.

The course we are on is not working. The hour is late, and the need is great. Fire. Indict. Fight.

20111013-04	08:50	SteveB	Re: Obamacare Helped Destroy the Economy
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Dear Mark,

The GAO states that the new health care legislation could provide “notable improvement” to our economic outlook. Tell me once again what it is that the Republicans find so distasteful about this.

“The federal government faces long-term fiscal pressures that predate the economic downturn and are driven on the spending side largely by rising health care costs and an aging population. GAO’s simulations show continually increasing levels of debt that are unsustainable over the long-term. Under the Alternative simulation, debt held by the public as a share of GDP would exceed the historical high reached in the aftermath of World War II by 2020. Both of these simulations incorporate effects of health care legislation enacted in Mar., 2010, which includes a number of provisions to control the growth of healthcare costs. **GAO finds fiscal “notable improvement” in “Obamacare.”**”

Republicans hate it.

[20111013-05](#) 08:51 Pam Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear SteveB,

I think James Carville is creepy, and I love that guy on Sat. Night Live who does an imitation of him. But he's right on the money here. People ARE livid. I'd like to see some heads roll and some accountability, but more importantly we need to follow Keynes' advice.

I know this sounds crazy, but do you think there will ever be a unified global economy, along the lines of the euro (rip)? Would it ever be possible for every person in the world to have opportunity and a decent income? Or does there always have to be an underclass to prop the rest up?

[20111013-06](#) 08:52 Pam Re: Why Republicans Like Cain's 9-9-9 Plan

Dear SteveB,

Total agreement here. My best friend, Laurie, LOVES Herman Cain and his 999 boondoggle. I can't see it. It's so obvious to me that 999 is good to the rich and horrible to the poor and middle class. I never liked Steve Forbes' 17% flat tax either.

[20111013-07](#) 09:02 GaryC Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Great points by James. [Carville —SteveB]

However, this is what you get when you elect a community organizer who never did anything in the ILL or U.S. Senate, other than vote present. (Disclaimer: I didn't like the other choice either.) One point I want to make about Carville though is that as long as he wants to indict Wall Street, you need to add Frank, Dodd, Reid, and Pelosi who made this mess happen in the first place.

[You mean when they weren't really in power? Because that's when the "mess happened in the first place." —SteveB]

[20111013-08](#) 09:15 Bill Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Pam,

Good questions, and perhaps Keynes would agree, but he would advise, I'm sure, that Congress balance the budget as soon as possible or, better, generate a surplus to pay down debt. Since the Congress, for purposes of a balanced budget, seems unwilling to restrain spending or impose more or higher rates of taxation, the answer seems elusive.

[20111013-09](#) 9:21 Charis Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear GaryC,

The Dodd-Frank Act was designed to ensure multinational companies of the extractive industries (primarily mining, oil and gas) avoid practices such as "transfer pricing" and to ensure they report their costs and profits on a country by country basis, for each and every one of their subsidiaries. It was designed to ensure their illegal use of transfer pricing and tax havens is cut short so they will be obligated to report and pay all the taxes they are supposed to pay in each country in which they work.

[20111013-10](#) 09:40 GaryC Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Charis,

Dodd and Franks should be indicted for the housing mess they helped to create and perpetuate.

[Oh, but no Republicans should be indicted for the 2008 Crash? —SteveB]

[20111013-11](#) 09:44 GaryC Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Pam,

Keynes' theory has been pretty much repudiated by none other than the Nobel Prize committee, hardly a bastion of conservatism. check this out.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203499704576622840100251326.html?KEYWORDS=nobel+prize+economics>

[See article below: "The Return of Rational Expectations" —SteveB]

[20111013-12](#) 09:51 Pam Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear GaryC,

Did you read the *New Yorker* article? I'd like to know what you think of it. Also, explain why the economy improved with the stimulus, then tanked again when the stimulus ran out. :-) (That's a friendly smile, not a sarcastic one. You can't be too careful.)

[20111013-13](#) 10:16 GaryC Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Pam,

I can't say that I have totally read enough about the Obama stimulus to make a really educated "guess" but I think the stimulus did not work because it did not really create jobs. A lot of the money was used to keep teachers, firemen and state employees employed. It not create construction jobs as promised because of the fact that the planning and permitting had not been done. In my simplistic opinion, it was a temporary band aid done to appease the voters who put Obama in office. It did not address infrastructure or systemic issues with the economy. It certainly helped a few people and it reduced some misery but the cost per job is way higher than what the private economy could have done if the same amount of money had been "invested" in the U.S.

Unfortunately, we who pay taxes will be bearing the burden of this "mistake" for a long, long time. Here is the worst statistic from this fiasco. 30% of black males under 25 are unemployed in our major U.S. cities. So the very people who vote blindly for him are the worst hit by this recession.

Yes, I know, George Bush created this mess!

[20111013-14](#) 11:25 Pam Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear GaryC and Bill,

OK, the economy hasn't tanked, not with all those corporate profits we keep hearing about. We all agree that joblessness is the biggest issue at the moment. I know that spending yourself out of a recession is counter-intuitive, but what's the alternative? Firing teachers, social workers, firefighters, police? If money can be spent to rescue the banks, and I understand why that was done, then why can't money be "invested" in people on the street? If the banks won't give credit to small business entrepreneurs and potential home buyers, then the money has to come from somewhere. I say, let the govt. kick in and get money flowing.

Maybe if we could unlock the engine, we wouldn't have to keep providing a jump start. What's going to MAKE people and businesses spend money and expand? Isn't money what is needed? Let's see, who's got some?

20111013-15

12:03

GaryC

Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!" & "The Return of Rational Expectations" & "Economists Win Nobel for Focus on Real World"

Dear Pam,

Here are the articles if you cannot get to them. Interesting read.

"The Return of Rational Expectations" by Paul Gigot and Dan Henninger, *WSJ*

Oct. 12, 2011, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203499704576622840100251326.html>)

(On the Nobel Prize in Economics winners and this week's GOP debate.)

This year's winners of the Nobel Prize in economics have played key roles in developing what we now call modern macroeconomics. But we wouldn't blame Thomas Sargent and Christopher Sims if they feel less than fully welcome these days in the field they helped to shape.

Consider Mr. Sargent's influential work on rational-expectations models. According to this theory, people do not respond passively to changes in economic policy or circumstances. They anticipate future conditions and adjust according to their best interests.

As Mr. Sargent, who teaches at New York University and is a fellow at the Hoover Institution, has put it:

The concept of rational expectations asserts that outcomes do not differ systemically (i.e., regularly or predictably) from what people expected them to be. The concept is motivated by the same thinking that led Abraham Lincoln to assert, 'You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.' [Rational expectations] does not deny that people often make forecasting errors, but it does suggest that errors will not persistently occur on one side or the other.

This means it is hard for politicians to manipulate people into behaving in ways that don't make economic sense. One implication is that loose monetary policy cannot permanently lower unemployment because people will anticipate higher future inflation and demand higher wages and interest rates in compensation. Likewise, temporary fiscal stimulus won't change consumer spending permanently because it doesn't change underlying wealth or income.

The rational-expectations school was supposed to have been discredited by the 2008 Panic, with the conventional wisdom saying that it was a lesson in market failure and the need for government intervention. The mania and panic of the 2000's certainly were a reminder that markets sometimes overshoot, especially when prodded by government subsidies for credit. We also know many investors who have become very rich betting not on fundamentals but on the occasional madness of crowds.

Yet markets also inevitably correct, as new information is absorbed. And as we move further from the subprime meltdown, the wisdom of rational expectations is once again asserting itself. The failure of the "temporary, targeted" Keynesian agenda to restore growth has become obvious.

A professor at Princeton, Mr. Sims is best-known for his mathematically elegant work on methods for interrogating macroeconomic data. He has been an active proponent of the "fiscal theory of the price level," which suggests that consumer prices aren't merely determined by the money supply. The public fiscal matters too. A persistent government budget deficit can cause run-ups in the price level because of the inflationary measures that governments are tempted to take to finance their liabilities.

Yet Mr. Sims has also argued that the powers of central banks are limited. "Monetary policy," he said in a 2007 interview, "is not as important as many people have thought in generating business cycles." The irrational expectation that so many have placed for three years on near-zero interest rates to conjure a recovery would seem to validate his point.

With this year's picks, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences upholds its reputation of being less cloistered and distant from reality than some of the other Nobel selectors. It may well be a sign of the times that the Academy selected two

economists so at odds with the recent Keynesian vogue, and in tune instead with the frustration with government fine-tuning that has dominated world economic policy since 2008.

Asked yesterday what he would do with his half of the \$1.5 million prize money, Mr. Sims said: "First thing I'm going to do is keep it in cash for a while and think." Good advice, not least for our political class.

"Economists Win Nobel for Focus on Real World" by Ben Casselman and Justin Lahart, *WSJ*

Oct. 11, 2011, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203499704576622561219152894.html>)

Two Americans won the Nobel Prize in economics for their research on how economic policy affects the real world—a pivotal issue as politicians and central bankers grapple with fallout from the financial meltdown and resulting recession.

Thomas J. Sargent of New York University and Christopher A. Sims of Princeton University were honored Monday "for their empirical research on cause and effect in the macroeconomy," said the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, which awards the prize.

The two men, working mostly separately, helped rewrite the models that central bankers and other economic policy makers use to analyze the likely effects of measures from tax increases to interest-rate cuts. Earlier models had proved simplistic, failing to account for the ways that policies and individual behavior affect one another.

"They've totally changed the way people do macroeconomics," said Kenneth Kuttner, a former economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York who now teaches at Williams College. "There's a pre-Sargent/Sims and a post-Sargent/Sims. It's that significant."

The economists' work has real-world implications. In different ways, the two have demonstrated that the world of economics is more interconnected than traditional models recognized, and that economic policy must reflect those connections. In a news conference Monday on Princeton's campus, Mr. Sims said the Federal Reserve and other central banks can't resolve the current economic crisis alone; their work must be supported by fiscal policy, which is controlled by the president and Congress.

"Monetary policy always has fiscal implications, and vice versa," Mr. Sims said. "It's dangerous to think that one of the two policies can by itself take care of an economic crisis." Mr. Sargent added, "The difficult thing is the politics, and I can't help you with that."

The economy is forever undergoing short-term changes, known as shocks: Unemployment rises, inflation falls, policy makers move interest rates up or down. But traditional economic models have often struggled to separate cause from effect: Did inflation fall because unemployment rose, or vice versa?

Mr. Sims tried to answer the question with statistical methods that helped identify the underlying shift, known as a 'fundamental shock,' that set the other changes in motion. Mr. Sims then studied how those fundamental shocks affected the economy over time. An interest-rate increase, for example, has an almost immediate, negative effect on total economic output, but generally won't affect consumer prices for a year and a half. Central bankers use models based on Mr. Sims's analysis to determine how policy actions will affect the economy in the future.

In a traditional macroeconomic model a central bank that wants to reduce unemployment will lower interest rates, encouraging consumers to spend and companies to invest, which drives up demand for goods and services and spurs more hiring. Eventually, that will increase inflation, at which point the central bank can raise interest rates to slow the economy down.

But according to rational-expectations theory, a branch of macroeconomics that Mr. Sargent helped pioneer, consumers and companies know that lower rates will mean higher inflation in the future. So workers demand higher wages and investors demand greater return on their capital. That limits the effectiveness of the bank's policies.

Professors Sargent and Sims, both 68 years old, both were educated at Harvard, did much of their early research at the University of Minnesota and are now co-teaching a course at Princeton, where Mr. Sargent is a visiting professor. Despite their similar biographies, the two men had markedly different approaches to their field. Mr. Sargent worked to develop

complex models meant to mirror the behavior of the economy, then used those models to see how economic outcomes would change based on different policies or other structural changes. Mr. Sims generally has been skeptical of such models and focused instead on direct analysis of economic data.

"We have a series of continuing arguments, many of which are still going on as I slowly persuade him of the error of his earlier positions," Mr. Sims quipped Monday.

The prize, formally known as the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, isn't one of the original Nobel Prizes. It was established by Sweden's central bank in 1968 to mark the bank's 300th anniversary. Princeton economists have won or shared three of the past 10 economics prizes.

Mr. Sargent is perhaps best known for his work in the early 1970s on "rational expectations theory," which argues that people base their behavior not just on government policies but also on what they expect those policies and their effects to be in the future. Thus when a bank lowers interest rates in an effort to boost the economy and lower unemployment, workers anticipate that inflation will rise and they will demand higher wages, pushing up prices even before the direct effects of a rate cut are felt.

As Mr. Sargent summarized his work on Monday, "What's going to happen is going to depend partly on what you think is going to happen."

Arthur J. Rolnick, a longtime economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis who now serves as co-director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative in Minnesota, said policy makers should pay attention to the implications of Mr. Sargent's research. Huge government liabilities that will come due in future decades, such as Medicare and Social Security, are an issue now, Mr. Rolnick said, because people will make decisions now based on how they believe the government will deal with the problem.

"This theory would say you ignore these problems at your peril," Mr. Rolnick said. "If you made a credible commitment to do this now and the markets saw that, this theory would predict you would have a much more positive impact on the economy today."

Mr. Sims, who was recruited to Princeton from Yale in 1999 by then-department chairman Ben Bernanke, is best known for his work with methods used to tease statistical relationships out of reams of data. In a 1980 paper, Mr. Sims showed how a statistical technique now widely used by economists known as vector auto regressions could be applied to studying changes in the economy.

"He said, let's push statistics as far as we possibly can and figure out what we can pull out of the data and what we cannot," said Middlebury College economist David Colander. "That was a major advance in macroeconomics."

20111013-16 12:55 Pam Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"
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Dear GaryC,

OK. I read the articles. I still don't have any idea what we should DO. Analysis of past behavior is all well and good, but what's next? I have a former colleague (and director) who's now at Duke heading up an institute for study of the history of economic ideas (funded by the Pope Foundation!), who used to talk all the time about how people make "rational" decisions when it comes to money. We used to have energetic conversations about economics—he a PhD in it, me a humanities type all the way. We never convinced each other. But I'm really trying to learn and understand. Why aren't the suggestions Robert Reich made in that little video I posted worth considering? I'm not so sure people do make rational decisions. Most people (47%) don't make financial decisions at all; they just hope the money doesn't run out before the end of the month. That means the ones making the decisions are already ahead of the game. Help me out here.

20111013-17 13:05 Dennis Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

from Pam:

I'm not so sure people do make rational decisions.

In my experience a lot of money can be made in the stock market betting against the irrational herd mentality of investors and consumers.

Mr. Sargent is perhaps best known for his work in the early 1970s on "rational expectations theory," which argues that people base their behavior not just on government policies but also on what they expect those policies and their effects to be in the future.

I found this paragraph ironic. If people are fed negatives about the competency of the government, which is the anti-government Republican mantra, the expectation will be that any efforts by the government will fail thus insuring this as a self-fulfilling prediction. It may be good politics for Republicans, but bad economics for the country.

[20111013-18](#) 13:32 SteveG Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

It seems that when the Republican-run House and their Senate partners state flat out that their goal is to assure that Obama is a one-term president, economic theories do not matter—none will be implemented.

[20111013-19](#) 13:33 Dennis Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

from Bill:

Good questions, and perhaps Keynes would agree, but he would advise, I'm sure, that Congress balance the budget as soon as possible or, better, generate a surplus to pay down debt.

Dear Bill and Pam,

My understanding of Keynes is that a budget surplus is maintained when the economy is strong and deficit spending is called for when it's weak and needs a boost. Maybe the problem is that building the surplus started at the end of the Clinton years wasn't continued, but instead was reversed by the Bush tax cuts and increased spending on the wars and the Medicare Part D profit bonanza for Big Pharma. Of course, I, like Rick Perry, only got a D in Econ 101 and could be mistaken.

[20111013-20](#) 13:36 GaryC Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Dennis,

Are you stating that Democrats do not engage in this activity?

[20111013-21](#) 13:52 Dennis Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

from GaryC:

Are you stating that Democrats do not engage in this activity?

Dear GaryC,

No, Democrats are Pollyanna's who will make you think that happy days are here again if you will only elect them. Theirs is not a rational expectation either. The fact is that government and the economic system both need a radical makeover which would cause too much pain during the transition for either party to tell the truth about if they want to get elected.

The change will happen during the Third Industrial Revolution and the U.S. will no doubt be a revolutionary laggard:

"The Third Industrial Revolution: Leading the Way to a Green Energy Era and a Hydrogen Economy" by Jeremy Rifkin, FOET

from *The Hydrogen Economy*: (<http://www.foet.org/lectures/lecture-hydrogen-economy.html>)

[See below, classified under Energy. —SteveB]

20111013-22	14:01	SteveB	"Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went
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When it comes to economics, I have to think in simple terms I know are valid. I don't trust any economists. We've never been here before, Dorothy. For many years, American business/money has gotten what it wants from our government. Freedom.

That should be a good thing. Let the marketplace work, we've been told over and over, right? But too much freedom, when coupled with greed can be a bad thing. We don't let people walk into banks and be "free".

Here's how "free trade" works. I will use the case of China, because it is the largest and most important. But the U.S. hasn't exactly come out on the good side in trade with Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Mexico, Canada, or India either. Not even with defeated Iraq.

In 2000-2001, I spent quite a bit of time designing and programming some automation for a brand new Amway factory in China to manufacture makeup. I was lucky enough to go there to help get things running. In the biz it's called a "startup". Some years earlier, Amway had burst onto the Chinese market like a comet. Door-to-door sales for millions of women! Free enterprise! Makeup and things Chinese women wanted and had been doing without or with little.

Business boomed.

Later, the government came to Amway and essentially told them they would be barred from the Chinese market if they did not build their factories in China. As quickly as possible, they built factories. The market is huge. Labor is incredibly cheap, though becoming more dear recently. Pollution control costs about 50 cents per year plus bribes.

I believe another stipulation was that the Chinese government, itself, had to own 50% of the Chinese enterprise. I can't remember if the government paid for this or just extorted it. That was before my time. And I'm not sure how things work now. Dennis and GaryC would be better informed than I.

Meanwhile, Amway found that it was manufacturing things in Michigan for one cost and in China for a far lower cost. Jeez! Michigan even had a few of those pesky unions, driving up wages to astronomical levels. So it just made sense to start using the Chinese factories to produce goods for the U.S. and elsewhere.

China stopped importing and started exporting Amway products to the U.S. Good jobs went down the tubes in the U.S. Did anyone think anything else was going to happen?

The company did all this with impunity. Their profits soared, much of it kept in China to avoid U.S. taxes. They spent a little money "retraining" some of the workers, but where are they now? And where are the jobs?

This story has been repeated over and over again for the last many years and I have yet to hear one Republican or Democrat tell us why unfettered free enterprise has been allowed to destroy our way of life in a way the U.S.S.R. never could.

Now you know why even the mighty Obama can't turn this ship around on a dime. Neither can any Tea Party. The jobs don't exist now.

20111013-23	14:11	Dennis	From <i>The Post-Corporate World, Life After Capitalism</i> : Corporations as Persons
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Are corporate stockholders slave owners? Consider this:

from David Korten's *The Post-Corporate World, Life After Capitalism* (pp.185-6) [Apparently debunked here: http://www.de-fact-o.com/fact_read.php?id=33. —SteveB]

In 1886, in the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*, the U.S. Supreme Court decided that a private corporation is a person and entitled to the legal rights and protections the Constitution affords to any person. Because the Constitution makes no mention of corporations, it is a fairly clear case of the Court's taking it upon itself to rewrite the Constitution.

Far more remarkable, however, is that the doctrine of corporate personhood, which subsequently became a cornerstone of corporate law, was introduced into this 1886 decision without argument. According to the official case record, Supreme Court Justice Morrison Remick Waite simply pronounced before the beginning of argument in the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company* that the court does not wish to hear argument on the question whether the provision in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, applies to these corporations. We are all of opinion that it does.

The court reporter duly entered into the summary record of the Court's findings that the defendant Corporations are persons within the intent of the clause in section 1 of the Fourteen Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Thus it was that a two-sentence assertion by a single judge elevated corporations to the status of persons under the law, prepared the way for the rise of global corporate rule, and thereby changed the course of history.

The doctrine of corporate personhood creates an interesting legal contradiction. The corporation is owned by its shareholders and is therefore their property. If it is also a legal person, then it is a person owned by others and thus exists in a condition of slavery—a status explicitly forbidden by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. So is a corporation a person illegally held in servitude by its shareholders? Or is it a person who enjoys the rights of personhood that take precedence over the presumed ownership rights of its shareholders? So far as I have been able to determine, this contradiction has not been directly addressed by the courts.

See source document: <http://www.ratical.org/corporations/SCvSPR1886.html>.

20111013-24	14:14	SteveB	Democratic VP Candidate?
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Dear Pam,

Yes. Yes. Yes. More people is good! Pam is good!!

Just had a great idea, then discovered it wasn't mine. Hillary for VP! Sorry, Joe, but maybe it's time to retire or maybe run for a House seat.

OR...maybe a black VP candidate...Jesse Jackson? Denzel Washington? Morgan Freeman? At least then we'd have more black candidates—maybe—than the other side!

20111013-25	14:23	Ben	I Find Myself Reading This Stuff Even When I Don't Have Time
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Dear SteveB,

I have had to set up an auto file for this list. Please send any messages or correspondence intended for me personally to me separately.

I find myself reading this stuff even when I don't have time... no good!

Obviously, it all matters, and yes, I DO care.

I will open that massive folder from time to time, and slurp. I've come close to reading all of it, but must grind to a slow creep.

Tom the Guard, my ex-spec-ops buddy, really enjoys it, too.

[20111013-26](#) 14:36 SteveB Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear GaryC,

I believe the lack of results as far as jobs goes cannot be laid on Obama either. He did what he could do. This actually is one I agree with the Tea Party about—government is very limited in what it can do at times, especially in the short run. Why would Republicans then so take to the idea that Obama and the government have failed by not creating more jobs? I thought they believed the government couldn't do anything good anyway? They are sort of right. Especially when destructive policies have been pursued by both parties for so long.

Again, this is all one of the big lies. For 30-40 years the jobs have been shipped overseas at no penalty to employers, but at incredible cost to American jobs and American taxpayers. The government can't employ that many people directly or through incentives. Only the right policies in the long run can save us now, with our eroded tax base, lack of will, and one party crying and screaming whenever a dollar gets spent, then crying and screaming that the government didn't do enough...well, I'm about as optimistic as Pam... But just as with "Obamacare", the Stimulus, etc. didn't hurt us one bit, didn't end up costing that much (a lot has been paid back), and probably saved us from the precipice...for a while longer. As far as creating jobs goes, Obama simply hasn't done it. With Bush having spent all the money, what could he do?

Neither has American business with the lowest tax rates in decades. With, as Pam, I believe, pointed out, \$trillions in cash sitting in piles, the mega-corporations are not bringing their foreign profits home to be taxed and reinvested in America to create jobs. This is what people should be irate about!

[20111013-27](#) 14:44 SteveB Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Pam,

Yes! Japan, Korea, China, Brazil, and India, in turn, learned from us, then kicked our butts. They know how to do this, and they learned it from us.

Why don't we know how to do it anymore?

I just did a little history review. It appears that, in cases of modern recession and worse, government intervention has often been helpful, sometimes not. But when governments don't act, the results can be pretty horrific...like a 50% cup in GNP in one year, and years to recover from that. Ouch!

Maybe better if big business, the rich, and the people's representatives (our beloved government) could get together and plot how to fix the country instead of how to do what for whom for politicians to stay in power.

[20111013-28](#) 14:57 Dennis Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

from SteveB:

As far as creating jobs goes, Obama simply hasn't done it. With Bush having spent all the money, what could he do?

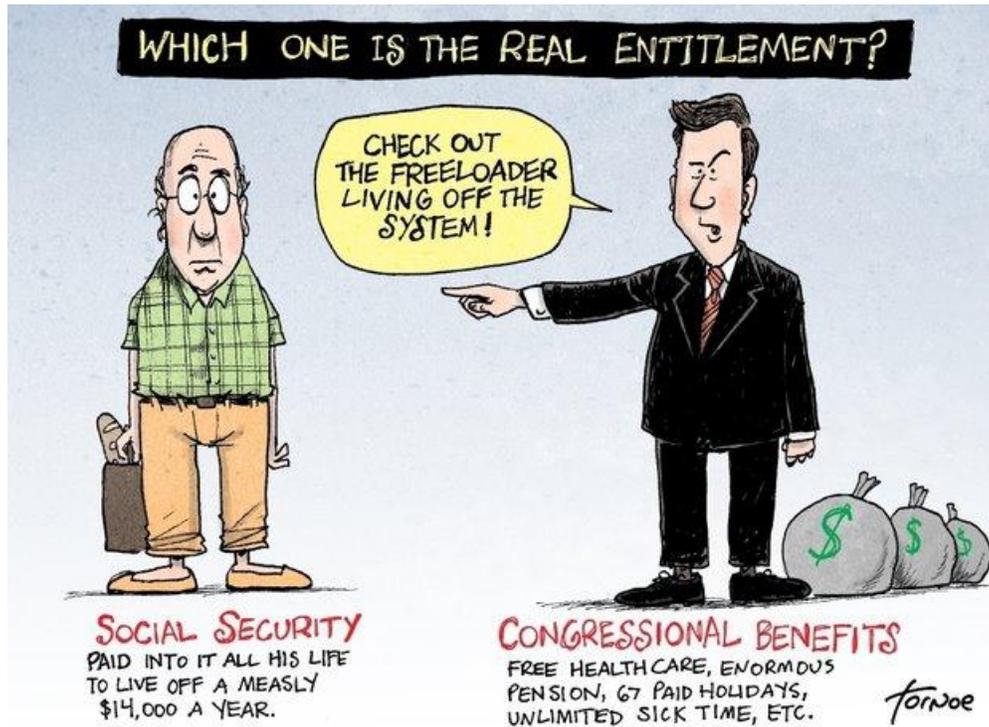
Dear SteveB,

It wasn't just Bush with the borrow and spend addiction. The American consumer maxed out their credit cards as well. And it was Greenspan's Fed that provided the artificially cheap credit (which also led to the housing bubble) to keep both addicted.

Now there is still plenty of cheap credit available but business, which is also sitting on piles of cash, isn't ramping up production with consumers completely tapped out, and pessimistic as well. Obama and the Fed are pursuing the same policies as before since Bernanke and Geithner apparently have no new ideas from the ones that got us into this mess.

Carville is correct about cleaning house. There are some new ideas out there that could be tried with advisors who can re-imagine politics and the economy. But I think Obama, ironically, is way too cautious to have the audacity to move on it.

PS: Love this cartoon:



20111013-29 15:59 Pam Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

I saw Austin Goolsbee interviewed by Jon Stewart, and I liked him a lot. He was just getting ready to leave D.C. and was obviously delighted and relieved to be getting out of town. He said some smart things that he probably wouldn't have said if he were still in government, and he had a sense of humor, always a plus. I'd like to see him come back.

Goolsbee, Grayson—there are some good, young people out there. We need to bring them back in. I like these two because they talk straight and have what I consider the right ideas. Isn't it ironic that being IN government makes politicians cautious about what they say, so what they say is mush? Sarah Palin is an idiot, but I can see why people are attracted to her honesty, if not her intelligence. Now that I've retired, I find that I am much more outspoken than I was when I was teaching, so I can sort of understand how this happens. I didn't want to proselytize; that wasn't my job. And I didn't want to offend students, thus losing their trust. I allowed glimmers of my true thinking out now and then, but nowadays I feel I can say anything. It's so liberating.

I have a friend who's big on civility. I value it too. But does being civil mean keeping some things to yourself? Maybe you can be uncivil with your intimates (or an online group you trust)—calling la Palin an idiot isn't exactly good manners. There ought to be a way to be civilly uncivil, in other words, to tell the truth and be true to yourself without being afraid.

20111013-30 16:41 Pam Re: Corporations as Persons

Dear Dennis,

What an interesting tidbit of information. You should write a letter to the *Times*.

20111013-31 16:49 SteveB Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

Dear Dennis,

You mean he lacks the "audacity to change"? Damn, there goes that campaign promise by the guy I now call "The Professor" or "Professor Obama", up there in his Ivory Tower with his elaborate yet opaque decision making process. Mmmmm, has he reached a decision yet?

[20111013-32](#) 16:51 SteveB Re: I Find Myself Reading This Stuff...

Dear Ben,

Thanks for the comments and for hangin' in there. I always value your contributions!

[20111013-33](#) 17:24 SteveG Re: "What Should the White House Do? Panic!"

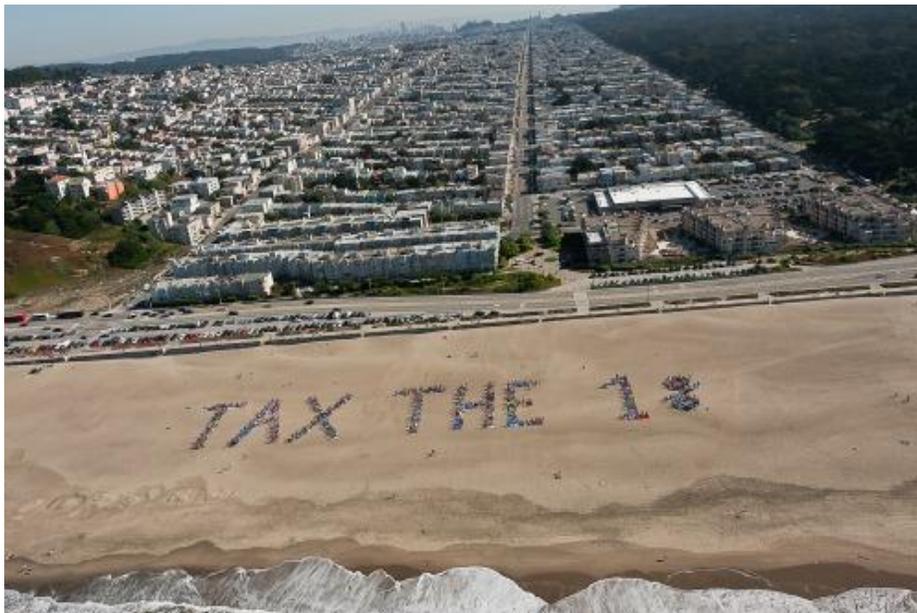
Dear Pam,

Politicians, by their very position as a politician and by the dictates of their party affiliation, have to raise money for elections of others and for their own reelection. Their whole existence becomes centered around money and the election process. Until, as Pam has mentioned previously, there is a change in the funding of the elections and some control of the election timeframe as there is in England, I doubt that much will change in politicians. Congress and elected officials need to become free to govern, make laws, form policy, lead discussions that center on problem solving rather than controlled by funding.

[20111013-34](#) 17:25 SteveG Graphics: What 99% Means

"What 99% Means" a Graphic Sensation and the OWS Piece That's Going Viral Today

<http://front.moveon.org/what-does-i-am-the-99-mean/?rc=daily.share&id=31980-18997482-K1BNHUX>



[20111013-35](#) 17:31 SteveG Re: "Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went

As reported on the national news this week, unemployed U.S. executives are moving to China and being hired and have a faster track to the top than they would have had if they had remained employed in the U.S. With the lower cost of living, they are living better than the ever expected in the U.S.

20111013-36 17:53 Pam Re: "Free" Trade & Where the Jobs Went

Dear SteveB,

I also heard a piece on NPR about how young opera singers are moving to China to sing in their opera companies, because there are no jobs for them here—what with all the budget cuts and all. Not only are our jobs going overseas, our people are too. Rats leaving a sinking ship?

20111014-01 08:49 Pam Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."

I don't remember who posted the article on hydrogen and a third industrial revolution. At least I think I read it on this list. I want to send it to my son, but I can't find it on my computer. Would whoever sent it please post it again. Thanks a bunch!

20111014-02 13:52 Dennis "The Third Industrial Revolution: Leading the Way to a Green Energy Era & a Hydrogen Economy"

"The Third Industrial Revolution: Leading the Way to a Green Energy Era and a Hydrogen Economy" by Jeremy Rifkin, FOET

from *The Hydrogen Economy*: (<http://www.foet.org/lectures/lecture-hydrogen-economy.html>)

Lecture Synopsis:

We are approaching the sunset of the oil era in the first half of the 21st century. The price of oil on global markets continues to climb and peak global oil is within sight in the coming decades. At the same time, the dramatic rise in carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels is raising the earth's temperature and threatening an unprecedented change in the chemistry of the planet and global climate, with ominous consequences for the future of human civilization and the ecosystems of the earth.

While oil, coal, and natural gas will continue to provide a substantial portion of the world's and the European Union's energy well into the 21st century, there is a growing consensus that we are entering a twilight period where the full costs of our fossil fuel addiction is beginning to act as a drag on the world economy. During this twilight era, the 27 EU member states are making every effort to ensure that the remaining stock of fossil fuels is used more efficiently and are experimenting with clean energy technologies to limit carbon dioxide emissions in the burning of conventional fuels. These efforts fall in line with the EU mandate that the member states increase energy efficiency 20 percent by 2020 and reduce their global warming emissions 20 percent (based on 1990 levels), again by 2020. But, greater efficiencies and mandated global warming gas reductions, by themselves, are not enough to adequately address the unprecedented crisis of global warming and global peak oil and gas production. Looking to the future, every government will need to explore new energy paths and establish new economic models with the goal of achieving as close to zero carbon emissions as possible.

The great pivotal economic changes in world history have occurred when new energy regimes converge with new communication regimes. When that convergence happens, society is restructured in wholly new ways. In the early modern era, the coming together of coal powered steam technology and the print press gave birth to the first industrial revolution. It would have been impossible to organize the dramatic increase in the pace, speed, flow, density, and connectivity of economic activity made possible by the coal fired steam engine using the older codex and oral forms of communication. In the late nineteenth century and throughout the first two thirds of the twentieth century, first generation electrical forms of communication—the telegraph, telephone, radio, television, electric typewriters, calculators, etc.—converged with the introduction of oil and the internal combustion engine, becoming the communications command and control mechanism for organizing and marketing the second industrial revolution.

A great communications revolution occurred in the 1990s. Second generation electrical forms of communication—personal computers, the internet, the World Wide Web, and wireless communication technologies—connected the central nervous system of more than a billion people on Earth at the speed of light. And, although the new software and communication revolutions have begun to increase productivity in every industry, their true potential is yet to be fully realized. That

potential lies in their convergence with renewable energy, partially stored in the form of hydrogen, to create the first "distributed" energy regimes.

The same design principles and smart technologies that made possible the internet, and vast distributed global communication networks, will be used to reconfigure the world's power grids so that people can produce renewable energy and share it peer-to-peer, just like they now produce and share information, creating a new, decentralized form of energy use. We need to envision a future in which millions of individual players can collect, produce and store locally generated renewable energy in their homes, offices, factories, and vehicles, and share their power generation with each other across a Europe-wide intelligent intergrid [interconnected electric grid]. (Hydrogen is a universal storage medium for intermittent renewable energies; just as digital is a universal storage mechanism for text, audio, video, data and other forms of media)

The question is often asked as to whether renewable energy, in the long run, can provide enough power to run a national or global economy? Just as second generation information systems grid technologies allow businesses to connect thousands of desktop computers, creating far more distributed computing power than even the most powerful centralized computers that exist, millions of local producers of renewable energy, using hydrogen storage and intelligent utility networks, can potentially produce far more distributed power than the older centralized forms of energy — oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear — that we currently rely on.

The creation of a renewable energy regime, partially stored in the form of hydrogen, and distributed via smart intergrids, opens the door to a Third Industrial Revolution and should have as powerful an economic multiplier effect in the 21st century as the convergence of mass print technology with coal and steam power technology in the 19th century, and the coming together of electrical forms of communication with oil and the internal combustion engine in the 20th century.

European industry has the scientific, technological, and financial know-how to spearhead the shift to renewable energies, a hydrogen economy, and an intelligent power grid and, by so doing, lead the world into a new economic era. Europe's world class automotive industry, chemical industry, engineering industry, construction industry, software, computer and communication industries, and banking and insurance industries, give it a leg up in the race to the Third Industrial Revolution.

By fostering renewable energies, a hydrogen infrastructure, and a continent-wide intelligent intergrid, the European Union can help create a sustainable economic development plan for its 500 million citizens in the first half of the 21st century.

The Third Industrial Revolution will require a wholesale reconfiguration of the transport, construction, and electricity sectors, creating new goods and services, spawning new businesses, and providing millions of new jobs.

Being first to market will position the European Union as a leader in the Third Industrial Revolution, giving it the commercial edge in the export of green technological know-how and equipment around the world. Producing a new generation of renewable energy technologies, manufacturing portable and stationary fuel cells, reinventing the automobile, transforming Europe's millions of buildings into power plants to produce renewable energy for internal consumption or distribution back to the grid, reconfiguring the electrical power grid as a intelligent utility network, as well as producing all of the accompanying technologies, goods and services that make up a high-tech Third Industrial Revolution economy, will have an economic multiplier effect that stretches well toward the mid decades of the 21st century.

The coming together of distributed communication technologies and distributed renewable energies via an open access, intelligent power grid, represents "power to the people". For a younger generation that's growing up in a less hierarchical and more networked world, the ability to produce and share their own energy, like they produce and share their own information, in an open access intergrid, will seem both natural and commonplace.

The key challenge that every nation needs to address is where they want their country to be in ten years from now: In the sunset energies and industries of the second industrial revolution or the sunrise energies and industries of the Third Industrial Revolution. The Third Industrial Revolution is the end-game that takes the world out of the old carbon and uranium-based energies and into a non-polluting, sustainable future for the human race.

(Jeremy Rifkin is president of The Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, DC. and teaches at the Wharton School's Executive Education Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Rifkin is currently advising the Prime Minister of Slovenia, Janez Janša, during his presidency of the European Union (January to July 2008). Mr. Rifkin also served as an adviser to Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Jose Socrates of Portugal during their respective European Council

Presidencies, on issues related to the economy, climate change, and energy security. He currently advises the European Commission, the European Parliament, and several EU heads of state, including Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain and Prime Minister Romano Prodi of Italy. Mr. Rifkin is the author of seventeen books on environmental, energy and economic related issues including *The Hydrogen Economy: The Creation of the World Wide Energy Web and the Redistribution of Power on Earth* (Tarcher/Penguin).

[20111014-03](#) 16:37 SteveB "Steve Jobs, in His Own Words"

There are words that should be more than heard or read. They should be absorbed and tested and lived, kept inside and made part of you. I believe these are such words. Hope you all have a great weekend. More to come.

I hope all of us can learn to reject dogma and look at things in new ways that enable new possibilities...even when there is no crisis there is no time to waste. And I refuse to be one of those who is "cleared away" without kicking and screaming.

"Steve Jobs, in His Own Words" by Aaron Lammer, Slate

Oct. 6, 2011,

(http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/longform/2011/10/steve_jobs_best_speeches_and_interviews_from_longform_org.html)

Playboy: Why is the computer field dominated by people so young? The average age of Apple employees is 29.

Jobs: It's often the same with any new, revolutionary thing. People get stuck as they get older. Our minds are sort of electrochemical computers. Your thoughts construct patterns like scaffolding in your mind. You are really etching chemical patterns. In most cases, people get stuck in those patterns, just like grooves in a record, and they never get out of them. It's a rare person who etches grooves that are other than a specific way of looking at things, a specific way of questioning things. It's rare that you see an artist in his 30s or 40s able to really contribute something amazing. Of course, there are some people who are innately curious, forever little kids in their awe of life, but they're rare.

Jobs (having been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, addresses the Stanford graduating class of 2005):

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new.

Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true. Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma—which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.

[20111014-04](#) 17:24 GaryC Re: "Steve Jobs, in His Own Words"

Dear SteveB,

A great email. I am proud to say at 64 that I am still embracing new concepts and trying new adventures while many of my friends have retired to the pasture. I prefer living, learning, loving and lying. I plan to never let myself get old until I die, then I start a new adventure. I can't wait for those 21 virgins Allah has promised.

[20111014-05](#)

"Prison or Deportation: What Choices Are Immigrants Given?" by Elizabeth Ruiz and Oliver Lazenby, NationOfChange

Oct. 13, 2011, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/prison-or-deportation-what-choices-are-immigrants-given-1318561564>)

I had been living in the United States for 10 years. I was a refugee: I left Oaxaca because of financial trouble. I didn't have a U.S. visa yet, though my daughter, who was three, was born here. And I had learned English through ESL classes at Clark College. One morning I left home to go to work in Portland and never made it.

I left my driver's license in my car before boarding the train from Vancouver, Wash., to Portland. I had my bus pass, but I didn't have any identification to prove that it was mine. There was a Caucasian guy who also didn't have proof of his fare, but the fare inspector allowed him to buy a ticket and continue riding the train.

I told the fare inspector, the security officer, and the two police officers that had arrived that I could buy a new ticket, but they didn't give me the opportunity. "You are illegal," one of the police officers said, and he arrested me.

I spent two days in different jails. During this time, my family didn't know where I was.

When I didn't come home, my husband went to several jails looking for me, and each time he was directed to a different one. On the third day, I was taken to Tacoma in a locked van. There were chains on my hands, feet, and stomach. I thought, what if we have an accident and die because we are chained and locked in? I wouldn't see my son and daughter again. They let me call my husband when I got to Tacoma, but first I had to register his name in a log. Since he wasn't a citizen, I was afraid to give them his phone number.

In the detention center, they treated us like we were the most dangerous people in the world. After showering, I wrapped my hair in a towel. I heard a guard yelling, but I didn't think it was directed at me until she screamed, "Take that damn towel off your head!"

I cried. I never imagined someone would yell at me over a towel.

I shared a windowless room the size of a bathroom. We were locked in twice a day to be counted. Usually we would have the same flavorless food for all three meals, but disguised in different sauces. To keep my mind occupied, I took a volunteer job folding laundry for a dollar a day.

There were Mexicans and Central Americans, Chinese, French, Cambodians, Koreans, and Pakistanis. Whenever someone started crying, all of us, no matter what our background, gathered to show support.

After one week at the detention center, an immigration official asked me to sign a deportation order. He told me I could leave right away and be on the next plane to Mexico, but I feared I would never see my family again. When I decided to wait to see a judge, he looked upset that I didn't sign.

While I was in the detention center, my husband and kids had to move out of our apartment and live with friends so they could afford a lawyer. My husband sold some of our possessions, and even now, we live with friends and don't own much more than our car and the clothes on our backs. Our friends helped raise money by selling tamales and enchiladas and having garage sales.

I was released on bail after two months at the Tacoma detention center, and my case continued until last December when my green card was granted.

Ten years ago, I knew that I had to come to the United States—there was no future for me or my son in Mexico. But during my time in the detention center and the months of immigration hearings, it felt again like I had no future. I couldn't plan my life; I could only wait.

Despite all of that hardship, this country is home now for me and my kids. My kids come back from school and say they've learned the national anthem. They love this country. And I am glad that I fought to stay here with them.

20111014-06	22:06	SteveB	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
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Dear Pam,

It is a very serious matter to enter a country illegally. I know because I've done it. It sounds like this person was treated very fairly. The fact that she got a green card tells me that she could probably have been legal the whole time or almost that she was illegal. If she didn't want a little pain, maybe she shouldn't have broken the law?

And I don't think we're talking about anything controversial here, like the legalization of marijuana. No one in the world honestly believes that a country should not have immigration laws that it enforces for its own benefit. There's nothing wrong in that, nothing to feel guilty about.

How is it fair to citizens or legal aliens who go through the process that these admittedly fine people can come here illegally and:

1. Harm the nation's security and open us up to the drug cartels and/or other terrorists.
2. Take our jobs (especially those of our existing minorities and young people who need them most).
3. Lower our wages and help destroy our unions.
4. Bankrupt our health care system with free emergency room visits.
5. Send much of their money back home, hurting our economy.
6. Destroy respect for the law and the government in this country.
7. Drive up the cost of auto insurance by driving uninsured (very often).
8. And then receive in-state tuition at many state universities where my kids have to pay out-of-state tuition.

And the impact is actually much worse than this. But the rich and big corporations want that cheap labor, so the government turns its back. The rich and powerful get their way again and down goes our middle class.

20111015-01	09:28	SteveG	"Rick Perry Makes Post-Debate Gaffe: 'We Fought the Revolution in the 16th Century'"
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Harbinger of things to come...

[Note: SteveG was being very prescient here! It was not until Nov. 9 that Perry made his famous "Oops!" gaffe, which essentially ended his presidential bid and, probably, career. See:

<http://politicalhumor.about.com/b/2012/01/19/rick-perrys-greatest-gaffes.htm>.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/10/rick-perry-oops-video_n_1085336.html.]

"Rick Perry Makes Post-Debate Gaffe: 'We Fought the Revolution in the 16th Century'" by Alex Alvarez, Media ITE

Oct. 12, 2011, (<http://www.mediaite.com/online/rick-perry-makes-post-debate-gaffe-we-fought-the-revolution-in-the-16th-century/>)

The political sphere—from the venerated marble monoliths of Washington, DC to the fine film of perspiration and Funyun dust lining the keyboards of so many online commenters—is a strange one, and one that has taken an increasingly disturbing, if anthropologically fascinating, turn in recent times. Sometimes, perhaps because they're nervous or impassioned or high on adrenaline, politicians get their facts wrong. It's embarrassing, certainly, but they're mostly human beings, and these things happen. But, as politics is a team sport where anyone with internet access has the potential to become a rabid hooligan, instead of demanding or expecting an apology when politicians inevitably stumble over their words or confuse their facts, people defend them. People defend them even if it means wrestling with semantics or fashioning historical timelines into a series of elaborate knots.

So it'll be interesting to see how people who are not just supporters of GOP presidential hopeful Rick Perry, but fans of his particular team (and members of the opposing team) will react to a gaffe he made following last night's Republican debate. Here is how MSNBC described the hiccup in history:

The Texas governor was comparatively energetic at his stop at the Beta Theta Pi fraternity on the Dartmouth College campus, taking questions on energy policy, Social Security, and states' rights. But he stumbled in his answer to a young woman's question about states' rights; Perry said that one of the "reasons we fought the revolution in the 16th century was to get away from that kind of onerous crown."

The Revolutionary War was fought in the 18th century.

Not only that, it was fought against an advancing alien army, from another dimension, who were upset with the founding fathers' decision to free the slaves and who wanted desperately to offer Paul Revere a reality series aimed at finding him a date, the rather saucily-named "Riding with Revere". Maybe. Or not!

Again, everyone makes mistakes. Maybe Perry became confused over how centuries are named, jumping to a number ahead instead of a number following. Maybe he was caught up in the moment and didn't realize what he'd said. What we're more interested in is how this will be spun and how, exactly, it will be reported on and built into a wider narrative. Thanks to the hyperactive television news cycle and the internet, we now have greater access to candidates than ever before. We spend more time with them and they are better able to reach out to their supporters and detractors, often without the benefit of a prepared statement or teleprompter. So, naturally, they are going to make more mistakes and we are going to hear about them. And it's not so much how politicians themselves deal with these gaffes that is interesting (or infuriating), but how those who either love or hate them and keeping tabs on them on home react and spin. And spin. And spin. So. We shall see.

20111015-02 17:00 SteveB Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."

Dear Pam,

Jeremy Rifkin wrote it. Dennis reposted the original article above. Here are a couple of additional articles:

<http://www.nakedeyez.com/content/jeremy-rifkin-hydrogen-economy>.

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1764063/the-hydrogen-economys-dirty-secret>.

I have written previously about my experience with a hydrogen explosion in Massachusetts. I'll look that up too.

20111016-01 06:01 SteveB Re: "Rick Perry Makes Post-Debate Gaffe..."

I'm thinking Perry may be dumber than Sarah Palin, if that's possible. What is with these Texans? (not Palin)

SteveG, I bet you'll love reading this about the Koch brothers and Herman Cain:

<http://news.yahoo.com/extensive-ties-powerful-koch-group-boost-cain-085542290.html>.

I love the truth of the statement calling Cain, "...the first presidential corporate spokes-candidate."

But Cain did go to Purdue, where he got a masters in 1971, but I don't remember seeing him around campus. Maybe he hung out with the black guys, but I doubt it.

20111016-02 06:31 SteveB "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Rich and poor...

"In fact, there's little evidence that the Bush tax cuts had any effect at all."

"Cutting taxes on the wealthy during the Bush years didn't stimulate growth, and raising taxes back to the levels we've had in the past—when growth was quite robust—won't have much of an effect either."

In this forum we have seen a lot of hard evidence that the Bush years and tax cuts have been disastrous for America.

There has been a lot of conjecture from the right, but no hard evidence of any kind, except Dale's article showing the rise in corporate profits.

We consider Dale's figures, along with all the other economic numbers, to be further proof of our case, since these profits stayed at the top instead of trickling down to workers. The rich got richer when they didn't need to, the country got poorer. This is so obvious! Investors didn't fare too well either. Now they're calling the last 10 years the "lost decade" for American investors.

I believe this article says it all. I'd love to see any of these points seriously refuted with evidence, not guesses, conjecture, name-calling, or dogma.

NO MATTER WHAT THEY TELL YOU, TAXES ON THE RICH DO NOT STUNT GROWTH! THE EVIDENCE INDICATES THE OPPOSITE!

"Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth" by Mark Thoma, *The Fiscal Times*

Oct. 14, 2011, (<http://money.msn.com/investing/why-us-should-spread-the-wealthfiscaltimes.aspx>)

America sacrificed equity for the false promise of efficiency and growth, and society is now more unequal than at any time since the early part of the last century.

Many economists worry that making societies more equal through income redistribution or other means reduces economic growth.

This big trade-off between equality and efficiency, which is supported by comparisons of capitalist and socialist countries, implies that there's a limit to how much redistribution a society should pursue. At some point, the trade-off of more equality for less output—which worsens as we push toward more and more equality—becomes intolerable.

However, while the trade-off is quite unfavorable as we push to extremes, recent experience suggests there is a wide region where the trade-off is hard to detect. Thus, worries about this trade-off appear to be overblown.

For example, the Bush tax cuts were justified, in part, by the assertion that equity had overshadowed efficiency in tax policy. Taxes on the wealthy, and the inefficiencies that come with them, were much too high, it was argued, and lowering taxes would cause output to go up enough to lift all boats substantially.

Accordingly, the lower end of the income distribution would fare much better after income trickled down than it would under redistributive policy.

The economy did grow after the Bush tax cuts, but the rate of growth was unremarkable, especially for jobs, and there's little evidence that they caused large increases in output growth, as promised.

In fact, there's little evidence that the Bush tax cuts had any effect at all. The tradeoff simply wasn't there.

And the tax cuts at the upper end of the income distribution did nothing to correct for the fact that although worker productivity was rising, wages remained flat—a problem that began in the mid-1970s.

This was an indication that something was amiss in the mechanism that distributes income to different members of society. Workers were helping to increase the size of the pie, but income did not trickle down, and their share of the pie was no larger than before.

This is not the only way in which the distribution of income has become disconnected from productivity. While some argue that those at the top of the income distribution earn every cent they receive, and hence deserve to keep all of it,

there is plenty of evidence that the compensation of financial executives, CEOs of major corporations and others at the top of the pyramid far exceeds the value of what they contribute to society.

That holds true even without the 2008-09 financial crisis, but how, exactly, can we justify the extraordinarily high income of this group when the result of their actions was to ruin the economy?

If those at the top of the income distribution receive far more than the value of what they create, and those at lower income levels receive less, then one way to correct this is to increase taxes at the upper end of the income distribution and use the proceeds to protect important social programs that benefit working-class households, programs that are currently threatened by budget deficits.

This would help to rectify the mal-distribution of income that is preventing workers from realizing their share of the gains from economic growth.

And there is another reason why taxes on the wealthy should go up. Someone has to pay taxes, and the question is how to distribute the burden among taxpayers.

Many believe, and I am one of them, that progressive taxes are the most equitable way to do this. In particular, the guiding principle is that the last dollar of taxes paid should cause the same amount of sacrifice for rich and poor alike.

There has been an attempt to make it appear that taxes are mostly paid by the wealthy; the deceptive claim that half of the people pay no taxes is part of this. But taxes are less progressive than before the Bush tax cuts, and when all taxes at all levels of government are taken into account, "the U.S. tax system just barely qualifies as progressive," according to a 2010 report from Citizens for Tax Justice.

We face a choice between cutting key benefits for the middle class and creating an ever more unequal society, or raising taxes on the wealthy to preserve the social programs that lower-income households rely upon.

We hear that raising taxes is unfair and that tax increases will harm economic growth. But there's nothing unfair about correcting the mal-distribution of income that we've seen in recent decades, or about making sure the burden from paying taxes is more equitable than it is now.

And there's no reason to fear that economic growth will be lower if taxes are increased. **Cutting taxes on the wealthy during the Bush years didn't stimulate growth, and raising taxes back to the levels we've had in the past—when growth was quite robust—won't have much of an effect either.**

20111016-03	08:28	SteveG	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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He might have something here... [It seems more like a bill than a Constitutional amendment, but, as I have said, it could be either...the amendment is harder to repeal. —SteveB]

Really hard to get traction on this one. Let's not give up.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the debt ceiling:

"I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election."

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971...before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc.

Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven took 1 year or less to become the law of the land... all because of public pressure.

Warren Buffet is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; and in turn ask each of those to do likewise.

In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011

1. No Tenure / No Pension: A Congressperson collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.
2. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system and Congress participates with the American people. It may not be used for any other purpose.
3. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.
4. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
5. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congress.

Congressional members made all these contracts for themselves. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Maybe it is time.

COULD THIS BE HOW WE FIX CONGRESS?

If you agree with the above, pass it on. If not, just delete.

20111016-04	09:17	Pam	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
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from SteveB:

How is it fair to citizens or legal aliens who go through the process that these admittedly fine people can come here illegally and:

1. Harm the nation's security and open us up to the drug cartels and/or other terrorists.
2. Take our jobs (especially those of our existing minorities and young people who need them most).
3. Lower our wages and help destroy our unions.
4. Bankrupt our health care system with free emergency room visits.
5. Send much of their money back home, hurting our economy.
6. Destroy respect for the law and the government in this country.
7. Drive up the cost of auto insurance by driving uninsured (very often).

8. And then receive in-state tuition at many state universities my kids have to pay out-of-state tuition at.

Dear SteveB,

1. I don't think our immigration policy much affects what the drug cartels do. It's illegal to tunnel from Mexico into the U.S., but the traffickers do it anyway. What "opens us up to the drug cartels" is the demand for drugs this side of the border. Take away the demand—by legalizing marijuana?—and the cartels will have to look for a market elsewhere.

2. I just heard a small business owner, from Alabama, on NPR, say he couldn't find workers, now that AL has their new draconian immigration law. How are immigrants taking "our" jobs, when Americans don't want them or aren't qualified to do them? We have to import engineers and other professionals because we don't have enough here. Let those middle-class or formerly middle-class teenagers get out in the strawberry fields for a week, and see how they do.

3. "Our wages"? When's the last time you cleaned a motel room or mulched a flower bed? It's too bad "illegals" don't have unions. Maybe they'd get a better shake if they did. The truth is, we need them and their labor. And they need a way out of a country where city mayors and journalists are shot down in the street. When I lived in Canada, there were lots of foreign doctors and professors, but I didn't see many low-wage workers. I wondered why, but I have an idea. Canada doesn't have big agribusiness—like, say, California does (maybe out west, I don't know. I lived in Ontario.) Also they've got us between them and Latin America. Immigration was the big issue though, I can't deny that.

4. Improper use of an emergency room is a problem, for sure, but illegals aren't the only ones taking advantage. The 40+million uninsured who are citizens have something to do with it too. The problem, as I see it, isn't crowded emergency rooms but a shortage of local clinics that provide free or low-cost care, no questions asked. In my city, there's the Public Health Dept., where anyone (even rich people) can get care—decent care; I know some of the doctors—for little or nothing. One of my rich friends (I have so many you know-ha) took her kids there for all their immunizations. I don't know if you have to show a birth certificate to get a tetanus shot; I hope not.

5. Do illegals really account for a drain on our GDP? Compared to lots of other holes we could plug, I bet that's a pretty insignificant one. Do you have any compelling figures?

6. Oh, I'd say illegals have a lot of respect for law enforcement in this country. Just look how they're making themselves scarce in Alabama—even legal immigrants are scared. Next we'll be making all Latinos wear a yellow star on their sleeve.

7. If they COULD get health insurance, maybe they WOULD. And another thing: if we can require car insurance, why can't we require health insurance?

8. I'll give you in-state tuition. But not public education, which I know imposes a strain on school budgets. Of course, college tuition is a whole other subject that I won't go into here. I'd recommend "Hunger for Memory" by Richard Rodriguez (I think that's his name; I know it starts with an R) and/or "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros.

I have a confession to make. When my first husband and I moved to Canada with our two boys (a daughter was born while we were there), we were legal. My husband had a work permit, good for a year. After the first year, he got it renewed. The next time he tried to renew it, a new immigration officer had taken over, and he turned us down. My husband was not "in the national interest." He was not a sympathetic man. In fact, he made it his mission to clear out all the "illegals" under his jurisdiction. including us. We had been trying to get "landed immigrant" status, hired a lawyer and appealed to our provincial rep., but we weren't getting anywhere.

One evening, as I was fixing dinner, there was a knock at the door. When I opened it, two men were standing there, looking very grim indeed. They identified themselves and asked to see my husband. My stomach dropped into my shoes. I hustled the kids upstairs—to protect them—and when I came down, my husband told me we had to be gone within a week. He had to leave his job in the middle of a semester; our oldest son was abruptly taken out of school, never to return; the life I loved came to a startling and sudden end.

So every time I read about some immigrant—like the girl who grew up here, was accepted to Yale (some good place?), then told she was to be deported—whose life is coming apart, I feel not only sympathy but kinship. Everyone has a story. If you knew it, maybe it wouldn't be so easy to get angry. Circumstances alter cases. To be fair, the law sometimes has to bend a little. Bend it or break it? Maybe that's the real choice.

[20111016-05](#) 10:02 Pam Re: "The Third Industrial Revolution..."

Dear SteveB,

It was Dennis, and he sent it to me. Thanks. I want to hear about your "hydrogen experience."

[20111016-06](#) 12:14 Susette Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Anecdotal evidence that those tax cuts didn't help the common man is all around us. The Bush era tax cuts are basically still in effect and people are tanking. Look at the business section of your paper, especially the personal financial advice section. Mine has articles: "Public sector remains anchor for local economy", "There's no place for your cash like a right-size home", "New recession may be looming; make plan to handle risk".

Doesn't look good.

[20111016-07](#) 12:28 GaryC Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Susette,

Based on the astute economic logic displayed here, wouldn't it be better to take all of the money from all workers and let the state distribute the funds? How has that worked out in history?

[20111016-08](#) 12:30 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Susette and SteveB,

"Public sector remains anchor for local economy." This is perhaps the most important sentence in this post. How does downsizing the Post Office, firing teachers and cops, etc. help the unemployment problem? What Boehner basically says is, we have to eliminate jobs in order to create jobs. He talks (as do all Repubs) about the "government" as if it were some big old mean man who only wants to suck up our money for his own pleasure. Government is not a monolith. The GOP just loves to oversimplify everything it can and deny what they can't. The politicians we see all over the media monopolize our attention, but maybe the real threat comes from those moneybags like the Koch brothers and Art Pope who pull strings from behind a curtain. Politicians are just the mouthpieces for moneyed interests. But I'm not telling you anything you didn't already know.

[20111016-09](#) 12:52 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear GaryC,

I just read an article in the last couple of days that presented a very persuasive argument for some "income redistribution." Alas, I can't remember where I saw this, and I can't find it after searching around. The gist of it was that the increasing wealth gap isn't doing anyone any good. We don't need to see everyone make the same salary or have equal amounts of money, but when the rich and the rest grow too far apart from each other, there's a hollow in the middle, and the whole society collapses. I'm so tired of hearing rich people defend their wealth by saying they earned it. I can't think of any job, no matter how important, that deserves multimillion dollar remuneration. I'd say an air-conditioner repairman who could get the cool air going again in a high-rise office building "deserves" quite a bit.

[20111016-10](#) 13:54 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear GaryC,

Neither of your replies here, where you jump to extremes of socialism and Democrat misbehavior, bear any relation to the "moderate" goals of Democrats compared to the radical goals of the Republicans.

Your case depends upon somehow proving that either:

1. The economy (and American workers) are really doing great, it's just that nobody knows it. I guess you'd also have to prove here that we're really in better shape than ever and going in a positive direction;
2. Or that it has really been Democratic not Republican policies that have been in effect most of the time and increasingly for the last 40 years or so, and they are the reason the economy and middle class are doing so poorly.

Good luck proving either of these points. In fact, for month, this forum has been full of hard evidence to the contrary. And simply look around you. Are we doing great? Do you see Democrat policies in effect? What? Social Security from 1933? Not the greatest, but provably a working system without the constant thefts of funds by Congress. Medicare/Medicare? Might need a little touching up, but probably the most popular and helpful government programs in America. Do you really want to advocate such a self-destructive position as your party seems to hold?

Isolated cases of Democrat mistakes or evil do not make the case for a lack of pervasive Republican tax, trade, business, education, and social policies—except to oppose anything the government could possibly do. In the case of one thing only do they lobby for more—WAR!

What has sunk us: the Republican wars, corruption, free trade, deregulation, ridiculous tax policies, and the failure (greed) of American big business and money to invest in America when a few more bucks could be made elsewhere.

Please prove otherwise or let's get on the same page and figure out how to fix things.

20111016-11	14:15	Dale	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
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Dear Pam,

Who decides what products and services are worth? Is it you. Is it Obama? Is it me? Is it a committee selected by election or appointment? No...in a free enterprise economy, the market decides. Government intervention has positive and negative effects. There is value in regulation and enforcement to reduce as much as possible fraud and abuse, but once the government starts setting prices/wages and deciding arbitrarily who "deserves" to get paid a specific amount or how much it will cost, the system breaks down. If you don't agree with this approach, there are still a few places in the world who are trying to make a government controlled economy work. Most countries that have experimented with centralized control have painfully recognized that the people finally rebel and choose to change. It would be way easier to go to one of these remaining holdouts and help them "perfect" that plan, then to undermine and overthrow the process that has enabled the U.S. to prosper, albeit with cycles of "better and worse" conditions.

There are NO plausible arguments for income redistribution. There are many arguments for compassion and caring for those who cannot take care of themselves. There are lots of valid arguments why society needs to create opportunity and support the pursuit of more than mere subsistence living standards, in other words enable the "pursuit of happiness." There are unquestionably actions that we could be taking to improve our current situation, but finding ways to enable lower income people to make more is the right objective. Taking it away from someone else is not the right answer. Let me ask, where do you draw the line? Who decides who the winners and losers will be? What if it were decided YOU needed to pay more and do with less?

[The last sentence... But, of course, all of us, here, are fortunate to have been in that position most of our adult lives, have we not? Most of us have not been on welfare, etc., we have had income taken from us and redistributed. So what? We (all of America, many times over) decided democratically that we want it that way. Look at it like this: the taxes you and I have paid all our lives have also been "redistributed" unfairly and unequally as far as military spending goes—it's not just "entitlements" that "receive" redistributed wealth. Defense spending redistributes wealth in a huge way, but you never hear Republicans squawk about that. Interesting, huh? —SteveB]

Under our current tax code, redistribution is baked in the cake. Half the population pays ZERO tax, yet those same people get the most benefit of public services (on average). It's a double whammy. Just out of curiosity, how do you justify having people pay zero tax on an ongoing basis, many for their whole life, while they get fire protection, police, schools, national defense, licensing, etc. all for nothing? (OK, I know, they pay sales tax in most states.) The bummer is that in an effort to socially engineer the tax code, we have ended with a labyrinth of laws that no one can understand and it costs the taxpayers to have experts do their forms and it costs the taxpayers for all the government inefficiencies to track and collect. Another double whammy. Scrapping the tax code and starting over is making a lot of sense to me.

[The overwhelming evidence suggests that almost no one pays zero tax their entire lives. The vast majority of people ended-up contributing. Maybe just so they can collect unemployment and Social Security checks, huh? —SteveB]

What do you think?

[There would be a lot of business climate uncertainty during the lengthy debate. I thought you and business hated that above all else? Maybe it would be enough uncertainty to drive us back into recession? —SteveB]

20111016-12 14:16 SteveB Re: "Prison or Deportation..."

Dear Pam,

I think this is a tough issue, especially for compassionate people. And I would admit that I feel compassion for many people in our prisons, even those guilty of violent crimes. Wow! What bad lives! What awful breaks! So, of course, I also feel compassion for illegal aliens. But I don't advocate eliminating violent crime laws or letting all the people out of prison and letting them break the law.

This is actually another rich versus the rest of us issue. Just because it has a human face doesn't make it any different. The rich benefit, and most of the rest of us pay the price by allowing so many illegals in the country.

Our citizens are in trouble. These people make things worse for them, for those who are undeniably our own. One of the two has to go. Which one do you want to leave? Our citizens or the illegal aliens?

I have compassion. And I think the government should and does handle at least some cases compassionately, like the lady in the story you sent me who got her green card instead of being deported. The same way you should have been treated in Canada, but were not, so maybe the U.S. is better? (Canada had no trouble with my Army deserter brother-in law or half of China). But I have more compassion for my children, grandchildren, friends, the black guy down the street, etc. who need jobs as much as illegal aliens.

And I think it's a myth that Americans won't do these jobs. I just spent six months mainly living in hotels and resorts in Florida. In some areas, like Orlando, all our maids and hotel workers were illegal aliens. None legal. In places with hillbillies instead of Hispanics, they were plenty able somehow to find hillbillies to do the jobs. Believe me, you give Alabama enough time and they are going to find people to do those jobs. If we'll pick cotton, fight wars, and work in steel mills (and we have and we will!), we'll do any damned thing!

Nobody loves Hispanic people more than I do. But their home countries need them more than the U.S. does. That's a fact.

20111016-13 14:40 Pam Re: "Prison or Deportation..."

Dear SteveB,

I don't see this as an all or nothing issue. If illegals commit crimes, deport them. Unless it's murder or something, I wouldn't pay taxpayer money to put them in jail. Ship 'em out. But if they're just poor folks trying to get by, and they're working (or someone in the family is), then I say, consider their circumstances before making a decision. I don't want to see bad people get rewarded, but I don't like to see good people hurt either.

We happened to get to Canada too late. Not long before our arrival, there was a total amnesty; all illegal aliens were automatically allowed to stay, and the country started all over. All those draft dodgers got to stay, which is fine by me. We got there after the deadline, so we were treated under different rules. I'm not complaining about how Canada treated us; I'm not mad or anything. But it did give me some insight into what people far worse off than us went through. We had no home, no job, nothing to go back to. We did have family, and that's where we went. That was no picnic, but it was a safe harbor until my husband was able to find another job. If I'd spent my whole life in the U.S. and then had to go back to Nigeria or wherever, it would be a catastrophe. Do we really have to round people up just because they have brown skin? Do you really want an America where everyone has to carry an identity card? Prosecute criminals, and deal with the rest humanely. I'd rather see more effort put into stopping the drugs flowing into this country from Mexico than into hounding some strawberry picker.

[20111016-14](#) 14:57 Mary Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

Wow! Nail on the head!

[20111016-15](#) 15:29 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

Lord, no, not a committee! I am a good capitalist, and I don't think wage and price controls are the answer. Much, if not most, of the time the market does a pretty good job of managing things—the invisible hand and all that. I would hate to have a planned economy. The countries that have tried it, like the Soviet Union, ended up with too many cabbages and not enough soap. Long lines had to queue for bread or go without if the bakery had sold out its quota for the day. That would be a nightmare.

But having reasonable limits is, well, reasonable. That's where a progressive income tax comes in. It's not meant to punish achievement or be a giveaway to low-end earners. The poor do pay taxes every time they buy something. No one is completely exempt. I like the proposal to keep taxes low on everyone making up to—what? a million dollars a year, two million? I don't care where you draw the line. But huge salaries (plus bonuses etc.) should be taxed hugely, or at least substantially. I don't see how this would hurt anyone, and I don't think it would slow down business. We've already seen what lowering taxes on the rich has done for us; just look around.

I suppose I do approach most things from a compassionate angle, but the strongest arguments don't have to do with fairness. They persuade me, but I acknowledge that the pragmatists among us need more than feeling good. The danger—and it is a danger—is that the have-nots will get fed up and trample through the rose beds of the rich, and where will that get us?

[20111016-16](#) 15:49 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

"Taking it away from someone else is not the answer."

Then what is the answer?

The money has to come from the people who have it, one way or another. A good tax system is our best bet. People hated the income tax when it was first introduced, but no one is suggesting now that we get rid of it. How else would anything get done? Should we hire our own private security guards? Wait, the rich already do that. Should we let our infrastructure crumble away? Rotten bridges are just as bad for the rich as they are for the poor. Should we continue to let corporations like GE pay no tax and hide their money offshore? Oh yeah, that's already happening. Reasonable limits and regulations, that's all I favor.

I'm so glad we are not all of one mind in this group. We'd have nothing to talk about then. Maybe we won't change anyone's mind, but at least we clarify our own beliefs and possibly get others to think. I'm not the best on facts and

figures; others of you do that much better. (Maybe you're not as lazy as I am.) :-) But I'm trying to find reasonable arguments that make sense to me. I don't want anyone to ever think I'm attacking them personally.

What are the things we'd all like to see? As close to full employment as possible. A state-of-the-art health care system. Investment in small business and a good climate for entrepreneurship. Affordable, if not free, education, including college level or its equivalent. Everyone in a decent home. Homeless people off the streets. Mentally ill people in compassionate care facilities. An end to war. Healthy food. Development of sustainable energy and a reduction of the use of fossil fuels. A decent standard of living for all, as well as the opportunity to get rich. What on this list do we not all want? The question, I think, is how to accomplish these things. Setting goals is a good step. JFK had the race to the moon. LBJ had the War on Poverty. People keep saying they don't know what the Wall St. protesters want? Really? I think it's pretty clear.

20111016-17	18:27	Art	Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"
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Dear Pam,

Well I agree with scrapping the tax code because it is certainly heavily weighted in favor of the rich as we all know. Not many poor people can pay to buy congressmen to juggle tax laws.

History is replete with examples of what happens to a country if adjustments are not made at the national level to somehow balance the distribution of wealth. France in 1789 and Russia in 1917 are pretty good examples. We could well be headed in the same direction. All we have to do is look at what has happened in the last few decades. I think almost everything I have read states that virtually all the increase of wealth has gone to the top few per cent in the country. Interesting coincidence that the time period is the same when all the tax breaks occurred, hmmm mostly for the rich. So maybe the accumulation of wealth is not because they have done better but perhaps rather because they have benefited from tax reductions. I also read somewhere they we are in the top, or bottom if you prefer 5 countries in disparity of wealth distribution. We used to call those places Banana republics but now , to quote Pogo, they are us.

I always try to read in detail the company annual reports when I receive them and I am always, astounded at the astronomical salaries they award themselves. (I know it is supposed to be a Board of Directors but who is kidding who? They are all part of the scam.) The CEO of Bank of America, a bank the taxpayer had to bail out just awarded himself a \$9.5M bonus. Think anyone is really worth that? And to add insult to injury, as Buffet says, he pays less percentage of tax than his secretary does who make 1/500th as much. What's fair about that?

So, back to wealth. Just ask yourself if you had been given \$10M or \$20M as you graduated from college do you think you might be a little better off today? it is not a level playing field. There is no evidence anywhere that taxing the rich hurts the economy. It is all just republican blather, and they want to reduce taxes for the rich. All that will do is provide more jobs in China, plus perhaps the occasional illegal alien gardener here in the U.S.

Happy to be in the group.

20111016-18	20:52	SteveB	Re: "Prison or Deportation..."
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Dear Pam,

Yes! The last one went out to everybody, it looks like. You're doing great!

But you're really p*ssing me off with this immigration stuff! Just kidding of course. (Ya, I was happy too that my brother-in-law and the draft-dodgers got amnesty in Canada. He's done well there, it's a great country, and he gave me more opportunity to get up there.) You know, I was just thinking. Immigration is a tough issue, but it's a whole lot easier than the budget problem or the energy or health care or jobs problems, maybe.

I think what you say sounds reasonable and has been the status quo for a long time...total tolerance. Not half-way tolerance, almost complete. With two amnesties already granted, over the years.

But...would you be for stopping any additional people coming illegally? Would you be for actually controlling the border? Don't you think there are some very negative consequences for the U.S. and its citizens under the current system?

I could maybe see a little tolerance, but I want some kind of deal in return. I'll meet you halfway. How about if no more come and half of the ones who are here get shipped back and half given amnesty? The illegal aliens would choose themselves who gets to stay and who goes. Anyone who leaves would, of course, have their chance to return legally. Sound fair? Or...I'm open to other creative solutions...

20111016-19 21:01 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Art,

Welcome to our informal group and thanks for your comments. I'm sure you'll be hearing back from people. Always good to have another ally on board, though actually I'm just as happy to have a contrarian. :-)

Where do you live? That Pam is a smart girl, huh? Must be the water where she grew up!

20111017-01 06:23 Mark Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

from Dale:

There are NO plausible arguments for income redistribution.

Scrapping the tax code and starting over is making a lot of sense to me. I'm whole-heartedly with you, Dale.

20111017-02 06:37 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Mark,

I don't think it would be feasible to scrap the whole thing, leaving nothing in its place.

Wouldn't it be better to start at one end and work toward the other? Say, begin with the top 10% of individual incomes and work down from there. Also, have a separate process for small businesses and corporations. The whole system does need to be rationalized. It's like a Rube Goldberg contraption as it is.

20111017-03 06:38 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

"There are NO plausible arguments for income redistribution." You are kidding, right?

All of these questions were answered long ago by the vast majority of Americans. Have we totally forgotten our history?

Radicalize it by calling it your dreaded "income redistribution" all you want, Americans want taxes to be progressive. It never seemed to harm us when they were even more progressive. No one here wants anything as radical as Cain's get richer scheme for the rich.

Americans have also decided that competition in the free marketplace is the way prices should be set. Why would you assume anyone disagrees with that?

Ah...Republicans call the opposition "communists" so you people start to believe it?

But the marketplace must be "free" and that requires your dreaded "government intervention" or disaster would strike even the rich. I guess you want to eliminate costly government regulation of the free marketplace? Things like the safety drugs, meat, bridges, etc., should be left to the marketplace? Study your history. The world learned long ago that you don't leave the fox guarding the henhouse!

We all know these things. There is no reason to rehash this stuff. THESE ARE NOT THE ISSUES! Where are the jobs your currently low, low taxes on the rich and business were supposed to produce???? That's the question we should be asking. I don't mind a simpler tax system, as long as it approximately preserves the progressive tax structure that led us to greatness...before the Regan and Bush tax cuts, before greed took the wheel in America, before a formerly great political party decided to try to balance the budget on the backs of the poor while allowing the rich to get even more filthy rich. (My Mom used to love that term, "filthy rich".)

Let me also inform you that the poor are not working. Much of the middle class is not working. How would it be possible to get enough blood from that turnip to balance this war-torn budget that Bush essentially gave us? Prove it.

20111017-04	10:07	SteveG	"The 99%, the 53%, and Distributive Justice"
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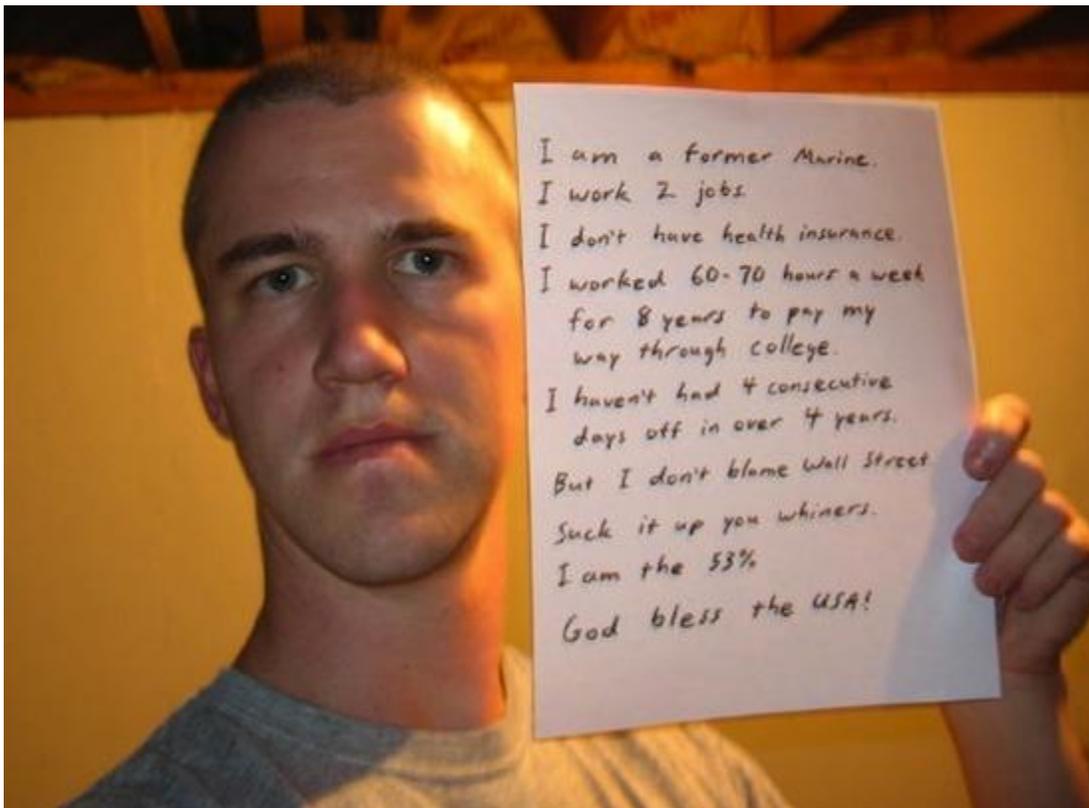
"The 99%, the 53%, and Distributive Justice" posted by Ben at Occupy Philosophy

Oct. 15, 2011, (<http://occupyphilosophy.blogspot.com/2011/10/99-53-and-distributive-justice.html?spref=fb>)

The battle cry of the movement that's occupied Wall Street and spread around the country and the world in recent weeks is "We Are The 99%."

The appeal to intuitive principles of economic justice implicit in highlighting the grotesque imbalance between the wealth, power and privileges of a tiny minority of the population and those of the other 99% seems clear enough. Given the large amounts of human suffering caused by the distribution of wealth and power in America and other contemporary capitalist societies, the prima facie injustice is certainly clear enough. Utilitarians, Rawlsians, Marxists (of both Hegelian and G.A. Cohen-style "analytic" stripes) and so on can all quite easily make the case that this distribution is massively unjust.

What, then, about the perspective of this fellow?



His use of the phrase "the 53%" is a reference to the bizarre right-wing myth that only 53% of the population pays taxes. (Apparently the payroll taxes still paid by those working people too broke to afford to pay federal income taxes don't...um...count, for some reason?) That bit of silliness aside, though, what should we say about him?

Max Udargo makes some reasonable points here about ways that the fellow in the picture might plausibly change his mind later. (What if he gets sick?, etc.) Imagine, though, that he sticks to his convictions through thick and thin. No matter how bad things get, he won't "blame Wall Street."

Who he does blame isn't clear. Given the emphasis on his own hard work and dedication, it's unlikely that he's taking Herman Cain's advice and blaming himself for his own negligence in not having the good sense to be born into a rich family. Nor, given the enthusiastic reference to "God" at the bottom of the sign, does it seem likely that he's blaming the deity for that particular bit of natural evil.

Perhaps the question of "blame" doesn't arise for him. He could tell two sorts of stories according to which "blame" would be a non-issue.

First, it could be that no one is to blame because he's perfectly content with his lot.

He was happy to work 60-70 hours a week while the rich kids had all the time they needed to study.

He doesn't need as many as four consecutive days off in four years since he can have all the fun he'd ever want in three.

He doesn't mind his lack of health insurance. If he gets cancer, he's happy to stay home from the hospital and hope for the best. Or he'll accept that the God who he invokes as blessing American capitalism in the last line of his sign wouldn't give him cancer without a good reason, and he thinks it would be inappropriate for him to interfere with God's will. Perhaps he thinks that doctors won't be necessary—he'll just grit his teeth and hum the Marines' Hymn over and over again until his cancer chickens out and goes into remission.

(From the halls of Montezuma....)

Of course, even if so, all of this would be morally irrelevant, and certainly wouldn't justify his charge that everybody else is just whinin'.

By analogy, the fact that many Saudi women would voluntarily wear veils hardly justifies the rest of them being legally forced to. The fact that many slaves in ancient Rome were content with their lot—some accepting their servitude, for example, as the will of various Gods—doesn't add up to a terribly convincing moral objection to other slaves joining Spartacus in revolt.

Hardly anyone chooses to live in poverty. The tens of millions of Americans who, like our friend the Marine, can't afford health insurance, aren't choosing to forgo it. (Maybe the sign-holder would refuse socialized medicine on principle—it would be interesting to find out if he takes advantage of the services of the Veteran's Administration—but, pretty clearly, most would not.) If circumstances of those even at the bottom rung of current casino-capitalist realities aren't even close to as bad, in many obvious ways, as those of Saudi women or Roman slaves, it remains the case that they have legitimate grievances, and despite the sociologically-illiterate babble of the Herman Cains of the world, it's impossible to seriously argue that the difference between their circumstances and those of the Wall Street profiteers are entirely, or even mostly, under their control.

Of course, somewhat more charitably, we could assume that the 53-percenter in the picture doesn't think in terms of blame, not because he thinks that if he doesn't mind his economic circumstances, it somehow follows that no one else has a legitimate complaint about those conditions, but because he regards the situation as morally just.

And, to be fair to him, "morally just" is quite compatible with "unfortunate and depressing." By analogy, if your wife or boyfriend or girlfriend or husband or whatever leaves you, and you loved them very much, it might make perfect sense for you to be (a) utterly devastated by that turn of events, without (b) going crazy and forming the belief that your partner should have been forced to stay with you, or that they didn't have a moral right to decide to end the relationship. Perhaps the Marine in the picture thinks his economic situation is like that—the natural result of consensual economic activity everyone involved had every right to engage in.

Robert Nozick thought that this would be sufficient to justify any economic outcome. In *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, he argued that even the most extreme end-state inequalities could be morally justified if they'd come about the right way. He had many interesting, challenging arguments for this view. Others have poked interesting holes in them—like G.A. Cohen's point that Nozick's most famous thought experiment shows only that historical considerations are relevant to the justice or injustice of end-states, while Nozick insisted on treating them as if they were decisive—but there's a much

simpler and more important reason why Nozickian considerations are not, and could not, even be relevant to the justice of the complaints of the 99%, rising up in all corners of the country, and now the world, to demand justice from the Wall Street profiteers.

To see why, consider Nozick's two conditions for a given distribution of resources being just:

First of all, we have to start with just acts of original acquisition, so that at the beginning of the story, everyone clearly has a right to their possessions. (For example, we imagine starting by people claiming bits of un-owned land, clearing them off to start farms, and so on.) Then, as long as all changes in distribution since then result from what Nozick calls "capitalistic acts between consenting adults" (i.e. transfers in which force and fraud are not used), whatever final distribution we end up with, even one far worse than the one we have, even one that involved 1% of the population living in opulence and the other 99% living in the conditions memorably described by Louie CK in the clip below—living just long enough to be hungry, then starving to death immediately thereafter—it would be just, because of its immaculate origins.

The argument between Nozick and people like Cohen about whether this hypothetical, immaculately-conceived version of capitalism would be morally just, is a fascinating philosophical debate, and it's the sort of complex question about which intelligent people can reasonably disagree. It could not, however, possibly be less relevant to the current real-life struggle between the actual 99% and the actual Wall Street aristocracy, for the simple reason that, whatever one thinks of hypothetical, immaculately-conceived capitalism, that's not what happened here.

Anyone who's ever cracked a history book and at least skimmed through it for fifteen or twenty minutes knows that the just-original-acquisitions-followed-by-consensual-transfers story could hardly be further from the real origins of our system. American capitalism was built on the back of slaves taken to the New World in chains. The fields where those slaves were forced to work were, far from having been claimed from some sort of state of nature, part of lands taken by force and genocidal violence from the native population of the continent. When we turn from America to the rest of the world—capitalism, after all, having always been a globally-interconnected system—we see capitalism emerging from feudalism, aristocrats becoming industrialists. Turning to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we see a trail of corpses in Europe and America, as trade union organizers, radical agitators and others who threatened those industrialists' profits were often murdered by thugs or locked up on trumped-up charges or using blatantly oppressive laws. As a 19th-century German guy who, like Robert Nozick, was a Philosophy major in college, but who, unlike Nozick, was as interested in empirical data about economic history as he was in philosophy, put it in one memorable passage, capitalism came into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt."

Turning to 2011, we see conditions exactly that brutal still in force in many of the third world countries whose sweat shops are integral to the high profit margins of the American 1%. (See the death squads employed by Coca Cola in Colombia as a case in point. You have to ignore an awful lot of recent history, in Latin America and elsewhere, to will yourself to believe the case to be entirely out-of-character for American corporate behavior in those regions.) And, here in America, the 1% successfully lobbied for the reversal of regulations that had prevented financial institutions from becoming "too big to fail", committed a thousand varieties of mathematically inventive fraud as they rode high on exploiting the housing bubble, and, when it all came crashing down around them, far from comporting themselves as Nozickian rugged individualists, they successfully directed their bribed political representatives to bail them out using tax money collected from the rest of us. Since getting back on their feet, they've cautiously hoarded their wealth while things have gotten worse and worse for everyone else.

Whether one focuses on origins or outcomes, the injustice of this situation—and the legitimacy of the 99%'s complaint—is overwhelming and undeniable.

And the guy clutching that sign proudly proclaiming his refusal to blame, or to whine, as if this refusal on his part was just supremely virtuous?

He's like someone who refuses to help his neighbors put out a fire coursing through the neighborhood, even knowing perfectly well that, if left unchecked it will consume his house as well, because he thinks working together is a kind of communism.

There are a lot of things you could say about that attitude.

"Virtuous" is not one of them.

20111017-05 08:52 SteveG Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

In terms of agriculture, the marketplace is not free as we continue to subsidize farmers and milk producers—tobacco, corn, peanuts, sugar cane, rice—all protected.

Companies used to have a social conscience, be concerned with—profits/shareholders, employees, communities, and country. Now it seems companies are interested in profit and the shareholders. When the CEO of Bank of America stated as a matter of fact there is an inherent right to make a profit after being bailed out, after the CEO of GE in discussing the movement of their research and development to Brazil and stated he owes it to the shareholders to make a profit. Chase in the process of being bailed out: sold their buildings; took the equity to profits; leased the buildings back; and outsourced 10,000 jobs to decrease their payroll. Back to Bank of America decreasing their workforce by 30,000 employees this fall and then complaining that they need to make money.

20111017-06 20:52 Pam Re: "Prison or Deportation..."

Dear SteveB,

I don't believe it! We're actually working toward a consensus. I love this group! (And it's all thanks to you.)

Yes, we should control our borders. I have no problem with that. I just don't want us to act like the Gestapo toward the people who are already here. When we got kicked out of Canada, we were given some time (a week or two) to get ourselves together. Nobody was arrested. They came knocking; we left. Traumatic at the time, but not as traumatic as going to jail.

I like the idea of some sort of amnesty. Clear the books and start over. I wouldn't put a quota on how many illegals would have to leave; I'd let them all stay, if they're here already and aren't committing crimes. I'd also let them apply for a green card from within the U.S.—if they're here already. Maybe if they've been here for a year or something. Children born here—no question. We could have applied for landed immigrant status in Canada, but we had to do that from outside the country, and it would take time (a year or two, I think). We couldn't do that, so we just left and moved in with my parents. That was just an awful time. This was actually the second time we'd had to do that (long story, well, not long, but sad), and I was miserable about it. My parents were very gracious about having us, but now that I'm older, I realize what an imposition we were. It was also humiliating. Oh well, that was a long time ago.

I agree that immigration is a problem that might actually have some solutions. That's rather nice, sort of like hating Nixon. The scandal was delicious, but no one died. Keep up the good fight!

20111017-07 09:35 Jim How Can We Frame the Debate?

I read somewhere on the net a few weeks ago about how the tea party and others "frame the debate" to set the playing field against letting the facts or scientific research or any logic interfere with their agenda.

For example all medical questions or insurance or welfare programs have to be antiabortion or they are just intolerable.

Taxes are "stealing from those who earned their money" instead of the price we pay to live in a civilized world.

Taxes are "redistributing the wealth" instead of setting up a more progressive way to pay for the infrastructure and education we need to have a healthy and productive educated workforce.

Tax cuts for the rich are to encourage them to spend a bit of their huge share of the pie to create some jobs and let the profits trickle down to the poor like the scraps from the rich man's table in the Bible instead of a greedy way for them to enrich themselves even more at the expense of the rest of the citizens.

Some senator claimed the Senate should take over doing the EPA's job so they could ignore the science when it suited their sponsors' needs no matter what it does to the air we breathe or the water we drink.

Building the XL Pipeline from Canada to the Gulf is extolled to "reduce our dependence on foreign oil" when the plan for that oil is to be able to export it from the U.S. to countries that will pay even more for it than we will.

Letting Medicare use the size of its purchasing power to negotiate lower drug prices was prevented by Congress to make sure the big drug companies could keep their prices high on patented drugs.

Where is the concern for the direct and side effects of these attitudes for both the short and long term?

How can we re-set the frames to get around the roadblocks of the know-nothings/do-nothings Teapublicans?

[20111017-08](#) 09:36 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Dale,

Now the government is totally broken by these dogmatic, thick-skulled teabaggers and that doesn't help.

[20111017-09](#) 10:26 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear SteveG,

I don't think I agree. Corporations were invented and are constructed to do one thing—make money! This are what they should do. And I believe a lot of the "bad corporation" behavior you are talking about has been taken by corporations, who by law must place their stockholders first, because of the currently vast uncertainties in the marketplace. This is why companies are sitting on so much money and banks aren't making loans. They're scared to death! Our government, especially in the last 10 years, has created a disaster. Now the government is totally broken by these dogmatic, thick-skulled teabaggers and that doesn't help.

Think about it. These corporations, the "people" of Mitt Romney's, are without morals, even if they used to have some, which I doubt. That's OK too. But they are more like autonomous robots from Terminator loose in our world than they are like people. They will eat people alive if given the chance and care not one whit.

Just as with government, just as with the tyranny the Founding Fathers feared, the corporations, driven by nothing but greed, just as our politicians driven by nothing but greed for power, can be a source of tyranny more powerful and dark than any single government. Ask anyone out of job right now.

Why were corporations allowed to ship the jobs elsewhere? That never happened before in American history, even under roughly the same conditions. Why didn't we keep protecting our markets like we always did? Now it's a little late.

And Republicans think the answers lie in further deregulation, more free trade, and even lower corporate taxes? My-o-my! Just what has worked so well for us!

CORPORATIONS (& UNIONS, WHICH ALREADY ARE) MUST BE CONTROLLED BY THE RULE OF LAW WHICH CREATES A FAIR SOCIETY FOR ALL.

But, I agree with SteveG, that it is such a slap in the face of America every year to see what taxes GE paid.

[20111017-10](#) 10:31 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

And the turnip at the bottom ain't gonna take much more squeezing!

[20111017-11](#) 10:45 Mark Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

from SteveB:

Now the government is totally broken by these dogmatic, thick-skulled teabaggers and that doesn't help.

Dear SteveB,

Gee, it certainly didn't take long for the teabaggers to ruin the government....

Are you talking about the originals in Boston or the recent ones that popped up during the 2008 presidential campaign???

I'd expect you to say that GWB ruined it much earlier.

20111017-12 11:00 Mary Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

from SteveB:

Now the government is totally broken by these dogmatic, thick-skulled teabaggers and that doesn't help.

Dear SteveB,

You know (and you're still living out of the country??), I really don't give a rat's booty what your opinion is, just suggesting that you NOT generalize and lump people together as "thick-skulled" because you disagree w/ them: shows ignorance. Guessing you wouldn't have joined the group in Boston, huh? Wondering where we'd be now w/o that protest? No doubt they were "thick-skulled", too, according to you. Just saying'.....

20111017-13 11:15 SteveB Things Americans Agree On

I have been thinking about Dale's last comments in the "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth" thread, which raise several of the key points in this debate.

It got me thinking, since, as I wrote, I thought many of these issues were settled long ago. I know I have read of times and can remember times when Americans did not have to question wars or the tax code and social values. People agreed about many goals—like the "American dream" Dale has mentioned or a good education, unions, or progressive taxes. What's to argue? Study history when those things did not exist. Is that where the Tea Party wants to take us?

Anyway, I put together a list of things that I firmly believe Americans still believe in and want enough to pay for. I don't know what the surveys say, or what you guys think, but I'd love to know.

It turns out that there is one common thread that runs through all these things, and that is freedom. (And you thought I was a communist!) The freedom is so important that I will discuss it as I go. And, gee, some of these things cost money.

WHAT MOST AMERICANS WANT (not necessarily in order)

1. **A decent job.** Winning the lottery or having a rich uncle would be nice, but a job that can completely support at least one person would seem to be a necessity. And I believe people want to work, not take government handouts. Those few who prefer to live contrary to this must be re-educated. :-) The freedom here is easy, though not guaranteed by the Constitution—freedom from want. I don't know about you, but I want all my countrymen to be in this boat together. These jobs are also necessary for our freedom. Our freedom from angry, hungry mobs roving the streets looking for victims.

2. **Security.** National and local. The job government's were created for. Why we put up with the compromises imposed by government. The freedom from worry. The freedom to make plans. Freedom from crime and bombs. Perhaps the right to a stable country. The entities created by this need, the police and army, must be controlled by the people, so as not to turn against the people, or even be able to turn against the people, or even one person. Fair?

3. **A good, fair educational system.** Almost all Americans used to agree with this one, now it's just most of us. Freedom from want. Freedom from ignorance. Freedom from lies and tyranny. The American dream. Freedom

from a bleak future. Freedom to hope. Maybe freedom from mobs in the street again. I want us all to have that, as much as we can.

4. **Competent, affordable healthcare.** Freedom from pain. Freedom from unnecessary suffering and death. And most Americans want some form of "socialized medicine". We love our Medicare and Medicaid, despite their flaws. They might need to be fixed or improved, but Republicans will commit political suicide to try to eliminate too much. Pandora's magic box has been opened.

5. **A way to retire sometime.** People also love Social Security, as a whole. Tamper too much at your peril. And, without thievery by Congress, the system (like the Post Office) would be working pretty well, thank you. Freedom from want and suffering. The American dream. Fairness. Partly the responsibility of families too.

6. **A fair society.** To have freedom, we must have freedom to fail. It seems like even God gave us that. Like some businesses which are started with great hope, but which ultimately fail and go bankrupt, some people, given the freedom to try, will fail. But despite what Mitt Romney says, people are different than corporations. When a person fails, and it may not even be their fault, just as it is not necessarily the business's, great suffering can result. And I believe, where at all possible and where else but in the greatest country on Earth, these people fulfilled their part of the social contract when they tried. I believe society must step in and help. That's all.

7. **Privacy.** If the government doesn't have the right to take away my gun, it doesn't have the right to invade my privacy and tell me what to do with my own body. I reserve the freedom to be me. No government knows better than me for me, so has no right to interfere unless I could hurt others in some way. The majority of us want abortion left alone, whether we think abortions are good or bad, moral or immoral. The government needs to say out of the bedroom. This was decided long ago.

Which of these things do Republicans not want, and do not want us all, as a society, to pay for? To me, these points of agreement seem somehow like the antithesis of what I imagine the Republican platform to be.

Do you think this reveals a disconnect with most Americans?

[20111017-14](#) 11:31 SteveG Re: Things Americans Agree On

It all sounds like the values when we grew up and very similar to the life style that is available in the Scandinavian countries. Yes their taxes are high, but they are happy, have access to health care, education, jobs, retirement, etc. If you check back into the 50's, 60's, 70's the U.S. had similar federal tax rates for certain income levels but we never had the educational & health care benefits.

[20111017-15](#) 11:33 Charis Re: Things Americans Agree On

Dear SteveB,

I'd say most of us want these things, yes. But many people are not willing to work for them. They want it handed out. They want jobs to come easy without making an effort to get the education they need, they want free education and healthcare but avoid paying as many taxes as possible, they want to retire but overspend and don't plan their retirement or save when they do have the possibility to do so, some want security and safety but aren't willing to do service, pay our police and military enough to recruit the best, or want someone else's kid to do service but not their own, etc. etc. etc.

There is a big difference between wanting something and being willing to take the steps to obtain what you want.

For example, I really wanted to be a pilot, however I decided I really wasn't up to the effort it would take with all the math involved. I really wanted to be a police officer and I attended training, then found I really didn't want to ever have to shoot someone, I really would love to eat three pounds of chocolate a day, but I know if I do I'll get sick.

You see, people forget that freedom is about both right AND duties. Most people just focus on their rights but aren't really all that committed to the duties involved.

[20111017-16](#) 11:58 Pam Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Mark,

He didn't do it by himself.

[20111017-17](#) 12:11 Pam Re: Things Americans Agree On

I can't argue with any of this. In SteveB's defense, let me say that here he presents his arguments in a reasonable tone and with sound logic. He's got it in him. But his tirades, nerve-jangling as they might be to some, are, to me, a letting off of steam. I often feel like ranting and raving too, but I try not to let myself do that. Sometimes it's kind of therapeutic to have someone else do it for me.

That said, I do hope those of you who disagree with those of us on the left side of the spectrum will not give up on the conversation. As they say, it's all good.

[20111017-18](#) 12:13 Pam Re: Things Americans Agree On

Dear Charis,

Will you concede that at least some of the time people fall into difficulties that are not of their own making? Yes, we are all responsible for ourselves, but it would be a cold world where it was every man for himself. Responsibilities and duties include offering a helping hand as well.

[20111017-19](#) 12:16 Pam Re: Things Americans Agree On

My mother always used to say, You get what you pay for. If we don't want to pay for health care for all or public education or security for old people, where does that leave us? We ALL have to pay if we all want to live peaceably together. You can't throw people to the wolves and expect them not to tear each other apart.

[20111017-20](#) 12:17 Art Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear SteveB,

Thanks for the welcome and like you, I enjoy a healthy discussion. Almost everything I have heretofore been getting from my right wing friends is just passed along hate mail. Where does all this stuff come from? It used to be they would claim some fact, "President Obama doesn't display the flag". SNOPEs takes most of those apart and, of course, I send them back, so now I notice a shift. Just hateful accusations, "President Obama is a secret communist", that there is no reply to. At least this group tries to justify its positions with some thought behind it.

As I think you know, I am a Greencastle product "61. Spent 28 years in the Army, then worked here in Washington for another 18 years. We live in Fairfax Station, VA just outside the beltway.

I used to be a Republican but simply cannot abide the politics of this new group. I don't think they care anything about the country except in their own twisted idea of what it should be. To many accusations of Nazism being thrown about these days but, as a historian, the tea party does remind me of the early days of the Nazi SA Brownshirts.

Thanks again for the welcome.

[20111017-21](#) 12:35 SteveB Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Mary,

If I referred to a real person, then I would apologize. If I referred to a politician or politicians in general or politicians of some party (which I did), then I reserve my right to criticize the government, as do we all.

Surely you don't always refer to President Obama in the kindest of terms, based on what I've read here? And I will defend your right to do so to the very death. I mean that.

And, yes, I live out of the country a good part of the time, but that's more my wife's choice than mine, though I don't mind. You should try it.

[20111017-22](#) 12:36 Art Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Mary,

Just as a point to consider, the American colonists in the late 18th century were collectively the richest society in the world at that time. So the original tea party participants were not a bunch of poor bedraggled economically downtrodden peons but rather folks from a very well off society. The British of the time knew that well and were simply asking the colonists help pay for defending the western approaches against the deprivations of Indians and the French and Spanish who were still in the south. The colonists very much wanted that protection, they just didn't want to pay for it.

Sound vaguely familiar?

[20111017-23](#) 12:50 Art Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear SteveG,

Take a close look at Mr. Cain's pizza transactions. Lots of money made by the high ranking staff in consolidation at the expense of the rest of the workforce. It's all there in the records.

As a lowly share holder, I also no longer believe big corporations are doing much for me, the shareholder either. As I review proposals a company recommends for the annual meetings, all it seems to do is benefit the senior management. Unfortunately I don't own in the 10,000 and up share category for most of them, so I realize my little protest doesn't do much but as a regular practice if they recommend it I vote against it. I also use an arbitrary standard of \$1M for total annual compensation. If it is more, I try to vote the CEO out.

Anyone ever look at what the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff makes or the salary of U.S. Army Division Commander with 20,000 troops and billions of dollars of equipment? Our corporate salaries are a joke.

[20111017-24](#) 12:54 Art Re: Things Americans Agree On

Dear SteveB,

Good thoughts. Pam sent along an article about happiness and the Danes that struck a note about faith in one another and that includes the government. I think a good point. I don't care if you have more than me, as long as there is a reasonable fair shake at achieving some level of happiness, pretty well cover below. Sadly that does not exist today.

[20111017-25](#) 13:47 SteveB "Unsettled Times"

I like this guy's thoughts. He seems to speak for average citizens—the middle class. I believe these issues (jobs and the greed of the rich) will be the biggest factor in the 2012 elections. Mark my words. I have to say that the Republicans do not exactly seem poised to take advantage of this, do they?

If you are a Republican or a Teabagger, and you not one of the top 1% of the wealthiest people in America, definitely if you are not in the top 10%, aren't you really on the wrong side in your struggle to achieve your dreams and those of your children and grandchildren? :-)

If only the top 1% or 10% are helped, are you getting that help or paying for it? I know I'm paying! And I further say that I believe the top 1% or 10% is sticking it to the rest of us!

"Unsettled Times" posted by Ron Indiana, MSB blog

Oct. 17, 2011, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/10/17/8363392-first-thoughts-defining-romney#c59052918>)

On Oct. 3, 2011, I first commented on Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protesters. With the advances of the internet the movement has now become worldwide. There are simply too many marches and demonstrations to list them all. It is not surprising that the austerity movement in European countries like Greece, Italy, France and England have found common ground with the OWS protesters. But, in fact, the OWS movement has spread beyond Europe and is now global.

There has been some change in the Republican response to OWS. Fewer Republicans are describing the movement in derogatory terms. Even Eric Cantor has dropped the word "Mob". Being the political animal he is, he sees the political implications as more and more people are willing to step forward and say, "I'm one of the 99%". But the harsh reality is that none—not one of the Republicans in office or running for office—are willing modify their conservative thinking to help Main Street Americans who are out of work, or being taxed to protect the riches of the wealthy.

It may have been Nixon who coined the term "silent majority"; but today's silent majority is frustrated and angry. They are angry that those in Congress cannot craft a jobs bill while politicians put themselves or their party first and not the country. And now the silent majority is not so silent. Not only are 99% of Americans angry at government, they are outraged by the bank bailouts and the banks demonstrating their greed by adding monthly charges on their debit cards. They are outraged by the banks unwillingness to work with customers and their continuing policy of foreclosing homes. They are outraged by the huge bonuses given to top executives.

As long as middle class Americans continue to get the short end of the stick, this movement will continue to grow and it will play a significant role in the 2012 election. If corporate CEOs, Boehner and Cantor don't come to grips with this reality, their picture can be hung along side of Alfred E. Neumann with the caption, "What, me worry?"

20111017-26	13:53	Charis	Re: "Unsettled Times"
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Dear SteveB,

It's not that I disagree with you about today's Republicans and the new teabuddies. However, I'm not of the opinion that Demos are doing any better. So where does that leave us? Should we start a new party?

20111017-27	14:27	SteveB	Re: "Unsettled Times"
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from the same blog...not a media personality or some famous pundit, but just a regular person, one of us... [Not "average". One of "we the people". —SteveB]

from "Defining Romney" Comments, posted by Hunter, First Read, MSNBC

Oct. 17, 2011, (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/news/2011/10/17/8363392-first-thoughts-definingromney>)

Both of my children are in college and are now very motivated by the OWS. Frankly, I feel the message is undisciplined and hard to follow but my son said it best:

"Something is not right; as if the last decade was a fake...we don't have a central message because people want us to define ourselves based on what they know and are comfortable with. It's like we don't know ourselves because what was comfortable and familiar to some [including our generation], was a lie; to go back to the way it was is a lie."

He goes on to talk about how people are sharing stories, venting, releasing energy (he's his mother's child) and connecting. What strikes me most though is he doesn't want "our" help. He wants to reinvent, create new ideas, find the motivation to "do something good" for his place in the world.

He's so energetic, much more than I've seen him and I can't help but find it refreshing. That is the underlying depth of American culture. We're never really down and out, we just reinvent ourselves and draw new energy. It is his future and, from the generation that is given a first place trophy even when they come in last, I like that they want to find their own way. I say go for it...

20111017-28	14:41	Charis	"First Person: My Biggest Money Secret"
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Dear SteveB,

This is why I really don't pity Americans all that much.

[Ya, but in country of more than 300 million people, there are bound to be all kinds of stories like these, even in good economic times, which these aren't. They are just saying that these are bad things that happen to people or that they did to themselves. Yes, bad things, but rare. Are they as rare as they should be? Probably not, but...this is not what is bringing the country to its knees. —SteveB]

"First Person: My Biggest Money Secret" by Tim Sprinkle, Yahoo! Contributor Network

Oct. 31, 2011, (<http://finance.yahoo.com/news/first-person-biggest-money-secret-183000348.html>)

As with most things, financial hindsight is 20/20.

We all have those money secrets — that big debt, that low credit score, that bankruptcy filing — that we'd rather our friends and family not find out about, if for no other reason than to save face and prove that we've moved beyond our youthful indiscretions. But where's the fun in that?

So, in the spirit of learning from others' mistakes, we asked our Yahoo! contributors to come clean and share their own personal money secrets with the world. Their stories are below.

I Filed for Bankruptcy (Jimmy Collins)

As a former financial adviser and someone who is often looked upon as one who makes good financial decisions, I am also only human and have been harboring a money secret from my past for some time now. Almost 15 years ago I had to file for bankruptcy.

This was well before I was a financial adviser and it was also during my first marriage. Now, I'm not going to say it was all my ex-wife's fault or all my fault, but I will say that between the two of us we racked up over \$45,000 in debt. At that point in my life I was only waiting tables and barely making enough to pay all the minimums.

After I lost my job and couldn't find another one, I saw no other alternative. However, I have more than rebounded from that awful financial nightmare and have learned from it as well. Now I don't buy anything unless I have the cash for it and I now pride myself for practicing what I preach.

I Had a Weakness for Credit Cards (Bex Barker)

My husband didn't realize he had married somebody who was addicted to shopping. Even though I knew that our policy of 'cash only' was a smart one, and I claimed to give up the use of credit cards, all I really managed to do was relinquish my most used ones. Unbeknownst to my husband, I squirreled away a card with a small balance and a decent sized limit.

Several months and \$2,000 later, my husband found out about my compulsive spending. At first I tried to deny anything was amiss, but it was obvious I had used the card often. The worst part about it was that I couldn't really account for all \$2,000. I knew I had bought clothes, but I can't remember what else was purchased.

My husband's discovery of my addiction was important not only to our financial health but also to our relationship. Since then he has monitored our finances more closely. Additionally, we sat down and cut up each

one of our credit cards so as to make it impossible for me to abuse them again. Our new lifestyle is a challenge at times, and thanks to my regression we've added several thousand dollars to our journey to being debt free, but we are back on the path again, and I've made sure our financial GPS doesn't take us anywhere near a mall.

I'm Still Making Minimum Wage (Jesse Schmitt)

I have been out of work for the better part of four years. I have been pursuing my writing career, but still I like to try and raise my contribution level whenever I am able. So when the opportunity came about for me to get some holiday work at a popular retail department store, I figured "why not?" ... The woman who made me the offer slid it across the table. She could not even speak the words; she had to write it down for me to read. \$8.25 an hour.

I accepted, and then quickly rescinded my acceptance of the offer. As a 32-year-old man I should not be accepting the same rate I was offered at my first suburban retail store almost 20 years ago.

I Was a Timeshare Junkie (Gerry Even)

I was likely an easy mark when I attended the timeshare presentation and walked out the proud owner of a piece of paper for what was promised to be a very nice condo that I could use for a week every year. I say 'promised' because at the time I signed my name, there was a drawing and a hole in the sand, and nothing more.

Two years later I returned, enjoyed my stay at my now newly built property, and again attended another sales presentation. Once again, I must have been an easy mark because I upgraded from a one-bedroom to a two-bedroom condo in what was probably record time.

It wasn't until after I'd signed my name on a \$27,000 piece of property (the two-bedroom) that I started to research what that condo was actually worth. Hello, eBay! My giddy investment was available to me at a fraction of the price I'd paid from other people that had fallen for the same bright shiny object sales pitch.

We Had to Shut Down Our Spending ... Completely (A.C. Haury)

The key to keeping a financially strapped family's head above water? Stop spending. I am not just talking about cutting luxuries, here. When I say I stopped spending, it meant I only got new things at Christmas and my birthday. My husband and I got our financial house in order by limiting all spending. Our children's needs came first, and the only time we purchased new clothes for ourselves was when our current wardrobe was falling into disrepair. Frivolous spending came to a complete halt. Our money went to bills, food and the needs of our children.

I Was Upside Down on a Car Loan (Marie Dubuque)

I was so proud of the brand new Mazda RX7 that I bought in 1989. It had a rotary engine that was as smooth as silk. Forget about the fact that it blew through gas like you wouldn't believe. I didn't believe it until I moved to Florida and took my new set of wheels on a 45-minute commute every day. Needless to say, between the toll roads and the gas guzzler I was driving, I went broke pretty fast. So, instead of trading the thing in for a more practical vehicle, I went to the car dealer armed with ... well, nothing. Not a penny to my name.

You see, I was upside down. I had taken out a loan and now owed more than the car was worth. No problem, according to the finance manager at the slick Mazda dealership. He could put me into a fire engine red Mazda Miata. The hottest thing going that year. The trick? I had to lease it.

Come to find out, that was a really bad idea when it came time to trade it in. I was over on my miles and, you guessed it, once again I had to pay money to get out of the thing. Only this time I made the right move. I traded it in for a no-frills blue Toyota (I paid cash). I'll never forget that car either ... because I hated it so much. It was the most boring car imaginable. But I did learn my lesson. I never again leased a car or borrowed money for one either.

That Time My Car Got Repossessed (Laura Cone)

It started with a bad financial move in 1994 when I literally gave away one of our two cars before making a rash decision to quit my job and move to California. We only made it as far as Tucson, deterred by the 1994 California earthquake. Without my well-paying job, we had trouble making the payment on our remaining car. We took our car in to be repaired and couldn't pay the repair bill. They repossessed the car while it was at the repair shop.

[20111017-29](#) 14:42 GaryC Re: "Unsettled Times"

Dear SteveB,

I have never considered you AVERAGE and I know I am not AVERAGE.

Please adjust your standards.

[20111017-30](#) 14:57 Mary Re: "Why U.S. Should Spread the Wealth"

Dear Pam,

This is why I enjoy your emails.....I may not always agree, but I respect you for seeing the whole picture, not name calling, backing up what you say, and not blaming just one person or party or movement.

[20111017-31](#) 15:01 Pam Re: "Unsettled Times"

This is terrific. You know, I think I'm beginning to feel less hopeless. It seems as if a tide is turning. It's hard for me to see how anyone could disagree with what the OWS is calling for. Some say, Get a job. Or why should we help lazy people? But these young people are not lazy; they are motivated and committed. They are our future, and I'm beginning to feel they just might turn things around.

[20111017-32](#) 16:00 Art Re: "Unsettled Times"

Ain't just young people either.

[20111017-33](#) 18:26 SteveG Re: "Unsettled Times" & "Is #OWS the Revolution the Beatles Were Singing About?" (continued under heading: Health Care)

from: The Daily Share (moveon-help@list.moveon.org):

Hello! Here are the three hottest progressive videos and graphics that we found on the web today, Oct. 17, 2011:

"Is OWS the Revolution the Beatles Were Singing About?"

<http://front.moveon.org/is-ows-the-revolution-the-beatles-were-singing-about-2/?rc=daily.share&id=32078-18997482-Er%3DZDyx>

"Why Occupy Wall Street Will Win the War of Ideas"

<http://front.moveon.org/why-occupywallstreet-will-win-the-war-of-ideas/?rc=daily.share&id=32078-18997482-Er%3DZDyx>

Gay Marriage, Straight Marriage—What's The Diff?

<http://front.moveon.org/gay-marriage-straight-marriage-whats-the-diff/?rc=daily.share&id=32078-18997482-Er%3DZDyx>

Powered by MoveOn Civic Action

[20111017-34](#) 22:32 SteveG Censorship

<http://www.activistpost.com/2011/05/governments-orders-youtube-to-censor.html>

[20111017-35](#) 23:03 Dale Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)

Dear SteveB [ref: [20111017-27](#)],

Now this is what framing is all about. Nice job of distorting the reality of the last election and most of the interim elections the last two years, where the voters overwhelmingly have sent a message they have no confidence in Obama and the policies he espouses. He has given up trying to lead the country and is now in full campaign mode. Travel at taxpayer expense is a pretense for fund raising. Poll after poll show the independents who voted for Obama have discovered just how unprepared he was and what a failure his economic, social and foreign policies are. Now the Democrats are stuck with him for the next election. Of course they are also saddled with Reed and Pelosi, whose arrogance in forcing an unpopular health plan resulted in alienating all but the most liberal.

Speaking of which, for those of you who think Obamacare is a good idea, or that it doesn't go far enough, how do you explain why polls show that a clear majority of Americans don't want it?

By ignoring the polls, do you think the issue will go away. It's been said in these exchanges that Obamacare hasn't cost us anything, because no money has been spent so far, but I believe that misses what THE EFFECT of the passage has had. By coming into office with a chip on his shoulder (Obama) and their shoulders (Democratic Congress) towards business and expressing how "we're going to show them," they sent a clear anti-business signal. Well, threaten a lot of environmental rules and enforcement, and not give businesses a chance to plan....what do you expect? They sit on their hands and don't invest in equipment or hire people. Forcing Obamacare through in the darkness of night, a bill even the Democratic lawmakers didn't understand and were afraid to show to anyone until it was passed, is not the way to build confidence. Now as more details emerge and the horrendous cost on businesses and the American public who will pay for a huge new bureaucracy are clearer, the impetus to repeal is growing, not slackening.

Pretend you are a sole proprietor running a small machine shop or a even a printing shop, a business you built up by risking your savings to buy equipment, advertise and by working long, hard hours. There is no way to plan what the costs will be for employee health insurance, for adding people to fill out forms, etc. You hope the whole thing will go away and something more rational will take its place.....so you wait. You don't hire. You don't buy new equipment. You try to keep up with technology, but that's about it. Passage of Obamacare is just one more unknown and it has cost us all by slowing the time it takes to recover our economy. It's easy to conjure an image of "business" or "rich owners" as heartless and greedy, but most jobs in the U.S. are with small businesses and small business owners. These owners have the same issues as their employees and neighbors, just trying to make their way and have something left when they are too old to work. They have children and parents and siblings who are like you and me, just trying to make something out of their lives. Unfortunately, lots of laws, rules, orders and unchecked enforcement is much harder on small businesses than large companies. They can be nimble when there are opportunities but their margin of financial safety is slimmer. People like "community organizer" Obama and career politicians don't understand this. They don't get that when you send signals you are going to "crack down," "make business pay more," and pick which industries to favor (automotive, solar) and which to attack (banks, which unfortunately also means small banks) you scare people. It's these scared people who are sitting on their hands and their investment \$\$\$. Something as simple as taking away some of the unknowns will go a long ways towards building confidence among small business owners. Even if their costs go up, at least they can plan.

Frame away, SteveB, but the sentiment numbers don't support your pipe dream.

[20111018-01](#) 09:41 Dale Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)

Dear SteveB,

I want you to know I don't really believe any of this stuff I wrote. I just like picturing you whirling around the room like a Tasmanian Devil after you've read it. :-)

Have a great day!

[20111018-02](#) 09:44 GaryC Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)

Dear Dale,

But it's so easy to irritate a socialist!

[20111018-03](#) 11:11 Pam Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)

Dear Dale [ref: [20111017-35](#)],

Shoot. I was all geared up to respond. Well, I think I'll respond anyway, at least a little bit. People are not upset about small or even medium-sized businesses. It's the huge corporate profits and corporate manipulations that make everyone crazy. No one wants to hurt the small businessman.

We hear a lot about regulations, but we're never told what they are and why particular ones are bad. This is argument without evidence. It sounds good, but it means nothing unless it's backed up with specifics. I'm going on what people I trust say about regulations: things like full disclosure on loans, clean water and air, safe drugs, etc. Water and air are so obvious. No one wants to breathe fumes. The financial regulations are trickier because they're opaque and obscure. We need to shine a light on that. When corporations get all worked up about Elizabeth Warren, who is trying to protect the consumer (us), you know they have something to hide.

The only thing wrong with Obamacare is that it doesn't go far enough. Single payer and universal care should be standard. When I lived in Canada, I didn't have to be a citizen or show my birth certificate or anything. We were enrolled in OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance Plan) automatically. An amount was deducted from my husband's paycheck to pay into it, and it was based on the size of our income. We never wrote a check. Overhead and bureaucracy were kept to a minimum, and the care we received was equal to or better than what we'd get here. You can see from the name, OHIP, that health care was managed by provinces individually. There are, what, nine provinces? (I should know, but I hate to admit I'm not sure.) I don't know how the whole thing was structured; I didn't need to. I just know that everyone was very satisfied with it. If the U.S. is too big for one single system, why not divide the country up into regions, grouping rich states and poorer states together, so as to spread the cost fairly? We could have four or five—or six, whatever—areas of coverage.

What we have now leaves no one satisfied, except perhaps big pharma and insurance companies. All this tinkering around the edges, which is about all Obama, or anyone, can do in this political climate is next to pointless. Too bad we don't have a parliamentary system, where the government in power actually has the power to do things. Once elected, members don't have to seduce their constituents; they go into govt. with a mandate firmly in place. I know we're never going to adopt a parliamentary system, but I wish we could. I'm not a political scientist, so don't everyone jump down my throat for not being a red-blooded, democratic (with a little d) American. Canada and Britain are democracies too. And nothing is perfect. But what we've got now is a disaster.

I don't think Henry Reid or Nancy Pelosi are any more annoying than Mitch McConnell or Newt Gingrich. It's never a good idea for the pot to call the kettle black.

I know you don't actually believe Obama has a chip on his shoulder when it comes to big business. He's in bed with them, haven't you noticed? The only group trying to sabotage the country for personal gain is the Republican extremists. I'd exclude the mainstream GOP, except they're in thrall to the Tea Party.

Finally, I'd like to say, we have a surfeit of "How Our Country Was Destroyed" books. I'd like to see more concrete ideas and less bombast. Americans must be pretty stupid if they're swayed by campaign ads that do nothing but sling mud or show the candidate on the beach in front of a sunset. You can draw your own conclusions about that. I wish I knew more history. I'd like to know how the National Health was implemented after WW II.

Final finally, I'd sure like to see SteveB in Tasmanian devil mode. :-)

With regard to this chain mail: it has a grain of truth, but that small truth (a very alarming small truth, to be sure) is wrapped in frantic layers of bull offal.

<http://www.snopes.com/politics/taxes/debtfree.asp>

There IS such a bill, of course. Whether it has a snowball's chance in heck of going anywhere is questionable. And it appears that a lot of the verbiage in the email is whole cloth.

It's been introduced into both houses. It was introduced to the House by Rep. Peter Fazio (D-Oregon) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). So, yes, by golly, it was introduced by—Democrats. (As are roughly half the bills in any congressional session.)

However, according to Snopes (whom I've never caught in an inaccuracy), our President has not expressed any particular interest in it. The bill is without doubt very unpopular, attested by a complete lack of co-sponsors.

Every session, many bills are introduced whose sponsors know will never pass. Often, this is done just to appease special interest groups. Members of all three parties regularly offer up this ridiculous, no-hope bills so that they have "delivered the goods" for ... you name it. It's too bad stuff like this happens, 'cause it takes attention and congressional time. Most importantly, though: you are being used. This is not "from the Man Who". It's from a couple of congressmen who undoubtedly realize it's doomed to die, moribund.

The major message of this email seems to me to be "Obama is destroying your future by lying to you." It's a very familiar message, shouted shrilly across the Web, always in the form of "tell ALL your friends, if you value your future." There was a ton of this about gun laws in the six months before, and the two years following, our President's inauguration. It was all BS. He's a constitutionalist. Absolutely nothing has changed about the gun laws. Even when (most) Democrats introduce gun legislation, in many cases it's well understood that a bill won't pass, and often never even comes to a vote. But the larger anti-gun lobbies ARE Democrats, and so, the representatives must be seen to represent. The lobby pushes, the congressman sighs, shoves the pen, and we have a bill that won't happen.

Don't get me started on Hilary, though. Fortunately, she is in a position where she can't do anything as insane as, say, putting individual serial numbers on every bullet. It's possible she might really be the person who cooked that idea up. I don't know.

I wouldn't vote for her, or support such a bill. But it would never pass, so I am not losing sleep that someone might introduce such a bill, or even if they did. I like my guns, and I like that the U.S. is such a whacked-out place that I can own them, virtually without limit. It IS an expression of freedom. It is NOT something that would stop the U.S. military from controlling the U.S. public, if it ever came to that. It probably would make a large power hesitate to send in ground troops, but... ya know, we just don't see that as a sole vehicle of war all that much anymore. Ever try and hit a drone with a rifle? There are soooo many guns loose in the U.S. that the idea of controlling them is exactly what the NRA promotes: you know, the old line about if criminals were outlawed, only guns would have criminals. (Whatever) It's obviously true. It's a definition.

My biggest concerns in politics, if we are going partisan here, is the steadfast manner in which Republican-sponsored bills have pecked away at public education, and promoted the obviously flawed concept of privatization. (Just how do we expect adding an additional layer of profit-taking to cut costs or raise efficiency? Each such layer has inbound and outbound auditors, lawyers, executives, and a required profit margin. Give it just a moment, please.)

I would do a lot to defeat this bill if there was any reason to think it was anything but dead in the water. But I cannot pass on propaganda to others, and that's what the wrapper of this message is.

"Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other peoples' thinking." — Steve Jobs

Dear Dale [ref 20111017-35],

Well...of course this is the email I don't believe. ;-) [From Dale, ID:

And the longer email I don't really find much to disagree with. And I think Dale stated the case very well.

I have been a small businessman, I've been getting the stuff from the IRS on PPACA ("Obamacare"). I sympathize with this most important of all economic segments. But I recall surveys for years before Obamacare where time after time small businessmen themselves said overwhelmingly that their number one problem was the rising cost of health care and, hence, insurance. Many had dropped insurance. Many worried about how to insure their own families. Something had to be done. It was the wrong time. The Democrat controlled Congress in late 2010 should have passed a budget instead of this bill.

Republicans should have taken part in a spirit of cooperation instead of standing aside and doing nothing. In the end, both parties—being totally corrupted by big money—sold out to the medical and insurance industries and dropped the single payer system. Dropped anything meaningful, in my estimation. Once again, I didn't see the President there leading, either. he sold out early and left the table, just as he did in the budget fight.

You are correct that the uncertainty introduced has a negative impact on hiring. But there was and is so much other uncertainty there too, and adequate credit is still difficult for many to get. And there are tax credits available to many businesses that should help rather than hinder their process. Also, I can remember the same kind of grumbling by doctors and hospitals about how all the Medicare paperwork was going to put them out of business. Ya, right. And I don't think there is any hard evidence yet that Obamacare is affecting the economy at this time. Dale's guess may well be right, though, in which case Mark has a point there too.

But, no the law should not have been passed. Instead, I agree with Pam that we need true socialized medicine and I'd be glad to discuss that subject at length sometime.

The Republicans have offered nothing to solve the healthcare problem except to bow to their moneyed masters in the industry. What's their solution? Same as the economy and taxes and wars and jobs? The same old?

You know what I think should have been done instead of the big elaborate behemoth of Obamacare? A little simple regulation. I can buy car or home insurance, even business or professional liability insurance, at a good price, as if I'm their best customer (almost). Normally, I don't get a much better price if I insure 10 cars or homes. But when it comes to health insurance, my rate is determined by how large a group I am with. Why can't it be the law that everyone is just automatically in the largest group, as with other insurance? This change would make a huge difference to many small businesses. But it would increase costs to big businesses, and the big money always controls things, doesn't it, even in the business world? If the government had extra money at the end of a year, they could simply chip into the pot, all without any huge bureaucracy. What do you think?

An aside: one thing I'll never understand is the hatred that the right seems to feel for Pelosi and "Reed" [sic]. They are a couple of bumbling idiots (excuse me, Mary) who are so totally ineffectual they've never gotten off the launch pad. They seem to have been the best friends the Republicans could have had. They made absolutely sure that absolutely nothing got done the first two years of Obamacacy (or Obamacracy?). (I just made that up. I rather like it.) Then the only thing that got done, instead of the budget, was Obamacare.

Why the extreme animosity toward President Obama and Obamacare, so out of place in an Obamacracy?

20111018-06	12:39	GaryF	Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act
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This is really good, the only one I disagree with is #5. I'd rather see the congressional health plan opened up to everyone. [That's a good idea! —SteveB]

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the debt ceiling:

"I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election.

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified!

Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971—before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc.

Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took one (1) year or less to become the law of the land—all because of public pressure.

Warren Buffet is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise.

In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

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3. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.
4. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
5. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen/women are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen/women. Congressmen/women made all these contracts for themselves. Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

20111018-07	14:22	Clark	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
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Dear SteveB,

Steve, I got a kick out of what you wrote about Pelosi and Reid. I once interviewed Pelosi for a magazine piece when she was first elected to Congress and came away with the distinct impression that she was a total airhead—I may have gotten one usable quote out of her, but I'm not even sure I got that. I guess she keeps her caucus in line but how she ever got to where she is today, I'm dumbfounded. And I've heard other journalists I know say the same. Whenever she appears on TV, I cringe.

And Harry Reid, well, enough said. Take it from me and many others on the D side of the aisle, we don't like these bozos either. But mainly because they seem so ineffectual and such bad reps for Democrats. I guess the R's attack them because they're such easy targets; they certainly aren't threats. Any dissenters on this? Am I missing something?

20111018-08	16:46	Jim	"We Are the One Percent"
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Look at this...where these people did not say these things directly but they would if they were truthful... the author is a columnist.

"We Are the One Percent" posted by Michael Kindt, The Cagle Post

Oct. 18, 2011, (<http://blog.cagle.com/2011/10/we-are-the-one-percent/>)

Individually, we each have so much money it would take four whole lifetimes to spend it all. Since we only have one lifetime, we use the rest to set the policies of the United States so that they are favorable to us in every single way. We must ensure that things continue pretty much as they are, for times are very, very good. If it ain't broke, don't fix it, we say. Lately, some have demonized us, but unfairly. We are not the bad guys.

Please, take a few moments to get to know a few of our members and see for yourself:



Hello. I am Brian Roberts, the CEO of Comcast, and I was paid 31 million dollars last year. My company has probably the worst customer service record in the nation. Ask the millions of people who have no choice but to use us. You'll find that we are, almost universally, reviled. Over the last decade, we have spent more than 10 million dollars on Congress to make sure we have absolutely no competition. This is, after all, a "capitalist" country. Haha.

I am Jeffrey Immelt, CEO of GE. Last year, we had profits of 14 billion, but paid absolutely no taxes on it. Not only did we not pay any taxes on our astounding profits, we were actually given an additional 3.2 billion dollars of your tax dollars by the government. President Obama selected little ol' me to advise him on creating jobs, most likely because I fed his campaign beaucoup bucks back in '08. I'm good at creating jobs, too. As head of a vast international corporation, I helped transfer almost 2 million American jobs to China and other Asian countries. This helped China become the economic powerhouse that fuels our debt. If I hadn't done this, where would the people of the U.S. have gotten my company's 3.2 billion dollar bonus?

I am William Swanson, the CEO of Raytheon. I only made 7 million dollars last year, a tiny fraction of what most American CEOs are paid. My company, however, made a mind-numbing profit of over 25 billion bucks, mainly by building things for the military. Thank you, tax payers! Anyway, it is very important that we keep fighting the war in Afghanistan. Very, very important. Also, I understand that North Korea is lovely this time of year.

I am Al-Waleed bin Talal, Prince of Saudi Arabia. Using our incredible wealth, we will buy some 60 billion dollars worth of your finest military technology. I would like to thank you for spending so many of your tax dollars dropping bombs on our oil competitors. The only thing cooler than having all your neat military gear is not having to use it ourselves. Thanks again!

We are Mitt Romney, Herman Cain, Michele Bachmann, etc. We're here to make it seem like you have a real choice for the presidency. We all believe the exact same things, otherwise we wouldn't be considered "legitimate" candidates. Although we'd like to take credit for it, we have to give kudos to our speechwriters, handlers, and marketers for making it seem like we're different people with different ideas. God bless America and yadda yadda so forth.

I am Ron Paul. Some of my ideas are genuinely unique. Many would say that when it comes to politics I actually think outside of the box. I don't have a snowball's chance in hell.

I am Barack Obama, President of the United States of America. I use words and rhetoric to make it seem like I'm on your side, even though I've filled my staff with bankers and corporate lobbyists. Me and my buddy, the Federal Reserve, cut the largest check in the history of mankind and gave it to the very people who caused the worldwide economic crash. Thank you for blaming it all on the white guys.

Yes, we are the 1% and despite having all the money, power, and influence, the Occupy Wall Street movement has us worried. We have even told the corporate media, which we own, to ignore, denigrate, and mock the movement in the hopes that it will go away—this includes both brands of media, the openly right-wing media and the right-wing media pretending to be left-wing media to give the illusion of diversity of opinion. We have done this to no avail, apparently.

Republican Congressman Peter King sums it up well: "We have to be careful not to allow this [Occupy Wall Street movement] to get any legitimacy. I'm old enough to remember what happened in the 1960s when the [genuine] left wing took to the streets and somehow the media glorified them and it ended up shaping policy. We can't allow that to happen."

Max Stirner wrote that "the poor are to blame for there being rich men", and it's looking like the poor are beginning to realize this. They are waking up to the fact that we exist at their leisure.

How terrifying.

(Michael Kindt is writer living in South Dakota whose work has appeared in College Times, Midwest Lit Review and in the poetry anthology *It's Dark and Scary in Here*. He's the author of *Early Onset of Night, Volume One* and blogs at <http://Early-Onset-of-Night.tumblr.com>.)

20111018-09	18:17	Art	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
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Dear Clark,

Interesting comments. Thanks for the insight. I consider Bonehead (I named Boehner that after he said the U.S. had the best health care system in the world) and McConnell (my main goal is to make the President a one term guy—not how can we work together to help the country) probably two of the slimiest and outright stupid elected officials I have ever seen in politics. Every time I hear of their latest comments they just reinforce my initial impression.

How can it be that we have such poor representatives for the public on both sides of their aisle? Some wit, maybe it was Mark Twain but I think it was someone else, once said eventually the elected officials of any democracy will come to be a direct intellectual reflection of the electorate. Hmmm????

20111018-10	18:24	Art	Re: How Can We Frame the Debate?
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Dear Jim,

Good thinking and this needs some serious further thought. Let's hope they are some really smart folks who are mulling this over. I think many of us feel like this is an absolutely target rich environment with all the opportunities we are being given (latest from Cain, "Jesus was a right wing conservative tried by a liberal jury" Huh????). As is evident from the debates, not even sure that word quite describes the fumbling going on, even the most diehard tea baggers are having problems swallowing much of this. Of course I used to say the only way Bush could win a second term was if the Democrats ran Bozo the Clown—guess what?

20111018-11	18:55	Art	Re: "Unsettled Times" & Health Care (cont. from heading: OWS)
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Dear SteveB,

If I could reframe this a bit I would ask your and others' thoughts on this idea. By way of background I have never been a small businessman. I am a retired U.S. Army Combat Arms Officer (really qualified me for the transition to the commercial world) and then the financial manager for the U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program. Created lots of U.S. jobs at no tax payer expense but not the same thing as a commercial entity.

At any rate, I think we are in the middle of a global economic transition very similar to that which Great Britain underwent at the turn of the last century. I once read that in the late 50s early 60s 1 in 4 jobs in the U.S. was related directly or indirectly to the automobile industry. Even if only partially true, we all know what has happened to the automobile industry and that has been going on for 40 plus years now. Industry long ago saw the writing on the wall and has been shifting jobs overseas for many years. We all know the rust belt for manufacturing jobs but even things like call centers etc are also overseas.

No one at the top of government for the past 40 years has really thought through or tried to make adjustments for what this means at the national level. As a nation, we've been living off our previously accumulated wealth and the fact that today 90% of our jobs are now service related has masked the impact of the consequences of these changes until recently. President Obama had the unfortunate experience of stepping into a nightmare, as Captain of the U.S. ship, just as it was going over the falls. What is happening isn't his fault nor Bush's, nor particularly either political party. It just is.

The key is what do we do? We can't change what is happening directly, but we can recognize what is happening and make adjustments. I'll spare you my thoughts on adjustments for the moment but the question now is, assuming I have even partially right, which political philosophy will best recognize what is happening and began to take steps to lead the nation into necessary adjustments. In my opinion also, just as it took a long time to happen, it will take some time to effect adjustments.

20111018-12	20:07	Larry	Fw: Where Are Obama's Girlfriends?
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[Source of original email seems to be Rush Limbaugh. —SteveB]

WHERE ARE THE OBAMA GIRLFRIENDS?

Think about this e-mail and see if there's anything here you don't believe.

I hadn't thought about this—but where are Obama's past girlfriends—surely he had at least one? No past girl friends popping up anywhere? Strange—strange to the point of being downright weird!

OK, this is just plain old common sense, no political agendas for either side. Just common knowledge for citizens of a country, especially American citizens, who know every little tidbit about every other president (and their wives) that even know that Andrew Jackson's wife smoked a corn cob pipe and was accused of adultery, or that Lincoln never went to school or Kennedy wore a back brace, or Truman played the piano.

We are Americans! Our media vets these things out! We are known for our humanitarian interests and caring for our 'fellow man.' We care, but none of us know one single humanizing fact about the history of our own president.

Honestly, and this is a personal thing... but it's bugged me for years that no one who ever dated him ever showed up. Taken his charisma, which caused the women to be drawn to him so obviously during his campaign, looks like some lady would not have missed the opportunity.

We all know about JFK's magnetism, McCain was no monk, Palin's courtship and even her athletic prowess were probed. Biden's aneurisms are no secret. Look at Cheney and Clinton, we all know about their heart problems. How could I have left out Wild Bill before or during the White House?

Nope... not one lady has stepped up and said, "He was soooo shy," or "What a great dancer!" Now look at the rest of what we know... no classmates, not even the recorder for the Columbia class notes ever heard of him.

Who was the best man at his wedding? Start there. Check for groomsmen. Then get the footage of the graduation ceremony. Has anyone talked to the professors? Isn't it odd that no one is bragging that they knew him or taught him or lived with him.

When did he meet Michele and how? Are there photos? Every president provides the public with all their photos, etc. for their library. What has he released? Nada—other than what was in this so-called biography! And experts who study writing styles etc. claim it was not O's own words or typical of his speech patterns, etc.

Does this make any of you wonder?

Ever wonder why no one ever came forward from Obama's past, saying they knew him, attended school with him, was his friend, etc? Not one person has ever come forward from his past.

This should really be a cause for great concern. Did you see the movie titled, The Manchurian Candidate?

Let's face it. As insignificant as we all are... someone whom we went to school with remembers our name or face... someone remembers we were the clown or the dork or the brain or the quiet one or the bully or something about us.

George Stephanopoulos, ABC News said the same thing during the 2008 campaign. Even George questions why no one has acknowledged that the president was in their classroom or ate in the same cafeteria or made impromptu speeches on campus. Stephanopoulos was a classmate of Obama at Columbia-class of 1984. He says he never had a single class with him. Since he is such a great orator, why doesn't anyone in Obama's college class remember him? And, why won't he allow Columbia to release his records? Do you like millions of others, simply assume all this is explainable—even though no one can?

NOBODY REMEMBERS OBAMA AT COLUMBIA!

Looking for evidence of Obama's past, Fox News contacted 400 Columbia University students from the period when Obama claims to have been there, but not one remembers him.

For example, Wayne Allyn Root was (like Obama) a political science major at Columbia , who graduated in 1983. In 2008, Root says of Obama, "I don't know a single person at Columbia that knew him, and they all know me. I don't have a single classmate who ever knew Barack Obama at Columbia ... EVER!

Nobody recalls him.

Root adds that he was, "Class of '83 political science, pre-law" and says, "You don't get more exact or closer than that.. Never met him in my life, don't know anyone who ever met him. At our 20th class reunion five years ago, who was asked to be the speaker of the class? Me. No one ever heard of Barack! And five years ago, nobody even knew who he was. The guy who writes the class notes, who's kind of the, as we say in New York , 'the macha' who knows everybody, has yet to find a person, a human who ever met him."

Obama's photograph does not appear in the school's yearbook, and Obama consistently declines requests to talk about his years at Columbia , provide school records, or provide the name of any former classmates or friends while at Columbia. How can this be?

NOTE: Wayne Allyn Root can easily be verified. He graduated valedictorian from his high school, Thornton- Donovan School , then graduated from Columbia University in 1983 as a Political Science major in the same '83 class in which Barack Hussein Obama states he was.

Some other interesting questions:

Why was Obama's law license inactivated in 2002? Why was Michelle's law license inactivated by court order? According to the U.S. Census, there is only one Barack Obama—but 27 Social Security numbers and over 80 aliases..

WHAT!?! The Social Security number he uses now originated in Connecticut where he is never reported to have lived. No wonder all his records are sealed!

Please continue sending this out to everyone. Somewhere, someone had to know him in school... before he "reorganized" Chicago and burst upon the scene at the 2004 Democratic Convention and made us swoon with his charm, poise, and speaking pizzazz.

One of the biggest CONS this country has ever seen, and getting away with it. This is scary on many levels! He's the most dishonest deceiving liar to ever darken the White House.

20111018-13 20:24 Dick Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Steve,

How could we ever get this into law especially when the fox is watching the hen house. This never comes up in the media. It just confirms my opinion that they are all in the tank together and anyone can be bought for the right price.

[Source of original email unknown. Snopes.com says only the quote is Buffett's, not the rest. —SteveB]

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the debt ceiling:

"I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election."

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971...before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc.

Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took 1 year or less to become the law of the land...all because of public pressure. [But #27 took more 203 years! —SteveB]

Warren Buffet [NO —SteveB] is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

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6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen. Congressmen made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Maybe it is time. THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS!!!! If you agree with the above, pass it on. If not, just delete. You are one of my 20+. Please keep it going.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011—28th Amendment (from Snopes.com)

1. TERM LIMITS—12 years only, one of the possible options below.
 - A. Two Six-year Senate terms.
 - B. Six Two-year House terms.
 - C. One Six-year Senate term and three Two-Year House terms.
2. NO TENURE/NO PENSION—A Congressman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they are out of office.
3. CONGRESS (past, present & future) PARTICIPATES in SOCIAL SECURITY—All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system and Congress participates with the American people.
4. CONGRESS CAN PURCHASE THEIR OWN RETIREMENT PLAN—Just like each and every other American.
5. CONGRESS WILL NO LONGER VOTE THEMSELVES PAY RAISES—Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 2.5%.
6. CONGRESS LOSES THEIR CURRENT HEALTH CARE SYSTEM—Congress will participate in the same health care system as the American people.
7. CONGRESS MUST EQUALLY OBEY ALL LAWS—No special exemptions or treatment.
8. ALL CONTRACTS WITH PAST AND PRESENT CONGRESSMEN ARE VOID—Effective 1/1/12.

20111018-14	22:23	SteveB	"What Wall St. Protesters Have Right"
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"What Wall St. Protesters Have Right" by Michael Brush, MSN Money

Oct. 18, 2011, (<http://money.msn.com/investing/what-wall-street-protesters-have-right-brush.aspx?page=0>)

If you can look past the hippie overtones, what the protests are really saying is that we need good jobs, honest banks and fair-and-square politics. It's hard to disagree with any of that.

Forget the wildest images, the ones that make Occupy Wall Street look like a Phish concert in the middle of Manhattan. What's really troubling about this growing protest movement is that the politicians and pundits continue to get it so wrong. OWS protesters are too often written off as commies or miscreants, playing drums and having sex under blankets, with no focused demands that make any sense at all.

But I recently spent a fair amount of time in occupied Zuccotti Park in New York, talking with OWS protesters and supporters, and I can tell you this: They have several crystal-clear messages about what's wrong with our system and what needs to be fixed.

Indeed, the substantial support being shown for Occupy Wall Street—protests have gone global, and organizers have raised \$300,000 in donations—shows that this group has touched powerful undercurrents of concern that are shared by many. In fact, several of the chief complaints you hear from protesters are shared by the commentators on the right and members of the Tea Party that preceded Occupy movement—even if the solutions offered are often very different.

To be sure, the protests have also attracted plenty of oddballs, as would any large gathering in New York City. They attract the fringe from the left just as Tea Party gatherings bring in oddballs from the right. But the core Occupy Wall Street demands, some found on the Web as well as in the park, reflect fairly mainstream worries that should be front and center as the nation debates what's wrong with our economy and our politics.

Message No. 1: Growing income disparities threaten everyone

This isn't about "resenting the rich for being wealthy" or declaring "class warfare," though many observers, particularly conservatives, twist the message to discredit the protesters.

Rather, Occupy Wall Street is highlighting a real economic trend that's not good for our country. While the superrich keep getting richer, "living standards for the median household have declined more or less steadily since the late 1990s," says Mark Zandi, the chief economist and a co-founder of Moody's Analytics. Here are some stats that back this up:

Between 1993 and 2008, the top 1% of families raked in more than half the gains in overall income, according to Emmanuel Saez of the University of California, Berkeley. And from 2002 to 2007, the top 1% of U.S. earners got two-thirds of all income gains. Their income grew by more than 10% a year after inflation, while the rest, the 99%, saw more-modest income gains of just 1.3% a year.

In 2010, median household income, \$49,500, fell back to levels last seen in 1996.

The 2010 poverty rate was the highest since 1993, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And the number of people in poverty, 46.2 million, was the largest in the 52 years of tracking poverty estimates.

CEOs, on the other hand, earned much more than they did several decades ago on average.

Unemployment remains stubbornly high, more or less stuck in the 9%-plus range since May 2009. Unemployment hasn't been this high since 1982-83. OK, so we all know the rich are getting richer and the rest of us not so much. But is this a real problem or just jealousy? "When people think they deserve to be in middle class but fall out, it is not healthy in terms of social order," says Dorian Warren, a professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. "It builds resentment. There's this sense that the American Dream is not longer a reality."

In fact, much of the post-World War II period saw a rising tide lift all boats. The rich got richer and the middle class did, too. Now, that doesn't seem to be the case. The results? Many people simply stop spending—which, in our consumer economy, hurts the rich, poor and everyone in between. Some permanently drop out of the economic system altogether. Others lose faith in the country. A few take to the streets as social unrest grows.

The OWS protests and those they've inspired could be the beginning of this trend. "People sense there is fundamental injustice because there is such a disparity in income," Karanja Gacuca, a spokesman for OWS, told me last week. "People sense that there is something broken."

Students just out of college, for example, find their paychecks can't cover both student loan payments and rent, "and that was the basic promise of a good education," says Gacuca.

A recent International Monetary Fund study backs up Warren's view that these trends are not good for the health of our country. The IMF study found that countries with more-equal income distribution see more economic growth, partly because inequality can foster political instability, which discourages investment. Does that remind you at all of the economic slowdown that hit this summer, after the U.S. got a credit rating downgrade, following a political squabble over entitlements intended to offset income declines?

Message No. 2: We need real bank reform

Bank sector reform sounds pretty wonky coming from a bunch of hippies sleeping out under blankets in a park, right? But it's actually near the top of the list of things protesters are concerned about. And they're right to be.

Three years after a financial meltdown that nearly took out our economy, we've really done very little to change the rules governing financial institutions, to make sure a meltdown like we saw in 2008-2009 doesn't happen again.

These protesters aren't the only ones to think that the Dodd-Frank financial sector reform law will fall short—even if it's eventually implemented in full. Many analysts, even on the right, share this view. "The principal elements of Dodd-Frank turn out to be useless as a defense against a future crisis," said Peter Wallison, of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

William Isaac, a former bank regulator who was the chairman the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. from Aug., 1981 to Oct., 1985, agrees that bank reform efforts have fallen short. "The Dodd-Frank law would not have prevented the last

crisis, did not fix what went wrong and will make it more difficult to resolve the next crisis," says Isaac, now head of financial institutions at FTI Consulting.

In fact, Dodd-Frank may be worse than no reform at all. It creates the illusion of regulation and carries the downside of the wrong government rules without locking in the right rules, says Joseph Mason, a Louisiana State University finance professor. And Mason should know about banking regulation—he used to work as an economist for the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, one of our main banking regulators.

OWS gets into quite a bit of detailed analysis on banking reform. One big problem, says Gacuca, was that Washington missed an opportunity to break up the big banks while bailing them out, to prevent the "too big to fail" problem from biting us again.

"Too big to fail" means that megabanks like Citigroup (C 0.00%, news) and Bank of America (BAC 0.00%, news) remain so large that we'll have little choice but to bail them out again when they get into trouble the next time. Because bankers know this, they take greater risks than they should. Instead of letting banks fail or making them downsize, we bailed them out and encouraged some to merge and grow. "We made the too-big-to-fail problem even worse," agrees Kent Smetters, a professor of business and public policy at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. "We've encouraged larger banks. We should have allowed more failure."

Another complaint of OWS is that there's still too much "counterparty risk" in the financial system, one of the problems that caused the credit market meltdown. By this, OWS means that banks create and own so many derivatives that they're too exposed to each other.

Derivatives are complex financial creations, but they're basically "bets" banks and others make to balance their risks or gamble on trends in all kinds of markets. The fear here is that players won't be able to pay off if they lose.

No less an institution than the IMF sees the risk, concluding in recent research that too many derivatives have insufficient collateral backing them. IMF researchers believe outstanding derivatives may be under collateralized by as much as \$2 trillion.

One solution, says OWS, would be to have more derivatives trade through clearinghouses or exchanges, which would add transparency and reduce risk. This is an approach that many mainstream analysts, like Smetters, agree would help.

Message No. 3: Political cronyism ruins democracy

Another core complaint of OWS, says Gacuca, is that corporate contributions to political campaigns lead to crony capitalism, which is bad for democracy.

This is hardly a fringe issue. And despite being painted as a "leftist" group, OWS faults the Obama administration for being too closely aligned with Wall Street. It cites campaign contributions to Obama from banks, as well as the appointment of William Daley, who has a banking background, as White House chief of staff. OWS also likes to cite the bank bailouts as examples of crony capitalism, another OWS position held by many on the right. Banks got help with mortgage trouble; homeowners much less so.

"We definitely share the same moral outrage at what happened," says Daniel Mitchell, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "Even if the banks paid the money back, they got breathing room for their own bad financial decisions, courtesy of the taxpayer."

Bank shareholders, bondholders and executives should have been allowed to take their losses in bank reorganizations that saved the good assets in the system, say many bank reform critics on the right. Instead, "the risks were socialized and the gains were privatized," says Warren. "It's not so much that people are upset around the top 1% getting rich. I think what angers people is the notion of crony capitalism. The hard-earned money of taxpayers was used to make a few people richer."

Is OWS so wrong in concluding that our democracy is broken because economic elites in banks with political connections were bailed out, while regular folks are still hurting? Warren doesn't think so.

Dear Steve,

This is a no brainer to implement. Common sense prevails, I hope.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

HOORAY FOR FLORIDA

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL

Great going, Florida. You set the stage for the other 49 States to join! Kudos to Republican Governor Rick Scott for having the correctness and guts to move forward on this critical issue!

I-95 will be jammed for the next month or so.....Druggies and deadbeats heading North out of Florida.

Florida is the first state requiring drug testing to receive welfare!

In signing the new law, Republican Gov. Rick Scott said, "If Floridians want welfare, they better make sure they are drug-free.

Applicants who test positive for illicit substances won't be eligible for the funds for a year, or until they undergo treatment.

Those who fail a second time would be banned from receiving funds for three years!

Naturally, a few people are crying this is unconstitutional.

How is this unconstitutional?

It's completely legal that every other working people have to pass drug tests in order to get a J-O-B which supports those on welfare! Forward if you agree!

Let's get Welfare back to the ones who NEED it, not those who WON'T get a JOB!

[20111019-02](#) 09:15 GaryF Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear SteveB,

How to fix Congress...

I just realized something has been left out of the 2011 Congressional Reform Act.

TERM LIMITS & LOBBYING REFORM.

Revisions I propose:

8. ALL Senators and Congressmen are limited to a TOTAL of six (6) years in office. The 6 years can be served in any combination; 2 years in the senate and 4 in congress. 2 years in congress, 5 years in private sector (not lobbying I'll address that in #9) the 4 in Senate. BUT after a total of 6 years they're done.

9. No Senator, Congressman, or any staff or aide to a senator or congressman can work for any lobbying organization for at least 6 years AFTER leaving office for the last time. (I'd rather just outlaw lobbying all together as the French do). The 6 year lobbying clause should also apply to retired military.

[20111019-03](#) 09:23 SteveB No More Pretending: The Republican Candidates

The Republican candidates' debate was interesting last night. Perry self-destructed.

Mitt fared pretty well, Cain lied about his 9-9-9 plan, bye bye Michelle, and Santorum, and probably Newt. I'm not sure if Ron Paul is in or out, or the guy who pulled a Palin and didn't show.

I was struck by three things:

1. Some of the Republicans are sounding very much like the liberals in this forum. Some Republicans, in general, seem to be recognizing that the current imbalances in society will destroy us if not corrected. That the banks raped us. I even heard calls against regressive taxes and against more taxes on the poor, even from teabagger Bachmann. I heard calls against war (not just from Ron Paul).

So I do not expect the Right-Wingers in this forum to pretend any longer that increasing taxes on the rich, to even the current disparities, help balance the budget, and make ours a fairer nation is some kind of communist, socialist, or anti-American plot. Even Warren Buffett and conservative pundits agree. See below article for lots of hard evidence on the subject.

2. The Republican candidates are much more discourteous than anyone in our forum. I heard a lot of "stupid" people described as such. In one of the most amazing moments in political history that I can remember, Perry called Romney a "hypocrite" in a menacing manner reminiscent of a fistfight.

Most strange, but let us keep that in mind next time someone uses such terms here to describe politicians...especially someone who has himself, personally, been called a socialist, communist, and (I guess) druggie in this forum. All in error. All without retraction.

LET US RAISE THE DISCOURSE TO A LEVEL ABOVE THAT OF THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES.

3. FLASH! Read today's news for yourself. It has now been proven by independent parties that Herman Cain's 9-9-9 plan would do nothing but lower taxes on the rich and raise taxes on the middle class and poor. Nice try, pizza dude. (Unless his plan is s-o-o-o simple...that no one can understand it?)

20111019-04	08:39	SteveG	"The 99% Declaration"
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"The 99% Declaration" by the-99-declaration.org

Oct. 17, 2011, (<https://sites.google.com/site/the99percentdeclaration/>)



WHEREAS THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, THE NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in order to form a more perfect Union, by, for and of the People, shall elect and convene a NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY the week of July 4, 2012 in the City Of Philadelphia to prepare and ratify a PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES on behalf of the Ninety-Nine Percent of the People of the United States to be served upon the United States Congress, United States Supreme Court and President of the United States prior to November 6, 2012.

I. Voter Qualifications and Election of Delegates.

In the Spring of 2012, the People, consisting of all United States citizens and lawful permanent residents who have reached the age of 18, regardless of party affiliation and voter registration status, shall elect two Delegates, one identifying as male and one identifying as female, by direct democratic vote, from each of the existing 435 Congressional Districts, to represent the People at a NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

The office of Delegate shall be open to all United States citizens and lawful permanent residents who have attained the age of 18 years. No candidate for Delegate to the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY will be permitted to run on a party line or use any party label while running for or serving as a Delegate. No candidate or Delegate may take private money from any source except for reasonable gifts to fund his or her trip to the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY in Philadelphia. No politician holding elected or appointed office at the time of the Delegate election, including members of Congress, are eligible to run for or sit as a Delegate to the National General Assembly.

The 99% Declaration Working Group and its committees shall organize, coordinate and transparently fund the election of Delegates. The Delegates shall be free from the corrupting influence of corporate money and all funds raised by the 99% Declaration Working Group shall be used for the purpose of funding the election of Delegates and providing a venue for the Delegates to meet in Philadelphia. Should sufficient funds be available, the 99% Working Group will assist in defraying the transportation and accommodation costs of the Delegates.

II. Meeting of the National General Assembly and Drafting of a Petition for a Redress of Grievances.

In addition to ensuring a free and fair election of the Delegates to the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, the 99% Declaration Working Group shall be responsible for raising sufficient funds to secure a venue wherein the 876* Delegates may convene, deliberate and ratify a PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES. The ratified PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES will be signed by the Delegates during a ceremony at Independence Hall the afternoon of July 4, 2012 and subsequently presented to all 535 members of Congress, the 9 members of the Supreme Court, the President of the United States and each of the political candidates seeking federal public office in the November 2012 general election.

Because the time to deliberate in Philadelphia will be limited, between the Spring 2012 and July 2012, the newly elected Delegates shall meet electronically, or in person if possible, to confer and write the PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES. The Delegates alone, in consultation with their constituents will be responsible for the content of the final petition. Moreover, the Delegates to the National General Assembly shall implement their own rules, procedures, agenda, code of conduct, internal elections and/or appointments of committee members and officers to efficiently and expeditiously accomplish the People's mandate to present a PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES to all three branches of the government of the United States of America, and political candidates, before the 2012 general election.

III. Content of the Petition for a Redress of Grievances.

The PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, ratified by the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, shall be non-partisan and specifically address the critical issues now confronting the People of the United States of America including the corrupting influence of exorbitant political campaign contributions. However, the final petition no matter how long or how short shall be the exclusive work-product of the 876 elected Delegates engaged in direct consultation with the People they represent. The Delegates shall debate and vote upon a specific set of grievances and solutions to be included in the PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES and, if necessary, adjourn for further consultation with the American People as our founding ancestors did during the meetings of the Continental Congresses over 235 years ago. Upon ratification of the petition, all of the Delegates, regardless of the margin of the vote, shall affix their signatures to the final PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES.

IV. Suggested Content of the Petition for a Redress of Grievances.

In order to facilitate the timely election of the 876 Delegates to the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY by July 4, 2012 and submission of the PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES before the 2012 general election, the 99% Declaration Working Group, shall include in this Declaration a suggested list of grievances to be submitted to the Delegates of the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY no later than April 30, 2012. The final version of the PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, are to be written and ratified solely by the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, and may or may not include the following issues currently suggested by the 99% Declaration Working Group:

1. Elimination of the Corporate State.

The merger of the American political system of republican democracy with the economic system of capitalism has resulted in the establishment of a corporate government of, by and for the benefit of domestic and multinational corporations. Therefore, the 99% of the American People demand an immediate ban on all direct and indirect private contributions of anything of value, to all politicians serving in or running for federal office in the United States. This ban shall extend to all individuals, corporations, "political action committees," "super political action committees," lobbyists, unions and all other sources of private money or things of value, including but not limited to, direct or indirect gifts and/or promises of employment. Private funding of political campaigns by concentrated sources of wealth such as corporations have completely corrupted our political system. Therefore, all private funding of political campaigns shall be replaced by the fair, equal and TOTAL public financing of all federal political campaigns.

We, the 99% of the American People, categorically REJECT the concepts that corporations are persons and that money is equivalent to free speech because if that were so, then only the wealthiest people, corporations and entities possessing concentrated wealth would have a meaningful voice in our society. We demand the immediate and complete elimination of all private political contributions through the enactment of new campaign finance laws and amendment of the Constitutional if necessary (see suggested grievance 2). It has become clear that politicians in the United States cannot or will not regulate themselves and have become the exclusive representatives of corporations, unions and the very wealthy who indirectly and directly spend vast sums of money on political campaigns to influence the candidates' decisions when they attain office. This cycle of legalized bribery ensures the reelection of the same corrupt politicians year after year despite historically low approval ratings.

2. Overturning the *Citizens United* Case.

The immediate abrogation, even if it requires a Constitutional Amendment, of the outrageous and anti-democratic Supreme Court holding in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and its progeny. This heinous decision proclaimed in 2010, equates the direct and indirect payment of money to politicians by political action committees, corporations, wealthy individuals and unions with the exercise of protected free speech. We, the 99% of the American People are outraged and demand that this judicially sanctioned bribery of politicians be reversed and never be deemed protected free speech again.

3. Elimination of All Private Benefits to Public Servants.

The 99% of the American People demand the immediate prohibition of private benefits to all federal elected officials, public employees, officers, public servants, officials or their immediate family members. This prohibition includes an end to the corrupt "revolving door" in and out of our government. Elected and unelected public officials and their immediate families shall be banned from ever being employed by any corporation, lobbying firm, individual or business that the public official specifically regulated while in office. No public employee, officer, official or their immediate family members shall own or hold any stock or shares in any corporation or other entity that the elected or unelected public official specifically regulated while in office until a full 5 years after their term or employment is completed. There shall be a complete lifetime ban on the acceptance of all gifts, services, money or thing of value, directly or indirectly, by any elected or appointed public official or their immediate family members, from any person, corporation, union or any other entity that the public official was charged to specifically regulate while he or she was in office.

The term "specifically regulate" shall mean service on or employment with a committee or sub-committee or service within any agency or department of the federal government responsible for the regulation of the person, union, corporation or entity seeking to offer a private benefit. To root out corruption and restore integrity to our political system, all elected politicians and public employees must ONLY collect their salary, generous federal healthcare benefits and pension. To enforce these policies, Congress shall immediately pass new criminal laws banning the aforementioned private benefits to politicians and public officials. Any person, including individuals connected directly or indirectly to corporations, lobbyists, or unions who violate these new criminal laws shall be sentenced to a term of mandatory imprisonment of no less than two years and not more than ten years. Private benefits shall include the use of any insider information as defined by existing laws, by elected and unelected public officials who attempt to profit in financial markets or investments.

4. Term Limits.

Members of the United States House of Representatives shall be limited to serving no more than four two-year terms in their lifetime. Members of the United States Senate shall be limited to serving no more than two six-year terms in their lifetime. The two-term limit for President shall remain unchanged. Serving as a member of Congress or as the President of the United States is one of the highest honors and privileges our culture can bestow. These positions of prominence in our society should be sought to serve one's country and not provide a lifetime career designed to increase personal wealth and accumulate power for the sake of vanity and hubris.

5. A Fair Tax Code.

A complete reformation and simplification of the United States Tax Code to require ALL individuals and corporations to pay a fair share of a progressive, graduated income tax by eliminating loopholes, unfair tax breaks, exemptions and unfair deductions, subsidies and ending all other methods of evading income taxes. The current system of taxation unjustly favors the wealthiest Americans, many of who pay fewer taxes to the United States Treasury than citizens who earn much less and pay a much higher percentage of their incomes in taxes. Any corporation or entity that does business in the United States and generates income from that business in the United States shall be fully taxed on that income regardless of corporate domicile or they will be barred from earning their profits in the United States. This will allow honest companies and individuals who pay their fair share in income taxes to take over those markets in the United States economy formerly held by income tax cheats. Businesses and individuals that pay taxes in other countries will no longer be permitted to use that excuse to justify their failure to pay federal income tax in the United States if they obtain benefits from doing business in the United States.

6. Healthcare for All.

Medicare for all or adoption of a universal single-payer healthcare system. The broken Medicaid program will be eliminated as redundant. Affordable healthcare for all shall be a human right.

7. Protection of the Planet.

Human greed, exponentially magnified by corporations partnered with corrupt governments, is destroying the only habitable planet known to humanity. Multinational corporations have purchased so much influence in Congress (and other governments in the world) that they can secure the passage or blockage of regulations to maximize profits and minimize conservation of the environment. The evidence of climate change due to human activity can no longer be denied by rational people and species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. Humans have caused the extinction of hundreds, if not thousands of species through overharvesting, pollution, habitat destruction, introduction of new predators and food competitors, overhunting, and other influences. Unsustainable human population growth is an essential cause of the extinction crisis. New comprehensive laws and regulations must be immediately enacted to give the Environmental Protection Agency, and other environmental protection regulators around the world, expanded powers and resources to shut down corporations, businesses or any entities that intentionally or recklessly damage the environment, and to criminally prosecute individuals who intentionally or recklessly damage the environment. No "corporate veil" should protect any employee, officer or director of a corporation who is directly or indirectly engaged in the intentional or reckless decimation of the planet for profit. The amount of profit a corporation can make must be balanced by conflict-free regulators with the inevitable damage that human activity inflicts on the environment. The 99% of the American People demand the immediate implementation of new and existing programs to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels to reusable or carbon neutral sources of energy and higher greenhouse gas emission standards so that something will be left for our children and grandchildren. The rights to clean air, water, and conservation of the planet for future generations shall no longer be infringed by greed-driven corporations and selfish individuals.

8. Debt Reduction.

Adoption of a plan to reduce the national debt to a sustainable percentage of GDP by 2020. Reduction of the \$15 trillion national debt to be achieved by BOTH fair progressive taxation and cuts in spending that

benefit corporations engaged in perpetual war for profit, inefficient healthcare, pharmaceutical exploitation, over-prescribing medications for profit, the communications industry, outsourcing jobs, the prison and military industrial complexes, criminal banking, securities and finance schemes, the oil and gas industry, and all other corrupt entities and individuals that have used the federal budget as a private income stream for decades. This "pay to play" racket run by Congress and the top income earners has resulted in a \$15 trillion debt and questionable future for our nation.

9. Jobs for All Americans.

Passage of a comprehensive job and job-training act like the American Jobs Act to employ our citizens in jobs that are available with specialized training. The American People must be put to work now by repairing America's crumbling infrastructure and building other needed public works projects. In conjunction with a new jobs retraining act, reinstatement of the Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps and similar emergency governmental agencies tasked with creating new projects to provide jobs to the 46 million People living in poverty, the 8.6% unemployed and 16.2% who are underemployed. Re-training will focus on science and mathematics necessary for 21st century technologies, green energy, and new sources of American manufacturing to reduce reliance on imported goods.

10. Student Loan Debt Refinancing.

Our students and former students are more than \$1 trillion in debt from education loans. These young people have far fewer employment prospects due to the financial collapse directly caused by the unbridled and unregulated greed of Wall Street. Ensuring a higher education, particularly in the fields of science, engineering, technology, green energy and mathematics, is no longer a luxury for the few and must now be viewed as a national security issue. Banks receive virtually interest free loans from the Federal Reserve Bank and then charge upwards of 6% interest to our students for profit. Because education is the only way to secure our future success as a nation, interest on student debts must be immediately reduced to 2% or less and repayments deferred for periods of unemployment. Subject to the provisions of grievance five, the tax code will be amended so that employers will receive a student loan repayment tax deduction for paying off the loans of their employees. Outright federal grants should be provided to those students who pursue and obtain degrees in the sciences, green energy, mathematics, technology and engineering. Moreover, to reduce the principal on all outstanding student loans, a financial transaction surcharge, similar to those fees charged by banks on consumers, will be introduced to banks and securities firms. The current economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression, resulted in the \$1.5 trillion dollar bail out of Wall Street, secret Federal Reserve loans, and unknown losses of trillions of dollars to the economy.

11. Ending Perpetual War for Profit.

Recalling all military personnel at all non-essential bases including but not limited to the Cold War era deployments in Europe, South Korea, Japan, Australia and Cuba and refocusing national defense goals to address threats posed by the geopolitics of the 21st century. Congress shall pass new legislation to reinvigorate the War Powers Resolution to limit the deployment of military forces to those instances where Congressional approval has been granted. New laws must be enacted to counter the Military Industrial Complex's mission of perpetual war for profit. The United States has engaged in war after war only to later discover that the pretexts relied upon to enter these wars were false or exaggerated. The goal of war in a corporate controlled state is to generate profit for the Military Industrial Complex and other industries and individuals who benefit directly and indirectly when humans kill one another. The annual savings created by updating our military posture and ending perpetual war for profit will be applied to the social programs outlined herein.

12. Emergency Reform of Public Education.

The public education system in the United States is a resounding failure. New educational goals to train the American people to perform jobs in a 21st century economy, particularly in the areas of technology, infrastructure repair, water and resource conservation and green energy must be mandated as a national security issue. These reforms must be accomplished by taking into consideration the redundancy caused by technology and the inexpensive cost of labor in China, India and other developing countries. Scientists

and other professionals should be recruited from all over the world to teach our students to be competitive in a global economy. Bonuses must be granted for merit performance and enticing the best people available to teach our children. Teachers are the key component to a new American renaissance and they must be paid a competitive salary commensurate with salaries in the private sector. Teacher salaries in public education must be based upon similar skills and education levels found in the private sector because without highly-skilled teachers, there will never be a highly-skilled workforce and the United States will fall further and further behind its competitors.

13. End Outsourcing and Currency Manipulation.

Subject to the elimination of corporate tax loopholes and exploited exemptions and deductions as stated in grievance five, limited tax incentives will be permitted to entice businesses to hire our citizens rather than outsource jobs. Conversely, an "outsourcing tax" should be introduced to discourage businesses from sending jobs overseas and tax incentives should be offered to companies that invest in reconstructing the manufacturing capacity of the United States. This country must again competitively produce everyday products in the United States rather than importing them from countries like China and India. To do business in the United States, corporations must make slightly less profit by hiring American workers and paying them a living wage rather than maximizing every penny of profit to the detriment of our society. Congress must implement legislation (see e.g. H.R. 639) to encourage China (which undervalues its currency by an estimated 25% to 40%) and our other trading partners to end currency manipulation and reduce the massive trade deficit.

14. Banking and Securities Reform.

Immediate reenactment of the Glass-Steagall Act and increased regulation of Wall Street firms by the SEC, FINRA, CFTC, the Justice Department and the other financial regulators including the recently established Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. We further demand an immediate investigation by the Justice Department into the potential criminal practices of the Securities and Banking industry that directly led to the collapse of markets, foreclosure crisis, bank bail-out and firm failures in 2007-2008. As discussed in grievance ten, to facilitate the aforementioned student loan debt relief, banks and securities firms shall pay a financial transaction fee, also known as the "Robin Hood Tax", on each and every stock trade and other financial transactions without passing the costs onto consumers. Uniform regulations will be enacted to specifically limit what banks may charge consumers for ATM fees and/or the use of debit cards and other so-called miscellaneous fees. There will be an end to the \$4 billion a year "hedge fund loophole" which permits certain individuals engaged in financial transactions to evade graduated income tax rates by treating their income as long-term capital gains which are taxed at a much lower rate (approximately 15%) than income tax.

15. Foreclosure Moratorium and Mortgage Refinancing.

Adoption of an immediate emergency plan to end the mortgage crisis. The privately owned Federal Reserve Bank shall not continue to lower interest rates for loans to banks that are refusing to loan to small businesses and consumers. Instead, the federal government shall buy all mortgages in foreclosure and refinance these debts at an interest rate of 1% or less because that is the approximate current interest rate the Federal Reserve charges the banks who hoard the cash despite ample liquidity. These re-financed debts will be managed by the newly established Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and an independent foreclosure task force appointed and overseen by Congress and the Executive Branch to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether foreclosure proceedings should continue based on the circumstances of each homeowner and the conduct of the financial institution when originating the loan.

16. Ending the Federal Reserve.

The immediate formation of a non-partisan commission, overseen by Congress, to audit and investigate the short-term and long-term economic risks in eliminating the privately-owned Federal Reserve Bank and transferring all its functions to the United States Treasury Department. It is widely believed that the housing bubble and collapse of financial markets in 2007 and 2008 was proximately caused by the mismanagement, incompetence and blind eye of the Federal Reserve Bank.

17. Ending the Electoral College and Enactment of Uniform Federal Election Rules.

The 99% demand the abolishment of the Electoral College in favor of the Popular Vote in presidential elections to avoid situations where the Electoral College elects a candidate who does not receive a majority of the popular vote. Congress shall immediately enact electoral reforms requiring total equal public campaign financing to all candidates who obtain sufficient petition signatures and/or votes to get on the ballot and participate in the primaries and/or general election. All funds used for the election of federal politicians will be drawn from a trust specifically created for this purpose and managed by the Federal Elections Commission and the United States Treasury. Individuals, unions, corporations or other groups or entities that wish to contribute to the campaign trust may do so without knowledge of where the funds will be applied. Instead, all private funds contributed to the trust will be commingled with taxpayer monies budgeted to the trust. Politicians will no longer be required or permitted to ask for campaign contributions of any kind. To reduce voter fraud and voter discrimination, Congress will utilize the commerce clause to implement nationwide uniform election rules applied to all voting districts requiring equal access of third parties to appear on ballots; abolition of "gerrymandering" by utilizing non-partisan public commissions so that third parties may fairly compete in elections; allowing voting on weekends and holidays to increase voter access to the polls; issuance of free voter registration cards to all citizens who are eligible to vote so that they cannot be turned away at a polling station because they do not have a driver's license or other form of identification; a review of the exclusion of voters with non-violent criminal records provided by corporations to eliminate voters from the rolls, outlawing the tactics currently used by certain states to limit and obstruct voter access to the polls by requiring additional forms of identification and/or passing "tests" to vote; and expanding the option of mail-in ballots and secure verifiable internet voting for those citizens who cannot attend the polls to vote in-person due to disability or absence from the country.

18. Ending the War in Afghanistan and Care of Veterans.

An immediate withdrawal of all combat troops from Afghanistan and a substantial increase in the amount of funding for veteran job training and placement. The enactment of new comprehensive programs dedicated to the treatment of the emotional and physical injuries sustained by veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Our veterans, who have sacrificed everything for this country, are committing suicide at an unprecedented rate of one person every 80 minutes. The 99% of the American People care and demand assistance to these veterans now.

19. No Censorship of the Internet.

In 1983 approximately 50 corporations controlled all news media outlets in the United States. Today, ownership of the news media has been concentrated in the hands of about six powerful media corporations. The free Internet and its related technologies foster free speech, innovation, and a global human consciousness. We believe that the Internet and its related technologies are the joint property and work-product of humanity, and as such, it must not be censored or regulated in any manner without the consent of the people who utilize and contribute to its vitality. We therefore demand the immediate withdrawal or repeal on passage of the Stop Online Piracy Act or "SOPA" (H.R. 3261) and the Protect IP Act (S. 968). These bills, if enacted into law, will grant the government broad new powers to curtail speech on the Internet, block domain names, track internet protocol ("IP") addresses, dramatically increase the cost of using content on the internet, chill innovation and creativity of web entrepreneurs in favor of a few media corporations that already own or control most online content. Furthermore, any future action by the government to censor, dismantle or interfere with, any other future technology that promotes communication between human beings, will be deemed by the people as a violation of the First Amendment and the universal human right to free speech and assembly. We also call upon the United States government to vociferously condemn any country that currently represses the speech of its people including the censorship of the Internet and related technologies.

20. Reinstitution of Civil Rights Including the Repeal of the NDAA.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, legislation has been enacted to curtail the privacy and civil rights of American citizens. Foremost among these laws is the Patriot Act of 2001 and more recently, portions of the National Defense Authorization Act wherein the government may or may not require the indefinite detention of U.S. citizens suspected of planning or assisting "belligerent" acts against the United States. Under this law, civilian citizens of the United States may be indefinitely held in military

detention and tried before a military tribunal without access to family, friends or an attorney. This terrifying law could be easily be abused in a time of crisis to make people "disappear." The law effectively repeals the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, The Bail Reform Act, suspends the Writ of Habeas Corpus at the discretion of the CIA or military and will violate at least the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The Patriot Act has allowed for the increased surveillance of American citizens and CIA access to confidential credit reports, school records, communication records, Internet activity, and other personal information, without consent or notification. We call upon the United States government to repeal those portions of the Patriot Act that limit the civil rights of American citizens, repeal the National Defense Authorization Act and immediately stop any and all abuses of the Foreign Surveillance Intelligence Act which allows for "Star Chamber" proceedings and extrajudicial eavesdropping on U.S. citizens without sufficient oversight.

(NOTE: All of the twenty grievances mentioned in the 99% Declaration are merely SUGGESTIONS. Only the elected delegates will select which issues will be included in the Petition for Redress of Grievances voted on in July)

V. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IF the PETITION FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, ratified by the 876 Delegates of the NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, is not redressed and acted upon within a reasonable time and to the satisfaction of the Delegates, said Delegates shall reconvene to organize and fund political grassroots campaigns for candidates in every available Congressional seat in the mid-term election of 2014 and again in 2016 and again in 2018 until all vestiges of the corrupt corporate state are eradicated and the grievances of the National General Assembly redressed. Only candidates who publicly pledge to redress all of the grievances contained in the final petition will be supported.

All of the twenty grievances mentioned in the 99% Declaration are merely SUGGESTIONS. Only the elected delegates will select which issues will be included in the Petition for Redress of Grievances voted on in July.

*FN. In addition to the 870 delegates elected from the 435 Congressional districts, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, The Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands shall each elect one delegate, irrespective of gender, to represent them at the National General Assembly. This will increase the total number of delegates to 876.

[20111019-05](#) 10:41 Charis Re: No More Pretending

Dear SteveB,

I'd be interested to know your opinion on responsibility. For example, when you say "the banks raped us" does this imply that the people who took out loans (many knowing they were not credit-worthy of said loans) are not responsible for their decision to do so? I mean, sure... many banks offered loans to people who definitely did not qualify and were way too lax—but should those people have taken out those loans? Or is it unreasonable these days to expect people to have some sense of responsibility and not take out loans they can't repay? I'm not generalizing here or including people who truly were credit worthy at the time they took out a loan and then ran into trouble due to unforeseen circumstances (loss of jobs. etc.) I'm talking about people who knew they were not credit worthy—who knew the banks were making offers they could not refuse—and still entered into said contracts. Same with credit cards. Are only the banks at fault here? Are normal ordinary citizens not responsible for their own actions anymore? I don't know, to me it's just way too simplistic to blame the government, banks or Republicans for everything.

[20111019-06](#) 10:44 Ben Re: No More Pretending

Dear SteveB,

Perry also said "that study's had a third party took a look at it."

Idiot.

Pretty soon, folks are going to recognize that intelligence and erudition are not running rampant among the Deciders in Texas politics. Once again, my immediate reaction is "My God! What will the Queen of England think?" if this idiot gets elected? I want it to be impossible. Probability is waning, but... yaaaaghh!

Perry is obviously not a man who embraces complexity.

[20111019-07](#) 10:45 GaryC Re: No More Pretending

Dear Charis,

In SteveB's world, it always starts with a problem being George Bush's fault and then it is the fault of Corporations or Republicans. It is NEVER the fault of the individuals who performed the act. They have NO responsibility. Please do not confuse the facts with ideology!

[20111019-08](#) 11:33 Pam Re: "The 99% Declaration"

Dear SteveG,

This is fantastic. I agree with almost everything in it. My only caveat would be that the "grievance" language be removed or moderated. Some of the comments are so specific to today's circumstances that in five or ten years (or less) they will seem hopelessly outdated. The suggestions themselves, however, are right on target. This should put to rest any complaints about the OWS not having any specific goals.

I agree that we should get our troops out of the middle east asap, but account needs to be taken of how complicated this will be in actual fact. Also, we should spell out (as best we can without knowing everything) under what circumstances we will send troops somewhere. Calling the military a "military-industrial complex" (even if Ike said it first) is inflammatory and doesn't really need saying. Accusing institutions, groups, or individuals of bad faith, even if they're guilty, is not the best way to gain sympathy. I know the Founding Fathers were p*ssed off at King George, but their issues are not our issues, and our issues will not be relevant in 100 years. The principles, though, will remain the same.

I completely support the Occupy movement, but I must confess I do find many of those folks in the park over the top. It looks in the videos I've seen as if every crazy in New York has crawled out from under a rock with the sole purpose of offending as many middle-class people as possible. It's the middle-class that's up in arms (so to speak); annoying the hell out of them is not good strategy. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe the protesters in Tiannamen Square dressed or acted like demented clowns.

[20111019-09](#) 11:51 Pam Re: "The 99% Declaration"

Dear SteveG,

P.S. I'm not particularly offended by the shenanigans in Z. park. At least these kids are DOING something. Maybe the media just focuses on the weirdos because they make better copy. Or maybe they're helping perpetuate the idea that the protesters really are hippie communists. Why don't they ever interview some of the more sober citizens, old and young, who are protesting too?

[20111019-10](#) 13:40 Art Re: "The 99% Declaration"

Agree this pretty well thought out. Couple of areas I'd personally tweak a bit but overall very good in my opinion.

[20111019-11](#) 13:57 Clark Re: "The 99% Declaration"

Dear Art,

Just to add a little note: When I was in NYC 10 days ago, I happened upon an OWS demonstration in Washington Square Park on a Saturday afternoon. Didn't really see any crazies that day—at least, no more than usual in Washington Square. But one sign did catch my attention: "**The economic system could be more fair.**" Talk about understated!

20111019-12 15:26 Pam Re: No More Pretending

Dear Charis,

Look at the Petition of Grievances put out by OWS and their plan for a "people's party." I think we are on the brink of something new here, a new party, coalition, call it what you will, that will be inclusive, reasonable, tolerant, and truly democratic (with a little "d"). I'm very excited by the idea of a National Assembly that includes all generations and has as its goal fairness for all.

20111019-13 15:27 SteveB The End of the GOP?

Do Republicans really think people are so stupid that they will vote to elect a party that wants to raise their taxes and lower taxes on the rich below already record low (in modern times) levels? Especially when 10-40 years of the same policies have nearly bankrupted us and everyone now knows it?

20111019-14 15:57 SteveB Re: No More Pretending

Dear GaryC,

"Taking every opposing argument or position to some arbitrary extreme of your own choosing does not make that argument or position false."

Kinda like the communistic and evil redistribution of wealth, or the unspeakable evil of Obamacare, Pelosi, Reid, or the half-black guy. Or, in this case, some ridiculous idea that people somehow can't be responsible for themselves and their own actions unless they are completely and solely responsible for their state in life. As if society or individual or circumstance do not matter at all. Utterly, ridiculous, excuse me.

Or maybe more like your golden age of American prosperity following upon 40 years of low taxes, free trade, a government for sale to the highest bidder, and deregulation...to be ushered in when, exactly?

20111019-15 16:12 Charis Re: No More Pretending

Dear SteveB,

Did you read the message? Because it doesn't say AT ALL what you are saying. No one—not a single solitary one of us is EVER ALWAYS AND FULLY completely and solely responsible for our state in life and no one ever said that. Nor does that in any way, shape or fashion even remotely suggest that the individual does not matter. Maybe read my question again? This doesn't answer it.

20111019-16 16:27 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

We know now that Herman Cain's magic pizza formula for the economy would raise taxes on the poor and middle class, while lowering taxes still further for the rich. Today, this is what Mr. Stuttering Feisty, Rick Perry, had to say when he presented his own plan:

"It starts with ... scrapping the three million words of the current tax code, starting over with something simple: A flat tax," he told an audience at the Western Republican Leadership Conference. "I am not the candidate of the establishment," Perry said. "You won't hear a lot of shape-shifting nuance from me."

That's for sure, Rick. I'm surprised you could even use the word, "nuance". That must have taken a lot of practice. And "shape-shifting"! Wow! A tongue twister too! Good boy! Now go get your reward of a bundle of cash from the nice CEO over there.

Do Republicans really think people are so stupid that they will vote to elect a party that wants to raise their taxes and lower taxes on the rich below already record low (in modern times) levels? Especially when 10-40 years of the same policies have nearly bankrupted us and everyone now know it?

This is what Republicans have been talked into staking the future of their party on by the teabaggers?

Balancing the budget on the backs of the unemployed and homeless in a time of economic catastrophe for the poor and middle class? (for GaryC!) Wow! *Adios*, GOP!

[20111019-17](#) 16:32 SteveB Re: No More Pretending

Dear Charis,

No, this was in reply to Gary's comment. Not yours. I'm sorry. You were only stating that there is that element to the problem, which I can't disagree with, though I guess I attach different weight than you do.

Sorry again! I should have pointed my arrow a little more carefully, that's for sure. I value you point of view and input to our little circle of people who care. Thank you.

[20111019-18](#) 16:50 Ben Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

Yes, they do. And demonstrably, they have been right about the apathy and ignorance of the Voter before. After all, GW got elected (well, sort of) didn't he?

[20111019-19](#) 17:04 Phil Re: The End of the GOP?

Does anyone remember *Animal Farm* by George Orwell? You can paint the pigs red, or you can paint the pigs blue. Or you can paint some red and some blue. But no matter which color you paint them, they just don't really care about the rest of the animals!

So until we are represented by ones that care about all of us, don't expect much from either color.

[20111019-20](#) 17:09 SteveB Obamacare & Obamacracy

Dear Art,

I really appreciate your comments, Art, and those of all of you! I'm learning a lot. I think you're definitely right, Art, about this major transition the world has been going through. Someday, historians will have a better perspective on it and some kind of clever name. It is a major thing! A shift to post-industrialism?

Dennis put up a reference to a good article on this very subject before you came onboard. And I completely agree that we have been like a train with no engineer for a long time. Like so many cities in the U.S. that just sprawled in ugly, wasteful, gobbles of land, with no planning, no awareness of future consequences.

But, you know, I don't feel this transition or whatever it is some act of nature or something inevitable, at least in the short run. I think we caused it. I don't believe in some big conspiracy theory like Ron Paul does, but I think the policies of our corrupt, misguided, and manipulated politicians sold the American people down the river, and it didn't have to happen. Or, say it had to happen, maybe we could have done better not asleep at the wheel?

At this point in time, as you say, it took us a long time to spiral down this far, recovery will not be rapid. I just hope it's fast enough that we avert a disaster of some kind.

Oh, I remembered one more simple law that would have helped the healthcare of Americans tremendously—a law to limit the medical lawsuits to reasonable amounts for the salvation of all. Would lower insurance rates and medical bills. But politicians corrupted by the insurance industry can't do anything with said industry except bail them out with taxpayer billions. Cool!

[20111019-21](#) 17:13 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Phil,

Does this mean you're becoming a Democrat? Hope you're having a great fall there!

[20111019-22](#) 17:33 Charis Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB and Phil,

I read *Animal Farm*. I wouldn't liken anything about it to being a Democrat. Maybe the problem with Democrats is they think too highly of themselves. and by this I'm not saying I'm Republican. The problem with U.S. politics is you really only have two visible parties—so where does that leave people when, like so many of us, we can't see ourselves siding with either? The U.S. system of only two parties suddenly doesn't look so Democratic.

[20111019-23](#) 17:50 SteveB Re: Where Are Obama's Girlfriends?

Dear Larry,

Hilarious!

[20111019-24](#) 18:17 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Phil,

I agree with your sentiments which is why I have long advocated a viable third party in the center which would make all of these clowns pay attention. There are many reasons for not favoring a parliamentary system but multiple parties with votes of confidence keeps everyone on their toes. If WE really want to change this corrupt system, WE have to propose Constitutional Amendments to take the power away from the clowns in charge.

[20111019-25](#) 19:10 Art Re: The End of the GOP?

Does anyone remember reading about the William Jennings Bryant and the Cross of Gold and the Granger Movement?

Just askin'.

[20111019-26](#) 19:34 Mark Re: No More Pretending

I'm beginning to realize how much SteveB likes standing on the tallest soapbox.....geeze!

[20111020-01](#) 05:56 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

A two-party system has given us a stability that multi-party systems often lack. A huge change like this is probably not something we need right now, but I think it might happen soon. Teabaggers won't support Obama (haha) and maybe not Romney...so what they gonna do?

And I'd be very careful with messing with the Constitution too much. More danger, though I have some ideas along these lines myself. But why not just eliminate the corruption? A few simple laws...just like could have solved the healthcare problem.

Nothing radical.

Why would a Republican who can't face the danger of Obama want to face the danger of a multi-party system and big constitutional experiments? Wow, more radical than any socialists I know.

20111020-02 06:00 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

Except...if we end up splitting the Democratic party, we're all doomed (except maybe the uber rich). Better to let the teabaggers split off from the Republicans. We just need to take control of the Democratic party (easier than building a new party), and for them to take control of the country, then we can take control of the millionaires' money. Arrrr! :-)

20111020-03 06:17 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP? & William Jennings Bryan's 'Cross of Gold' Speech

Dear Art,

Good idea! I remembered the painting, but had forgotten the speech. Very pertinent. Notice how little things have changed since these times, we're still subject to the same tyranny. (But I don't think we want to go back to the gold standard.) I love this quote:

The income tax is a just law. It simply intends to put the burdens of government justly upon the backs of the people. I am in favor of an income tax. When I find a man who is not willing to pay his share of the burden of the government which protects him, I find a man who is unworthy to enjoy the blessings of a government like ours.

For those who are interested:

Bryan's "Cross of Gold" Speech: Mesmerizing the Masses, (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5354/>)

The most famous speech in American political history was delivered by William Jennings Bryan on July 9, 1896, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The issue was whether to endorse the free coinage of silver at a ratio of silver to gold of 16 to 1. (This inflationary measure would have increased the amount of money in circulation and aided cash-poor and debt-burdened farmers.) After speeches on the subject by several U.S. Senators, Bryan rose to speak. The thirty-six-year-old former Congressman from Nebraska aspired to be the Democratic nominee for president, and he had been skillfully, but quietly, building support for himself among the delegates. His dramatic speaking style and rhetoric roused the crowd to a frenzy. The response, wrote one reporter, "came like one great burst of artillery." Men and women screamed and waved their hats and canes. "Some," wrote another reporter, "like demented things, divested themselves of their coats and flung them high in the air." The next day the convention nominated Bryan for President on the fifth ballot. The full text of William Jennings Bryan's famous "Cross of Gold" speech appears below. The audio portion is an excerpt. [Note on the recording: In 1896 recording technology was in its infancy, and recording a political convention would have been impossible. But in the early 20th century, the fame of Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech led him to repeat it numerous times on the Chautauqua lecture circuit where he was an enormously popular speaker. In 1921 (25 years after the original speech), he recorded portions of the speech for Gennett Records in Richmond, Indiana. Although the recording does not capture the power and drama of the original address, it does allow us to hear Bryan delivering this famous speech:

I would be presumptuous, indeed, to present myself against the distinguished gentlemen to whom you have listened if this were but a measuring of ability; but this is not a contest among persons. The humblest citizen in all the land when clad in the armor of a righteous cause is stronger than all the whole hosts of error that they can bring. I come to speak to you in defense of a cause as holy as the cause of liberty—the cause of humanity. When this debate is concluded, a

motion will be made to lay upon the table the resolution offered in commendation of the administration and also the resolution in condemnation of the administration. I shall object to bringing this question down to a level of persons. The individual is but an atom; he is born, he acts, he dies; but principles are eternal; and this has been a contest of principle.

Never before in the history of this country has there been witnessed such a contest as that through which we have passed. Never before in the history of American politics has a great issue been fought out as this issue has been by the voters themselves.

On the 4th of March, 1895, a few Democrats, most of them members of Congress, issued an address to the Democrats of the nation asserting that the money question was the paramount issue of the hour; asserting also the right of a majority of the Democratic Party to control the position of the party on this paramount issue; concluding with the request that all believers in free coinage of silver in the Democratic Party should organize and take charge of and control the policy of the Democratic Party. Three months later, at Memphis, an organization was perfected, and the silver Democrats went forth openly and boldly and courageously proclaiming their belief and declaring that if successful they would crystallize in a platform the declaration which they had made; and then began the conflict with a zeal approaching the zeal which inspired the crusaders who followed Peter the Hermit. Our silver Democrats went forth from victory unto victory, until they are assembled now, not to discuss, not to debate, but to enter up the judgment rendered by the plain people of this country.

But in this contest, brother has been arrayed against brother, and father against son. The warmest ties of love and acquaintance and association have been disregarded. Old leaders have been cast aside when they refused to give expression to the sentiments of those whom they would lead, and new leaders have sprung up to give direction to this cause of freedom. Thus has the contest been waged, and we have assembled here under as binding and solemn instructions as were ever fastened upon the representatives of a people.

We do not come as individuals. Why, as individuals we might have been glad to compliment the gentleman from New York [Senator Hill], but we knew that the people for whom we speak would never be willing to put him in a position where he could thwart the will of the Democratic Party. I say it was not a question of persons; it was a question of principle; and it is not with gladness, my friends, that we find ourselves brought into conflict with those who are now arrayed on the other side.

The gentleman who just preceded me [Governor Russell] spoke of the old state of Massachusetts. Let me assure him that not one person in all this convention entertains the least hostility to the people of the state of Massachusetts.

But we stand here representing people who are the equals before the law of the largest cities in the state of Massachusetts. When you come before us and tell us that we shall disturb your business interests, we reply that you have disturbed our business interests by your action. We say to you that you have made too limited in its application the definition of a businessman. The man who is employed for wages is as much a businessman as his employer. The attorney in a country town is as much a businessman as the corporation counsel in a great metropolis. The merchant at the crossroads store is as much a businessman as the merchant of New York. The farmer who goes forth in the morning and toils all day, begins in the spring and toils all summer, and by the application of brain and muscle to the natural resources of this country creates wealth, is as much a businessman as the man who goes upon the Board of Trade and bets upon the price of grain. The miners who go 1,000 feet into the earth or climb 2,000 feet upon the cliffs and bring forth from their hiding places the precious metals to be poured in the channels of trade are as much businessmen as the few financial magnates who in a backroom corner the money of the world.

We come to speak for this broader class of businessmen. Ah, my friends, we say not one word against those who live upon the Atlantic Coast; but those hardy pioneers who braved all the dangers of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom as the rose—those pioneers away out there, rearing their children near to nature's heart, where they can mingle their voices with the voices of the birds—out there where they have erected schoolhouses for the education of their children and churches where they praise their Creator, and the cemeteries where sleep the ashes of their dead—are as deserving of the consideration of this party as any people in this country.

It is for these that we speak. We do not come as aggressors. Our war is not a war of conquest. We are fighting in the defense of our homes, our families, and posterity. We have petitioned, and our petitions have been scorned. We have entreated, and our entreaties have been disregarded. We have begged, and they have mocked when our calamity came.

We beg no longer; we entreat no more; we petition no more. We defy them! The gentleman from Wisconsin has said he fears a Robespierre. My friend, in this land of the free you need fear no tyrant who will spring up from among the people. What we need is an Andrew Jackson to stand as Jackson stood, against the encroachments of aggregated wealth.

They tell us that this platform was made to catch votes. We reply to them that changing conditions make new issues; that the principles upon which rest Democracy are as everlasting as the hills; but that they must be applied to new conditions as they arise. Conditions have arisen and we are attempting to meet those conditions. They tell us that the income tax ought not to be brought in here; that is not a new idea. They criticize us for our criticism of the Supreme Court of the United States. My friends, we have made no criticism. We have simply called attention to what you know. If you want criticisms, read the dissenting opinions of the Court. That will give you criticisms.

They say we passed an unconstitutional law. I deny it. The income tax was not unconstitutional when it was passed. It was not unconstitutional when it went before the Supreme Court for the first time. It did not become unconstitutional until one judge changed his mind; and we cannot be expected to know when a judge will change his mind.

The income tax is a just law. It simply intends to put the burdens of government justly upon the backs of the people. I am in favor of an income tax. When I find a man who is not willing to pay his share of the burden of the government which protects him, I find a man who is unworthy to enjoy the blessings of a government like ours.

He says that we are opposing the national bank currency. It is true. If you will read what Thomas Benton said, you will find that he said that in searching history he could find but one parallel to Andrew Jackson. That was Cicero, who destroyed the conspiracies of Cataline and saved Rome. He did for Rome what Jackson did when he destroyed the bank conspiracy and saved America.

We say in our platform that we believe that the right to coin money and issue money is a function of government. We believe it. We believe it is a part of sovereignty and can no more with safety be delegated to private individuals than can the power to make penal statutes or levy laws for taxation.

Mr. Jefferson, who was once regarded as good Democratic authority, seems to have a different opinion from the gentleman who has addressed us on the part of the minority. Those who are opposed to this proposition tell us that the issue of paper money is a function of the bank and that the government ought to go out of the banking business. I stand with Jefferson rather than with them, and tell them, as he did, that the issue of money is a function of the government and that the banks should go out of the governing business.

They complain about the plank which declares against the life tenure in office. They have tried to strain it to mean that which it does not mean. What we oppose in that plank is the life tenure that is being built up in Washington which establishes an office-holding class and excludes from participation in the benefits the humbler members of our society.

Let me call attention to two or three great things. The gentleman from New York says that he will propose an amendment providing that this change in our law shall not affect contracts which, according to the present laws, are made payable in gold. But if he means to say that we cannot change our monetary system without protecting those who have loaned money before the change was made, I want to ask him where, in law or in morals, he can find authority for not protecting the debtors when the act of 1873 was passed when he now insists that we must protect the creditor. He says he also wants to amend this platform so as to provide that if we fail to maintain the parity within a year that we will then suspend the coinage of silver. We reply that when we advocate a thing which we believe will be successful we are not compelled to raise a doubt as to our own sincerity by trying to show what we will do if we are wrong.

I ask him, if he will apply his logic to us, why he does not apply it to himself. He says that he wants this country to try to secure an international agreement. Why doesn't he tell us what he is going to do if they fail to secure an international agreement. There is more reason for him to do that than for us to expect to fail to maintain the parity. They have tried for thirty years—thirty years—to secure an international agreement, and those are waiting for it most patiently who don't want it at all.

Now, my friends, let me come to the great paramount issue. If they ask us here why it is we say more on the money question than we say upon the tariff question, I reply that if protection has slain its thousands the gold standard has slain its tens of thousands. If they ask us why we did not embody all these things in our platform which we believe, we reply to them that when we have restored the money of the Constitution, all other necessary reforms will be possible, and that until that is done there is no reform that can be accomplished.

Why is it that within three months such a change has come over the sentiments of the country? Three months ago, when it was confidently asserted that those who believed in the gold standard would frame our platforms and nominate our candidates, even the advocates of the gold standard did not think that we could elect a President; but they had good reasons for the suspicion, because there is scarcely a state here today asking for the gold standard that is not within the absolute control of the Republican Party.

But note the change. Mr. McKinley was nominated at St. Louis upon a platform that declared for the maintenance of the gold standard until it should be changed into bimetallism by an international agreement. Mr. McKinley was the most popular man among the Republicans ; and everybody three months ago in the Republican Party prophesied his election. How is it today? Why, that man who used to boast that he looked like Napoleon, that man shudders today when he thinks that he was nominated on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Not only that, but as he listens he can hear with ever increasing distinctness the sound of the waves as they beat upon the lonely shores of St. Helena.

Why this change? Ah, my friends. is not the change evident to anyone who will look at the matter? It is because no private character, however pure, no personal popularity, however great, can protect from the avenging wrath of an indignant people the man who will either declare that he is in favor of fastening the gold standard upon this people, or who is willing to surrender the right of self-government and place legislative control in the hands of foreign potentates and powers.

We go forth confident that we shall win. Why? Because upon the paramount issue in this campaign there is not a spot of ground upon which the enemy will dare to challenge battle. Why, if they tell us that the gold standard is a good thing, we point to their platform and tell them that their platform pledges the party to get rid of a gold standard and substitute bimetallism. If the gold standard is a good thing, why try to get rid of it? If the gold standard, and I might call your attention to the fact that some of the very people who are in this convention today and who tell you that we ought to declare in favor of international bimetallism and thereby declare that the gold standard is wrong and that the principles of bimetallism are better—these very people four months ago were open and avowed advocates of the gold standard and telling us that we could not legislate two metals together even with all the world.

I want to suggest this truth, that if the gold standard is a good thing we ought to declare in favor of its retention and not in favor of abandoning it; and if the gold standard is a bad thing, why should we wait until some other nations are willing to help us to let it go?

Here is the line of battle. We care not upon which issue they force the fight. We are prepared to meet them on either issue or on both. If they tell us that the gold standard is the standard of civilization, we reply to them that this, the most enlightened of all nations of the earth, has never declared for a gold standard, and both the parties this year are declaring against it. If the gold standard is the standard of civilization, why, my friends, should we not have it? So if they come to meet us on that, we can present the history of our nation. More than that, we can tell them this, that they will search the pages of history in vain to find a single instance in which the common people of any land ever declared themselves in favor of a gold standard. They can find where the holders of fixed investments have.

Mr. Carlisle said in 1878 that this was a struggle between the idle holders of idle capital and the struggling masses who produce the wealth and pay the taxes of the country; and my friends, it is simply a question that we shall decide upon which side shall the Democratic Party fight. Upon the side of the idle holders of idle capital, or upon the side of the struggling masses? That is the question that the party must answer first; and then it must be answered by each individual hereafter. The sympathies of the Democratic Party, as described by the platform, are on the side of the struggling masses, who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic Party.

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

You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard. I tell you that the great cities rest upon these broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic. But destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.

My friends, we shall declare that this nation is able to legislate for its own people on every question without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation on earth, and upon that issue we expect to carry every single state in the Union.

I shall not slander the fair state of Massachusetts nor the state of New York by saying that when citizens are confronted with the proposition, "Is this nation able to attend to its own business?"—I will not slander either one by saying that the people of those states will declare our helpless impotency as a nation to attend to our own business. It is the issue of 1776 over again. Our ancestors, when but 3 million, had the courage to declare their political independence of every other nation upon earth.

Shall we, their descendants, when we have grown to 70 million, declare that we are less independent than our forefathers? No, my friends, it will never be the judgment of this people. Therefore, we care not upon what lines the battle is fought. If they say bimetallism is good but we cannot have it till some nation helps us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we shall restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States have. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we shall fight them to the uttermost, having behind us the producing masses of the nation and the world. Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.

(Source: *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention Held in Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, 1896*, (Logansport, Indiana, 1896), 226—234. Reprinted in *The Annals of America, Vol. 12, 1895—1904: Populism, Imperialism, and Reform* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 100—105.)

[20111020-04](#) 06:20 SteveB Re: No More Pretending

Dear Mark,

:-) Except this has got to be the shortest soapbox in the world! It just happens to be in the midst of my friends and family, whom I thank greatly for listening and climbing up here on this little soapbox with me!

[20111020-05](#) 07:34 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Ben,

I guess then we have no choice but to try to wake the suckers up!

[20111020-06](#) 08:25 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

What? there are no fellow travelers in Bolivia that share your anarchic tendencies. You should consider moving next door and spending some quality time with Cesar.

[20111020-07](#) 08:32 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

In case you haven't noticed in Bolivia, the socialists have taken over the democrat establishment. That is the best thing that could happen to Democracy in the U.S. The right wing religious nuts are ready to take over the republican party. That gives us in the middle (fiscal conservative, social liberal) a chance.

[20111020-08](#) 08:43 Charis Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

If you'd ever truly lived in a socialist country (as I have in Cuba) you'd be very, VERY careful about saying this... the loss of liberties and dire poverty you would experience are far worse than anything you've ever seen in Bolivia. Bolivia is

heading that way and I am more and more frightened every day for this country. I don't say this because I'm an American with socialist-phobia, but because I've lived under true and pure socialism—and it is nothing to joke about. I thought I'd seen dire poverty growing up for over 30 years in Bolivia. Then I lived in Cuba and I returned to Bolivia truly thankful for how wealthy we really are here—and, for the most part, still free.

[20111020-09](#) 08:47 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Charis,

Sorry, my writing skills are not as good as SteveB's or most on this board. I meant to say that since SteveB is living in Bolivia, he may not have noticed what is going on in the U.S. I have spent a lot of time in communist and socialist countries and it is not a good thing. Which is why I fear for the U.S. with the nuts in charge of the Democrat party. Of course, I feel the same fear for the fascists on the right with their religious ideals.

And, yes, I know where Bolivia is headed as I read a lot about world issues.

[20111020-10](#) 09:08 Art Re: The End of the GOP?

I think the right wing nuts have taken over the Republican party—note I left out religious.

[20111020-11](#) 09:13 Clark Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

OK, I know this is going to sound schoolmarmish, but I hope those on this forum will stop referring to the "Democrat" Party. It's the "Democratic" Party. "Democrat" is a noun, not an adjective. Calling it the "Democrat" Party is something the Republicans dreamed up a while back as a way, I guess, of not giving Democrats credit for being "democratic," and now they all say it. That doesn't make it correct, any more than "Republic" Party would be correct. It's just annoying. Thanks.

Now that I've got that off my chest, I would throw out a question: what would be a good name for a third party, featuring candidates that somehow weren't bought and paid for, signed and delivered to special interests? People's Party has been mentioned. Any other thoughts?

[20111020-12](#) 09:14 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

Surely you know a lot of radical socialists in Bolivia.

[20111020-13](#) 09:15 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

What?

[20111020-14](#) 09:19 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

I'm sure everyone has noticed that I don't keep up on "what is going on in the U.S." Haha! Gadhafi is dead! (Oops, not in U.S. yet?) Long live freedom! Yeh, ra, Obama, again! He must be a true Republican! Socialist? LOL!!!

[20111020-15](#) 09:23 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

... :-) [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20111020-16](#) 09:27 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Clark,

Clark: Thanks for understanding the "purposed" nuance as I don't believe the Democratic party is really democratic. Special interests run it like they do the Republican party. I'm glad you feel better now. Hope the meds are working for you!

I don't like the People's Party as it sounds socialistic like something SteveB would worship. I prefer Common Sense Fiscally Responsible Socially Enlightened Party, but that might be too much.

OK, I'm off the discussion for a while to go create jobs. Added 3 this month already and trying to create a new entity that will employ about 175. Of course, I'm shipping them all to Bolivia so they can experience the benefits of socialist living. I do hear the women are beautiful there (obviously SteveB has benefited from that luxury in Bolivia).

[20111020-17](#) 09:30 Art Re: The End of the GOP?

Everyone please remember as we compare Libya with Iraq the costs—a few hundred billion dollars less and not one U.S. soldier's life. Hmmmm? But this guy is really incompetent. However, after the terrible Libya mistake, now he's getting us involved in Africa, oh wait, where is Libya again?

[20111020-18](#) 09:32 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

Actually, I do know quite a few of them in high places. [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

[20111020-19](#) 09:35 Jim A Middle Way?

But if we could create a common sense group in the middle either by election of more independents or by gathering a group of existing Democrats and Republicans who are disgusted with extremist just say "no" gridlock that would be big enough to deny a majority to either right or left without their cooperation we might be able to force compromise to occur.

How many would that take to prevent filibuster in the senate? Say 20? and leave 40 on the right and left who could not pass anything by themselves.

[20111020-20](#) 09:38 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Art,

I had the pleasure of spending some time in Uganda for a few years after "President for Life" Idi Amin quickly left Kampala for Saudi Arabia. I was traveling around the country with the equivalent of their CIA and Minister of Agriculture (the most powerful guy in the country next to the President—he controlled the coffee trade). The genocide I saw was appalling. Bodies in the streets, in the rivers, mass marches etc.. If any country needs help now it is Uganda and I think Obama is right to try to reach out to these people. There are 7 major tribes in Uganda and for years they have tried to kill each other off. I don't think this will be a short term adventure like Libya but I can only hope we are doing something to stop the genocide

[20111020-21](#) 09:38 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Clark,

I agree with you, Clark, and I am one of the guilty ones. But, you know, I honestly have trouble getting that whole "Democratic" thing to roll off my tongue. It's no more Democratic and no less corrupted by money, as you point out, than the "Republic party" (I like that, though "Empire" party might be better). In an Obamocracy, it's gotta be the Democrat party that (sort of) rules (if you can call it that). Or I could invoke conciseness? :-). Aw heck, I'll do it your way!

I'm a conservative guy. I'm afraid of what a third party could bring. And I thought our Republic friends were so deathly afraid of a little uncertainty in the marketplace caused by Obamacare? I would think they would hesitate before endorsing the vast uncertainty of a true multi-party system. We might even need a prime minister...maybe not a bad thing...though government that works that well is not what the framers of the Constitution had in mind. A new Constitution? Frightening! I thought Republicans loved the old one so much, now they want to throw it out?

Business-wise in this world? This is probably not a good time for radical solutions, as appealing as they might be. Though I guess I can see where they're coming from. A third party on the left = Republic victory! A third party on the right = Democrat victory. Let's get those teabaggers moving!

But, if it could actually happen? If the corruption and greed could actually be controlled? I love the name, THE PEOPLE'S PARTY!

[20111020-22](#) 09:55 SteveB Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC and Art,

I'm not sure if this is a first, and I don't really want the U.S. in five wars at once (though that is not quite the reality), nor do I want to see a lot of money spent, but I am in complete agreement with, gulp, GaryC.

And I hope Democrat and Republic alike are proud of Obama for what he achieved in Libya at little cost to U.S. taxpayers. But, of course, Republics will never admit anything good about him...

And if we are going to try to maintain our position in the world, it is going to require more taxes from people who can afford to pay them, not the unemployed millions, Mr. Cain and Mr. Perry. Or do we give-up and become isolationist as the U.S. used to be, simply because the most belligerent among us don't want to pay to support the aggression they desire, and want the rest of us to pay instead?

Iraq—Afghanistan—Libya—Yemen—Uganda (but you can't really count Iraq or Libya any more).

[20111020-23](#) 10:01 SteveB Re: A Middle Way?

Dear Jim,

I like this idea a lot, Jim. But I would like some kind of assurances that these politicians would not be like all the rest...full of lies and corruption.

Maybe they could sign a pledge to take no large campaign donations? Otherwise, if they take these donations, they're corrupt, by definition and in fact.

But which politician is going to do such a thing, and which one of them could win when huge amounts of money are arrayed against them?

Oh, maybe we could just trust them...

I know I don't see these current jokers reforming the campaign money problem, because it is their life's blood.

20111020-24 10:12 Charis Re: A Middle Way?

Dear Jim & SteveB,

I personally don't believe, Steve, that a 2-party system has brought us stability. If anything, the country is more unstable now than it has been in 70 years and it's because you only have two parties decided the nation's fate and rather than looking for answers they're spending their time, our time, and our money, looking for who's to blame. I like Jim's idea. I'd totally go political to do something like this.

20111020-25 10:32 Pam Re: The End of the GOP?

Ooh, I think I'm pulling ahead of SteveB in the radicalism race. My thinking is either evolving or degenerating, but I'm considering things I never ever did before—like a third party. I always thought I believed in gradual change, so that the risk of uncontrollable disruption could be contained. Now I'm beginning to think that we need to just cut through the Gordian knot, get rid of all the layers of political bullsh*t, and bring some simplicity and clarity to our democratic process. The Republicans are hopeless. I don't believe even they believe what they say, unless they are incredibly uninformed or totally corrupted. The Democrats are running in circles, trying to play a fair game (more or less), while the goalpost keeps moving.

I really like the Petition of Grievances the OWS put out, minus some of the inflammatory language. That is the platform for a third party; I'd call it the People's Party, since that's what it would be. I know we don't want a multi-party like Italy, where corruption is endemic, but even in the U.S. political parties have evolved and even had different names. I have been close to despair in recent years, because it seemed this country had come under the malign influence of greed and ultra-conservatism. Back in the 'sixties, there was a sense (at least I felt it) that the nation was moving inexorably in a progressive direction, and it did for a while. I had a good feeling about politics and our system, but I can understand how Christian fundamentalists and fiscal reactionaries felt beleaguered. They must have felt a surge of renewed optimism when Sarah Palin was the country's darling (NOT mine) and we kicked butt after 9/11. Now it's their turn to be on the ropes, at least I hope that's what's happening. I don't see the protest movement—that is going global— fading away, any more than the starving housewives of Paris were going to stop petitioning the King for bread.

When times are dire, people can do and believe some crazy things. In the Middle Ages it was witches and self-flagellation. For centuries it's been the Jews. Fear can all too easily become paranoia, and even formerly sensible people can be persuaded that the moon landing never happened or that without the certainties of Christianity morality is impossible. The best thing about America is that, so far, we have managed to weather the storms of Tea Pot Dome, Reconstruction, and a Great Depression, et. al. I've been afraid this time we were going to go under—we still might. But today I have Hope with a capital H, just like Obama promised. I don't know how all this is going to play out, and I worry that this movement might be high jacked by the "dark side," but so long as we all keep pushing in a progressive direction, I think there might be a chance.

20111020-26 10:40 Charis Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear Pam,

I've always admired one thing the most about Americans: their intense self-analysis. If America has one saving grace, it's that Americans are always doing evaluations on themselves, looking at what mistakes were made, how to avoid making them again, and how to improve in the future. It's why a young country like the U.S. is what it is today—and if we can take the time to analyze (but not so much time or so much over analysis that we don't do anything at all) then we still have a chance as a country.

20111020-27 10:50 Mark Re: A Middle Way?

Here's a third party!

The GOP could face a revolt from within its tea party grassroots base if it nominates an establishment candidate without true conservative, anti-big government values, one of America's leading conservative pundits tells Newsmax.TV in an exclusive interview. Specifically, columnist and former Republican presidential candidate Pat Buchanan told Newsmax that the nomination of former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, the architect of a state insurance plan that many say inspired Obamacare, could prompt the tea party movement to form a third party.

I would say the Democrats would love to see that happen! Certainly it would lead to another 4 years of Obamacracy.

20111020-28 11:02 Pam Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear GaryC,

Jon Stewart showed a clip of Rush Limbaugh railing against Obama (that Muslim socialist!) fighting the Lord's Resistance Army. Why, Obama is killing Christians! How dreadful! Oh, wait, I was just told that the LRA does some pretty horrible things (rape and child mutilation among them). Maybe I'd better do my due diligence. I'll get back to you on this. If you heard Rush fulminating, then having to back up without apology, then you know how preposterous he and his ilk are.

20111020-29 12:14 GaryC Re: The End of the GOP?

The last time SteveB agreed with me was the fall of 1965 and it involved the physique of a young lady. We were both admirers.

20111020-30 15:03 SteveB "The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'"

"The Bible Has Some Shocking 'Family Values'" by Michael Coogan, CNN

Oct. 26, 2010, (http://articles.cnn.com/2010-10-26/opinion/coogan.bible.family.values_1_biblical-writers-family-values-slavery?_s=PM:OPINION)

(Editor's note: Michael Coogan is a lecturer on Hebrew Bible-Old Testament at Harvard Divinity School, professor of religious studies at Stonehill College, and director of publications for the Harvard Semitic Museum. Editor of *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, his most recent book is *God and Sex: What the Bible Really Says* (Twelve).)

When talking about so-called family values, pastors, popes, and politicians routinely quote the Bible as if it were an unassailable divine authority — after all, they assume, God wrote the Bible, and therefore it is absolutely and literally true.

But that is a misconception. As the Bible itself makes clear, its authors were human beings, many of whom are named: David, Isaiah, Luke, and Paul. These human writers wrote over the course of more than a thousand years, and their writings reflect their own views and the values they shared with their contemporaries. So it's not surprising that inconsistencies are frequent in the Bible, both trivial and profound.

Although Jews and Christians, individually and collectively, have for the last 2,000 years accepted the Bible as authoritative in principle, in practice many of its values have been rejected. On issues such as slavery, no one today would maintain that slavery is acceptable, even though, according to the Bible, it was a divinely sanctioned institution. In the debates about slavery in the 19th century those opposed to its abolition cited the Bible in support of their position, but despite such biblical warrant, their views were renounced.

According to biblical law, a father could sell his daughter as a slave, and the last of the Ten Commandments lists as off-limits a neighbor's possessions — his house, wife, slaves, and livestock. But the majority of modern Jews and Christians no longer accept the biblical view of women as men's property and hence subordinate to them, as they have also abandoned the biblical practice of polygamy.

According to biblical law, a father could sell his daughter as a slave.

In current debates about family values, most of which have to do with sex, opponents of abortion and advocates of a woman's right to choose both cite the Bible in support of their conflicting views, even though the Bible in fact says

nothing specifically about the issue. And with regard to same-sex marriage, although the few biblical writers who mention same-sex relationships, especially between men, were unequivocally opposed to them, many contemporary believers would argue that, as with slavery and the status of women, it is time to recognize that the values of the biblical writers are no longer necessarily our own.

Opponents of same-sex marriage cite Leviticus, which says that when a man sleeps with a man as with a woman it is an abomination. They're right: It does say that. But it later calls for the death penalty for such activity, which only the most rabid opponents would insist on. The Bible also calls eating pork and a woman wearing a man's clothes abominations, yet many would no longer enforce such prohibitions.

Individual biblical texts should not be appealed to selectively: Such cherry-picking is all too easy because of the nature of the Bible as a multi-authored book. Rather, as with another formative text, the Constitution, one needs first to understand it historically — what did its words mean when they were written — and then attempt to determine what its underlying values are, not just what it says in a specific passage. Only in this sense can the Bible be considered to have timeless relevance that transcends the historical particularities of its authors.

What are those underlying values? I would argue that they are rooted in love of neighbor, which Jewish and Christian commentators over the ages have identified as the essential and enduring message of the Bible.

Here are three of them. The great Rabbi Hillel, who when asked what the basic principle of the Torah was, replied: "What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor: That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary." His words are echoed both by his near-contemporary, another rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, who put it this way: "Whatever you wish people to do to you, so you should do to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets," and by an early leader in the movement that Jesus started, the rabbinically trained Paul, who pronounced that "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

So, I suggest, the essence of the Bible — its ultimate authority — is not in its individual pronouncements, but in its underlying message: equal, even loving, treatment of all persons, regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

[20111020-31](#) 16:59 Pam Nation of Change

Do you all get the postings from Nation of Change that come out every day? I keep posting things to Facebook, but I don't know if all of you are on that. What you get are editorial- and op-ed-type essays about all the stuff we've been talking about. I highly recommend it. I think it was SteveG who alerted me to it; I'm so glad he did:

<http://www.NationofChange.org>.

[20111020-32](#) 18:55 Art Re: A Middle Way?

While I like the idea of the tea baggers being placed out to rot, they so hate President Obama that they would vote for anyone, if they think he will go down. To my way of thinking the entire approach of the republicans has been "say no to anything that might make the President look good and the country and people be damned". McConnell said as much in JAN of this year and they've lived up to it ever since. Bonehead and his lap dog Cantor are as slimy a politicians as we have seen in quite a while.

I cannot imagine being President and trying to run an operation with that kind of baggage. Maybe Lenin had the right idea.

[20111020-33](#) 20:48 Charis Fw: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Warren Buffet's brilliant answer to our troubles with Congress...

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

makes sense to me...

Warren Buffett, in a recent interview with CNBC, offers one of the best quotes about the debt ceiling:

"I could end the deficit in 5 minutes," he told CNBC. "You just pass a law that says that anytime there is a deficit of more than 3% of GDP, all sitting members of Congress are ineligible for re-election."

The 26th amendment (granting the right to vote for 18 year-olds) took only 3 months & 8 days to be ratified! Why? Simple! The people demanded it. That was in 1971—before computers, e-mail, cell phones, etc. Of the 27 amendments to the Constitution, seven (7) took one (1) year or less to become the law of the land—all because of public pressure.

Warren Buffet is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in The United States of America will have the message. This is one idea that really should be passed around.

Congressional Reform Act of 2011

1. No Tenure / No Pension. A Congressman/woman collects a salary while in office and receives no pay when they're out of office.
2. Congress (past, present & future) participates in Social Security. All funds in the Congressional retirement fund move to the Social Security system immediately. All future funds flow into the Social Security system, and Congress participates with the American people. It may not be used for any other purpose.
3. Congress can purchase their own retirement plan, just as all Americans do.
4. Congress will no longer vote themselves a pay raise. Congressional pay will rise by the lower of CPI or 3%.
5. Congress loses their current health care system and participates in the same health care system as the American people.
6. Congress must equally abide by all laws they impose on the American people.
7. All contracts with past and present Congressmen/women are void effective 1/1/12. The American people did not make this contract with Congressmen/women. Congressmen/women made all these contracts for themselves.

Serving in Congress is an honor, not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so ours should serve their term(s), then go home and back to work.

If each person contacts a minimum of twenty people then it will only take three days for most people (in the U.S.) to receive the message. Don't you think it's time? THIS IS HOW YOU FIX CONGRESS! If you agree with the above, pass it on. If not, just delete. You are one of my 20+—Please keep it going, and thanks.

20111021-01	05:47	Pam	Re: A Middle Way?
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Dear SteveB,

You must have been listening to a different John McCain than the one I heard. The one I saw on TV credited the English and the French and played down our role. Someone must have gotten to him. I think the poor guy is losing it. The other day he said the Democrats have killed (or lost) BILLIONS and BILLIONS OF JOBS. That's more people than we have in the whole country.

20111021-02	06:15	SteveB	Re: A Middle Way?
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Dear Art,

I think you have it exactly right. We have actually seen two phases during our golden age of Obamocracy:

1. Democrats in control tried to get Republican cooperation but got none, so they did nothing except the half-a*s health care bill. I guess they were essentially too shy to offend Republicans. And Republicans hate it that Democrats acted like that and hate the one little thing Democrats got done.

2. Republicans take the House—total obstructionism to the detriment of the country. Republican leadership had to go around its own do-nothing members and depend upon Democrats just to keep the country solvent. The Republicans are not a functioning party, so they didn't want the country to function. I suspect they still don't. Maybe they think they can pull a coup if things get desperate?

The better I get to know any member of Congress, the slimier they seem. I want them all gone, every one. We need fresh blood controlled by the boss—the people!

Lenin? I think he works better for the teabaggers:

Attention must be devoted principally to raising the workers to the level of revolutionaries; it is not at all our task to descend to the level of the "working masses."

I guess Lenin was really a Republican...he thought the "working masses" were too slimy for him.

[20111021-03](#) 06:46 SteveB Re: A Middle Way?

Dear Pam,

But...I have to tip my hat today to one John McCain! Because he is so involved in war-stuff, he is the only Republican I have seen place reality above dogma and partisanship and actually congratulate the President for a job well done in Libya. To admit the President might actually have done something right.

What is it? They can't say one nice thing about the guy or help him save the country. Why?

Because he's black? I honestly don't know and I've never seen anything quite like it in American politics in my lifetime, so that's all I can come up with. That seems to be the key difference that I can see.

Why isn't it transparent to all the people how evil to the republic this Republican dogmatic attitude is? Isn't it time to get real or become Greece?

[20111021-04](#) 07:04 SteveB Re: 28th Amendment / Congressional Reform Act

Dear Charis,

I think it could work.

But nothing will work as long as even honest men can be bought because corrupt campaign financing is permitted by law. This needs to be stopped one way or the other.

I like that this doesn't include term limits, which I consider to be a Tea Party red herring that, if it were to happen, would keep Congress full of people who don't know anything and have no experience in government. They would be completely at the mercy of special interests, big money, and lobbyists, which is, I guess, the goal—a government controlled completely by greed for power and money.

[20111021-05](#) 07:10 Clark Re: The End of the GOP?

Dear SteveB,

As entertaining as that might be, I think it will be a much more boring race of Obama-Biden vs. Romney-Portman (Rob, of Ohio) or an equally dull GOP veep (Romney doesn't want to be outshone). Cain took himself out of it when he told Piers Morgan on CNN last night that he was, in effect, pro-choice (later, of course, he tried to backtrack but pro-lifers

don't overlook these things) and Marco Rubio probably screwed his veep chances by lying about or at least misleading about when his parents were "exiled" from Cuba (turns out it was 2½ years before Castro took over, not exactly boat people). It's possible Biden will drop out due to foot in mouth disease, true, but I think for now it's unlikely.

[20111021-06](#) 07:44 GaryC Re: A Middle Way?

Dear SteveB,

In case you haven't noticed, he's not black. In fact, he's in trouble with the real blacks because he hasn't done enough for them in their opinion.

[20111021-07](#) 08:52 Pam Re: A Middle Way?

Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have an ethnic litmus test? Some African-Americans aren't light enough to get into exclusive clubs (the paper bag test), while others aren't black enough to be "authentic." Piffle. You may not much like Al Sharpton, but he sharply :-) criticized Condoleeza Rice, Colin Powell, and Herman Cain. So did Larry Wilmore (the black comedian). I think it's real progress when African-Americans don't see themselves as one block. White Americans certainly don't. Identity politics is the last vestige of tribalism.

[20111021-08](#) 09:24 GaryC Re: A Middle Way?

Dear Pam,

I agree with your sentiments. However, when a conservative black calls out a liberal black, the conservative is always branded as a house N_____. There is a big double standard. My opinion is that the democrat party treats the black vote as if they are plantation slaves. Why do 93% of blacks keep voting for the same tired race rhetoric? I have always believed that race relations would tend to be a far smaller problem in the U.S. if blacks were not so blindly beholden to democrat politicians and their black minister plantation owners.

[20111021-09](#) 09:32 SteveB Re: A Middle Way?

Dear GaryC,

You're right, but at least he said something! None of the candidates gave him any credit. No honesty. And Obama is really the Republicans' man, if you ask me, he has caved-in to them at every turn, seemingly as if not even trying.

As for McCain's senility, well, yes, that's why I didn't vote for him, though I kind of like him. He's not exactly your usual politician, sort of a throw-back.

But last election, instead of all this reasonable discourse :-) I put out a daily "Senile Act of the Day" for McCain, and every single day there was something amazing in the news that he had done or said...like there being no economic problem (let alone a monster crisis), or when he then suspended his campaign to "solve" it, then sat there and said nothing, etc., etc. Mostly, all I had to do for lots of laughs was quote some article. I think he had a few cobwebs even then, though I hope I'm as sharp as he is at his advanced age. What is he, 111 now?

[20111021-10](#) 09:35 GaryC Re: A Middle Way?

Dear SteveB,

Well said. I assume you could start a balanced commentary on Biden now. The guy is younger than McCain but is loonier and somewhat scary. I personally dream of a ticket with Biden and Palin.

What fun!

20111021-11 09:44 SteveB Un-Elect Congress in 2012

Is there really a need for potentially dangerous, maybe radical, solutions? If that's what it really takes, so be it, but I would rather first try what I'll call diplomacy, instead of all out nuclear war.

If the "silent 99%" (it might actually be a little less than that) would, instead, expend their energy, votes, and available money and simply DIS-ELECT (UN-ELECT?) EVERY SINGLE SITTING MEMBER OF CONGRESS!, they would instantly prove themselves to be the most powerful force in the history of American politics.

Maybe then the corrupt politicians and the 1% would listen. That might get their attention! Maybe this "diplomacy" would work? We try to reason with them first, in the only language they seem to understand, power and money!

And, if that doesn't work, I'm open to the dangerous stuff.

20111021-12 09:58 SteveB Re: A Middle Way?

Dear GaryC,

Ya, except Joe is funnier! I love the guy, but he scares me every time he goes out in public, especially if he talks to anyone. I'd love for them both to take a senility test and see which one would do better.

But, forget your dream ticket, buddy, it's gonna be:

CAIN & PALIN vs. OBAMA & H.CLINTON!

Shake 'n Bake vs. Rock 'n Roll!

Now that's a matchup made in heaven, and if we do what I suggested in my last email, we don't even care who wins—they'll be powerless to do anything except serve the will of the people.

I'm ready for a little more democracy...like, maybe, Egypt, at least.

20111021-13 10:16 GaryC "Charters & Minority Progress"

Dear Pam,

You might enjoy this article:

"Charters and Minority Progress" by *The Wall Street Journal*

Oct. 20, 2011, (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204485304576643461600325694.html>)

(New evidence on school reform and black student performance.)

A tragedy of American politics is that civil rights groups like the NAACP oppose education reform, even as reform's main beneficiaries are poor and minority students in places like Harlem and New Orleans. The latest evidence comes in a study showing that black students in charter schools outperform their peers in traditional public schools.

The California Charter Schools Association looked at the state's Academic Performance Index (API), which runs on a scale from 200 to 1000, and found that the average black charter student outscored the average black traditional school student by an average of 18 points over the last four years of publicly available data.

In reform hubs like Los Angeles, the charter advantage was 22 points, in Sacramento 48 points, in Oakland 51 and in San Francisco 150. In San Diego, the other major urban center, traditional schools outscored charters by an average of eight points.

The report also found that charters are disproportionately among California's best schools in educating black students. Though charters account for only 9% of California schools, they represent 39% of those in which African-American API scores exceed 800 and English and math proficiency exceed 65%. Charters serving African-American students are also less likely than traditional public schools to have low academic status coupled with low academic progress.

Crucially, the data show that charters' success isn't attributable to attracting students who are better equipped to learn from the start. "The African American populations in charter public and traditional public schools are very similar," notes the report, with the same level of parental education, similar household income and nearly identical attrition rates. The real difference is that charter schools are free of the traditional school system's union contracts and bureaucratic rules, which shorten the school day, stifle innovation and protect ineffective teachers. This autonomy doesn't guarantee charter success, but it allows the schools—and their students—to benefit from creativity, competition and accountability.

Minority parents increasingly understand this, which is why they work so hard to get their kids into charters. The report finds that 9% of California charter school students are African-American, compared to 6% of students in traditional schools.

Believe it or not, some people read this data not as an endorsement of better schools but as an indictment of reform and a sign of cultural imperialism. "We are concerned about the overrepresentation of charter schools in low-income and predominantly minority communities," wrote the NAACP, the National Action Network, the National Urban League, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition and others in a statement last year. So more good schools in poor neighborhoods are a problem? Such statements show that the NAACP is still fighting the last civil-rights war, refusing to break with its teachers union allies from the 1960s even as another generation of black children is doomed to less equal educational opportunity.

The education achievement gap remains enormous—even in charter schools, black kids in California are almost 150 API points behind their white peers. But the gap won't get any narrower as long as civil-rights leaders oppose the reforms that are doing the most to bridge it.

[20111021-14](#) 11:08 SteveG Re: A Middle Way?

If congress/administration could do something positive towards getting the economy moving, creating an atmosphere for job creation maybe we wouldn't be focusing so much on foot in the mouth diseases and gaffes.

[20111021-15](#) 13:54 Pam Re: Good-Bye

Dear DaveY,

[Reply to DaveY, who was dropping out of the group because his inbox was always full and his time limited. —SteveB]

Bye, bye, David. But before you go, let me tell you why I like this group and our conversation. I'm retired too, and suddenly my life is a lot less populated than it was. I no longer have unexpected conversations with colleagues as I walk across campus; I no longer attend university social events because all the students I taught have graduated. I worried before I retired that I'd disappear down a rabbit hole and lose contact with the world, to say nothing of reducing the number of stimulating conversations I had in an average week. But this group has my little gray cells (to quote Poirot) sparking again. I think it's great fun. Yes, the things we discuss are serious mostly, but thinking about them and talking about them is, for me anyway, fun.

[20111021-16](#) 14:04 SteveB The Defeated Obama?

I just witnessed a little live press announcement made by President Obama. I was amazed!

He was there basically to announce victory (again) in Libya and victory in Iraq (bringing the troops home by year's end). You would think he might have been jubilant, enthusiastic, proud. You'd think he might have wanted to (what a verb tense!) sound a few patriotic notes, stir the voters a little.

Instead, he read the announcement as if he were announcing the biggest defeat in American history. Either that, or when did being the President and "leader of the free world" become so utterly boring?

To me, just getting troops home, saving lives and money, is a big victory! A big deal! Why not proclaim such?

You're going to have to do better than that, Mr. President, or Obamocracy is going to end after just four years, I fear.

[20111021-17](#) 14:17 Pam Diplomacy

We need radical change (reform), but I don't want a revolution either. I doubt very much that the 99% would ever do anything violent; maybe a few extremists will throw garbage on some CEO's lawn, but I can't see burning cars and looting stores. The only source of dangerous behavior I see is the Right wing nuts. How far will they go to hold onto power?

[20111021-18](#) 14:21 Charis Re: Diplomacy

I'd say just as far as the left-side wingnuts. Hahahaha.

[20111021-19](#) 14:25 Clark Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear SteveB,

I think he's got mission-accomplished-avoidance-itis to the max. I don't know if this is good or bad, though. I thought it was a pretty dignified statement and appropriate to ending this disaster of a war that most all of us would just like to see in the rear view mirror.

[20111021-20](#) 14:26 GaryC Re: Diplomacy

Dear Charis,

Please understand, the bad people are always right wing nuts. Liberal people are never extreme and never do anything to retain their power. Please do not confuse the facts with your opinions.

[20111021-21](#) 14:44 Pam Re: "Charters & Minority Progress" (w/ reply from GaryC)

Pam: Where is this article from?

GaryC [ref: [20111021-33](#), below]: The article is from today's *WSJ*.

Pam: I used to be opposed to charter schools because I thought they undercut the public schools, but I've changed my mind. Whoever can do the best job is who should be doing it. I like labor unions in general, but you're right about the teachers' union. Protecting tenured teachers shouldn't be more important than educating children.

GaryC: You got that right sister!

Pam: Unfortunately, some people's jobs depend on the very things that hurt, or don't help, education. This is the 21st c., and we need innovation and creativity in the classroom. Teachers need to brainstorm and collaborate, and they need to be free to try new things. No Child Left Behind is a disaster. I guess the people who make up the tests like it.

GaryC: OK, SteveB is right on this one, blame George Bush!

Pam: We need to get away from the 19th c. model of educating children to be docile factory workers. We need kids who can think and solve problems and be self-reliant. If the most important thing is being quiet and staying in your seat, and if a kid gets good at that, he will undoubtedly be a passive follower rather than an autonomous learner.

GaryC: I have always told everyone that what I learned best at Purdue in Engineering and Economics was to be a critical thinker and problem solver. Going to law school also helped as it made me understand that sometimes facts are black, or white or grey or some of each. My wife taught at a private school for 30 years and their whole concept was to teach critical thinking in all areas—math, science, literature, music, art etc. BTW, she got paid about 70% of public school teachers but she loved the experience and kids she had 30 years ago still call her or write her as she was such an influence on so many lives. [Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Pam: Here's an example of what I'm talking about. I may have already told SteveB about this. When I was teaching, I stumbled upon a new pedagogy developed by a history professor at Barnard, called "Reacting to the Past." You can google it for more info., but take it from me, it's a great way to teach history. Students are assigned a role (maybe historical, maybe fictional). They then stay in character during the whole class, which is run like a game, with the students in charge. There are lots of games, and probably more in development, but the first one I did was the French Revolution. I did this with college freshmen. The class WAS the revolution in 1791. There was a King, a group of Jacobins, Girondins, Loyalists, and street crowd. We had a Danton, a Robespierre, but as I recall the rest of the characters were based on a type: a merchant, a clergyman, etc. Each student is part of a faction, and each faction has its own goals. Also, each student has a list of individual goals that remain secret until the very end. This builds in lots of competition, strategizing, forming alliances, etc. The whole thing is run with the same rules as the original National Assembly. They elect a leader, who runs the whole show. The students give speeches arguing for their position and against their opponents'. They put out a newspaper, much like the pamphlets published during the Revolution. They could stage riots. They could leave the room to talk in private. I sat in the back of the room and answered questions about the rules of the game and I kept score (points for speaking, for responding, etc.), but I didn't actually "teach." They did tons of research and studied up on what they needed to know to push their side, which included knowing what the opposition was up to as well. They did the work, because if they didn't and they tried to give a speech, the rest of the class would challenge them or they'd be obviously failing—sort of like the Republican debates. :-). There's more, but this gives you an idea.

Students are active, not passive. They depend on themselves, not an authority figure, i.e. the professor. No one goes to sleep, and no one is bored. It's so exciting the students met on their own outside of class to collaborate with their factions. It got pretty heated sometimes, as they really got into character. I could write about this all day, but my point is, there are exciting new ways to teach that produce a different kind of student than those of yore, more self-motivated, more engaged, more creative. That's what we need in the 21st. c. Politicians brought up in the old ways (like we were) don't know jack sh*t about what schools should be doing.

GaryC: Very cool. Of course, I am sure you broke a lot of union rules doing this. And, why weren't you teaching them the answers to the standardized tests? Did you have anyone acting as an anarchist like Stevie?

Pam: As you can see, education is an issue that really gets my blood pumping. I'll stop now.

20111021-22	14:45	GaryC	Responsibility
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Dear SteveB,

Several of the socialists in this group have long advocated that the RICH are not paying their fair share and that the government should TAX 150% of their earnings over \$200,000 annually.

When considering this confiscation of earnings, I often look at the consequences of such action and the responsibility of other parties in this action. I have asked this question before to the foremost exalted observer in this forum but surprising never received a response. Therefore, I would like to pose this question for serious discussion:

What is the responsibility of the poor to society?

20111021-23	14:52	Pam	Re: The Defeated Obama?
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I agree with Clark. I don't think a lot of chest-thumping is what we need at this juncture. I'm always a bit dismayed when people dance in the streets when a government falls or a dictator is killed. I understand the feeling of relief and celebration, but somehow jubilation seems trivializing. I don't know. But SteveB is right too. Obama needs to be more inspiring. He used to be famous for that. What happened?

[20111021-24](#) 14:54 Pam Re: Diplomacy

Dear GaryC,

One of my Facebook friends posted a nifty comment yesterday: "Sarcasm is what you use when what you really want to do is beat the cr*p out of people." You say some crazy stuff, GaryC, (at least in my humble opinion), but you always make me laugh.

[20111021-25](#) 15:03 Clark Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Pam,

He has a real disconnect between his stump speeches and his "presidential" pronouncements. I agree he could use more inspirational language in the latter, but he's either made a conscious decision not to go that route or he's incapable of it. Maybe he's beaten down and only gets fired up on the stump, but I suspect he just thinks low-key pronouncements are better for official policy statements. Politically, I think that's a losing proposition.

[20111021-26](#) 15:04 Pam Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

This is a better question than might at first appear.

Every citizen has responsibilities to the whole social entity that is the nation, whether it be by simply obeying the law, paying fair taxes, keeping litter off the streets. We hear so much about "trickle down" economics and a rising tide floating all boats, as if showering the top layer of society with lots of goodies will somehow translate into benefits for all. We have seen, surely by now we have seen, that this doesn't work. Let's look at it the other way around. How about a "trickle up" economy. Boost the bottom layers of society so there are more jobs, more people with money to spend, more demand to increase production, which would all lead to nice profits for the very top.

I believe it is the moral thing to do for the richest among us to shoulder more of the financial burden—not to an extreme, but something more reasonable than what we have now—but if that isn't convincing, let's consider a more pragmatic view. A healthy, stable, large, confident, secure middle class is good for the whole society, rich and poor alike. The middle class is one of the great inventions of the modern world. The more wealth is shared, the more wealth there will be to share. A rising tide can't raise boats when there's a hole in the bottom of the ocean.

[20111021-27](#) 15:07 Pam Re: The Defeated Obama?

There's "low key" and then there's flat. These new trade agreements are apparently the biggest thing since NAFTA. Obama needs to explain, with vigor, how these agreements will help Americans. I know we'll be able to sell more abroad, but as I recall it, NAFTA drained away a lot of American jobs. What's the difference between then and now? Or do I have it all wrong?

[20111021-28](#) 15:08 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

Well, I do think the founders of our nation did believe that the more wealthy have a certain responsibility to care for the lesser-advantaged. Our nation was, after all, founded (primarily) on Christian principles whether we like it or not. which is why Americans are so well-known for their volunteerism too. However, I don't think they thought the poor would take on the attitude that they were ENTITLED to be carried through life by the wealthy without making any effort of their own to improve their condition.

I say this having grown up very poor myself and I realize not all people of the underprivileged classes do this. But we are seeing it much more often now. The U.S. actually has NO EXCUSE to have poverty. There are thousands and thousands of programs and options for aid. I've seen people take too much advantage of these options (to the point of attempting to get out of working altogether) and I've seen people not want to take advantage of the aid available to them because it required a little effort on their part, or because they considered it humiliating.

I guess my personal response to this would be that we ALL have a responsibility to society, no matter what our background or current circumstances are. Poverty is not an excuse to ignore our moral duties—to ourselves, our families, or others. I remit to my previous message in which I asked a similar question: is no one responsible for themselves and their own actions anymore?

I am American but I was brought up overseas. My mom is a (legal) immigrant. She always taught me that the phrases "the American dream" and "the U.S. is a land of equal opportunity" are not meant in the socialist/communist way. They do not mean we MUST or WILL all have exactly the same amount of anything. They do not mean the government or anyone else has any obligation to GIVE us the same as everyone else has.

They simply mean we should ideally all have equal opportunity to work hard and make effort to achieve something (defined as: whatever your own "American dream"—personal goals for yourself—might be).

[20111021-29](#) 15:11 Charis Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Pam,

Not to mention that NAFTA is now what most of Latin America is using to blame America for the entire world's economic woes.

[20111021-30](#) 15:15 Pam Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Charis,

I need to know more about this.

[20111021-31](#) 15:22 Pam Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC and SteveB,

I've got to go make dinner, but I want to say one more thing. WHY do the very poor have to pay at least some tax, just to "have some skin in the game."? When I was a struggling grad student with no husband and three kids, I got money back from the govt.—the earned income credit. I still had to pay state and sales taxes, but that earned income credit sure came in handy, especially at the end of the month.

[20111021-32](#) 15:24 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

Good question. [But since I'm answering the very same question for the THIRD time, I grow weary of it. I also answered it on Feb. 24 ([20110224-02](#)) and on Mar. 29 ([20110329-02](#)), also see below ([20111021-35](#)). Surely these represent a pretty conscientious attempt to answer the, for some reason, oft-repeated question. —SteveB]

I did answer that question before and can prove it. I said it is to work (vital for society, even the rich). It is to consume (vital for society, even the rich).

And I will add to that now that their responsibility is also to lick the boots of the rich and feed their egos by consuming Rupert Murdoch publications and watching Fox News.

But what is their responsibility to society when society has destroyed the lives of the lower classes? When there are no jobs to make work and consumption possible for huge numbers of people? (All the more reason why I don't want unhappy illegal aliens here.) Then, i.e., now, I am afraid you (will) see that their responsibility is to revolutionize that society and establish a new order, such as we see being done in many places in the world today.

Arab Spring Egypt had about the same unemployment rate as the U.S. does now. They were only slightly more unhappy, according to the polls. I kept pointing this out before the Occupy Wall Street movement started. Listen to Pam, fer cryin' out loud! :-)

Do you suppose their responsibility is to pay the taxes of the rich? Though I do agree with, I think it was Charis, that all citizens should pay at least a tiny bit of federal taxes, unless destitute. just as I think everyone who wants to see a doctor or go to a hospital should have a small co-pay, unless destitute.

Maybe their responsibility is to "get out of Dodge" or go back to Africa. What the hell is it you could possibly want them to do? Re-educate themselves? Sell themselves into slavery? I don't exactly get it. Should they turn themselves in and go to debtors' prison? Declare bankruptcy? Suicide? What?

[20111021-33](#) 15:29 GaryC Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"

Dear Pam [ref: [20111021-21](#), above],

OMG A reasoned answer from one of the liberals. See my comments [above] in your text.

BTW, the reason I think public schools are such a failure is that poor kids are hurt the most by the fact that the unions and the NAACP are adamantly opposed to reform. They state it's all about the kids but, it's all about protecting incompetent teachers and antiquated rules.

[20111021-34](#) 15:32 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

I don't think that was GaryC's point, at least I didn't understand it that way. I think everyone has some responsibility to themselves and others no matter how much or little they have. Even the destitute have TIME (it's what they have the most of, actually). I should know, I've lived near destitute most of my childhood (yes, we're talking kneeling down and praying desperately for food), but we always had time and a way to help others somehow. We never turned anyone away.

I don't really understand your statement that "society has destroyed the lives of the lower classes". As a member of the lower class (not even the middle class) most of my life, it never occurred to me to blame the wealthy for my condition. I'm not exonerating the ruling party powers for the poor decisions they've made but in the U.S. everyone has a voice and a vote no matter who wealthy or poor they are. Now, if people chose not to VOICE their dissent until recently, wasn't that also of their own volition?

[20111021-35](#) 15:41 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

The question only makes sense to me in terms of economics. I agree even the poor should help others and always try to get up one more time. They should also obey the laws, unlike the Wall Street bankers.

What I mean by lives being destroyed by society is all the jobs that are now missing. Not actually the workers fault. It just costs more to be poor in America than most places on Earth, or to be rich. Millions of good manufacturing jobs have left the U.S. to China, NAFTA countries, etc. All the free trade has been a terrible thing for American workers.

So what I take it Gary is asking about is, OK, we have people who are poor. They exist. Maybe they have jobs, maybe not, but they are at least below the poverty line. Now, what should they be doing for society.

I think he wants to bleed them for more money. Am I wrong? If so, what does he want with them? Ahh....military service! Indentured servitude in India! Let's get them poor folks crackin', by gum!

[20111021-36](#) 15:42 Pam Re: Responsibility

And don't forget, it's not just the poor, uneducated, lazy types who are in trouble. I know quite a few middle-aged, formerly employed, formerly middle-class people who are struggling to find work or to make it on a part-time salary with no benefits. These people, who are my friends, are not lazy or trying to game the system. They are desperate and afraid. There are five applicants for every job opening in America. I know that in academic, there are usually HUNDREDS of applicants for a single faculty position, usually one without tenure or a large salary. Unless you're a famous literary critic or something, choosing a life in academia is middle-middle-class at best. And there are LOTS of adjunct and part-time teachers who barely get by working at several schools at the same time. I've done that, and believe me, a lazy person couldn't do it. You may not think so, but I think it is tragic that a young person can spend four to ten years getting an advanced degree and go into crippling debt in the process only to be told there might be a one-year position in Podunk, SD, if they're lucky enough to get it.

I don't know enough about the truly impoverished to be able to say whether the drain on society caused by the underclass is substantial. I would never defend a healthy person who simply refused to work. (I could talk about that too if I were in a confessional mood.) But a 55-yr. old, who has worked for the same company for twenty years, then gets let go, breaks my heart.

[20111021-37](#) 15:44 Charis Re: The Defeated Obama?

Pam, basically word from Mexico to Argentina is that capitalism is to blame for all the economic woes of the world, that the U.S. is an evil giant that purposely used agreements such as NAFTA to suck other countries dry, that NAFTA benefited ONLY Americans, and that Americans purposely used agreements such as NAFTA to purposely cheat South Americans out of their natural resources, money, and livelihoods. Today, the same South Americans that willfully entered into these agreements blame their past non-socialist governments (i.e. their past capitalist governments) for entering into trade agreements with the U.S. that gave the U.S. all the advantage and left none of the benefits in South America.

This is the current wildly-popular rhetoric of presidents such as Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Evo Morales of Bolivia, Humala of Perú, Christina of Argentina, Correa of Ecuador, Brazil's new president, the president of Honduras, the president of Nicaragua, and others, all of whom are left-wing, some of whom are very near to installing themselves as dictators. It all began with big-daddy Fidel Castro of Cuba and spread like wildfire. It's why in the past 8 years more and more South American countries are electing left-wing socialist leaders now. The typical rhetoric of these leaders is that the U.S. is evil, that the U.S. is to completely and fully responsible for all the poverty in South America, and that the U.S. is the Enemy Numero Uno. The general belief throughout South America today, is that the U.S. uses it's "democracy" and "capitalism" and "power" disguised as "U.S. aid" to stick its nose in everyone's business and start wars all over the world, and that it does this for one reason and one reason only—to take over other nation's natural resources. Americans are seen as such as excessive consumer of any and all the world's resources, that America today is also being blamed for the entire planet's pollution and climate change. Now, on the one hand, it's easy to see why people believe this so readily. Americans are the world's biggest consumers, and are the most wasteful people on the planet (sorry don't take offense, I'm American too, let's just be real and admit it). But on the other, these countries are sort of like what some of the people on this forum want us to believe—they feel they have absolutely NO responsibility for their own circumstances.

[20111021-38](#) 15:48 GaryC Re: The Defeated Obama?

Ladies and gents: Obama CANNOT be enthusiastic about these trade agreements because it will p*ss off his union masters. This is not rocket science.

[20111021-39](#) 15:52 Pam Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"

Dear GaryC,

You're right. Most of life falls in the grey zone, I find. It's the young who see things in black and white. Once you're been around a while, you know nothing is ever quite as simple as it appears to be.

I was teaching in a university in an Honors Program, so experimentation was encouraged. This was unique within the larger university, where things go on pretty much as usual. Which a lot of the time is just fine. There was no standardized test, but the truth is the students learned so much more through "Reacting" than they ever would reading a textbook and memorizing dates. We had no textbook, rather a collection of primary sources. The kids read the actual articles Danton or whoever in fact wrote. They also read Edmund Burke's essay on the French Revolution; he was against it, even though he supported the American one.

I don't dismiss the importance of tests, but I see their main purpose as a reason/excuse to study hard and really bore in on the material. I've always thought it strange that I could teach a class, then test the kids on what I was pretty sure they would know. If I had really taught them well, they should be able to do well on ANY test on the same material. But that's in an ideal world. The GRE and comprehensive exams at the end of graduate study come close.

I can relate to your wife. I LOVED teaching.

[20111021-40](#) 15:53 GaryC Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Charis,

Well played. And, now China is going into these countries and making the same deal with the socialists and its ok.

[20111021-41](#) 15:57 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

But you see, that's exactly my point. I grew up poor most of my life but I never felt there was nothing I could do—there was always something. As long as my tongue and lips work I can speak out for myself and others. As long as my hands are healthy I can voice my dissent in writing. I just see a lot of people getting immediately defeated and not doing ANYTHING about their condition. Sheesh, if I had just sat there waiting for someone to pluck me out of my misery, I'd still be there too. You have to be willing to make SOME effort for yourself. I just think sometimes that maybe our definition of poverty in the U.S. is so different from other countries. I mean when I think "poverty" in South American or African terms, I suddenly don't feel like I was ever impoverished.

I can't speak for GaryC, but when I think about responsibility I don't only think about our present circumstances. I also think about what put us into those circumstances. Some people never had it better, but for those who did and now see their economies being reduces, I'd have to ask: Did we save while we could? Did we consume more than we needed to when we did have money? Did we make wise choices while we could? Did we do anything to change the laws to favor the poor before we also became poor? Or are we only voicing our dissent now that we've lost our non-poverty status? Hmmmm?

[20111021-42](#) 15:58 GaryC Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"

Dear Pam,

You must have been a damn good teacher. When I was teaching at Purdue I had three fraternity brothers in class and several pretty young things to impress. I taught introductory economics but tried to use common everyday experiences to teach the law of supply and demand or diminishing returns. For example, the 12th beer you pounded has less affect than

the first beer you pounded. Out of 13 sections, I had the highest two. I think it was because I made it fun. BTW I was a democrat liberal at the time.

[20111021-43](#) 16:02 Charis Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear GaryC,

Right you are. That is exactly what formerly-socialist and now full-blast capitalist China is doing. It's taking advantage of the hate toward Americans to gallop in on a white horse and "save the day". Unfortunately, these same socialist dicta—sorry "presidents" are signing the same types of agreements with China that they signed with the U.S.—and are even forming organizations like MERCOSUR and UNASUR (not unlike the European Union) to enter into NAFTA-style agreements all over again. But you see it's not the U.S.—it's CHINA and China still "bills itself" as a socialist country—so there is no way China would rip them off like the U.S. did—right? That's the reasoning, anyway. Pfffffffffff.

[20111021-44](#) 16:05 Pam Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Charis and GaryC,

I've never been to Latin America, and I don't claim to know much about it, but it seems inevitable that our western hemisphere could/should band together more than we do—not like the Eurozone maybe, but something less antagonistic.

I'm not sure I quite understand your point of view here. You don't like all the socialists who are in power in So. America, but the capitalists that cooperated/collaborated with the Americans are bad too? I agree that America has exploited the resources of poorer nations in South America, Asia, and Africa. I always used to talk to my students about the workers in Mexican factories who make the tee shirts that we buy so cheaply at the GAP. Our ten- or twenty-dollar shirts are possible because Mexican workers are paid a pittance. This is a huge subject, and I think I won't dig any deeper for the moment. But any enlightenment anyone can send my way will be greatly appreciated.

[20111021-45](#) 16:07 Charis Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Pam,

No, I'm not saying that is my opinion. I'm explaining that that's the twisted incongruent reasoning of South Americans today.

[20111021-46](#) 16:14 SteveB Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Charis,

I love my circumstances and I am completely responsible! :-)

[20111021-47](#) 16:22 Art Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

I think maybe Cain is a plant by the Koch brothers to try to take some presume off the obvious racist nature of the tea baggers and now the Republican party. We know he has been in bed with them for years. All he is really doing is traveling on a book selling tour. He has done zero study on foreign affairs and his tax plan is really just a pizza ad.

But, horror of horrors, suddenly he has leaped ahead and might possibly actually win the nomination. HOW DID THAT HAPPEN???? I can see the Koch brothers rolling over in the coffins that they climb into every morning. They'll find a way to get him out of the picture. How's that for a conspiracy theory?

[20111021-48](#) 16:28 Clark Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

Dear Art,

Makes as much or more sense than anything Cain has ever said.

[20111021-49](#) 16:28 Art Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear SteveB and Clark,

Maybe he should fly out to an aircraft carrier and wear a flight jacket? Iraq was a senseless tragedy and Libya by contrast a masterful act of diplomacy but no heroic military act. I don't feel much like chest thumping either.

[20111021-50](#) 16:33 Art Re: The Defeated Obama?

Trouble is he's an intelligent man and he keeps forgetting what he's dealing with. Like you Pam I cannot see celebrating the death of anyone. I can see killing them easily but never being happy about it.

[20111021-51](#) 16:37 GaryC Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

Well said!

[20111021-52](#) 16:42 GaryC Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

How do you know I was talking about you?

Now that you have spewed your venom and the hatred of anyone successful, please use your critical thinking skills and wonderful writing skills to give a reasoned answer.

[20111021-53](#) 16:44 Pam Re: "Charters & Minority Progress"

Dear GaryC,

Oh, my God, what happened? And you got off to such a good start! ;-)

[20111021-54](#) 16:45 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

I'm sort of wondering what you think of Winston Churchill? I mean, not that you knew him personally, but what is your general opinion of the guy?

[20111021-55](#) 16:47 DaveY Good-Bye

You guys have too much free time on your hands. I am retired living in Tucson, but don't have time to spend every hour of every day on the internet. I am way too busy for that.

[20111021-56](#) 16:48 Art Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

I'll be glad to help you, if you need it, with some historical references—think fat alcoholic. Good writer though.

Winston Churchill did once say the biggest argument against a democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter.

[20111021-57](#) 16:48 Pam Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

Dear Art,

I'd say you're right on target.

[20111021-58](#) 16:55 Pam Re: Responsibility

Dear Art and Charis,

Love it! Didn't he also say that democracy is messy and inefficient, but it's the best system mankind has yet devised?

[20111021-59](#) 17:00 DaveY Re: Good-Bye

Dear Pam,

First of all, if you enjoy this type of diatribe, then by all means continue. Everyone should be able to choose how they occupy their retirement years. I am also a retired college professor but I prefer to occupy my time by playing tennis, enjoying the Arizona sunshine, partying with my neighbors, and traveling this beautiful country of ours. I do maintain contact with former colleagues and a few students, but since my subject was Human Sexuality, we don't discuss academic subjects much, just personal lives and goals. I certainly do not miss the faculty meetings and university socials. Regarding the "fun" banter in these emails, I don't believe the name-calling I have observed in some is necessary to make a point. But again, if this is something you enjoy, then by all means continue. I am just opting out.

[20111021-60](#) 17:02 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

I work—about 18 hours a day. But I'm taking little moments of time between other stuff cuz this is very stimulating—I was about to give up on Americans being politically involved—I've always seen them so apathetic—but these conversations are actually giving me some hope for our country. See the thing I like about SteveB is we can have these heated debates and a week from now we'll be seated at an expat dinner thoroughly enjoying ourselves—probably discussing other things like, what the heck is that stuff floating around in our *pipían de gallina*... (SteveB that's a hint on next week's menu by the way) k-k-k-k-k

[20111021-61](#) 17:53 SteveB Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear Clark and Art,

Ya, I guess I didn't mean so much that attitude (the Bush thing was yukkie), humble is OK, and maybe that's all he was trying for. And war is a serious, not a gleeful, business.

But maybe because we wanted to leave more troops longer but Iraq wouldn't agree to our terms (?), he seemed so...well, defeated...bored...try to watch a little of it if you can.

But no big deal, really...just wish he'd stand up and lead!

[20111021-62](#) 17:59 GaryC Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear SteveB,

He was leading alright, from behind. just like a good community organizer is trained to do.

[20111021-63](#) 18:05 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

And why would I direct those things toward myself? I'm actually not really in the group of people I seek to protect and in whose interest we should all take an interest or this country ain't gonna work.

None of this is venom. I flat out don't get the question.

If we're talking about the economics of the rich paying more taxes ("their fair share")—which we were—and we're talking about the debt the rich owe to society...to our schools, culture, government, etc., and their responsibilities to that society which essentially allowed them to get rich.

Rightfully so! More power to them! But they cannot be without responsibility (especially toward the poor, especially if they have helped create those poor by closing factories, etc.) and that was the subject.

So you turned it around and asked what was the responsibility of the poor. I don't know what you could possibly have been getting at both times you asked it. I can only assume we're talking about economics and that is the basis on which I answered the question.

I've already said all citizens should pay at least a little tax, just to give them a little ownership of the process.

So end the mystery already! If the responsibility of the poor is not as I have stated it (see below, maybe minus the boot licking), then what is this mysterious economic responsibility of the poor to society? I'm at a total loss.

[20111021-64](#) 18:09 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear Pam,

Pam I had a (for me) brilliant idea today to solve this problem and also expand our horizons a little. I think you're going to love it. I'll write the long email tonight or tomorrow morning. You are a wonderful friend! I'm treasuring what we've discovered too.

[20111021-65](#) 18:14 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Charis,

That is so nice of you. You are a good friend. Thank you so much for your participation!

Today I got an idea that will cut our email traffic, expand our circle, and make everything easier and better for our little group.

I'll write the long email and send it to you tonight or tomorrow morning. Thanks again. I'm enjoying reading your stuff and really learning a lot from everyone. A lot of smart people, I think. I like having all sides too, a lot!

P.S. Winston Churchill is one of my heroes.

[20111021-66](#) 18:16 Charis Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

Looking forward to hearing your idea. I like Winston Churchill cuz he said "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." :-) See you later!

[20111021-67](#) 18:19 Pam Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

Yaaaay!

[20111021-68](#) 18:23 SteveB Re: Good-Bye

Dear DaveY,

No problem. Happy you listened for a while. I'll get you off the list, but emails will take a while to stop.

Thinking about this problem today...there do get to be a lot of emails, but I think the issues, the discussion, and the ideas are important. We're in deep trouble in America and it needs our help. And you know a lot of the people in the group. But I'm thinking of gathering all the input from the group, compiling it by thread and sending out just email per day to everyone who wants it. That should work better. It's also something that could be easily forwarded and allow the group to grow...maybe into a movement...haha.

But I won't put you on that list unless you want.

How's the weather there now? I was lucky enough several years ago to work in Phoenix on a project for about 6 months. I loved it! And had an opportunity to explore a lot of the countryside. Seems like I ran into more than my fair share of rattlers, but never had a real problem, as long as you don't count attacks of fear. :-)

But Sedona, the Grand Canyon, Spirit Valley, the gold mines, Frank Lloyd Wright, the desert itself. Loved it!

[20111021-69](#) 18:26 SteveB Re: The Defeated Obama?

Dear GaryC,

I have to admit it seems sometimes like he never did leave that behind. I thought that, having been in Congress, he would know a little about actually dealing with Congress, but like Clinton, he has gotten better cooperation from the Republicans than he has his own party. (Just a bit of an exaggeration, not much.)

[20111021-70](#) 18:32 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC and Pam,

It seems like a small price to pay in a compromise to extract a tax increase from the rich, as they kick and scream all the way to their yachts and summer homes.

Maybe we want everyone to pay at least a dollar so they can see who the real boss man is, because the government can make them do it? There, take that, you lackey.

[20111021-71](#) 20:55 SteveB Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear "Group" (for want of a better name, see below),

Don't try to duck your head. You know who you are. You are the folks who have taken the trouble to make at least my life more interesting lately. You are the writers of our forum. I have an idea that I wanted y'all to think about and let me know if you're willing to try an experiment to improve things, if not in the world, at least right here and now.

My idea concerns this format we have been sort of forced to use...my idea...and my apologies for its limitations. Pam and I have discussed turning it into a blog (she writes a very interesting one), but I have my doubts. One thing I like about the emails is the same thing internet businesses like about them, they're harder to avoid than a webpage or a blog. You don't have to go to it. It comes to you. This can be both powerful and annoying. But if it's from someone you know, at least a little, even if it's just a forwarded message, you're inclined to look at it. Since I want to affect opinions and actions, just as the merchants do, I like the sort of in-your-face nature of emails. Plus you have the huge tradition of everyone on the internet forwarding interesting emails they receive. You can forward someone a link too, but they might never open it.

Your jobs would be to just keep doing what you've been doing—contribute witty, even brilliant, op-ed pieces concerning our topics (more on that in a minute). Your emails could include links to articles, etc., or articles themselves, or quotes. Please attribute or I won't be able to include in the publication. You would still send these pieces or whatever you want to anyone you want, including people in this existing group. We already have a lot of auxiliary traffic going one-on-one beside the main stream. This is good and can be kept going.

But instead of sending what you want "published" to the entire group, you would just send it to me or copy me, at this email address or, probably, one based on the name and purpose of the group (more in a minute). Once a day, I will cut and paste everything that has been sent into one new email organized by threads, with fresh contributions followed by reader comments on previous contributions. If your email is a reply to someone else and you copy me, I'll know what it's in reply to, in most cases, and will make those kinds of things clear in the "publication" (I hope). Then I'll send that out to everyone in this group and to additional people who request to be on the mailing list or already are—our dear readers.

This way everyone who wants will receive just one email per day and everyone will be happy(ier). When you send me your first contribution or comment, you will grant me permission to publish it in the email newsletter (for want of a better term), until you might choose to rescind it anytime in the future. You will need to choose a user name, because your real name and your email address will not show up in the publication. Only your user name. I will send the emails to the group using blind copy. This will reduce the number of emails for all.

Actually for this charter group, we could take the best user names for ourselves because we're early birds, founding members—SteveB, SteveG, Pam, Dale, GaryC, GaryF, Mark, Mary, Larry, Jim, Dennis, Clark, Dick, Bill, Ben, Art, Charis. These names would make it simple for all of us to easily discern the writer when we read their stuff, or if you prefer something special, just let me know.

At the same time, anyone in the group can keep sending and receiving as many emails as they want to/from other group members. If you want these exchanges in the FottM Newsletter, and you probably do, just copy me too.

Another huge advantage, is that this our Newsletter will be something that could easily be forwarded to other people you think would want to read it. I will always have instructions for getting on the list. People will join. More will contribute. More will send it to other people they know, etc., etc., until it gets to Kevin Bacon.

If we could reach more and more people with a rational discussion of how to arrive at practical solutions to our problems, directed especially toward the next elections (for now), we might be able to make some kind of difference. At least, it might be worth a try. At least we might all keep learning stuff while we entertain each other. I'm willing. What do you think?

Now, the big question. What would be our exact purpose and our name. Forget anything with "change", Obomacracry messed that up for us.

First, our issues, our topics, our cause(s), our raison d'être. Below are the ones I remember coming up in our discussions. Maybe you have some more. Do we tackle all of them or just some or find the best common element? I'm sure I'm forgetting some or not stating some so well. It seems like we would be more effective the more focused we could be on one thing. But I really want to keep discussing all these things and they all have to do with the state of America in 2011 and forward.

Our angle on things would be that we are a growing group of fairly ordinary citizens (except GaryC) from the practical middle, seeking solutions to Americas problems, particularly via the 2012 elections and beyond.

I want us to be practical and bipartisan, as much as possible, but we need to focus on consensus building and finding real answers and solutions, even if that is something as simple as the truth or falsehood of some politician's utterance. Hopefully, it could be something as grand as how to get the government functioning again.

We don't have to make these decisions right away. We can change immediately to the email newsletter format, then continue to work on causes and names. In fact, if you start sending stuff to me, I'll get the first issue out Sunday. Normally I'll send them out the night of the same day, but I want to allow a little extra time at first.

Here are the issues I remember best. What am I missing you'd like to see? (I wonder if almost all these things are really about restoring the American Dream as a real possibility?)

1. Campaign finance reform (my favorite)
2. Un-elect all members of Congress (my second favorite)
3. "Free" trade
4. Taxes
5. Education (at all levels)
6. Amending the Constitution
7. The influence of big money on politics
8. Term limits
9. Lobbying & lobbyists
10. Regulation (by government)
11. Jobs—their loss & how to regain
12. A third party
13. The 2012 candidates (one I think needs to be in there)
14. Present and recent Administrations
15. Affordable healthcare (incl. insurance, rising costs, socialization, Medicare, Obamacare)
16. Class vs. class in America
17. Energy
18. Social Security & retirement in general
19. Welfare
20. Immigration, legal and illegal
21. Deficit spending and budget cuts
22. War, the wars
23. Voting and election issues (will come up next year)
24. Capitalism
25. American small business
26. World markets, the housing bubble, and bailout
27. China, Europe, etc.

The following are group names I have toyed with. I'm sure you'll come up with better ones. (For the most part, google does not show these as taken already, just thinking out loud here.)

1. THE ALLIANCE OF THE MIDDLE
2. HAVE YOUR SAY
3. THE ALLIANCE TO RESTORE THE AMERICAN DREAM (maybe close to what I'm trying to get at)
4. THE ALLIANCE SEEKING AGREEMENT IN AMERICA
5. THE ALLIANCE SEEKING SOLUTIONS
6. ALLIANCE TO PROMOTE GOOD GOVERNMENT (similar to existing group, no pizzazz)
7. ALLIANCE FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE
8. ORGANIZATION FOR A FUTURE AMERICA
9. PEOPLE FOR AMERICA'S FUTURE
10. THE WORRIED CITIZENS ALLIANCE
11. THE PEOPLE'S ALLIANCE
12. JUST ASK HOOSIERS (because of many connections to Indiana)
13. RETAKE AMERICA
14. THE ALLIANCE TO RETAKE AMERICA

15. CITIZENS OF THE MIDDLE
16. CITIZENS TO REMAKE AMERICA
17. CITIZENS FOR PRACTICAL POLITICS
18. THE ALLIANCE FOR PRACTICAL POLITICS

What do you think? For both topics and a name of our group (soon to be a powerful PAC). Early next year I would like to put all the Newsletters on a website and see what else might be possible.

Remember, you can start "publishing" your comments the new way effective immediately. Just send to me only or copy me if it has to do with our group's issues. I'll get everything published the new way, starting on Sunday, so we can immediately reduce everyone's email. Thank you for all your thoughts and contributions.

[20111021-72](#) 22:15 GaryC Re: Responsibility

Dear SteveB,

Really? I hope you are kidding because I am offended by this remark. You know nothing of the charity I give, the work I do for charities or family members, the jobs I have given to students, or the jobs I have created for the poor. Just because I am RICH does not mean I am not generous. In fact, the RICH are far more generous with their time and money than are the effete liberals you champion. Those are the facts!

Steve: I appreciate your comments, however unfounded, because it makes me consider my position on certain items. I even agree with many of your positions. After all, for the most part, we both want less government and better government. But never ever call into question a person's feeling for the disadvantaged just because they have a different way of helping instead of having the government steal money from them to make politicians look better. I will respond to the group in a different email as this is private.

[See "from SteveB" [20111021-35](#) and [20111021-70](#), I guess. —SteveB]

[20111021-73](#) 22:38 Charis Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I can make this easy for you. I can set up a "blog-style discussion page" on my website for you. It can be a password protected private page just for our group. You can use the form to start your discussions on each subject listed below. Each time a person writes in a response or comment they have the option to "be notified" by email when someone else has responded to their comments—they can also choose to simply not be notified, therefore not receiving any emails and they can just visit the page if and when they want to. No one else on my site would know about this page. It would not be connected to any of my site pages.

[20111021-74](#) 22:41 Charis Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

It would look something like this: www.boliviabella.com/bolivia-travel-forum.html.

See all the blue links below the form? Each is a new subject.

[20111021-75](#) 22:45 Charis Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I like "have your say"—it's simple, direct, and not motivated by either left or right political inclinations—also leaves your group open to anything else you'd like to discuss in the future...

20111022-01 01:45 Ben Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

You really should move this to a publicly accessible website. That would enable the Group to access it any time but would avoid the increasingly awesome volume of email. It would also allow your forum to grow, and perhaps for its ideas and feelings to be viewed by others who might be interested. Many, many others. There is a lot of good material here, and many good ideas, but to try and go back and find any of it would be a mess.

Steve: you need a BLOG. There are many free blog packages available; I'd suggest Linux as a platform. Or OSX, of course; it's tightened down pretty well, is reasonably well documented, very standardized, largely open-source, and there are many forums—as there are with Linux. Windows on an open internet socket is getting to be just a big f*cking bulls eye these days. Of course, you have more free time than most, so if Windows is comfy, well, there is certainly plenty of support and documentation available there, too. But you really need a real blog, and more visibility.

This blog idea is weird, though, because I saw that 50% of my email traffic on this account was from you, directly from you, and while I love to read them all... well, I had hit reply and written the first three paragraphs above BEFORE I read the body of that to which I was replying, and realized that your subject was the very idea I had—truly independently—crystallize in my own mind before I knew it had in yours just a few hours before. That's real.

Here's new elaboration, AFTER realizing our common train of thought: what you are doing now is a serial broadcast. What you COULD be doing is giving your group DMA. And new folks can quickly scan MUCH more content MUCH faster in a good blog format; dealing with emails is really, really cumbersome, if you are actually interested in a very long thread.

There are even free blogs available, probably more than I know about. My daughter has a fun blog on blogspot.com where she chronicles, with good wit, her adventures at school in London and the Old World at large.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Blogspot's layout and capabilities may not be suitable for a more conversational and interactive group, but there are many free ones, and there are open source programs if you want to roll your own.

I really think you could have quite a following, and even real impact. Your fans seem to be fairly diverse. Tom _____, by the way, is my good buddy here in Austin that fanned my interest in shooting and now, reloading; he's about my age, a very bright, kind, thoughtful guy, Masters in biology, did some real interesting field work, and then went into the army. He was a Green Beret in the Viet Nam conflict, and Special Operations of one flavor or another thereafter. You know: days in a hole, waiting, eating bugs, many firefights and parachute drops... I suppose he generally votes Republican, but he is a bright sucker who really understands issues on many more levels than your average Joe. He's not a frequent contributor, but he seems always to be up on what your thread is doing.

[Personal content removed. —SteveB]

Blog, SteveB. Blog!

20111022-02 05:23 Pam Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

Gosh, you're really taking it up a notch. I can't believe you want to do all this extra work—it seems like work to me. I appreciate your enthusiasm, truly.

You're waiting for the "but," so here it is. I LIKE getting lots of emails. I also like it that we can respond to something right away, not have to wait a day for a response or for the conversation to continue. I like our spontaneity. What we have now also allows for private side comments in more or less real time. If you could somehow keep a record of our conversations for "publication" in, say, a monthly digest, along with what we have now, I think that would be great. I've been thinking about what a shame it is that all this good discussion is getting lost in the cyber sphere. If we could keep the spontaneity and also have a record to share more widely, I think that would be great. I don't want just one email a

day. I like stringing them out as they come in. I can choose when to jump in or jump out. Also, re. the name. I like "Have Your Say." It's completely neutral, and I think that's what we're going for, so as to be as inclusive as possible. I, for one, think we really have something good going here. I just hope it continues and doesn't poop out. There are so many things we could talk about. I feel like I have a whole new group of friends—even GaryC.

20111022-03 08:03 SteveB Re: Responsibility

Dear GaryC,

No insult intended at all, my comments are obviously sarcasm to match yours, my friend, nor do I think of you as part of the rich, nor am I talking about your feelings for the poor, except maybe in this one way of taxes.

Funny you place me in the poor group in your previous email... They are my brothers, but so are the misguided rich, but I never think in terms of classes really. It just doesn't really occur to me at any gut level. That's one reason why I'm upset by all this class strife going on now. I don't like to see it.

Maybe it's because we see the facts differently. To me, it's a fact that one of the reasons America is in trouble is because taxes are too low. I know you don't believe this, but there is enough evidence and enough serious people who believe this that it does not work to simply try to joke and name call it away. At least at this moment, we need to find additional tax revenue without sinking the economy.

Since the government needs money and the rich don't want to pay more taxes (Who does? But the country's in trouble.) , somebody would have to. Who else? The middle class and the poor. This is the position you have actively supported. I believe it is a position that would hurt the poor and middle classes at a time it cannot be allowed to happen or there goes the economy over the Bush cliff. And lo and behold, the proposals from the Republican candidates are perfectly consistent with this and with what you've been arguing for a long time now.

You still, after three answers from me have not been able to tell what this economic responsibility of the poor is other than what I've mentioned. It is still a mystery to me and, based on all your previous comments, since even ultra conservative Republicans admit we need more money from somewhere and are actively seeking it, I assumed that you must want more taxes from this group just as your fellow party members do. So they have an obligation to pay taxes and to vote, which I mentioned the first time around. You never responded so I had to keep guessing. :-)

Tell me how I have the responsibilities of the poor wrong. I know nothing of you and the poor other than there it touches this one issue of your question and taxes. Just as I don't place you in a class, I would never presume to know your relationships or aid. I'm sorry if I implied that.

Maybe all the communist, socialist, druggie name calling doesn't help, to be perfectly honest.

You and Mary get it wrong because of your passion for the right. I insult politicians and political forces only, not private individuals, though private individuals can take offense. That is never my intent. My intent is always, quite honestly, to find the truth and help it spread and prevail.

I really appreciate your great help on this road!

20111022-04 08:48 SteveB Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear Group,

It would mainly be cutting and pasting. Charis and Ben are helping me already. They have more of a traditional Blog in mind, which would also satisfy what Pam has talked about..a log or record. I still have everything going back to the run up to the 2008 election. I've got some really wild, radical right wing stuff from those days that makes very interesting reading. So we should have a website or blog page.

But I, as Pam, like the email idea too. Personally, I like the idea of one a day and I know we'll keep more readers if we do that. But I don't want to limit in any way the conversational advantages we enjoy now. So keep doing that all you want, just not published to the whole group. Copy me on what you send. Once a day I'll add these to the Blog and concoct the

email.

So far, Charis and Pam both like "Have Your Say". The BBC has a "Have Your Say" on the radio or TV, but that's completely different, so it should work.

Other ideas? Names. We do all topics or specialize? One topic from the news today that I didn't include is "Global Warming". I left off "Abortion" because I'm not sure we can have a productive conversation on that subject. Our goal is bipartisan consensus from all sides of the middle... Think hard, *mi colegas*.

20111022-05 09:56 SteveG Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear SteveB,

I like the idea of the emails going to a monthly digest.

There are some folks who have not participated, so maybe an effort to see who wants to continue might be in order.

20111022-06 10:17 Dale "The Employee Rights Act"

Here is some responsible legislation for workers rights. This must be what OWS is seeking.

"The Employee Rights Act" by Sen. Orin Hatch and Rep. Tim Scott, TownHall.com

Sept. 13, 2011 (http://townhall.com/columnists/orrinhatch/2011/09/13/the_employee_rights_act)

(Aug. 2, 2011, S. 1507, in Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee)

America's laws have long recognized the need to protect workers from abuse. In 1935, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), which ensured that employees would have the right join a union or to refrain from doing so—free of harassment or intimidation.

In 1959, after a numerous hearings examining corruption within the labor movement, Congress passed the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) in an effort to bolster self-governance, transparency, and democracy within unions.

But, since that time, progress for workers' rights has stalled.

As Big Labor and employers continue their ongoing power struggles, the rights of individual workers are far too often lost in the shuffle. And, as we've seen under the Obama Administration, legal protections for workers who may oppose unionization can be easily swept aside by ideological bureaucrats.

For these reasons, we've introduced the Employee Rights Act, a bicameral, pro-worker piece of legislation to bolster democracy in the workplace.

First, the Employee Rights Act will require a secret ballot vote in all union elections.

According to the National Labor Relations Board, nearly 40 percent of all unions certified in 2009 did not have to go through an election. Presumably, most of these unions were certified through a combination of card checks and decisions by employers to accept the union without demanding a vote.

Over the years, we've all heard the troubling accounts of unions obtaining signatures through deception and intimidation. And, we've all heard about union organizing campaigns and boycotts that have all but forced employers to give up their right to demand a secret ballot vote. Under the Employee Rights Act, that right will belong to the employees, and it will be guaranteed.

While requiring these votes is important, it is only the first step in restoring democracy in America's workforce. The vast majority of current union members more than 90 percent according to some estimates never had an opportunity to vote for their union, neither by card nor by ballot. They simply accepted jobs at workplaces that were already unionized and, in many cases, they were forced to begin paying dues as a condition of employment.

The Employee Rights Act will give millions of workers their first opportunity to vote on whether to be part of a union. Under the bill, instead of a one-time vote followed by mandatory union representation in near-perpetuity, unions will stand for reelection by secret ballot every three years.

In addition, the Employee Rights Act will prevent any union from ordering a strike unless it first obtains the consent of a majority of employees through a secret ballot vote. If we're serious about ensuring democracy in the workplace, we must allow employees to have a say before their union can force them into unemployment and possible replacement.

Furthermore, the bill would give employees more control over how their union dues are spent. Exit polls continually show that union members are almost evenly divided among Democrats and Republicans at the ballot box. Yet, more than 90 percent of Big Labor's political contributions go to Democrats.

Under the Employee Rights Act, a union will have to obtain an employee's written consent before using their dues for any purpose unrelated to the union's collective bargaining functions, including political contributions or expenditures.

These are not radical ideas, they are simply common sense. And, not surprisingly, they are very popular with the public. According to a poll conducted earlier this year by the Opinion Research Corporation, these and other proposals contained in the Employee Rights Act are supported by no less than 60 percent of Americans and most of them by more than 75 percent.

America is in the midst of a fierce debate over the role of labor unions in our economy. While this debate is important, it should not stop us from working together to take affirmative steps to protect the rights of individual workers. The Employee Rights Act would do just that.

20111022-07	10:26	SteveG	Fw: UUSC Action: Sign Letter of Support for OWS
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from UUSC:

Open Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement

I stand with people around the country and the world who are calling for economic justice.

My values affirm that each person has inherent worth and dignity; that justice, equity, and compassion should be the guiding principles for human relationships; and that all people deserve access to the democratic process.

My recognition of the inherent worth of every person compels me to speak out against policies that privilege the demands of corporations over the human rights of people. I support the Occupy movement in its affirmation that protecting workers' rights and ensuring that basic human needs are met must take precedence. All people have a fundamental right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families.

I also join the Occupy movement in decrying the wealth disparity that leaves millions struggling for economic security. Policies and legislation that promote economic marginalization are morally unacceptable. Everyone is entitled to a government that recognizes and promotes basic economic rights. Justice, equity, and compassion should be foremost in our government's decision making.

Economic oppression is not only a violation of fundamental human rights, it is also a blow to democracy. When economic power is concentrated in the hands of a few and when corporations are awarded the same status as actual human beings, the democratic process is fundamentally compromised. Basic fairness requires that all people have equal opportunity to participate in political debate and to be represented in government.

I envision a powerful and radically inclusive movement for economic justice. I recognize economic justice as a right that is due to all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, immigration status, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status or distinction.

I sign this letter as an expression of gratitude to all who are working for economic justice in the United States and around the world, as an affirmation of my hope for fair and compassionate economic reforms, and as a renewal of my commitment to help make it so. Sign letter here:

http://actnow.uusc.org/site/PageNavigator/occupy_open_letter.html.

20111022-08	11:31	Pam	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
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Dear SteveB,

Maybe I'm being selfish in continuing to articulate my preferences, but this is an open discussion, right? I don't want to get just one email a day, because then I'd have to devote an hour—or two or three?—to getting through all of it. As it is now, when I have a few minutes, I can check to see what's here and get through it and be ready for the next batch. I have snatches of free time, but not any big chunks. Besides, I like the tennis-match quality of our exchanges. Just my 2 cents' worth.

20111022-09	11:39	SteveG	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
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Snatches of time is right - emails need to continue - a blog would be nice to look up a history of certain thoughts.

20111022-10	11:58	Pam	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
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Dear SteveB,

Maybe seeing who wants to remain on the list is a good idea. Some of us are more active than others, but that doesn't mean the silent ones don't follow the discussion. We've lost a few recently, so maybe some self-selection is going on already. My friend Kim (new addition) has been following but has yet to write anything. I know it took me a while to get comfortable with this, and I know she's enjoying it. How about a general request for those who want out to let us know?

Also, I like not having a specific focus. I really am an anarchist in disguise. Ha. My whole life I have hated organizations, meetings, agendas, formalities, rules, regulations, and bullsh*t. When someone starts saying, let's do it THIS way, I want to throw something. We're all about freedom, no?, and the current format seems wide open to me. I do like the idea of a digest though. Maybe at the end of each year (should we last so long), you could publish a "book." Maybe at some point you'll want to write a book about this whole enterprise. The one thing I do like that sounds restrictive is that I assume we're all a similar age. Kim is 47, so maybe she's the youngest—except for your kids. I'm not against the young-'uns, I just like feeling I'm among my peers. I also love the diversity of the group. It's good for academics to find kindred spirits in law or medicine or business or whatever—and vice versa.

You should feel good about this, SteveB. It was all your idea, and it's working.

Last fall Mark and I went to his Stanford class reunion, where I met a man who was starting something sort of like this. He wanted to "change the world" and was going to invite people to join a website with a view toward writing a book eventually. He wanted me to help edit it. I was all excited about it at first, but when I looked into it more, I found it to be too focused, too slick (fancy website etc.), and far too organized. I never did anything with it. I wonder if it's still operating or if it ever got off the ground. I like things that grow from the ground up and keep improving, so long as things don't get too codified. I like the idea of our being like a really good local restaurant that people hear about and want to visit. Places like that always decline in quality once they become a chain.

Sometimes good ideas are best left spontaneous. Example: as a teacher, I had students over the years that I got particularly close to. I became a mentor of sorts. A few of them have become friends, and we're still part of each other's lives. Facebook helps too. But these relationships formed because we liked each other. As simple as that. A kid would start dropping by my office, we'd talk, I'd be encouraging and talk to them like a human being, and if they got into that, we'd gradually form a friendship. Then the university, in its wisdom, decided to have a mentorship program where they would assign a faculty member to a student and encourage them to do stuff together. I did this several times. I'd have a student assigned to me, then I'd dream up things for us to do at least once a month. I usually ended up taking them for

ice cream or coffee. It was stilted and awkward. We were, after all, strangers to each other, and our get-togethers were more like an onerous social obligation than a true relationship.

I feel as if I'm getting to know some of the people in this group in a natural, easy way. We don't have to write if we have nothing to say—no small talk. We can cut right to the serious conversation (with some jokes) without all the extra baggage of a meeting or a class or even a party. I love going out for dinner, say, with friends, but even if we've known them a long time, the conversations tend to remain rather superficial. That's OK, nothing wrong with it. But this group gives me something much more substantial.

20111022-11	14:35	Jim	Re: Responsibility
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I substituted yesterday in a high school Personal Finance course where they were viewing one of Dave Ramsey's programs on family budgeting and money and kids. He quoted Warren Buffet as saying you should give your kids enough money that they can do something but not enough that they can do nothing.

I think that has to be a part of helping the poor that avoids despair but avoids the "free-lunch" syndrome that allows them to just do nothing.

The program also recounted what he had done with his own kids. from the time they were very young (like 3) they had a posted list of five jobs that they could do that week and earn commission. they had other things that they were expected to do just because they were part of the family but they had a way to earn money. They also had some of it to spend and some of it to save and some of it to give to others.

He wanted them to make the mental and emotional connection between work and money instead of an allowance like welfare that did not separate having money to spend from having to work. It seems to have worked for his kids well.

He had told them at an early age that the parents were not going to buy a car for the kids but that he would match what they saved up themselves for a car. One of the daughters had \$8000 by the time she was 16 and got a \$16000 car of her own that she paid cash for.

20111022-12	14:38	Art	Rich and Poor
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<http://imgur.com/a/U4FR4>

Some interesting stats here. I don't think anyone can argue that the disparity of wealth is growing. I guess the fundamental question is:

1. Is the growing disparity of wealth a problem?
2. Do we care?
3. Assuming we get past 1 and 2, what can/should we do about it?
4. What is the outcome goal?

I think sometimes a lot of our discussion go past one another because some of us are on 2 or 3, and other can't get past 1. I am one of those who came up very poor, I can out country shuck Perry dirt farm and all I think, and who has done very well economically, all without any help other than what I made for myself. I also was a Republican for all of my life until just recently.

To me the problems of wealth distribution, political honesty, intelligence in government and the current economic challenges are blindingly obvious, and yet I know that lots of very bright people don't even think we have an economic problem to began with. What I keep trying to grasp is what am I missing. I understand the logic string of the so called liberals or, as some have labeled some of us, socialist, (by the way, nothing could be further from an accurate description of me at least) but I cannot follow the logic train of tea party types, most of the current republican contenders, and in general the republicans as a whole these days. I tend to oversimplify sometimes and label most of the tea party types as racists who just won't publicly admit it and I suspect that is still true in many cases, but I keep thinking there has to be

more than that. So, for any who would care to enlighten me and maybe a few more of us, starting with 1 above, do we have a problem?

[20111022-13](#) 14:39 Jim Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

I wonder if it would affect fundamentalist support if we point out that his 9-9-9 plan signs turned upside down to reveal 666 the number of the beast?

[20111022-14](#) 15:30 GaryF No Wonder People Are Taking to the Streets

I just read an interesting news item. It seems a bank just up the road in Brunswick, Ga. failed, the FDIC took it over, shut it down, and fired the bank's president, NOW, the bank's ex-president is suing the FDIC for \$711,000+ for severance pay.

What's wrong with this picture? No wonder people are taking to the streets.

[20111022-15](#) 15:48 Charis Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

Dear Jim,

hahahaha.

[20111022-16](#) 16:19 Clark Re: Herman Cain & the Koch Brothers

Dear Charis,

Actually Michele Bachmann already pointed that out in a debate, or at least strongly hinted at it. I'm sure she believes it.

[20111022-17](#) 17:06 Pam Re: Responsibility

Dear Jim,

This makes wonderful sense. I forwarded it to my daughter, who has two little boys.

[20111022-18](#) 18:55 Dale Re: No Wonder... & "Lawsuit Filed Against FDIC"

Dear GaryF,

I'm not sure what is so hard to understand here. She, the bank president, had a contract specifying under which conditions she was entitled to compensation. The courts will decide if the suit is valid.

"Lawsuit Filed Against FDIC" by Louie Brogdon *The Brunswick News, Ga.*

Oct. 22, 2011, (<http://www.istockanalyst.com/business/news/5493859/lawsuit-filed-against-fdic>)

A former Glynn County bank president is suing the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. for not paying her severance after state and federal regulators closed and sold her failed bank in January. Former Oglethorpe Bank President Laura Cross-McKinley filed suit Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Brunswick requesting \$711,466 in damages from the FDIC.

She claims the federal bank regulator did not honor a severance clause in her employment contract after she was fired when the FDIC became receiver of the bank.

According to the five-page complaint, Cross-McKinley was to be paid two years salary if she was terminated within two years of a "change of control of the bank," as per her employment agreement with Oglethorpe Bank, which she entered into Oct. 1, 2002.

On Jan. 14, Oglethorpe was closed by the Georgia Department of Banking and Finance, and the FDIC was named receiver of the bank, according to the complaint.

By becoming the receiver of Oglethorpe Bank, the FDIC took ownership of all of the bank's accounts, credits, debts and contracts.

Bank employees were called into the lobby at 5 p.m. Jan. 14 by regulators and informed they would still have their jobs with Bank of the Ozarks, the company which regulators brokered with to buy the bank. Cross-McKinley was told not to return until FDIC staff finished going through her files.

Before she was notified by FDIC, a Bank of the Ozarks official fired her, according to the complaint. Cross-McKinley reportedly received a letter Mar. 8 from FDIC telling her to file a claim with the corporation by Apr. 23 to receive her contractual payments.

She filed the claim Apr. 21, according to the complaint.

The regulator first reportedly told her she had missed the deadline, but after Cross-McKinley faxed staff a copy of its own Mar. 8 letter setting Apr. 23 as the cut-off date, the regulator told her Sept. 2, "the proof of claim fails to state a provable claim against the FDIC as the receiver for Oglethorpe Bank..."

Citing a previous federal case with allegedly identical facts, Cross-McKinley is asking for \$711,466 in damages from the FDIC and is asking that the regulator pay her attorney and court fees.

A hearing date has been set.

20111022-19 19:03 Charis Re: No Wonder...

Dear GaryF,

I realize it may be hard to swallow, being as she was the president of the bank and therefore ultimately responsible for ensuring it remained feasibly operational; however, if her contract states she is entitled to severance pay then the FDIC is going to have to pay up. It may be difficult for us to imagine paying someone an amount like that for NOT doing their job well, but that is, after all, the very definition of severance pay—it's for people who get fired or laid off. It doesn't bother me that she'll get severance pay. We all do when we get fired. The amount is, however, very hard to swallow isn't it.

20111022-20 21:17 SteveG "Is Bank of America Headed for the Glue Factory?"

The End of BoA?

"Is Bank of America Headed for the Glue Factory?" by Mike Whitney, CounterPunch

Oct. 22, 2011, (<http://www.readersupportednews.org/opinion2/279-82/8033-is-bank-of-america-headed-for-the-gluefactory>)

Why is Bank of America moving derivatives from Merrill Lynch to an insured subsidiary? Is it because the derivatives could blow up at any time leaving Merrill with gigantic, unsustainable losses? If that's the case, then it would make perfect sense to shift them into a depository institution that's covered by the FDIC. That way, the taxpayers would wind up paying for the damage and no one would be the wiser. It's like a stealth bailout, right? The only problem is that Bloomberg let the cat out of the bag, so now everyone knows what's going on. And that's going to be a very big problem for B Of A. Here's a clip from the Bloomberg article:

Bank of America Corp. (BAC), hit by a credit downgrade last month, has moved derivatives from its Merrill Lynch unit to a subsidiary flush with insured deposits, according to people with direct knowledge of the situation.

The Federal Reserve and Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. disagree over the transfers, which are being requested by counterparties, said the people, who asked to remain anonymous because they weren't authorized to speak publicly. The Fed has signaled that it favors moving the derivatives to give relief to the bank holding company, while the FDIC, which would have to pay off depositors in the event of a bank failure, is objecting, said the people. The bank doesn't believe regulatory approval is needed, said people with knowledge of its position.

Three years after taxpayers rescued some of the biggest U.S. lenders, regulators are grappling with how to protect FDIC-insured bank accounts from risks generated by investment-banking operations. Bank of America, which got a \$45 billion bailout during the financial crisis, had \$1.04 trillion in deposits as of midyear, ranking it second among U.S. firms. ("BofA Said to Split Regulators Over Moving Merrill Derivatives to Bank Unit", Bloomberg)

There are two things worth noting in this article. First, according to Bloomberg, "the transfers (of derivatives) are being requested by counterparties." Well, how do you like that? In other words, the investors on the other side of these contracts want Merrill to put them under an insurance umbrella provided by the FDIC.

Now, why would that be? The only reason I can come up with, is that they know that a lot of these complex instruments are undercapitalized and ready to implode, so they want to make sure they get their money back any way possible. That means they need to latch on to Uncle Sam without anyone knowing about it. But, like we said, the cat is out of the bag.

The other thing worth noting is that the Fed and the FDIC are at loggerheads over the matter. ("The Fed has signaled that it favors moving the derivatives to give relief to the bank holding company, while the FDIC, which would have to pay off depositors in the event of a bank failure, is objecting.") Now, that's not good at all, in fact, it's a big red flag that suggests the Fed trying to pull a fast one on the American people. One does not have to look too far for other examples of Fed misbehavior; the endless bailouts (TARP, QE1 and 2, Operation Twist, ZIRP, etc) In fact, the Fed's history is a tedious chronicle of one shifty deal after another. This is just more of the same; another gift to big finance at the public's expense.

It's ironic that the B Of A flap is taking place at the same time the non-partisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) just released its report on conflicts of interest in the Fed. It helps to put the Fed's dubious behavior into context. This is a summary of the report from Washington's Blog:

The GAO detailed instance after instance of top executives of corporations and financial institutions using their influence as Federal Reserve directors to financially benefit their firms, and, in at least one instance, themselves...

The corporate affiliations of Fed directors from such banking and industry giants as General Electric, JP Morgan Chase, and Lehman Brothers pose 'reputational risks' to the Federal Reserve System, the report said. Giving the banking industry the power to both elect and serve as Fed directors creates 'an appearance of a conflict of interest,' the report added...

Joseph Stiglitz — former head economist at the World Bank and a Nobel-prize winner — said yesterday that the very structure of the Federal Reserve system is so fraught with conflicts that it is 'corrupt' and undermines democracy.

Stiglitz said, 'If we [i.e. the World Bank] had seen a governance structure that corresponds to our Federal Reserve system, we would have been yelling and screaming and saying that country does not deserve any assistance, this is a corrupt governing structure.' ("Non-Partisan Government Report: Federal Reserve Is Riddled with Corruption and Conflicts of Interest," Washington's Blog)

So, no one should be surprised that the Fed is involved in another sketchy deal. Even so, this particular maneuver really seems to have hit a nerve with some prominent and usually even-tempered, financial bloggers, like Yves Smith over at Naked Capitalism. Here's Smith's take on the Fed's subterfuge:

This move reflects either criminal incompetence or abject corruption by the Fed. Even though I've expressed my doubts as to whether Dodd Frank resolutions will work, dumping derivatives into depositories pretty much guarantees a Dodd Frank resolution will fail. Remember the effect of the 2005 bankruptcy law revisions:

derivatives counterparties are first in line, they get to grab assets first and leave everyone else to scramble for crumbs. So this move amounts to a direct transfer from derivatives counterparties of Merrill to the taxpayer, via the FDIC, which would have to make depositors whole after derivatives counterparties grabbed collateral. It's well nigh impossible to have an orderly wind down in this scenario....This move paves the way for another TARP-style shakedown of taxpayers, this time to save depositors. No Congressman would dare vote against that. This move is Machiavellian, and just plain evil. (*Naked Capitalism*)

"Just plain evil." Maybe that should be the Fed's byline?

Anyway, Smith is not alone in her contempt for the Fed, but there are those who feel she may be off-base in her assessment of what is going on vis-à-vis the derivatives dump. Bank analyst Christopher Whalen at Reuters thinks that the transfer could be a sign that B of A is getting ready to throw in the towel. Here's an excerpt from the article:

...the move to put the derivatives exposures of Merrill Lynch under the lead bank could be preparatory to a Chapter 11 filing by the parent company. The move by Fannie Mae to take a large junk of loans out of BAC, the efforts to integrate parts of Merrill Lynch into the bank units earlier this year, and now the wholesale shift of derivatives exposure all suggest a larger agenda.

I don't have any access to inside skinny, but what I see suggests to this investment banker that a restructuring may impend at Bank of America. ("Is Bank of America planning for a Chapter 11?", Reuters)

"Restructuring"? So is B of A headed for the glue factory?

No one knows for sure, but the banking behemoth has been laying off workers by the thousands, slashing expenses, and raising fees while its stock has dropped 49 per cent in a year. These are hardly signs of a thriving business.

So, consider this: If you were in Fed chairman Ben Bernanke's shoes, what would you do?

Let's say the second biggest bank in the country is starting to teeter because it's loaded with all manner of dodgy (toxic?) derivatives that could blow up at any minute and take down the entire global financial system. Would you:

(a) Wait until the bombshell exploded knowing that the only choice you would then have would be to further expand the Fed's balance sheet by another couple trillion dollars, or

(b) Try to sleaze the whole thing off on Uncle Sam and let the taxpayers pick up the tab?

I'm not sure, but I think Bernanke may have chosen (b).

20111023-01	07:19	SteveB	"LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"
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The subject of the article below—8000 homeless vets in LA, alone—makes me very angry. At least maybe they are finally doing something about it (a new VA project), but funds will probably be cut after the Super Committee deadlocks, the U.S. suffers further credit rating cuts, and, as I understand it, across the board cuts will be made to "discretionary spending"...

I know Bill Gates does a lot, and so do many other of the now famous 1%, but despite their increases in wealth, they don't seem to be taking care of these problems, even though most of them seem to support the wars, or at least did support them. I don't necessarily blame these folks, though. It just isn't getting done. A lot of us help the veterans and veterans organizations, especially we veterans, I hope. But it must not be nearly enough. Right? If not now, when? The rich are richer and the poor are poorer and need help more than at other times. Taxes are low. Why not now? We help even our enemies, like Pakistan?

I know the problems are big, but we are told we can cut all this money for the poor and charitable donations will pick up the slack. It doesn't seem to be happening and I, myself, wouldn't expect it to. This is, unfortunately, the legitimate role of the government and it is not fulfilling its obligations to its own most cherished.

But, I don't know, maybe the plight of these veterans is their own fault. What's wrong with them that they can't just try harder? Why don't they get off their lazy butts and look for jobs? Maybe they'd be better off if they paid more taxes? Why don't they fulfill their mysterious responsibility to society? I rest my case.

More lies: Michelle Bachmann (paraphrase), "My NH campaign staff has not resigned en masse. The other candidates are spreading false rumors to try to destroy me." The truth: it looks like all 5 quit and at some have gone to work for other campaigns. The chief said he called the national organization at least the day before the above response she gave to a questioning reporter. Even if she and her staff didn't lie, how could they be so ignorant as to what was going on in their own campaign? How can a person like this be POTUS?

"LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus" by Dr. Sanjay Gupta and Caleb Hellerman, CNN

Oct. 24, 2011, (<http://edition.cnn.com/2011/10/22/health/homeless-veterans/index.html>)

(Programming note: With an estimated 107,000 homeless vets in the U.S., Dr. Sanjay Gupta explores their daily struggles and the legal battle over a plan to help them. Watch "CNN Presents" Sunday night at 8 p.m. ET/PT.)

(Los Angeles) The connection seems obvious: nearly 400 acres of land set aside to house veterans and thousands of veterans who need a place to call home.

But Los Angeles' estimated 8,000 homeless vets have been barred from living at the sprawling campus for decades. The West Los Angeles property—some of the most valuable in the nation—was donated in 1888 to "establish, construct and permanently maintain" a branch of a national home for veterans, according to the original deed.

And for nearly a century, that's what happened: permanent veterans facilities sprang up, including a post office, a trolley system and housing for as many as 4,000 vets, said American Civil Liberties Union lawyer Mark Rosenbaum.

But "beginning with the Vietnam War era, vets were kicked out," said Rosenbaum, who's leading a class-action suit over the property against the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Now, a generation after Vietnam, the facility's abandoned buildings are off limits to the veterans they were intended to serve.

"It's a shame," said Carolina Barrie, a descendant of the heiress who donated the land. Veterans should be "given every single opportunity to rehab their lives—and if they have no place to live, a place to live."

The VA saw fit to lease parts of the property to several businesses. In September, the VA canceled three leases after rising criticism. But other entities remain on the property including a public golf course, a college baseball stadium, a theater and practice fields for the exclusive private Brentwood School.

CNN's initial requests to the VA for its side of the lawsuit were referred to the Justice Department, which said it wouldn't comment while the case is still pending.

Vet: 'I just wanted to die or go to prison'

Iraq war veteran Robert Rissman, 22, isn't part of the lawsuit, but he has spent years battling addiction, post-traumatic-stress disorder and homelessness. As an 18-year-old high school senior, Rissman signed up with the Army intending to "go to college and make something of myself," he said. "And the Army said they'd pay for it." He was deployed to Iraq for a year as part of a quick response unit that saw constant action. Upon his return to Colorado's Fort Carson, Rissman was diagnosed with PTSD. Nightmares and paranoia haunted him.

It got worse. According to Army papers, he once spent a day drinking and sitting on his bed pointing with the barrel of an illegal sawed-off shotgun in his mouth. "I just wanted to die or go to prison," he said. "And that was where I was headed and I knew that was where I was going and I was OK with that." After leaving the Army, Rissman ended up homeless in Arizona and later Los Angeles, where he "was doing a lot of methamphetamines" and "smoking a lot of dope."

Study: PTSD signals long-term health problems.

Accurate figures are hard to come by, but the VA in its most recent report estimates about 107,000 veterans find themselves homeless on any given night. Mental illness plagues 45% of homeless vets and 70% suffer from some kind of substance abuse, according to the VA.

Washington has OK'd \$35.5 million to renovate various buildings on the campus including "Building 209 for housing facilities for homeless veterans," according to a bill signed by President Obama this month.

The facility would provide vets with 70 permanent housing units, far short of the living space needed to house LA's homeless vets.

The VA has launched an aggressive national plan with an ambitious goal: eliminating homelessness among veterans by 2015.

Under the joint program with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, homeless veterans get federal vouchers to help them pay rent.

This summer the VA granted nearly \$60 million to nonprofit groups that help veterans, including more than \$7 million to aid an estimated 1,800 vets in California. The money aims to prevent veterans and their families from slipping into homelessness by helping with basic expenses such as rent, utilities security deposits and moving costs.

Occupy the park?

Ron Kovic, whose story was made famous in the 1989 Tom Cruise film "Born on the Fourth of July," said the \$35.5 million isn't enough.

Paralyzed in the Vietnam War, the former Marine has been working to improve VA treatment of returning troops since his own homecoming in the late 1960s. Kovic is calling for an occupation protest of the West LA property, not unlike the current Occupy Wall Street movement.

"If that land was given to veterans and if we were able to put at least a small percentage of what we're spending on these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan toward building a facility for homeless and disabled veterans," Kovic told CNN, "I think it would be one of the most honorable things we could do as citizens and one of the most honorable things that the VA could do to make up for the mistakes of the past."

U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein of California, told CNN via an email statement that she's concerned about the rising number of homeless vets in Los Angeles and believes that "updated and new facilities are needed at the West LA VA."

"I intend keep working to make sure that Congress doesn't stop" with the latest improvements, she said. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki "has told me he is committed to renovating two additional buildings on the campus, and we intend to hold him and the administration to that commitment."

Meanwhile, VA attorneys have asked a federal judge to throw the ACLU lawsuit out of court.

"In fact, according to Rosenbaum the Justice Department attorney said, 'We don't believe that the VA has any authority or any responsibility to provide housing.' But Dr. Dean Norman, chief of staff of Los Angeles' VA health care system seemed to contradict that. "I think we have the resources with the community to end homelessness for veterans in Los Angeles," Norman said.

Norman said new housing is being created for homeless vets and those who need help should call 1-877-4AIDVET (1-877-424-3838) to start the process that will put them in safe housing.

As for Rissman, he's currently living at a halfway house in hopes of leaving his homeless life behind. He thinks the West Los Angeles property could help many more homeless vets win their personal battles. "It would get a number of people in off the street and get them doing what they need to be doing to get their life together," said Rissman.

Meanwhile, the judge has refused to throw out the case and has appointed a mediator to try and resolve the situation beginning this week. "I promise you that these gates will be open," said Rosenbaum. "We will win this case."

(CNN's Danielle Dellorto, Thom Patterson and Curt Merrill contributed to this report.)

20111023-02 07:54 Charis Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"

Dear SteveB,

I think vets have a special place in our society. They are upstanding citizens who put their lives on the line for us and make sacrifices (along with their families) for us in manners unlike any others. They secure for our country what no one else can—our freedom. In my book, freedom is so priceless we cannot even put a true dollar value on it so I personally have trouble relating this subject to others we've discussed concerning taxes, jobs and responsibility. The way I see it, they've more than paid any dues our society could possibly expect from them. I'm personally upset that Obama has decided their benefits should be slashed and I'm p*ssed off that Congress is voting on that now. I think this kind of sarcasm is unnecessary:

But, I don't know, maybe the plight of these veterans is their own fault. What's wrong with them that they can't just try harder? Why don't they get off their lazy butts and look for jobs? Maybe they'd be better off if they paid more taxes? Why don't they fulfill their mysterious responsibility to society? I rest my case.

20111023-03 09:26 SteveB Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"

Dear Charis,

You are probably right about the sarcasm. I guess I just don't know any better way to express my frustration at how things are going in our country.

And, the entire time this forum has been in existence, though I and others on the left have repeatedly offered real criticism of the left, its politicians, and even its policies and goals, I have yet to hear one person from the right (I consider you to be firmly from the middle, Charis. I think you see both sides.) admit that there is a part of society that we the people, via the hated government owes an obligation to.

If not these vets, then I guess no human in dire straits should ever be helped? Right? Sure would be cheaper government.

But maybe with such an admission of an actual responsibility, we could move the discussion forward to the plight of the middle class, the jobless, etc. But, of course, that is why the admission is not made, right? It might be a slippery slope down the path to spending their tax dollars on helping people who need it.

Maybe a little of the dreaded "redistribution of wealth" might be necessary!!! OMG! I haven't even heard any Republican admit any kind of equality as even a goal. I find that so extreme.

Does it ever happen in America that people need and deserve help (even from the government)? I think this article points to an answer.

20111023-04 09:52 SteveB Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

OK. Going forward, I want everyone to keep doing exactly as you have been doing, even if the group gets a little larger. You will keep fighting for your positions and beliefs and explaining your reason and citing evidence to back it up and offering possible solutions on a large range of topics, especially those with a political dimension.

The only difference will be that it will be better, I think, if you don't send emails to the entire group. Let me do that once a day or so. Send to whomever you want and also send a copy to me. I will compile and publish.

I was thinking about doing it this way...every day, usually very early in morning (I love *madrugada!*), I will publish the daily email. It will consist of one lead opinion or piece of writing. I will leave the floor open for comments on this subject or any other you desire...the same freedom we've always had. Every day, some of you comment of what I've said, others on what others have said, others present original topics which get other discussions going. I like that! Let's keep it!

So the second part of the email newsletter will be the lead article from the day before, including all the comments I've received that day. I will try to identify thread names, even if I don't necessarily organize by threads. Every day, you will have a pithy publication in your inbox, that you maybe contributed to, that you can pass on to people on your list, then they can do the same. The email newsletter will also give those readers an opportunity to subscribe.

This lead piece might be something I write or it might be something a group member wrote that previous day.

This would keep up the email to people who like it (Pam and I) while cutting down on email to more marginal but still very valuable group members.

We can start this immediately. But at any time, feel free to email anyone at the top of this email (our charter members) or anyone else in the group who carries on a conversation with you individually. But copy me if it's something pertinent to the group and let me do the mailing of everything to the whole group.

At the same time, with Charis, Pam, and Ben's help, I will get all our past and future content (edited only very slightly) on a website of some kind.

Website visitors will be able to sign up for the email newsletter (and contribute, haha).

Today I have taken the liberty (because it was available) to register the domain name:

<http://www.FriendsOfTheMiddle.org>

I also liked the "Our Say" and related names too, but the OWS group seems to have taken them. We don't have to use the above name, but it's there if you want to.

Now, who knows how to become a PAC? :-)

And let me know (via your normal emails or whatever) the user name you would like me to use for you.

And, if you prefer, you can think of all this as business as usual, I hope.

20111023-05 10:14 Charis Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"

Dear SteveB,

I guess I don't understand why people hate the government so much. It's not like Americans live under a dictatorship. The people in our "hated government" are there because Americans put them there. I don't believe that just because someone is poor they should be given everything. I'm more of a "teach to fish" rather than a "give them a free fish" kind of person. As to vets, they've done and sacrificed more than anyone else. They've done their duty. Should they be given a free ride for the rest of their lives? No, I don't think so. But are they in a league all of their own? Definitely. Like police and firefighters. A league no one else comes near to. Anyone willing to give their LIFE for us is. You simply CANNOT give more to someone than your LIFE. You simply can't compare that to anything else.

20111023-06 10:43 SteveB Re: "LA Vets Demand Housing at Giant VA Campus"

Dear Charis,

I don't think hardly anybody gets a real "free ride" from the government. I don't think any of us want that for anyone. Of course we want to make productive citizens of anyone we can. Unfortunately, some people are mentally deficient or have serious mental problems and can't be productive, or not very. We take the middle way here. Should people get a "free ride"? No one here has ever said that. Are there people we must help? Surely! But I'm having a devil of a time getting that admitted. I don't understand how we cannot all be on the same page on this one issue to help those "willing to give their LIFE for us."

These vets were good enough for the Army, though. But the right doesn't seem to think they are deserving. The left does, but has a lot of trouble getting the funding passed. Same old story. Of course we're not talking about everyone, or

those who can but don't (largely eliminated from the rolls in the 1990's, so why the big deal now?). But we are talking about real people who really exist. Don't we owe them something? Can't it be admitted government has a place in this? No alternative is working, as I pointed out yesterday.

I use "hated government" satirically because Republicans don't seem to think the government has a place in these matters that involve redistribution of wealth. I disagree. I don't hate the government myself. I just hate corruption and greed.

20111023-07	10:48	SteveG	Fw: UUSC Action: Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement
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from UUSC:

Sign the Open Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement:

http://actnow.uusc.org/site/PageNavigator/occupy_open_letter.html.

I stand with people around the country and the world who are calling for economic justice.

My values affirm that each person has inherent worth and dignity; that justice, equity, and compassion should be the guiding principles for human relationships; and that all people deserve access to the democratic process.

My recognition of the inherent worth of every person compels me to speak out against policies that privilege the demands of corporations over the human rights of people. I support the Occupy movement in its affirmation that protecting workers' rights and ensuring that basic human needs are met must take precedence. All people have a fundamental right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families.

I also join the Occupy movement in decrying the wealth disparity that leaves millions struggling for economic security. Policies and legislation that promote economic marginalization are morally unacceptable. Everyone is entitled to a government that recognizes and promotes basic economic rights. Justice, equity, and compassion should be foremost in our government's decision making.

Economic oppression is not only a violation of fundamental human rights, it is also a blow to democracy. When economic power is concentrated in the hands of a few and when corporations are awarded the same status as actual human beings, the democratic process is fundamentally compromised. Basic fairness requires that all people have equal opportunity to participate in political debate and to be represented in government.

I envision a powerful and radically inclusive movement for economic justice. I recognize economic justice as a right that is due to all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, immigration status, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status or distinction.

I sign this letter as an expression of gratitude to all who are working for economic justice in the United States and around the world, as an affirmation of my hope for fair and compassionate economic reforms, and as a renewal of my commitment to help make it so.

20111023-08	10:58	Art	Re: UUSC Action: Letter of Support for the Occupy Movement
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Dear SteveG,

Good stuff, thanks.

20111023-09	10:59	SteveB	Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group
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Dear Group,

OK, charter members. Please use the above updated addresses for our core group. SteveG has a different one.

My wife, Marcela, suggested that people who have too many emails in their inbox could get another address just for these emails. She also likes the immediacy of the emails, but better than chat. Just a thought. Do that if you want, but I still will do the compilation thing, starting tomorrow, of today's stuff, even though I'm still sending my replies out to everyone. Tomorrow, my part will be different. If you only write to me, I may answer just to you, but I will publish to the group. If you write to others and copy me, everything will look the same, pretty much.

Thank you, all!!!!

[20111023-10](#) 11:12 SteveB Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear Group,

Tomorrow you will receive the first email newsletter (write bunches of stuff today to be in it!).

One copy will be from : FriendsOfTheMiddle@hotmail.com.

A second copy, tomorrow only, will be from my normal email address, just in case the above newsletter gets in your Junk box.

Be sure to add the above address to your safe list or add the address to your contact list. It is what you will want to use from me from now on. Thank you.

[20111023-11](#) 11:27 SteveB Re: Big, New Plans for Our Group

Dear Group,

Here's the same email with my new political-only email address. After tomorrow, unless you specifically ask, I will only bother all of you once a day. Pam and GaryC, I'm gonna bother you all the time!

[20111023-12](#) 11:55 Pam Re: No Wonder...

Nothing is ever simple. It helps to have all the facts, which this group is good at ferreting out.

[20111023-13](#) 12:00 Pam Re: No Wonder...

Dear Dale,

I'm glad to know about this.

[20111023-14](#) 17:32 Dennis "Nine Policies Conservatives Were *For* Long Before They Were *Against* Them"

Why would you trust proven lying hypocrites?

"Nine Policies Conservatives Were *For* Long Before They Were *Against* Them" by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Sept. 23, 2011, (<http://www.alternet.org/story/152447/>)

In 2001, the GOP's budget guru, Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, was excited for the opportunity to vote for Bush's "temporary" tax cuts. "I think we ought to have this income tax cut fast ... to make sure we get a good punch into the economy, juice the economy to make sure that we can avoid a hard landing," he said at a committee hearing. "The

economy has soured," he continued. "And it is my concern that if we keep waiting and seeing we won't give the economy the boost it needs right now."

Fast forward 10 years, to this August. President Obama was poised to call for an extension of a payroll tax break—and an additional break for businesses—and Ryan began singing a very different tune. "Those things are all temporary," he told Fox News. "They are demand-sided. And they are proven not to work and they still facilitate uncertainty for businesses." Suddenly, tax cuts—the GOP's answer to every economic issue of the past four decades—were "proven not to work."

"What's plaguing our economy today," he said, is "the amount of uncertainty as to what the future holds for them on regulations, on taxes, on interest rates and all of those things." He said that the temporary nature of the cuts "exactly exacerbates those problems."

Obama had made a point of the fact that the proposals contained in his jobs package had all been embraced by Republicans in the past, but that didn't prevent them from bashing it, just as they had decried many other erstwhile conservative ideas as so much misguided "socialism" when proposed by Democrats.

Before the memory-hole swallows them up, consider nine other ideas that Republicans had long championed, and were then picked up by Democrats and became toxic within the GOP caucus. They tell us not only how serious Republicans are about undermining the administration, but also how far both parties have lurched to the right—the Democrats are offering inherently conservative proposals to deal with the problems we face, and today's Right considers those policies to be way out in left field.

1. The Healthcare Mandate

Late last year, when a federal judge ruled against the mandate (two other courts disagreed, and the Supreme Court will end up deciding the question), Senator Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, rejoiced. "Today is a great day for liberty," he said. "Congress must obey the Constitution rather than make it up as we go along." It was an odd testament to freedom, given that Hatch himself co-sponsored a healthcare reform bill built around an individual mandate in the late 1990s.

Journalist Steve Benen noted that while "the record here may be inconvenient for the right ... it's also unambiguous: the mandate Republicans currently hate was their idea."

It was championed by the Heritage Foundation ... Nixon embraced it in the 1970s, and George H.W. Bush kept it going in the 1980s. For years, it was touted by the likes of John McCain, Mitt Romney, Scott Brown, Chuck Grassley, Bob Bennett, Tommy Thompson, Lamar Alexander, Lindsey Graham, John Thune, Judd Gregg, and many other ... notable GOP officials.

According to NPR, the mandate was the Right's response to progressive proposals to establish a single-payer system. Mark Pauly, the conservative economist widely credited with the idea, explained that "a group of economists and health policy people, market-oriented, sat down and said, 'Let's see if we can come up with a health reform proposal that would preserve a role for markets but would also achieve universal coverage.'"

2. Cap and Trade

A central tenet of traditionally conservative economic thinking is that you tax activities you want to deter as an alternative to regulating them out of existence. This was the thinking behind "cap and trade" policies to control pollution—it was the "free market" approach.

The ideas had been floating around for some time in broad terms, but it was the Reagan White House that developed the first proposals for a cap and trade program. It gained momentum during the first Bush administration when, according to a history of the concept in *Smithsonian Magazine*, George H. W. Bush decided that "cap-and-trade still beats command-and-control regulation." Cap and trade is decidedly business-friendly, as *Smithsonian* noted:

The cap-and-trade system continues to let polluters figure out the least expensive way to reduce their acid rain emissions. As a result, the law costs utilities just \$3 billion annually, not \$25 billion, according to a recent study in the *Journal of Environmental Management*; by cutting acid rain in half, it also generates

an estimated \$122 billion a year in benefits from avoided death and illness, healthier lakes and forests, and improved visibility on the Eastern Seaboard.

Today, some 20 years later, this signature, market-based, business-friendly alternative to "Big Government" regulations is just another "job-killing tax" according to a significant majority of Republicans.

The "Pledge to America: the 2010 Republican Agenda" promised to "oppose attempts to impose a national 'cap and trade' energy tax."

3. Small Business Tax Credits

Perhaps the most blatant flip-flop on policy was Republicans' sudden concerns that a bill that would have provided \$30 billion to encourage banks to lend to small businesses and another \$12 billion in tax credits targeted directly at them was a form of "government overreach." But last July, Reuters reported that "some Republicans have cast the small-business proposal as part of what they consider government overreach by the Obama administration." They ended up blocking passage of the proposal because they were angry that "Democrats shut them out from amending the package."

4. Infrastructure Bank

In the not-at-all-distant past, this was another idea for a market-based, "public-private" partnership that virtually everyone could get behind. "A national infrastructure bank is a great place to start securing the funding we need to increase our mobility, create jobs and enhance our global competitiveness," said Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Donohue—not known as a socialist—last year. "With a modest initial investment of \$10 billion, a national infrastructure bank could leverage up to \$600 billion in private investments to repair, modernize and expand our ailing infrastructure system."

Kay Bailey Hutchinson, a conservative senator from Texas, and senator James Inhofe, R-Oklahoma, among the most conservative members of Congress, have each co-sponsored legislation to set up an infrastructure bank in just the past two years. A recent study found that 85 percent of Republicans, 84 percent of self-identified conservatives and 80 percent of Tea Party fans favored more public/private partnerships to tackle the nation's problems, and two-thirds of voters "say that making improvements in infrastructure is very important."

But now that it's a centerpiece of Obama's jobs plan, conservatives have come to view an infrastructure bank as, in the words of the Heritage Foundation, "one idea that...progressives have been flogging for the past few years... [that] would do little to spur the economic recovery—and nothing to create new jobs."

5. Supplier-Side Cuts to Medicare

For two years, the GOP has made a big issue of \$500 billion in "Medicare cuts" contained in the Dems' healthcare reform bill—a claim that is "misleading" at best. The cuts come from reforms in the way Medicare providers are compensated, not out of beneficiaries' hides.

The GOP-controlled House then passed a budget along party lines with those very same cuts, but they nonetheless continue to blast them. During a recent GOP presidential debate, Michele Bachmann, R-Minnesota, said that seniors "know in Obamacare the president of the United States took away \$500 billion—a half-trillion dollars—out of Medicare, shifted it to Obamacare to pay for younger people."

But as Jill Lawrence noted, the rhetoric represents "a dizzying role reversal from the days when Republicans used to recommend the same types of reductions in future Medicare spending." In 1995, for instance, Republicans proposed cutting \$270 billion over seven years. In 1997, McConnell and McCain were among the Republicans voting for a Balanced Budget Act that cut Medicare by \$115 billion over five years. And in his 2008 presidential campaign, McCain proposed combined Medicare and Medicaid cuts of \$1.3 trillion over 10 years.

Lawrence notes that McCain later, "led the fight against the Democrats' plans to trim Medicare."

6. Financial Disclosure Laws

Lawrence also noted that "prominent Republicans have often made the case that transparency—not limits on campaign spending or contributions—is the best antidote to corruption."

"Republicans are in favor of disclosure," Sen. Mitch McConnell said on NBC's "Meet the Press" in 2000. Seven years later, on the same program, House GOP leader John Boehner declared: "Sunlight is the best disinfectant."

But, she adds, those same Republicans voted against the DISCLOSE Act last year. According to the current GOP line, requiring companies to disclose their contributions "is a punitive measure for associations of persons who choose to exercise their right to free political speech as guaranteed by the Constitution, and affirmed in the *Citizens United v. FEC* case."

7. Encouraging Low-income Home Ownership

As I noted last year, perhaps the most pernicious right-wing lie of late is that the Wall Street hustlers who came close to bringing the global economy to its knees in 2008 were just innocent victims of government-sponsored programs that forced them to lower lending standards in a misguided effort to increase home ownership among the poor (read: dark-skinned).

It's an alluring story line for those who are ideologically predisposed to blame "inner city" people instead of MBAs in suits roaming the executive suite. It's also patent nonsense—a Big Lie that has nonetheless become an object of almost religious belief for some on the Right.

But it's not just that the story isn't in any way grounded in objective reality. What makes it even more disgraceful is that conservatives have long argued that efforts to increase home ownership among low-income families and communities of color was the "free market" thing to do (and have, to some degree, negated the need for a decent social safety net). It was George W. Bush, not Vladimir Lenin, who said in a 2002 speech, "We have a problem here in America...a homeownership gap," and added, "We've got to work together to close [the gap] for the good of our country."

The *New York Times* reported, "From his earliest days in office, Bush paired his belief that Americans do best when they own their own homes with his conviction that markets do best when left alone."

Bush pushed hard to expand home ownership, especially among minority groups, an initiative that dovetailed with both his ambition to expand Republican appeal and the business interests of some of his biggest donors. But his housing policies and hands-off approach to regulation encouraged lax lending standards.

This stuff was standard American Enterprise Institute-quality conservative fare until it became a handy way of diverting blame away from the titans of Wall Street. Then it became the root cause of the Great Recession.

8. The Fairness Doctrine

Beginning in the 1970s, deep-pocketed conservative donors started investing in their own dedicated, ideologically driven media to counteract what they perceived as "liberal bias" in the corporate media. In the 1980s, those efforts began to bear fruit, and at about the same time, right-wingers came to dominate the talk-radio airwaves.

The Fairness Doctrine, which required broadcasters taking advantage of public airwaves to present both sides of political controversies, was abandoned in 1987, but that didn't stop the GOP from freaking out about it when Obama was elected. "Freedom of speech is under attack in this country," said Sen. Jim DeMint, R-South Carolina. "I am just committing today to use every rule, every tactic that we have at our disposal to keep the Fairness Doctrine from moving in Congress or to overrule it if it is implemented by the FCC."

"Bringing back the Fairness Doctrine today would amount to government control over political views expressed on the airwaves," said Rep. Mike Pence, R-Indiana.

But as First Amendment attorney Robert Corn Revere notes, with so much hostility toward the fairness doctrine coming from the Right, "it is easy to forget that many prominent conservatives championed the doctrine before its demise."

Phyllis Schlafly was a vocal proponent of the Fairness Doctrine because of what she described as "the outrageous and blatant anti-Reagan bias of the TV network newscasts," and she testified at the FCC in the 1980s in support of the policy "to serve as a small restraint on the monopoly power wielded by Big TV Media."

Senator Jesse Helms was another long-time advocate of the Fairness Doctrine, and conservative groups Accuracy in Media and the American Legal Foundation actively pursued fairness complaints at the FCC against network newscasts.

More recently, a Republican controlled FCC under Kevin Martin has advocated far more extensive controls over broadcast and cable programming, including news and public affairs. These proposed regulations include requirements governing local programming, restrictions on the use of video news releases, and other new rules that would extend content controls beyond broadcasting.

9. Judicial Restraint

It wouldn't be fair to say that conservatives were before judicial activism before they were against it. More accurately, most people don't grasp what the term means, and they've come to use it as a euphemism for "court rulings we really don't like."

But it is true that they constantly rail against judges "legislating from the bench." And it's also true that it is far more common for right-leaning jurists to do so than those of a liberal bent. The charge is pure projection.

That is what several studies have concluded. Media Matters offered a run-down of a couple of prominent ones:

A 2005 study by Yale University law professor Paul Gewirtz and Yale Law School graduate Chad Golder showed that among Supreme Court justices at that time, those most frequently labeled "conservative" were among the most frequent practitioners of at least one brand of judicial activism—the tendency to strike down statutes passed by Congress. Those most frequently labeled "liberal" were the least likely to strike down statutes passed by Congress.

A 2007 study published by University of Chicago law professor Thomas J. Miles and Cass R. Sunstein... used a different measurement of judicial activism: the tendency of judges to strike down decisions by federal regulatory agencies. Sunstein and Miles found that by this definition, the Supreme Court's "conservative" justices were the most likely to engage in "judicial activism" while the "liberal" justices were most likely to exercise "judicial restraint."

There you have it: from eschewing the "magic" of market-based solutions to opposing tax credits for businesses, we see in the conservative coalition an almost perfect ideological flexibility. The only constant is that whatever policies Democrats propose—even those conservatives previously championed—are foreign and beyond the pale.

20111023-15	20:30	SteveG	"The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
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http://www.fdrheritage.org/bill_of_rights.htm

On Jan. 11, 1944, in the midst of World War II, President Roosevelt spoke forcefully and eloquently about the greater meaning and higher purpose of American security in a post-war America. The principles and ideas conveyed by FDR's words matter as much now as they did over sixty years ago, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt American Heritage Center is proud to reprint a selection of FDR's vision for the security and economic liberty of the American people in war and peace.

"The Economic Bill of Rights"

Excerpt from President Roosevelt's Jan. 11, 1944 message to the Congress of the United States on the State of the Union

It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty.

As our nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not free men." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

1. The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation.
2. The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation.
3. The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living.
4. The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad.
5. The right of every family to a decent home.
6. The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.
7. The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment.
8. The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens.

Source: *The Public Papers & Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Samuel Rosenman, ed.), Vol. XIII (NY: Harper, 1950), 40-42

"Necessitous men," says the Lord Chancellor, in *Vernon v Bethell*, 2 (1762), "are not, truly speaking, free men; but, to answer a present emergency, will submit to any terms that the crafty may impose on them."

20111024-01	06:34	SteveB	Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)
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Dear SteveG,

Good 'ole FDR! Now there was a good socialist President. :-)

I wish these things were rights, but I guess they aren't because we can't afford them anymore. It's strange that during the depths of the Great Depression, they were able to imagine that we, as a nation, could fulfill our collective dreams. Now, in the midst of the great lies, dreams are destroyed and lie strewn across the jobless landscape. We don't even have the will to dream any more. Geez! I'd give a prize to anyone who can put it more dramatically than that.

OK, I'm at work on "Friends of the Middle Newsletter #1". Thanks for the article!

[20111024-02](#) 07:33 SteveG Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)

Dear SteveB,

If they become our priorities they are achievable, but as we know none of these issues are really our country's priorities in 2011. As a nation you are right, we do not dream anymore.

[20111024-03](#) 10:55 SteveB Re: "The Economic Bill of Rights" (of FDR)

Yes, we went to the moon didn't we? Now we're hitching rides on Virgin and the Chinese will own the moon.

Things are so much more difficult after you have given away your manufacturing base. Only three things actually create real wealth in a given society:

1. mining, drilling, etc. (w/ some other energy production—atomic, solar, wind, etc.)
2. farming
3. manufacturing

Notice that importing, banking, engineering, medicine, lawyering, teaching, cooking, and many other worthy professions don't make the list. All fields except the three listed simply move money around, usually from the bottom to the top, more seldom the other way around.

- #1—mining—is declining in our country and that's the way most of us want it for now
- #2—farming—is stationary or declining, though I think we want it reversed
- #3—manufacturing—because of #1 & #2 not performing that well, losing any of #3 really hurts, and we've lost *mucho!*

[20120112-01](#) 07:19 SteveB Re: WMDs—"Yellowcake Uranium Found In Iraq, Bush Was Right! Well, Not So Much"

"Yellowcake Uranium Found In Iraq, Bush Was Right! Well, Not So Much" by Logan Murphy, C&L

July 5, 2008, (<http://crooksandliars.com/2008/07/06/yellowcake-uranium-found-in-iraq-bush-was-right-well-not-so-much>)

This article from the AP was posted yesterday, reporting the sale and transport of 550 metric tons of yellowcake uranium from Iraq to Canada. Some of the leading right wing blogs were quick to hail the find as a significant victory for the Bush administration and proof of Saddam's WMD program, but as Daniel De Groot at Open Left Points out, their celebrations may be a bit premature, if not dishonest:

I noted last night that a supply of uranium from Iraq had been successfully moved to Montreal in secrecy.

If you check into this, you'll quickly find that the uranium:

1. Was not weapons grade.
2. Was well known to the UN and IAEA and was being stored legally by Saddam's government. It was legally in Iraq according to international law.

I wondered if the right wing echo chamber would use this as "proof" that the WMD claims were true after all. I got even better than I hoped, as not only do they use it that way, but they reveal how dishonest they are by the way they have done this. Top recommended post at Redstate:

"Yellowcake uranium found in Iraq, Saddam's legacy, Bush was right!"

Well...not so much.

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