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CLASH OF THE TITANS

"You're all a bunch of socialists!"

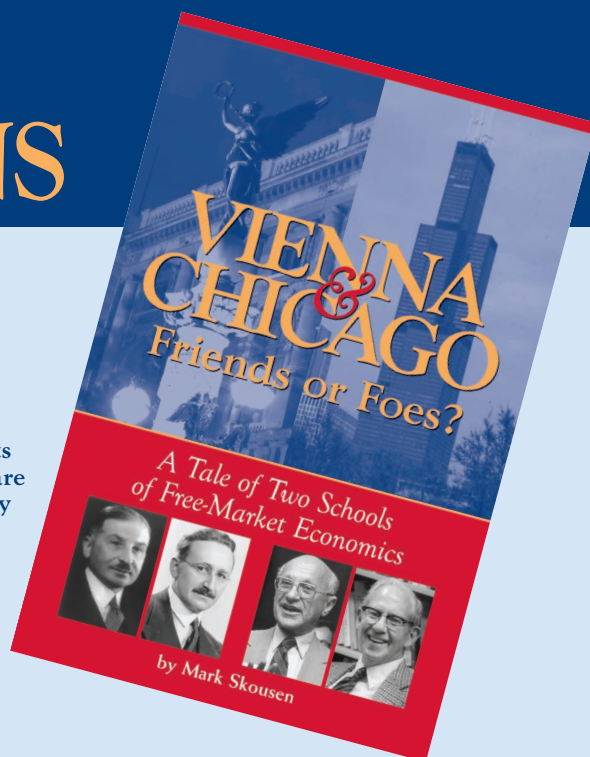
— Ludwig von Mises (Vienna)

"We are friends and foes!"

— Milton Friedman (Chicago)

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- Why Friedman and Mises admire Adam Smith, and Murray Rothbard despises him.
- Why some Austrians call Friedman a "Keynesian" and "a statist" while Friedman calls Mises and Ayn Rand "intolerant" and "extremist."
- Major differences between Mises and Hayek..... and between Stigler and Friedman.
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—Steve Forbes

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Hazardous to Your Freedom

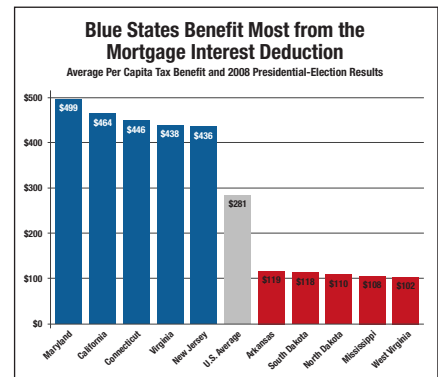
Regarding Daniel Foster's "Smoke Alarm" (July 18): If the nanny state's real objective is to scare a significant number of smokers into stopping puffing, let me suggest a warning for the cigarette package that will truly terrorize: "As much as half of the money you paid for these cigarettes will fund the salaries of people who know what is best for you, and will devise ways to make you do it for your own good."

David K. Hackley
Minneapolis, Minn.

Tax Breaks for Rich Liberals

Regarding Kevin A. Hassett's "Tax Breaks for the (Democratic) Rich" (July 18), I'm surprised NATIONAL REVIEW would publish a report on such a shoddy analysis. Would anyone dispute that homes in Maryland, California, Connecticut, Virginia, and New Jersey are more costly than homes in Arkansas, Mississippi, West Virginia, and the Dakotas? It stands to reason that a greater mortgage value at an identical interest rate would result in a greater dollar benefit.

In the interest of a fair analysis, percentages should have been used, as in analyzing tax-rate reductions.



Alan R. Fedele
Via e-mail

KEVIN A. HASSETT REPLIES: This letter seems to miss the point, so let me humbly restate it.

The benefits of tax reform are beyond dispute. Yet while Democrats often talk a good game, advocating a broader base and lower tax rates in the abstract, they always seem to abandon ship when reform is sighted. The fact that two of the largest base-narrowing measures (the mortgage-interest deduction and the state-and-local-income-tax deduction) disproportionately benefit Democrats is probably the best explanation available for this behavior.

Yes, liberals tend to live in areas that are more densely populated and have higher property values. That's why they defend the mortgage-interest deduction to the death.

Correction

Maggie Gallagher's "Gay Old Party?" (August 1) asserted that conservative donor Paul Singer funds *The Weekly Standard*. He does not.

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The Week

■ Mr. Strauss-Kahn seems quite well qualified to be prime minister—of Italy.

■ Rep. Michele Bachmann and former governor Tim Pawlenty, both Minnesotans, have been trading jabs as they run for president. Pawlenty says she has never accomplished much in government and often gets her facts wrong, and he took the opportunity to needle her over the migraine story (see below). Bachmann says he was a squishy governor who left the state with a budget mess. There are elements of truth in both sets of accusations. Pawlenty was as conservative a governor as Minnesota has had, but he did bend from time to time. Bachmann is opportunistic, on the other hand, in repeating the Democratic/liberal-Republican line that Pawlenty is to blame for the recent budget standoff. (Their indictment: He should have raised taxes.) Pawlenty has not shown grace under pressure in responding to Bachmann. These candidates clearly get under each other's skin, so don't expect to see any "Minnesota nice" on display.

■ Former aides to Representative Bachmann went to the press, anonymously, to say that the presidential candidate had been hospitalized on several occasions because of migraine headaches resulting in part from stress. Bachmann then released a statement from a doctor who has seen her and who attests that her condition is well controlled. And there, barring further information, is where the story should end. Voters should know whether the candidate is up to the demands of the job, physically and psychologically. Based on the public record, Representative Bachmann is.

■ Google "Marcus Bachmann" and the first suggested search is "Marcus Bachmann gay." It's going to be that kind of campaign, because his wife scares the crusty Birkenstocks off of the Left. Mr. Bachmann is a Christian (second search suggested by Google: "Marcus Bachmann Jewish"), he accepts his faith's historic teachings on sex and marriage, and he runs a counseling center. Ergo, he is the reincarnation of Josef Mengele. Mr. Bachmann's particular crime in the eyes of the Left is that his practice will, if requested, offer counseling to people who have homosexual inclinations from which they wish to be free. His critics began by denouncing him as a snake-oil salesman and quickly escalated to denouncing him as a closet homosexual. Among those making the accusation is Jon Stewart, the Walter Cronkite of attention-deficit Democrats. Exhibiting equal vulgarity, a gay blogger in Los Angeles has offered a \$10,000 bounty for proof that Mr. Bachmann is gay. There isn't an atom of evidence that he is, of course, and there was a time, right around the mid-1990s, when Democrats regarded inquiring into the sex lives of public figures as a species of witch hunt. But now they think they've found a witch.

Rahm Emanuel
(see page 8)



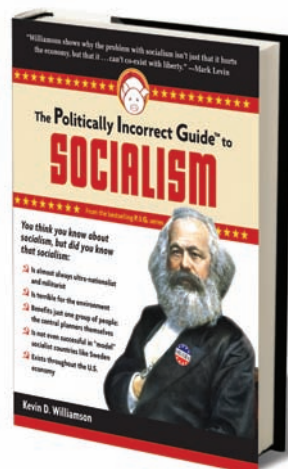
■ Las Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn, a noted Democrat, believes that he has discovered the main impediment to job growth: President Obama. "The business community in this country is frightened to death of the weird political philosophy of the president of the United States," he said in a conference call with investors. "This administration is the greatest wet blanket to business and progress and job creation in my lifetime." Mr. Wynn might note that the administration's chief legislative enabler is his dear friend Sen. Harry Reid of Nevada, and that his continued support of Reid helps ensure that President Obama's "weird political philosophy" becomes the law of the land.

■ Herman Cain continues to demonstrate that his impressive skills as a corporate executive are not readily transferable to a campaign for the presidency. Weighing in on a controversy surrounding the construction of a mosque in Tennessee, Cain opined: "It is an infringement and an abuse of our freedom of religion." But of course it is our freedom of religion that allows for the construction of mosques. Mr. Cain talks about restoring the Constitution. Perhaps he ought to give it a read.

■ Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey has paused between challenging teachers' unions and taming the Democratic legislature to approve a plan that allows the dispensation of marijuana

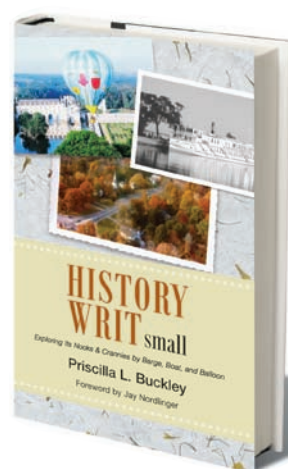
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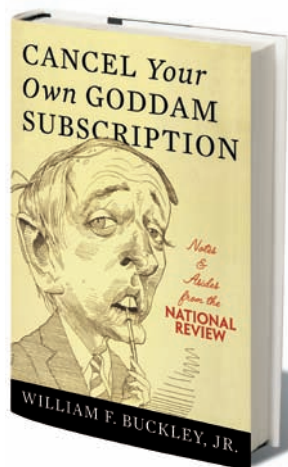
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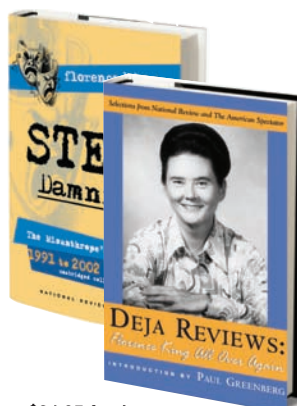
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for medical reasons. Unlike some states' medical-marijuana schemes, in which shady "clinics" are everywhere and declaring yourself subject to headaches or low spirits is enough to get a prescription, the New Jersey plan will distribute marijuana from six state-licensed dispensaries only, and strict medical protocols will be observed. While we favor having no limits at all on marijuana sales to adults, this could be a case where strong regulation is better than weak, because setting up obstacles to selling marijuana and then accepting virtually any excuse as medically valid merely creates a class of dishonest parasites.

■ Rupert Murdoch's travails continue to leak into politics in Britain and possibly here. Tory prime minister David Cameron has joined the pack of Murdoch critics, because Andy Coulson, one of the News Corporation employees allegedly behind the late *News of the World's* phone hacking, later worked as Cameron's communications director. Cameron had best be nimble—as a man of no ideology, he has no base to fall back on. The glib moderate is ever prey to the ill winds of fortune. Meanwhile, the FBI is investigating whether the phones of 9/11 victims were hacked. Shame on the hackers if true. Of more interest politically, four Democratic senators asked Eric Holder to investigate whether News Corporation—incorporated in Delaware—violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act by

power to deny legal recognition to same-sex marriage: that seeks to use the courts to force all states to provide such recognition. President Obama is in this camp. Even though he claims to oppose same-sex marriage himself, he also seeks the repeal or judicial invalidation of the Defense of Marriage Act, which allows states to preserve the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman. Governor Perry may be, as his supporters insist, a fine federalist and an impeccable social conservative. But taking the right side in a battle is useless unless you know where the battle lines are.

■ Opponents of same-sex marriage have long argued that if legal sanction is extended to such unions, it will be impossible in principle to resist demands for recognition of bigamous, polygamous, polyandrous, and incestuous unions. Sure enough, here is eminent law professor Jonathan Turley, in a *New York Times* op-ed, arguing that the polygamous Brown family of Utah—Mr. Brown, his four wives, and their 16 children—should be left alone by state authorities, who have been bothering them. "They want to be allowed to create a loving family according to the values of their faith." Professor Turley is lead counsel for the Browns in a challenge they have filed to their state's criminal law. Yes, it's a slippery slope. At the top of that slope is the traditional conservative conviction that heterosexual pairing is the only arrangement conformable to natural

Governor Perry may be, as his supporters insist, a fine federalist and an impeccable social conservative. But taking the right side in a battle is useless unless you know where the battle lines are.

bribing British cops for tips. Would such payments constitute "obtaining or retaining business"—the actions forbidden by the statute? Were they hidden in News Corporation's books—a possible SEC violation? File it under Battlespace Preparation, 2012 Elections.

■ One thing went right for the world in Parliament's grilling of Rupert Murdoch over the hacking scandal: When a "comic" named Jonnie Marbles threw a plate of foam at him, Marbles was smacked by Wendi Deng, the victim's tiger wife, and reviled by fans of decorum and enemies of Murdoch (who felt the tycoon had been made to seem sympathetic) alike. There can be a place for the clever heckle. But throwing objects, even as lightweight as cream pies or foam, crosses the line, however slightly, to violence, dishonestly disguised as humor. A comic would have thought of a clever jibe, but that would have left him open to a retort—which Marbles would have been even less able to deal with than he was with Wendi Deng's hook.

■ Texas governor Rick Perry (R.), noting that New York has enacted a law recognizing same-sex marriage, said, "That's New York, and that's their business, and that's fine with me. That is their call. If you believe in the Tenth Amendment, stay out of their business." Nobody disputes that New York has the legal power to redefine marriage within its borders. But there is a powerful contingent that disputes whether Texas has the

law and therefore the only sure foundation for social stability. At the bottom of the slope is the libertarian view that the state has no business in our private lives beyond enforcing their legal-contractual aspects, and the needs of children can be addressed ad hoc. Which of these positions prevails will determine the moral landscape of 21st-century America.

■ Details continue to trickle out regarding Fast and Furious—the bizarre sting operation in which federal agents allowed Mexican drug cartels to purchase firearms from American gun shops and then waited for the weapons to turn up at crime scenes. Kenneth Melson, acting director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, met with congressional investigators on Independence Day, and the details of that meeting emerged in a letter from Sen. Charles Grassley (R., Iowa) and Rep. Darrell Issa (R., Calif.) to Attorney General Eric Holder. Melson at last conceded that agents allowed trafficked guns out of their surveillance, and accused the Obama administration of trying to deflect blame for the program away from political appointees. It also seems that at least one of the people the misbegotten operation had in its sights was actually an FBI informant. Further, news broke that two targets of the program had been arrested for felonies in the past—and yet these suspects managed to buy more than 350 guns before being arrested. The Justice Department, meanwhile, continues to avoid answering simple questions, such as:



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Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices

How was this program supposed to work, and who within the Obama administration knew about it?

■ Minnesota governor Mark Dayton (D.) thought he could bully the Republican-led state legislature into approving his state budget. Instead of planning to spend just the \$34 billion the state was expected to receive in the next biennium, as Republicans wanted, Dayton demanded a \$37 billion budget, funded by a more “progressive” income tax on individuals making more than \$1 million. When Republicans refused, Dayton forced a 20-day government shutdown, the longest in state history. Two weeks into it, however, he caved, jettisoning his call for tax hikes. In exchange, Republicans surrendered their plan to cut 15 percent of the state workforce. It’s not hard to see why compromise was reached: When MillerCoors’s liquor license expired, the paper pushers at the licensing agency were on furlough. The brewer, which supplies 38 percent of the beer sold in Minnesota, almost had to take its prod-

ucts off state shelves, and the public was less than pleased. Now, the state budget will spend only about \$35 billion. It will pay for the \$1 billion increase with accounting gimmicks and new debt, but, by stopping a tax increase, Republicans have shown voters the value of having given them control of the legislature last fall.

■ Rahm Emanuel, elected mayor of Chicago this February past and formerly Barack Obama’s White House chief of staff, is not best known for restrained diffidence in dealing with adversaries. In an interview with NBC’s Mary Ann Ahern, Emanuel was asked which Chicago school he would be sending his kids to. He got testy, telling the interviewer it was none of her business. When she persisted he unclipped his lapel mike, dropped it on the floor, and headed for the door. Ahern later reported that when the cameras had stopped rolling, Emanuel came back: “The Mayor of Chicago positioned himself inches from my face and pointed his finger directly at my

One for the History Books

THE National Bureau of Economic Research’s Business Cycle Dating Committee has collected data on every American recession since the 1850s. These data make clear that America has experienced economic calamity many times. The Great Recession that began in December 2007 was a much longer recession than Americans had grown used to, but our grandparents and great-grandparents saw far worse.

The latest recession lasted a painful 18 months, more than double the length of the two previous ones. But if we look back to 1854, that duration seems relatively short. Between 1865 and 1885, there were three recessions that lasted more than 32 months, and since 1854 there have been twelve recessions (out of 33 total) that lasted at least as long as our “Great” one.

Which means that there was ample historical opportunity for a president to preside over a terrible economy, and there are many possible candidates for the worst presidential economic record in modern American history.

Perhaps the most commonly relied-upon metric of economic well-being is job creation. The nearby chart draws on job-creation data that go back to 1890, spanning a period with seven recessions that were at least as long as the Great Recession. The chart provides the job-creation records for the five worst presidents over that period. In order to adjust for the changing size of the workforce, job creation is measured in terms of percentage change, and the change is calculated over the first two and a half years of a president’s term in order to allow direct comparison with President Obama.

It is perhaps no surprise that Herbert Hoover’s job-creation record is the worst, since his first two and a half years encompassed the dawn of the Great Depression. But it is surprising, given how terrible recessions were

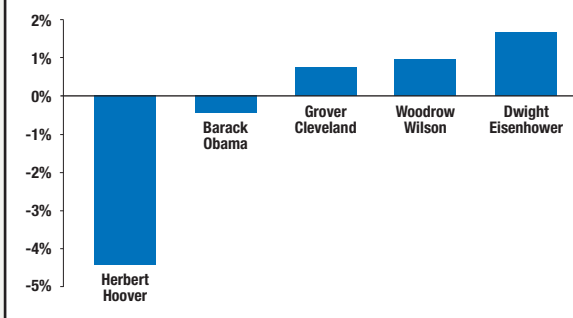
before World War I, that Barack Obama is solidly entrenched in second place. During his first two and a half years, employment has dropped about half a percentage point. Other than Hoover and Obama, no modern American leader has presided over negative job growth for a comparable period.

Obama’s supporters might suggest that the jobs picture would have been far worse without the president’s big-government, high-regulation policies. But past presidents were far less ambitious in hard times, and saw far better results. To put that in perspective, consider that government spending has increased relative to GDP by 3.1 percentage points under President Obama. In 1900, total federal spending was 3.1 percent relative to GDP.

Our great-grandparents may have seen worse recessions than we have, but they did not see a worse president.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

Five Worst Presidents on Job Creation Since 1890



SOURCE: 1890–1947 FROM DAVID R. WEIR’S “A CENTURY OF U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT, 1890–1990”; 1948–2011 FROM BLS.

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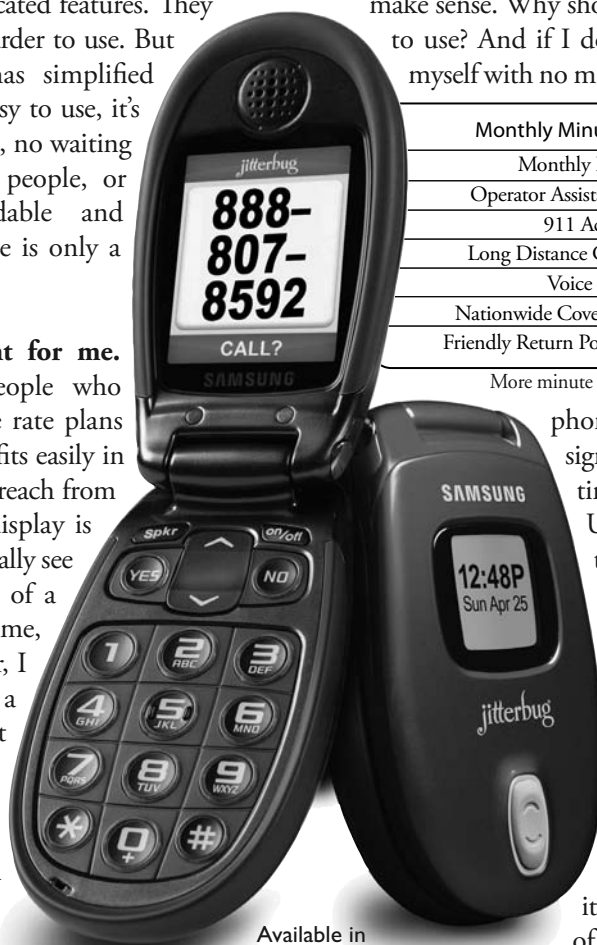
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head. . . . How dare I ask where his children would go to school!" A politician's desire to shield his loved ones from the coarse combat of his job is commendable. For a left-liberal politician of the Democratic persuasion who would rather his children not attend the public schools whose employees' union dues fund his party, and whose virtues he is therefore obliged constantly to praise, family privacy is also a mighty convenient trapdoor through which to escape charges of hypocrisy.

■ To what degree should bad parenting concern the public authorities? Plainly there is *some* point at which it should. Opinions differ, naturally, on just where. Obesity specialist Dr. David Ludwig of Children's Hospital Boston (which is affiliated with Harvard University) recently editorialized in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that morbidly obese children with serious obesity-related health problems should be placed in public care. His case is not a contemptible one; but expansions of state power over the private lives of citizens, however disorderly, should be resisted. Should children addicted to computer games likewise be placed in care? Children whose parents smoke? The state may validly, via public-service announcements, inform and encourage us, but

world are now lower than those of George W. Bush, when he left office. We could cite many examples of Obama's conceit and hubris, but take just one, from the '08 campaign: "I truly believe that the day I'm inaugurated . . . not only does the country look at itself differently, but the world looks at America differently." The candidate continued, "The world will have confidence that I am listening to them, and that our future and our security is tied up with our ability to work with other countries in the world." Not so easy, is it, Mr. President?

■ Often, Europeans and American liberals ask why American conservatives have so little respect for the United Nations. Next time they ask, you could tell them this: North Korea is chairing the Conference on Disarmament. If that's not good enough, you could add this: Iran is a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. That should answer their question.

■ In Sweden, 46-year-old Roger Tullgren has been collecting income-support payments from the state ever since his obsession with heavy-metal music was declared a mental disability. (Bear in mind, this is a land where enthusiasm for Abba and

While President Obama's job-approval rating hovers stubbornly in the mid-40s, he can take comfort in the fact that **God Himself** barely commands majority support.

it cannot make us good. Nor can it remedy every possible instance of the immemorial principle that the sins of the parent must, in some measure, be visited upon the child.

■ Quick action by Senate Republicans (and Joe Lieberman) thwarted an administration plan to release the Hezbollah commander who built Iran's Shiite terror network in Iraq. U.S. forces captured Ali Mussa Daqduq in Iraq shortly after his network abducted and murdered five American soldiers in Karbala in 2007. They also captured two of the terrorist ring-leaders, Qais and Laith Khazali. The Obama administration transferred the Khazali brothers to Iraq for release in a prisoner exchange for five British hostages (four of whom turned out to be dead)—a reckless departure from U.S. doctrine against negotiating with terrorists. In May, Obama's Justice Department provoked congressional ire by signaling that it would bring Daqduq to the U.S. for a civilian trial. With a looming year's-end deadline for transferring prisoners to Iraq, and seeking to avoid another debacle like the DoJ's failed effort to give 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Moham—med a civilian trial, the administration apparently decided to release this enemy to return to the jihad against our troops rather than anger the president's base by sending him to Gitmo for military detention and trial. A letter from the senators to the Defense Department embarrassed the administration into calling off the plan—for now.

■ If you could resist a smile when hearing this news, you're a better man than we: President Obama's ratings in the Arab

lutfisk is considered normal.) Tullgren's condition, first diagnosed by a Swedish psychometallurgist in 2007, also gives him the right to skip work so he can attend concerts, and to wear heavy-metal gear to his job (as a kitchen porter—surprisingly high-skilled for a metalhead). It is easy to call this a case of socialism gone wild, or to say that Sweden's disability policy is to genuine concern for mental health as Slayer is to Mozart, but the same thing could easily happen here. After all, British headbangers have been asked to list their religion as "heavy metal" on this year's census by no less a personage than Biff Byford, whose preppie-sounding name belies his occupation as frontman for the durable band Saxon. So an American metal fan could easily exact similar concessions under the First Amendment doctrine of "reasonable accommodation" for religious practices. As Oscar Wilde should have said, these days people are religious about everything except religion.

■ While President Obama's job-approval rating hovers stubbornly in the mid-40s, he can take comfort in the fact that God Himself barely commands majority support. According to a survey conducted in late July by the Democratic polling company Public Policy Polling, 52 percent of respondents felt that "if God exists" they approve of "its performance." (PPP explained that "because not everyone who believes in God believes God to be male," referring to God as "it" was "more inclusive.") Majorities also approved of God's handling of the issues apparently falling within His purview: the creation of the universe, natural disasters, and—inexplicably—animals. No word from the pollsters on what God thinks of us.

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■ At this writing, Al Sharpton is set to host a show on MSNBC. Apparently, his days of inciting riots and making false accusations of rape are over. He's Mainstream Al now. But if ratings are stubbornly low, maybe MSNBC will ask him to revert?

■ In other MSNBC news, Contessa Brewer has done it again. This beautiful anchorwoman's career has been a joy to follow. In the summer of 2009, she said, "There are questions about whether this has racial overtones." She was talking about a pro-gun rally outside a hall where President Obama was giving a speech. "I mean, here you have a man of color in the presidency and white people showing up with guns." Her network was showing a man packing heat. They were showing only the

middle of his body. Then it turned out the man was black. Oops. A couple of months later, she introduced Jesse Jackson as . . . Al Sharpton. Do all the reverends look alike to her? A conservative would have been impaled. Now she has had an exchange with Rep. Mo Brooks, an Alabama Republican. She was trying to educate him about economics, telling him that, without the Democrats' massive spending, we would be in a depression. Brooks said he disagreed. Brewer asked, sniffily, "Do you have a degree in economics?" With calm courtliness, he replied, "Yes, ma'am, I do. Highest honors." Every once in a while, watching MSNBC is a pleasure.

■ Johann Hari made a reputation for himself by flooding the columns of the *Independent* (London) with maximum political correctness. (He also wrote a sneering account of a NATIONAL REVIEW cruise.) In 2008, judges appointed by the Media Standards Trust—as the name implies, it is somewhere between a busybody and a toothless watchdog—awarded a "George Orwell Prize" to him. Orwell's integrity had marked the world in his day, and Hari enjoyed association with it. But not so fast. Attentive readers spotted that he has the habit of splicing into his articles quotations taken from elsewhere without attribution. As if the charge of plagiarism were not enough, it also turns out that he has gone in for exaggeration in his reportage, and deception in blogging against his critics under a false name. His editor at first expressed confidence in Hari, but later was obliged to suspend him as the evidence of malpractice mounted. An internal investigation is now under way. Whatever the newspaper comes up with, the Trust people have let it be known that they will be withdrawing their prize from what Orwell's famous Newspeak would reduce to *double-plusungood Hari*.

■ Amy Winehouse sang like someone much older than she was: a 60-year-old R&B queen, perhaps. She will now never grow into her voice. Reports that she had bought a cornucopia of drugs before her death were contradicted by her family, but the damage had already been done during years of punishing indulgence. There is a respectable argument that drug legalization would cause levels of use, after an initial rise, to fall over

time. Such a curve, if true, would scarcely have helped her (one of her poisons was alcohol, legal here since 1933 and in Britain forever). Drugs are a handy tool for the suicidal: a word to those with any wisdom in them. Among the reams of tabloid copy, she left a delightful album. Dead at 27, R.I.P.



■ Nguyen Cao Ky was a 34-year-old South Vietnamese air-force officer when he took control of the country in a 1965 coup. His rise to the top ended a cycle of mid-Sixties coups and plots; when he was finally shunted aside, he went peacefully. The new government of South Vietnam was too corrupt, however, to win the approval of American liberals. Ky returned their scorn, telling journalist Oriana Fallaci that America and the white race were played out. He flew a chopper out of Saigon as it fell, and sought refuge in the United States. In the 2000s, he reconciled with the Communists and tried to boost investment in Vietnam. His style was flashy: thin mustache, black flight suit, purple scarf. Ky was a Vietnamese patriot with insufficient gifts, insufficient luck, and insufficient allies. Dead at 80. R.I.P.

■ Lucian Freud revitalized the art of portrait painting. The work was always formal, a completely finished and realistic study in character. His models, whether men or women, were usually naked, and the frailty of their flesh, the whole pitiful clumsiness of the human being, was at the center of this artist's disquieting vision. His view of the world and its inhabitants was as concentrated and personal as that of his famous grandfather Sigmund. Born in Berlin but escaping while still young from Hitler, he carried something of the refugee about him, as if always on the run to somewhere else. His cold eye and dismissive manner were the talk of the town. So were his bohemian habits. He is supposed to have fathered more children than could be counted and to have gambled away the immense sums his pictures brought in. He had no time for journalists or critics. How to make the next picture an immortal work of art was really all that mattered. He died at the age of 88. R.I.P.

POLITICS

Debt Burdens

FOR anyone who expected transformational changes from the fight over the debt-limit increase, Speaker John Boehner's plan to raise the limit is a disappointment. But as a way to begin to control Washington's spending, and to avoid the potential economic and political downsides should the debt fight go wrong, it is a worthy framework.

The Boehner plan increases the debt limit by \$1 trillion, or a little less, immediately. At the same time, it would cap discretionary spending so that the government has to spend roughly \$1 trillion less over the next ten years than it currently plans to. These caps would be enforceable law, valid unless both houses of Congress and the president decided to break them. In the

second phase of the plan, a bipartisan congressional committee would recommend roughly \$1.8 trillion in additional deficit reduction. Congress would consider the recommendations under an expedited procedure, and if they passed, President Obama could ask for another debt increase of \$1.5 trillion to get beyond the 2012 election.

The advantages of the plan are that it does not raise taxes, it imposes some spending restraint, and it reduces the risk of disruption to credit markets. It could get through the Senate and, if it did, President Obama would almost certainly have to sign it—which would be a political defeat, given that the president first sought an unconditional increase in the debt limit, subsequently sought tax increases, and is now implying that he will not sign a short-term deal.

But the Boehner plan has downsides, too, which its proponents would be wise to acknowledge and, where possible, remedy. The initial savings are tiny—and will likely remain so even as Boehner scrambles to revise the plan to make it more palatable to conservatives. (The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the real cut from this fiscal year to the next would be a pathetic \$1 billion.) The big numbers accrue only over time, and who knows what Congress is going to look like five, eight, or ten years from now? While the first tranche of the plan features, in theory, a one-for-one match of spending cuts to increased borrowing authority, no one can say what would happen with the second tranche. The committee the plan sets up smacks of typical Washington buck-passing, and it could become a vehicle for a tax increase along the lines of what the Gang of Six proposed. The plan might not impress the rating agencies enough to prevent a downgrade to the federal government's credit.

Thus we understand the skepticism of House conservatives. They should by all means work to improve the plan. In particular, they should try to make the up-front cuts and the total savings larger. If they can't strip out the committee the plan establishes, they should push to stipulate that it may recommend spending cuts but not tax increases, and insist that Boehner and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell commit to naming the likes of Jeb Hensarling, Paul Ryan, and Scott Garrett—anti-taxers and spending hawks all—to the committee. Boehner, for his part, should be open to these changes. He wants a plan that can pass the Senate and believes his qualifies. But the Democratic Senate is bound to make some changes. So let Boehner first concentrate on getting a majority in the House and then go to the Senate with a stronger negotiating position.

What House conservatives should not do, we think, is simply work to blow up the plan in the hope that wondrous things will happen when it explodes. Some of our friends in the House seem to think that if they push the stalemate far enough that the government hits the debt limit, victory will fall into their laps and scores of Democrats will go along with a constitutional amendment that requires balanced budgets and limits spending. It is more likely that, with Republicans having openly pushed for blowing the deadline, they will be blamed for any negative consequences. Senate Republicans may cut and run even before that point, isolating the House and making it more likely that a rump of House Republicans will work along with Democrats to pass something worse than the Boehner plan. The least likely outcome is that liberals will sign a suicide note by acquiescing, in the next week or two, to

the enshrinement of conservative fiscal goals in the Constitution.

The Boehner plan, even in modified form, is surely not the sort of compromise House freshmen envisioned passing when they came to Washington. But they have already made a difference. Without them, a clean debt-limit increase or a Gang of Six deal would have likely passed Congress. Without them, there would be no spending cuts at all. But a plan that does everything we conservatives think necessary to secure our fiscal future cannot be enacted in today's Washington. The election of Barack Obama in 2008, and the Democratic retention of the Senate in 2010, had consequences that continue to this day.

The 2012 elections will have consequences, too. If Obama is reelected, the further socialization of American medicine will proceed and the modernization of entitlements will not. Taxes will very likely go up. If Republicans want to return the federal government to its proper constitutional dimensions, the legislation they advance now must do as much good as possible while also laying the groundwork for the election of conservatives, and the defeat of liberals, in 15 months. The easier they make it for Obama to blame Republicans for hurting the economy with debt-limit brinkmanship, the more they will undermine that goal.

What Republicans should do, then, is simple, albeit difficult. Cut spending. Hold the line on taxes. Avoid a fiscal crisis. Defeat Obama and Senate Democrats. And with a new mandate and additional allies, set to work bringing lasting change to Washington.





Grieving in Oslo

TERRORISM

Mass Murder in Norway

ANDERS BREIVIK'S mannequin-handsome visage has gone around the world, as he hoped. The 32-year-old Norwegian killed eight people with a bomb in downtown Oslo, then killed almost 70, execution style, on a nearby island youth camp of the ruling Labor party. Everyone must sympathize with the dead, with their family and friends, and with a country rudely thrust into a violent nightmare.

Breivik is no psychotic loner, like Jared Loughner or the Virginia Tech shooter, but a politically minded mass-murderer, like Timothy McVeigh and the jihadist terrorists who have afflicted the world in the last dozen years. Breivik posted a 1,500-page manifesto online, rife with bizarre touches: He quoted long swatches from Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, and showed a video-gamer's fascination with the Knights Templar (he posed in a made-up uniform, complete with self-awarded medals).

His basic analysis seems clear enough. He feared Muslim domination of Europe and the "cultural Marxism" that enabled it. That is not an impossible prospect, and he decorated his analysis with quotations from sensible commentators on the terror war and its causes, including Mark Steyn, Rod Dreher, Daniel Pipes, and other NR writers. Unlike them and us, however, his strategy was to ignite a literal revolution against Europe's corrupt governing class. His targets were an array of "traitors" (whom he helpfully divided into Class A

and Class B), ranging from most of the Norwegian establishment to Prince Charles; he evidently hoped that Norway's former prime minister would be at the Labor party camp he attacked. His thought-world was classically extreme: All is lost, apocalypse now. So were his methods: He took the weapons of violence into his own hands, and directed them not against his ultimate enemies but against those who failed to fight them. He said he acted alone, but he also claimed like-minded fellows throughout Europe.

Leftists and radical Muslims will use Breivik as a stick to beat their own political enemies. That is par for the course. The defenders of the West say to Breivik and any potential admirers that he was as thoughtless as he is wicked. The tools of struggle in free societies are argument, politics, and war, the declaration of which is reserved to duly constituted authorities and the conduct of which is not to deliberately target the peaceable. Christians, who are assured that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against them, have additional weapons: faith, hope, and charity. The fight will be long. Good police work should be able to keep Breivik's few fellow *enragés* under wraps. Jihadi violence, by contrast, is incubated in failed states, funded by rogue states and freelance donors, and propagated through a network of sympathizers worldwide.

Norway unfortunately has no death penalty. At least Anders Breivik will live long enough to see his thoughts and causes returned to a well-deserved obscurity.

OBITUARY

Dorothy McCartney, R.I.P.

IN its earliest days, NATIONAL REVIEW identified itself on its cover as "A Journal of Fact and Opinion." For the last 36 years many of those facts were wrangled, sifted, and marshaled by Dorothy McCartney (1953–2011).

She came to NR from Smith. In short order her office at the old building on East 35th Street was on the third floor, WFB's floor. Hers was to his left, Frances Bronson's to his right. They were the two wings that kept him flying through the controversy-sphere. When the baroque fanfare from the Second Brandenburg cut out and Bill proceeded to introduce his *Firing Line* guest, the life story, the telling quote, the bright detail had come from Dorothy. She worked equally well with John O'Sullivan, losing not a step to his midnight dinners or his insatiable appetite for conferences. Dusty Rhodes, Jack Fowler: She served them all.

It is impossible to think of her failing to assist anyone in need. Her appearance was striking—fair skin, red hair, eyes you would have called demure except for their 22-carat flash. She saw everything, and much of it amused her—she could have written, blindfolded and standing on one leg, the Bill-and-his-world book that Sam Tanenhaus is laboring on—but she worked professionally and charitably.

She succumbed to a two-year battle with cancer, which made a second assault after seeming to relent—a test of anyone's faith. But her Catholicism was as solid as it was unostentatious. She was cared for by her brother, the Rev. John McCartney, to whom our condolences.

R.I.P., dear colleague, dear friend.

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*Thank-you.
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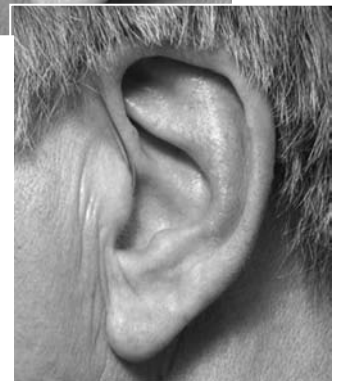
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Credibility Deficit

A balanced-budget amendment would not be enforced

BY RAMESH PONNURU

REPUBLICANS have long sought to amend the Constitution to require that the federal budget be balanced. President Reagan campaigned for an amendment, and the Senate voted for it by the necessary two-thirds margin during his first term, but the Democratic-controlled House did not. The Contract with America, the House Republicans' campaign platform in 1994, promised a vote on it, and the next year the House passed it, but this time the Senate fell short by one vote.

Having taken control of the House while inveighing against the debt, Republicans have renewed their quest for an amendment. Both House speaker John Boehner and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell have argued that Congress should pass an amendment as part of a deal to raise the debt ceiling, and the House has approved legislation to raise the debt ceiling if one passes. Some congressmen have taken a pledge to support a higher debt ceiling only if an amendment passes. Although they are using tactics of unprecedented aggressiveness, Republicans will almost certainly fail again in their campaign to secure a balanced-

budget amendment—which is a good thing.

The version of the amendment that Republicans are promoting now is significantly more conservative than the versions Congress considered in the 1980s and 1990s. The legislation the House passed says that the constitutional amendment should do more than just require a balanced budget. To pass muster, it must also set a limit on government spending as a proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP) and block tax increases unless two-thirds of each house of Congress demands them.

The Senate Republicans' version of the amendment—all of them are co-sponsoring it—adds more specificity. Spending would be limited to 18 percent of the previous year's GDP, and the president would have to submit to Congress a budget with spending so limited and balance expected. Congress would have to muster a two-thirds majority to pass any bill that spends in excess of receipts, or in excess of that 18 percent. Raising the debt ceiling would require a three-fifths majority of each house. The balanced-budget requirement, the spending limit, and the supermajority requirement to raise the

debt ceiling would be waived if Congress has (by majority vote) declared war. Congress could also, by a three-fifths vote, waive these provisions in order to authorize deficit spending for military conflicts other than declared wars.

House Republicans have advanced two versions of the amendment. One is identical to the Senate version. The other is less stringent. It would set a spending limit of 18 percent of the current year's GDP rather than the previous year's (which will usually be smaller because of economic growth). It would require a smaller (three-fifths) supermajority to break the balanced-budget rule. It would waive the two-thirds-vote requirement to raise taxes during a declared war, in addition to waiving the other requirements. It would require only a majority vote to establish the existence of "a military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security" that justifies waiving the amendment.

There are, generally speaking, five classes of objections to a balanced-budget amendment. The first is that it would result in a government too small to meet the nation's needs. Robert Greenstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal group, estimates that we have not had a government that spent 18 percent of the previous year's GDP since the mid-1950s. While the public generally favors smaller government, at least when the proposition is put to it in abstract terms in polls, it is hard to see 38 states—many of them reliant on federal deficit spending to balance their own budgets—ratifying such a tight limit on federal spending. If ratification could be achieved, on the other hand, presumably it would be after the development of a strong national consensus for this tight limit. So this criticism has more force as an argument for the unlikelihood of the amendment's ever taking effect than as one for its undesirability.

The second line of criticism is that the government must sometimes run deficits during peacetime. Like the amendment itself, this criticism comes in multiple versions. One—we could call it 2a—stresses that a zero-deficit rule is unnecessary, because a persistent but small deficit (say, 2 percent of GDP) is compatible with a stable and manageable ratio of debt to GDP. What is true in mathematics, however, may not be true in politics. It may be that people are incapable, collectively, of confining themselves to a 2 percent deficit rule: that



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once a political culture has granted itself the permission to run a deficit, it will let it grow well past that point. If so, then a simple bright-line rule might make sense.

Or it would, if not for 2b: A balanced-budget rule would require that governments greet recessions by either raising taxes or (more likely under the current Republican version of the amendment) cutting spending. Most economists believe that either step would cause more economic pain. There are two ways to avoid this scenario. One would trust the Federal Reserve to run monetary policy in such a way as to compensate perfectly for these ups and downs. That seems optimistic. Alternatively, the government could run a surplus during boom years and then shrink it during recessions. But that policy would require a degree of political

A conservative supporter of the amendment might respond that luckily, we do not have such high tax rates today, that the current version of the amendment will prevent them from ever rising that high again, and that cutting tax rates further is not terribly important. But is it really sensible to make a semi-permanent alteration to our basic law in response to the conditions of the political moment—to make an amendment that would have been disastrous three decades ago the supreme law of the land now? Is it really impossible to imagine a future in which the amendment would bar constructive and even necessary tax reform?

Some supporters of the amendment have hinted that they might be willing to drop the limitation on tax increases in order to win more congressional support.

evade its requirements. There is still the question of how to force a collective decision.

Let's say that an unexpected collapse of inflation causes revenues to come in below expectations, as happened in the early 1980s. Each and every congressman in this scenario supports a plan to bring spending and revenue back into balance, as constitutionally required. But some want to cut program A, some want to cut program B, and some want to raise taxes. The amendment does not force Congress to adopt any of these plans; nothing happens if it fails to do so.

Both versions of the amendment under consideration attempt to address this problem by requiring supermajorities to pass spending bills in excess of 18 percent of GDP (or of revenues, or of last year's rev-

Is it really sensible to make **an amendment** that would have been disastrous three decades ago the supreme law of the land now?

discipline that, if it existed, would render the balanced-budget amendment unnecessary in the first place.

A third commonly voiced criticism is that it is improper, or somehow beneath the dignity of the Constitution, to codify within it policy goals. This is partly a matter of aesthetics, but also partly a matter of ensuring that the Constitution retains a character capable of eliciting a wholesome reverence. The more it partakes of the specificity and arbitrariness of which a traffic code must, the less it will have that character.

Fourth, this amendment could stand in the way of worthwhile reforms to the tax code. Even most liberals implicitly agree that we are better off without the Carter-era tax code, with its top marginal rate of 70 percent. But would the Reagan tax cuts have been possible had any of these balanced-budget amendments been in effect? Supply-siders make the case that cutting tax rates did not actually cause the ratio of revenue to GDP to drop, and just glancing at a graph of that ratio over time supports that case. But if the Congress of 1981 had been required to meet a constitutional requirement to keep spending and revenues tightly aligned, it would probably not have passed major tax cuts. We could well have been stuck with 70 percent tax rates for additional decades.

Needless to say, this change to the amendment would magnify the danger.

So far I would score 2b and 3 as having struck at least weak blows against the amendment, and 4 as having put a real dent in it. But it is the fifth argument that seems to me decisive: There is no way to enforce the amendment that is both desirable and reliable. The Senate version of the amendment prohibits courts from raising taxes to balance the budget, but otherwise does not limit judicial power. To allow courts to cut defense spending, or otherwise set budget priorities, would be an appalling retreat from republican government. Judicial meddling would be a constant threat unless there were an explicit ban.

If judicial enforcement is off the table, though, what's left? Several Republican congressmen who support the amendment say in interviews with NATIONAL REVIEW that they expect future congressmen to abide by it simply because it would be in the Constitution. Let us assume—for the sake of argument, and with foolhardy charity—that all our elected officials would display this degree of conscientiousness. Let's also assume that nobody would exploit the opportunities the amendment's wording would almost certainly create to manipulate the definition of such terms as "GDP" and "outlays" to

enues). Maybe this method would work if each year's spending were determined by legislation that Congress voted on during that year, though even then there would be ample opportunities for mischief: The congressional leadership could schedule votes so that all the funding to keep the Pentagon and the national monuments in operation represented "excess outlays"; two-thirds of Congress would then vote for it. The president could play similar games when submitting, as he would have to do, a balanced budget.

Leave that aside too, because there's an even bigger problem with a balanced-budget amendment. A large and increasing share of federal spending does not have to be authorized each year; in dollar amount, it does not have to be authorized ever. If we did not have so much of this sort of spending—entitlement spending—we would not be facing the future of massive debt that has inspired support for this amendment in the first place.

If Social Security and Medicare push federal spending to 25 percent of GDP, what would happen under the amendment? Would courts order the programs to be cut? If so, how? Reining in entitlements raises questions about whose answers there is no political consensus. Finding those answers is a burden from which an amendment cannot deliver us. **NR**

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Are the Palestinians Ready for Peace?

Why Arab intransigence makes peace most unlikely.

Just as all the presidents since Harry Truman before him, President Obama is spending much time, effort, and political capital trying to bring about peace between Israel and the Palestinians Arabs. If history is any guide, he will be as unsuccessful in this endeavor, just as every one of his predecessors.

What are the facts?

Many attempts at peace. In order to understand the unlikelihood of peace in the Middle East, it is necessary to trace the history of peace-making attempts between Israel and the Palestinians. Virtually all of them resulted in complete failure. Here is a list of only the most important of such events:

The enmity of the Arabs against the Jews in their midst and the violence against them predates the creation of the Jewish state.

There were some peace proposals during the British Mandate (prior to 1948), but they were in vain and deserve little mention in this narrative. Notable was the Peel Commission proposal in 1937, in which the creation of an Arab state was suggested, but the Arabs rejected it.

The most important proposal in the history of peace making was the 1947 U.N.

Resolution to create a large Arab state with the Jews receiving two disjointed pieces, consisting mostly of much of the coastline and the Negev Desert. Jerusalem was to be internationalized. The Jews accepted the plan. The Arabs totally rejected it. Instead, they invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five Arab nations, in hopes to "drive the Jews into the sea" (one of their favorite imageries). Of course, that isn't the way it turned out. Instead, about 650,000 Arabs fled the area, mostly under the goading of their leaders. Remarkably, their descendants, even today, are called "refugees," supported by the United Nations, which means mostly by the United States.

Every year for the last 60+ years, the Arabs memorialize the "Nakba" (catastrophe) of the creation of the State of Israel. But, of course, without the war that they imposed on Israel, there would be no "Nakba." Just as Israel, the Arabs would now be able to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of their Palestinian state.

From 1948 to 1967, Jordan occupied the "West Bank." During the nineteen years of their tenure, not a word was heard about forming a Palestinian state in the area. After the 1967 Six-Day War,

in which the Israelis trounced the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, Jordan's occupation of the "West Bank" ended and so did Egypt's occupation of Gaza. At that time, Israel offered the hand of friendship to the Arabs, which was rudely rejected when the Arabs issued the Three No's of Khartoum: No Peace, No Negotiation, and No Recognition of Israel. Another important opportunity that would have radically changed the history of the Middle East was missed.

"If the Arabs had accepted the 1947 partition plan and had not invaded the nascent Jewish state ...they could be celebrating their country's 63rd anniversary of peace..."

Never-ending efforts at peace. In 1993 and 1995 Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords with the aim of creating a Palestinian state within five years. Israel agreed to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel turned over most of its administration of the territories to the Palestinian Authority (PA). But, the Palestinians violated their commitments,

thus scuttling the agreement.

In 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered to withdraw from 97% of the West Bank and 100% of Gaza. That proposal also guaranteed Palestinian refugees the right to return to the Palestinian state and offered reparations from \$30 billion of international funds that would be collected to compensate them. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat rejected the deal.

In 2003, Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon agreed to negotiate with the Palestinians according to the "road map" formulated by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the U.N. The Palestinians never fulfilled their obligation to normalized relations with Israel and to arrive at a comprehensive peace. Another missed opportunity!

In 2005, Israel unilaterally decided to evacuate every soldier and citizen from Gaza. The "reward" for Israel's evacuation was for the Palestinians to launch rockets into Israel from Gaza at an almost daily rate. There were further attempts in 2007 by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and in 2010 by Prime Minister "Bibi" Netanyahu, but all have ended in failure.

The above chronology is only a partial one, giving only the most important highlights. There have been negotiations, conferences, plans, and meetings almost uninterruptedly. All of them have foundered. The "all-or-nothing" mentality of the Arabs, their unwillingness to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and the Arabs' expressed desire to destroy the hated Jews, have kept peace from flowering. What a shame! If the Arabs had accepted the 1947 partition plan and had not invaded the nascent Jewish state with the armies of five Arab countries, they would not now have the need today to commemorate their "Nakba." They could be celebrating their country's 63rd anniversary, their enduring peace with Israel, and could be part of the tremendous prosperity that Israel has brought to that region of the world.

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Facts and Logic About the Middle East
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Downgraded President

*Mr. Obama has been judged,
and found wanting*

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

I shall not want capital in Heaven / For I shall meet Sir Alfred Mond / We two shall lie together, lapt / In a five per cent. Exchequer Bond. —T. S. Eliot, "A Cooking Egg"

ON Feb. 7, 2010, the secretary of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, was asked whether persistent deficits put the United States in danger of losing its AAA credit rating. "Absolutely not," he said. "That will never happen to this country." A little over a year later it did, when the ratings agency Egan-Jones downgraded the United States to AA.

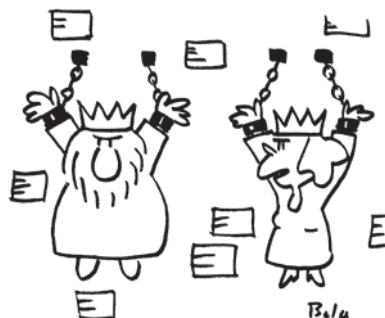
Egan-Jones, though a member of the cartel of ten credit-rating agencies recognized under federal law, is not one of the Big Three (Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch), and its ratings do not generate the same kind of headlines. But it is an interesting firm, and not beloved by the other agencies. One reason for that is the fact that it makes its money by charging bond investors for its information, rather than by charging bond-issuers for ratings, and makes much of this practice, accusing its competitors of having a conflict of interest built right into their business model. Further, the firm's principal went to Congress in 2008 to accuse the ratings industry of having engaged in a race to the bottom for credit standards, which did not make him popular. In some investors' minds, these are reasons to regard Egan-Jones as more credible than its household-name competitors. In any case, the Big Three themselves have warned that, absent a credible deal to rationalize U.S. public finances, a downgrade is likely. And their downgrades would have consequences.

The judgment of the Big Three agencies is taken as gospel by practically no serious investor; their ratings are largely of technical and legal concern. The role of the credit-rating agencies is not to provide guidance and insight to the marketplace,

but to certify the findings of the marketplace as conventional wisdom. But their role is important because of the way banks, insurance companies, pension systems, and other financial firms are regulated. (Contra Rep. Barney Frank et al., our problem was never deregulation; our problem was, and is, regulation written and enforced by dopes.) One of the regulations faced by banks is the "capital requirement," which mandates that a bank must hold a certain amount of capital in reserve to offset its liabilities. But not all capital is created equal, and so \$1 million in AAA bonds offsets more than does \$1 million in AA bonds. Insurers and pension funds operate under similar restraints.

Financial firms hold trillions of dollars in Treasury securities, and a downgrade to AA (or worse—Greece is now down to Ca) would have meaningful consequences, though not necessarily catastrophic ones. Financial firms would be sent scrambling to raise new capital, in a market that would no doubt be panicked by the fact that the United States of America and its once-unshakable Treasury bond have been caught with their fiscal pants down. This would be in a sense a replay of the 2008 credit crisis, in which declining mortgage securities forced banks to raise capital, which they did by selling those same declining securities, which drove values down further still, necessitating the raising of more capital, in a kind of subprime death spiral. The impact of a Treasury downgrade is likely to be wider, but possibly not so deep or so radical—whereas there was no bottom under mortgage securities, investors are more likely to hold on to their Treasuries until maturity and redeem them than to dump them in a fire-sale panic—so long as the prospect of a real default remains remote.

Beyond that, the immediate result of a



"Okay, I admit it—your conspiracy theory was right!"

downgrade of Treasury bonds to AA is anybody's guess. There are a number of major economic powers, Japan among them, whose government bonds are AA or lower. But none of those economies accounts for 25 percent of the planet's GDP. The usual assumption is that a downgrade will send interest rates up: That's what downgrades are supposed to do. Downgraded countries, like individuals with bad credit, pay higher interest rates. Demand for U.S. debt is likely to fall, but the Federal Reserve, and possibly foreign central banks, will be inclined to counter that effect, buying up Treasury debt in the interest of what they believe, naïvely, to be stability. Some contrarians expect that U.S. interest rates could fall after a downgrade, at least in the short term, as investors who see no immediate signs of inflation in the United States but expect economic disorder and a possible global recession once again seek safe haven in the U.S. Treasury.

So there remains a great deal of uncertainty in the marketplace.

Insolvency, like a striptease, moves in stages. After a downgrade, the next and more serious concern is default. There has been much talk of default during the debt-ceiling debate, but that seems premature. It is probable that we will come up against the debt ceiling again, in much the same circumstances, and the word "default" will once again be on official lips. While there would be some difficulty in rolling over large chunks of debt that come due all at once (a consequence of our increasing reliance upon short-term rather than long-term Treasury securities), the cost of debt service at present is less than 10 percent of federal spending, and current revenues would be more than adequate to make necessary debt payments. We can pay our creditors, but there are other bills that cannot be paid without increasing the debt ceiling. Hardliners have talked a good game about paying for Social Security, Medicare, and the troops, all without raising the debt ceiling, but their numbers don't quite add up: The Office of Management and Budget estimates that federal tax revenues will amount to \$2.17 trillion in 2011, while Social Security, Medicare, national defense, and debt-service payments by themselves will outstrip that number, amounting to \$2.21 trillion. The Republicans' talking point apparently was derived by counting only the troops' salaries, as though we could

stop buying them diesel and food and ammunition, or suspend operation of the bases and hospitals and aircraft necessary to their work. Our deficit is currently more than 40 percent of spending, and it has been foolish of Republicans to pretend that we can eliminate it without inconveniencing anybody other than ethanol producers, federally subsidized cowboy poets, and foreign-aid welfare queens. Just as their railing against Medicare cuts during the health-care debate has made it more difficult for Republicans to undertake necessary Medicare reforms, Republicans have done themselves a disservice by minimizing the size and scope of the spending cuts that will be necessary to salvage our national finances.

Despite the recent loose talk, default remains unlikely under most scenarios for the simple reason that the possibility is something that the political class fears and loathes. Default would make it impossible for Washington to continue to borrow

Despite the loose talk, **default** remains unlikely for the simple reason that it is something that the political class fears and loathes.

money at concessionary rates. But the threat of default, with its banana-republic connotations, remains a potent rhetorical bomb: Secretary Geithner, who just over a year ago was contemptuous of the notion of a credit *downgrade*, has spoken earnestly about the threat of a sovereign default. He is not to be taken seriously. (Not yet.)

We have been lucky in our timing: During the debt-ceiling debate of 2011, American public finances could still boast of being on more solid ground than those of the Europeans, wracked as the Continent is by the technical default of Greece and the persistent fiscal troubles in Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. At the same time the Japanese, with a national debt totaling 200 percent of GDP, inspire little confidence. There are only so many Swiss bonds in which to invest, and the United States thus remains the leader of the pack, even if the pack is running toward insolvency.

We have learned a few useful things from the debt-ceiling debate. The most

important is that Pres. Barack Obama's insistence upon tax increases as part of a debt-ceiling plan is largely political rather than ideological or economic. Senate majority leader Harry Reid and Speaker of the House John Boehner had worked out the basics of a medium-term deal without tax increases, but the president dismissed it out of hand when his fellow Democrat presented it to him. For the president, taxes aren't about revenue—they're a cultural issue. Soak-the-rich talk is to Democrats what promises to kill the National Endowment for the Arts are to Republicans: a way to fire up the partisans. And Obama needs them fired up. A July poll found that only 31 percent of self-identified liberal Democrats expressed "strong support" for the president, down from a majority, while the number of black voters who believe Obama's policies have helped the economy declined from 77 percent to about half. With Gitmo still open for business and U.S. bombs dropping unilaterally

around the Muslim world, President Obama's natural loyalists are hungry for some red meat. But President Obama, in addition to continuing the larger part of George W. Bush's counterterrorism program, also oversaw the extension of Bush's tax cuts. He owes the Left some scalps. This is worth knowing, since it means that sensible tax reforms of the sort sought by the Simpson-Bowles commission or Paul Ryan's plan will be difficult to achieve, because they are exercises in revenue-raising rather than in class warfare. The president is positively fixated on the amortization schedule for corporate jets.

So the debate has been instructive. What we will learn now is whether any of this will prove sufficient to forestall a downgrade and the disorder threatened by it, whether Republicans can achieve long-term entitlement reform, and whether Barack Obama will be remembered, to emend a phrase of Daniel Hannan's, as the downgraded president of a downgraded nation. **NR**

House of Doubt

The case for providing clear mortgage rules now, not later

BY CHRISTOPHER PAPAGIANIS

THE ongoing struggles of the housing market are contributing to the softness of our overall economic recovery. Over the last couple of weeks, the Obama administration has restarted debate about further government action to prevent foreclosures and stave off home-price declines—all with an eye toward improving the outlook for a market that has traditionally been a key driver of the broader economy.

The backdrop for these closed-door meetings is that the U.S. government will soon be the country's largest source of domestic home-mortgage and consumer-credit loans. In reviewing the latest Fed data, *Investor's Business Daily* noticed that the total amount of government-financed consumer credit (the vast majority of which is mortgages) stood at \$6.3 trillion, just slightly below the private sector's total, \$6.5 trillion. As recently as 2006, the private sector far outpaced the government: \$8.5 trillion to \$4.4 trillion.

And how is the Obama administration approaching housing policy today? Is it trying to shrink the government's footprint on the consumer-credit space? No—quite the opposite. Already, the administration has announced an expansion of one of its programs at the Federal Housing Administration, changing the rules so that unemployed borrowers may miss mortgage payments for a full year.

Proceeding with caution is certainly wise—in the wake of a financial crisis, the transition back to private-sector dominance needs to be slow and measured, in order to keep credit flowing through the economy—but the administration is moving the market in the wrong direction entirely.

Mr. Papagianis is the managing director of Economics21, a nonpartisan policy-research institute, and previously was special assistant for domestic policy to Pres. George W. Bush.

Currently, the government provides massive financial assistance to homeowners through tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes, the ongoing bailouts of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (more than \$160 billion and counting), the Federal Housing Administration (which still accepts down payments of 3.5 percent), and a host of other housing-support programs. Over the last few years, the government's share of new home loans in this country has grown to more than nine out of ten, if you include loans backed by government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) such as Fannie and Freddie. It used to be approximately half that.

These interventions, many launched during the crisis or nascent recovery, can be broadly placed in two categories: policies designed to boost the demand for housing by supporting sales and prices; and policies designed to control the supply of housing by keeping distressed homeowners out of foreclosure (thus keeping their houses off the market). The

afford. It also reflects a basic political obstacle to large-scale interventions of this kind: the intrinsic unfairness of helping people who bought houses they could not afford at the expense of people who were more prudent.

It seems that even the Obama administration no longer views HAMP as a plan to keep millions of struggling borrowers in their homes permanently. For instance, in a meeting with prominent financial bloggers, Treasury officials stressed the importance of HAMP in preventing a rash of foreclosures at an inopportune time. Even if many aid recipients re-default and lose their homes anyway, the administration will likely declare success, claiming HAMP reduced stress on the banking system during a critical period.

This narrative is plausible, but it is based on the questionable assumption that more foreclosures would have destroyed the system, as opposed to speeding along a needed transition in the real-estate market. Further, this shift in rationale doesn't

potential buyers stay away, expecting that prices will fall even farther when the government programs end and those houses—what analysts call the “shadow inventory”—finally become available.

Rather than continue to play small ball with the housing market, the administration and Congress should pursue a bold restructuring of our housing-finance system. The new system should rely on private capital, not taxpayer resources, and private entities—not quasi-government enterprises such as Fannie and Freddie—should bear the burden of mortgage-related losses.

Some analysts argue that the fragile state of the housing market and the risk it poses to a sustained economic recovery mean that broad-scale reform of the housing-finance system should happen slowly. But the speed of the actual transition is a separate matter from the legislative schedule for developing—and, more important, committing to—a new system. As Brookings Institution scholars includ-

Just as expectations of rising prices helped inflate the housing bubble, restricting the supply of houses for sale has created expectations of **future price declines**, which has further damaged market confidence.

first category includes policies such as the homebuyer tax credit; the second includes the Home Affordable Modification Program (HAMP), the Home Affordable Unemployment Program (HAUP), the Home Affordable Foreclosure Alternatives Program (HAFA), and the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP).

The administration's signature housing program is probably HAMP, which seeks to help borrowers avoid foreclosure by reducing their mortgage payments to a manageable level. Since the program was announced in 2009, HAMP has led to roughly 700,000 permanent mortgage modifications, far short of the administration's goal of 3–4 million.

As the depth of the housing decline demonstrates, these types of policies—pursued by both Republican and Democratic administrations—have failed to stem large-scale losses. In large part, this failure reflects the magnitude of the housing problem; tens of millions of American families bought homes they could not

make the program any more popular: Taxpayers have balked at the prospect of spending tens of billions of dollars to assist banks and drag out the foreclosure crisis.

A more cynical narrative is that the Obama administration was trapped—having criticized the Bush administration, the new president had to “do more” to avoid foreclosures, but he couldn't afford the political cost of bailing out so many irresponsible borrowers. This left the administration with HAMP, which gave the appearance of bold action but achieved only modest results.

Just as expectations of rising prices helped inflate the housing bubble, restricting the supply of houses for sale has created expectations of future price declines, which has further damaged market confidence. Despite the various mortgage-modification programs, there are still too many homes for sale, and not enough willing buyers. In this climate, when the government makes short-term efforts to keep houses off the market,

ing Karen Dynan and Ted Gayer have argued, the fact that there is no new legal regime on the horizon for housing finance is a source of real uncertainty for businesses and families trying to make informed decisions. How can we expect private-sector lenders to commit large amounts of discretionary capital to housing unless there are clear rules about how the market will be governed? Even if a new system did not go into effect for several years, the alleviation of this uncertainty would have an immense positive impact.

The GSEs were taken over by the government in 2008. It's now 2011, and the Obama administration and Congress plan to wait until 2013 to even start debating plans for the future. But the time to act is now. Passing a law that clearly establishes how our mortgage-financing system will work should be the top legislative priority this summer after the budget talks wrap up. It is the best and most direct way to get the housing market back on track.

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United States Of Google

Social-networking sites may eventually undermine the primacy of the nation-state

BY REIHAN SALAM

IN just a few short weeks, Google+, a new social network from the company that gave us the world's most popular and profitable search engine, has signed up over 10 million members. While it remains to be seen whether Google+ will prove an enduring success, it has already demonstrated that Facebook, with over 750 million members, is not infallibly destined to dominate the social-networking landscape.

Though Google+ and Facebook appear similar on the surface, they are built around different animating principles. Google's mission is often described as organizing the world's information. That sounds like a noble enterprise in itself, but of course Google seeks to organize the world's information so that it can place relevant advertisements next to that information. Google's fate is thus tied to the fate of the wider Web. The more information that is accessible via the Web, the better it is for the search engine that helps you find it, which is part of why Google has controversially sought to digitize all books ever published. Facebook, in contrast, aims to build a large and flourishing "walled garden" that exists apart from the wider Web.

Google+ is perhaps best understood as a "social backbone"—an open system that will eventually serve as the structure underlying a larger, more complex ecology that allows its users to join a large number of overlapping communities. In time, these new virtual communities may well become as important as the virtual community that is the nation-state.

In 1983, the Marxist polymath Benedict Anderson published *Imagined Communities*, a brilliant look at the origin and spread of the idea of the nation. While Marx had predicted that national consciousness would eventually fade away,

Anderson, a student of Southeast Asia, understood that it was a far more durable phenomenon. Nations—communities of people united by common ideas, language, and/or culture—have been understood as the basic building blocks of world order for so long that we often forget how new they really are. Until the late 18th century, dynastic states were the norm (a state being defined by its territory and government, not by anything else its inhabitants hold in common—so the Habsburg Empire was a state but not a nation, while Hungary and Slovenia and Italy were nations but not states). The legitimacy of rulers stemmed from divine authority, and religious communities that transcended the boundaries of states were of the utmost importance.

The advent of what Anderson calls "print-capitalism" fatally undermined these interlinked certainties. Print-capitalism, in Anderson's telling, was the product of two innovations. The first, the printing press, was a technological innovation. The second, the rise of Protestantism, was in a sense the software that gave new power to the hardware that was the printing press.

Before Martin Luther, the market for Latin literature was quickly saturated, because the number of people who could read and write the language fluently was small. But the masses who spoke various vernacular languages were potentially a vast market, and Protestantism emphasized the importance of reading Scripture in vernacular languages. With the aid of print entrepreneurs eager to sell books, languages that had been ill-defined took on firmer shape when they were reduced to writing. In-between languages spoken in borderlands were assimilated into larger linguistic communities, which had achieved the scale that print-capitalism needed to take root.

The new print-languages "created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars." Differences of dialect were overcome through the printed word, and vast communities of fellow newspaper and novel readers became the germ of truly national communities. These communities were not built on face-to-face, intimate contact. Rather, they were built on the idea that strangers we've never met but who share our language are in some important sense like us.

"For whatever superhuman feats capitalism was capable of," Anderson wrote,

"it found in death and languages two tenacious adversaries." Even though humanity's general linguistic unification would have created the largest possible market for book publishers, it was not to be. And that is how nations found their edges.

In the decades since *Imagined Communities* was first published, capitalism has begun to triumph over linguistic divisions. It will be many decades before we can meaningfully speak of humanity's linguistic unification, but it no longer seems beyond the realm of possibility. At the most basic level, the Web has given rise to a unified field of exchange and communication that transcends print-languages. Though instantaneous-translation software is still in its infancy, it is getting better all the time, and this has greatly facilitated the flow of knowledge from one linguistic community to another. Scandinavian rock bands and Indian software entrepreneurs do their best work in English, which has become the language not just of a narrow elite but of a large and growing swathe of the global middle class.

These tendencies towards linguistic unification have the potential to make our allegiances more expansive. We might, for example, feel a sense of solidarity not just towards our fellow Americans, but towards all people who share our broad cultural sensibilities. In the pre-national era, the European aristocracy conceived of itself in cosmopolitan terms, held together not by



Google+ or Facebook but by a dense web of intermarriage and a common interest in subjugating restless populations. Only belatedly did royal families, from the Windsors to the Hohenzollerns to the Wittelsbachs, attempt to "nationalize" themselves, in a bid to enhance their legitimacy with newly nationalized publics. In similar fashion, today we often hear the argument, most recently from Chrystia Freeland of Reuters, that there is a new global elite of wealthy entrepreneurs and hedge-fund managers and other masters of the universe who no longer think in national terms. Christopher Lasch spoke of "the revolt of the elites," and of affluent professionals who live like expatriates in their own countries.

It is increasingly clear that this post-national frame of mind is not the exclusive preserve of elites. Immigrants to affluent market democracies have traditionally embraced assimilation as the most effective means of upward mobility. Now, however, there are migrants at both ends of the eco-

Mr. Salam writes NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE's domestic-policy blog, The Agenda. He is a policy adviser at the nonprofit economic-research organization Economics21.

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conomic spectrum who remain closely linked to their home countries. Successful immigrants often move back and forth between their native and adopted countries, carrying ideas and capital with them. Poor immigrants send home remittances, and often dream of returning to their country with a large nest egg. In *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, Christopher Caldwell provocatively argues that contemporary Muslim immigrants in Europe are not unlike early European settlers in the Americas: They have no intention of assimilating because they consider their own traditions and beliefs superior to those of the natives. Something similar is true of many of the American and European expatriates living in the booming cities of Asia, who have no intention of going native but will happily exploit new economic opportunities.

As Marc Dunkelman recently argued in an essay in *National Affairs*, social-media technologies allow us to be more selective about the relationships we maintain. The people with whom we share physical space—those who live in our subdivisions and apartment buildings, or who work in the same place as we do—remain an important source of friendships, but they no longer hold a monopoly on our attention or our affection. We can be choosier, and we can withdraw into safe zones with those who share our aspirations and sensibilities. This is not to say that we're all retreating into ideological bubbles, for example. But we can more carefully select the people with whom we choose to disagree. In Dunkelman's view, this shift in how we form communities has undermined our ability to bridge political divides. It is worth noting, however, that as of now, relationships on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ resemble real-world relationships in that we are far more likely to "friend" or "follow" someone living in the same city or region than someone living half a world away.

These technologies are still in their infancy, and it is not yet clear where they will lead us. If I had to venture a guess, I'd say that nation-states, and the big governments to which they are so closely tied, will give way to new virtual communities that will be built around shared values more than shared languages or shared territories. This will be as unsettling as the transition from a spiritually unified Christendom to a world of nation-states was. But it might be just as inevitable.

The Failing of The Fishwrap

*Will your breakfast newspaper
meet the News of the World
in oblivion?*

BY JOHN DERBYSHIRE

THE newspaper, in the sense of news actually printed on actual paper, is clearly in its last days. The content of a newspaper can be delivered online at far lower cost than is required by investment in printing plants and equipment, fleets of delivery vans, labor, paper, and ink. With fewer people buying the paper product, big advertising accounts have drifted off to TV and glossy magazines and smaller fry have signed up with Google AdSense, while classifieds have migrated to Craigslist and Monster.com. The print edition *New York Post* I have delivered daily is one of two tabloids, circulation half a million each, serving a city of over 8 million. The only big firms with full-page advertising in today's copy of the *Post* are two local discount appliance megastores and the utility company. There are just 75 classified ads, not counting 16 legal notices.

With print newspapers as with poor humanity, the Angel of Death comes in many forms. He came most abruptly to the English Sunday tabloid *News of the World*, which published its last edition on July 10 after 168 years in print. The *News of the World* had been the most serious offender in the phone-hacking scandal that, at the time of writing, seems set fair to engulf all of British public life, from the Royal Family to the Football League. The leaders of the parent company, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, administered a *coup de grâce* to the wounded beast and left its corpse on the battlefield in their long retreat before the forces of law, public outrage—among those whose phones had been hacked were murder victims and British soldiers killed in action—and leftist Murdoch-haters.

There was some nostalgic lamentation over the *News of the World's* demise. Not much of this was owed to the actual content of the paper. The British tabloids have always been a low sort of product. They were, for example, keen customers of free-

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Malcolm Muggeridge thought that Orwell's social commentary owed more to the *News of the World* than to his own direct experiences. From Muggeridge's memorial essay on Orwell—one of the best things he ever wrote:

[illegible]

The demise of the printed newspaper is one of those techno-historical processes there is no point in deploring. We shall make necessary adjustments. Preteen boys with bicycles will find other ways to make pocket money. Patrons of old-style British fish-and-chip shops will wrap their purchases in something else. Drawers will be lined with Christmas wrapping paper. Some midwives of the old school may need to make changes, too. From Richard Gordon's 1952 novel *Doctor in the House*: "Newspaper, that was it! There was a pile of them in the corner, and I scattered the sheets over the floor and the bed. This was a common practice in the district, and if he knew how many babies were born yearly straight on to the *Daily Herald* Mr. Percy Cudlipp [the editor] would be most surprised."

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An End to Borders

*In which the topic is, not national
frontiers, but book and music shops*

BY JAY NORDLINGER

THERE'S no crying in baseball!" says the manager in *A League of Their Own*, the 1992 movie about female baseball players. There's no crying in a free-market economy either. You either adapt or die. And Borders, apparently not adapting, has died. There will be no more Borders bookstores.

You're not supposed to cry, and I'm not, but I might have shed half a tear, when I heard the news. The reason is mainly personal and sentimental. The original Borders was in my hometown, Ann Arbor, Mich. The store was founded in 1971 by the Borders brothers, Tom and Louis, who were students at the University of Michigan. We all went into that store. The selection was enormous, even exciting, and they would let you read, as I recall.

The staff was renowned for its knowledge, although whether that renown was justified, I can't tell you. I think they were somewhat arrogant and snotty. I also think that most customers kind of liked it—the way people like waitresses in New England chowder houses who bark at you.

I was a little tickled—there's a Michigan word!—when the store went national. When it became a chain. Sometime in the mid-1990s, I went into a Borders in Washington, D.C., the city in which I was living. On the wall was a photo of the original Borders staff. I recognized most of them. Got a little pang.

I also remember reading that Borders had been acquired by Kmart. That, too, tickled me. The Borders people thought themselves so cool, and here they were being acquired by the uncoolest company in America—a company whose name was synonymous with downmarket. Made me laugh, I swear.

In any case, an Ann Arbor company had made good. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Can a great business venture come out of Ann Arbor, one of the small citadels of the Left, a

place not exactly friendly to enterprise? Oh, yes. Borders came out of Ann Arbor, and so did Domino's Pizza, which is still selling pizzas.

Now that I've gotten a little political on you, let me mention a piece that appeared in these pages in September 2004: "Little Suppressors: Dealing with the bookstore clerk who hates you." I should explain the title. While in Ann Arbor, I didn't work at Borders, but I worked, briefly, at a bookstore called The Little Professor. Our manager refused to put out some conservative magazines. (On the whole, he was a very nice guy.) My friend Eddie came up with a new name for the store: "The Little Suppressor."

Why did I write about this topic in September 2004? There was a book called *Unfit for Command*, by John O'Neill, a Vietnam vet. It attacked Sen. John Kerry, who was the Democratic presidential nominee. There were stories around the country that bookstore clerks were refusing to display or sell the book. And Borders employees were telling their stories on their union website. This remark was typical: "We're 'finding' that most of the few copies we're getting are damaged and need to be sent back. So sad. Too bad, Bushies!"

You can say this about buying books over the Internet: You don't have to deal with a clerk who snarks at you about your politics. Did you ever have the experience of buying a conservative book or magazine and getting attitude from the clerk? It was no fun, really.

But let me return to the Ann Arbor of yore, and a particular record shop. I think it was a CD shop later. Do we still have CD shops? Not in my neighborhood (which I'll get to in a minute). I am thinking of Ann Arbor's Liberty Music, one of the great stores of its kind. It was famous all over the world. Like Borders, it had a vast selection and a knowledgeable—unquestionably knowledgeable—staff. Also a slightly quirky one, like all great staffs, right?

The shop had listening booths, so you could try things out, before buying. Say you had \$5 (or whatever it was) for a Brahms Second. Would you get Klemperer, Walter, or Karajan, Bernstein, Solti, or Szell? You could stay in the booth for as long as you were unhassled. I was always a little nervous. Adding to the nervousness was this: You didn't want to scratch the record.

Liberty Music has gone by the wayside, needless to say. But, hang on, I see by the Internet that it still exists in a quaint form: It is a mail-order business, “centered on classical 78’s.”

I like progress as much as the next guy—making me a progressive, you see—but I’ve never been an “early adopter”: someone who early adopts a new product or technology. I was one of the last to buy a CD player. In fact, I bought a CD before I bought a CD player. I spotted this particular CD in a store, and I thought I should snap it up, lest it become “nla”—no longer available. It was a historic reissue. And I knew I’d have a CD player sooner or later.

The disc, by the way, was a collection of duets sung by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Irmgard Seefried. As you might guess, you can go to the Internet right now and download it in about two seconds.

I was pretty much the last person to switch to a metal driver, too, and to other metal “woods.” I thought they were cheating. So did Jack Nicklaus. But eventually he switched, and I did too. If Nicklaus was relenting, everyone had to. Would I have been late to switch from hickory shafts as well? I hope not, but I fear so.

Few things are easier or more pleasurable than buying books over the Internet. Click, click, click—bingo. Couple of months ago, I learned about memoirs written by Paul Gore-Booth, a British diplomat, in 1974. The book has long been out of print. But thanks to AbeBooks.com—one of the greatest things since the wheel—I had it in about a week.

Equally easy and pleasurable is the buying of CDs. Or the downloading of music that would be on CDs, if we needed CDs (or audiocassettes, or LPs). But to hell with buying: What about music that’s *free*? Several weeks ago, I wrote a piece on the Russian composer Rodion Shchedrin. I asked his “people” to send me an assortment of CDs. These recordings did not reach me in time. But no problem: I found pretty much all the music I desired via YouTube—an invention so great, it dusts AbeBooks, and almost the wheel.

The Internet is great when you know what you want. But I must say I like shops—liked shops—for browsing. I’m told you can browse on the Internet, and I’m sure it’s true. But I haven’t quite



learned how to do it. I do know this: You can click on a link to sample a CD before buying it. That’s the modern equivalent of those listening booths. (No scratching.)

Earlier, I mentioned the neighborhood I live in: It’s the lower Upper West Side of Manhattan, to use a term I believe I coined. Recently, we lost the gigantic Barnes & Noble that sat on the corner of 66th and Broadway. Some of my neighbors think it’s the end of civilization. Of course, they thought it was the end of civilization when Barnes & Noble came to these parts in the 1980s. *Ewww, a chain!* It was threatening the beloved local establishment Shakespeare & Co.—an establishment not so beloved that the locals kept it in business.

A few years ago, we lost our gigantic Tower Records, which sat across Broadway from the recently defunct Barnes & Noble. These two stores constituted a browser’s paradise. You could flit across the street, gorging yourself on books and music. People would spill out of a concert or opera at Lincoln Center, and go to Tower to buy a recording of music they had just heard. You met, or at least noticed, some interesting types in these stores. Now you bowl alone, so to speak: tapping and clicking at your computer.

And the Internet is not necessarily the Speed King. Ordering by computer is fast, of course. But you know how you can get your book or CD faster? By popping into the store and walking out with the thing. Say you need a gift, to take to your dinner

hosts. If the Internet is your only option, you have to order well ahead.

Look, I’m not a nostalgist. Let me share with you an e-mail I received from my mother, about an hour ago. (She has no idea I’m writing about Borders, and I quote her without permission, of course.) She lives in the woods outside of Ann Arbor. She writes, “Quite annoyed at people mourning the demise of badly managed Borders.” Mother is blunt. Once, she was asked why she didn’t want to go to a particular restaurant, much praised. She said, “The food is bad, the carpet is dirty, and the waitresses are surly.” Anyway, in her e-mail, she continues, “Our public libraries are *magnificent*. Even my hokey district one has latte, etc., and will find any book you want in a day or two.”

No, I’m not a nostalgist. But neither am I a “Couéist,” as Bill Buckley liked to say: someone who believes that things are getting better every day. Some things do, some things don’t. There are young people—not all that young anymore, come to think of it—who have never held a newspaper or a magazine in their hands. They have read online. Pretty soon, there will be young people, and not-so-young people, who have never held a book: They have Kindled.

I think this new age for media is a bonanza, a multifaceted gift to mankind. But you’ll understand, I bet, if I offer one cheer for bricks and mortar, and quirky staffs, and popping in and out. You’ll understand, too, if I shed a tear—half a tear—for the dear old Borders Book Shop.

NR



Obama's Nemesis

A visit with Rep. Eric Cantor

BY ROBERT COSTA

ACROSS the rotunda, Sen. Harry Reid, a 71-year-old Democrat, is grumbling about Rep. Eric Cantor, the House majority leader. The previous evening, Cantor, a boyish Virginia Republican, flustered President Obama during debt-limit negotiations at the White House. Reid repays this horror with a tongue-lashing, calling Cantor “childish” from the floor.

Cantor, relaxing in his Capitol office, shrugs when he hears about Reid’s remark. Days before, he reminds me, Reid had taken him aside and thanked him for his blunt answers during the high-stakes talks. Now, in the late-July heat, Reid has apparently forgotten, tagging Cantor as the Beltway’s *bête noire*.

For Democrats, casting Cantor as this decade’s Newt Gingrich—a right-wing threat to reasonableness—became a favorite pastime in the midst of the debt-ceiling debate. President Obama, more than most, has found Cantor irritating. Unlike House Speaker John Boehner, who has played a round of golf with Obama, Cantor has not developed a personal relationship with the president, nor is he interested in one. Instead,

from the stimulus to the debt ceiling, Cantor has eagerly opposed the Obama agenda at every turn.

But that opposition, Cantor says with a hint of weariness, entails more than making the case for GOP policies. It also involves dealing with a president who is averse to rigorous debate. As the impasse between senior Democratic and Republican lawmakers stretched into the evening, Obama, he says, became agitated, refusing to haggle. “Would Ronald Reagan be sitting here?” the president reportedly huffed before storming out of the room. “Eric, don’t call my bluff,” he famously added at the door.

Cantor lightly chuckles as he details the meeting. The president references the Gipper as he makes a dramatic exit? It was like a poorly written scene from *The West Wing*. The best politicians, Cantor says, know that policy battles are supposed to be “robust” and take care not to interpret sharp words as slights.

These days, tangling with Obama has become an unofficial part of Cantor’s job. The 48-year-old congressman is smooth, energetic, and unabashedly partisan, which makes him a favorite of tea-party newcomers. In the Republican hierarchy, Boehner may reign, but it is Cantor, along with Rep. Kevin

J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE/AP

McCarthy of California, the GOP whip, and Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, the Budget Committee chairman, who forms the youthful nucleus of the conference.

Karl Rove, the former senior adviser to Pres. George W. Bush, says it is no surprise that Cantor has emerged as Obama's number-one whipping boy. "The White House views Cantor as a rising star, so in the Chicago style of politics, they are making things uncomfortable for him," he says. "They put him in the direct crosshairs of the national media—trying to shock him into submission, rough him up—in order to send a message."

Since coming to Congress a decade ago, Cantor has been one of the party's most ambitious warriors. He was appointed to a leadership post, chief deputy whip, in 2002, after less than one full term. In April, Boehner tapped him to represent House Republicans at the debt-reduction discussions led by Vice President Biden. He left the bipartisan group in late June, after telling Biden that he would not agree to include any tax hikes as part of a deal.

Once those talks collapsed, and with the August debt-ceiling deadline looming, Obama began to huddle with Capitol Hill leaders. Cantor entered the second phase of negotiations with reservations. He trusted Biden, but he was unsure of what Obama was attempting to do. Cantor repeatedly told the White House that any deal with House Republicans would need to be framed around trillions of dollars in cuts to the federal budget and respect the GOP's stiff aversion to revenue increases.

Obama paid little attention to Cantor's warning. He courted Boehner, who spent the early summer privately discussing a potential "grand bargain" with the president. That never panned out. But as July wore on, Obama began to pin the blame for the breakdown on Cantor, whispering to reporters and Democrats that the Virginian was the cause, the one who represented the worst of the tea-party impulse of the Republican caucus. The whisper soon became a chorus. Sen. Chuck Schumer, a Democrat of New York, held a press conference and said Cantor was "standing in the way, and it is a shame."

Cantor was disappointed, but undaunted. Behind the wire-rimmed glasses, dark suit, and skinny frame is a practiced political pro. He has spent nearly his entire life in politics, balancing a willingness to fight with a conservative temperament. As one GOP aide puts it, "Cantor knows how to throw bombs, but he never lets himself look like a bomb-thrower." Growing up in Richmond, the son of strict Jewish parents, Cantor was attracted to the rough-and-tumble world of local politics; but he was taught early that politics was more than a sideshow, that it was a serious civic pursuit.

CANTOR'S father, Eddie, managed a commercial-real-estate company and eventually built a small fortune. "My father was a consummate entrepreneur," Cantor says. "He was always a Republican, too. He believed in economic freedom." Immigrant grit drove the family. Cantor's grandfather had died when his father was two years old, soon after arriving in America from Russia, leaving Cantor's grandmother, Frances, with two children and little money. She opened a small grocery store and raised her children above it, prodding them to read and study.

By age 15, Eddie Cantor had graduated from high school. He

worked his way through Virginia Tech, then attended the University of Richmond School of Law. At age 21, he passed the bar exam—a year before he was legally allowed to practice. He and his wife, Mary Lee, instilled a flinty, education-and-hard-work-are-everything resolve in Eric and his brothers as they grew up. The congressman notes that, though his father is ill, his mother attends his campaign events to this day, urging him to keep improving his performance.

Of his father, Cantor says, "He was always reading, working, paying attention, and thinking." Eddie Cantor also was never afraid to take bold positions, even if the majority of the community thought it brash or unseemly to do so. When fellow Richmond Jews were backing Democrats, Cantor's father was organizing for Ronald Reagan and raising money for ragtag slates of local Republicans.

Eric Cantor frequently assisted his father in such efforts, stuffing envelopes and hammering campaign signs into the dirt. "I was around the nitty-gritty of county-supervisor races," he says. "I was out at polls in the dark when they opened, year after year." Yet his high-school years were about more than politicking: Cantor attended the Collegiate School, a private academy in Richmond, where he was one of the few Jewish students.

In local politics and at Collegiate, Cantor learned how to navigate worlds in which he was in the minority, he says. As majority leader, Cantor is known to handle matters of rank and rancor deftly, much as he once handled matters of religion as a student. During chapel services, Cantor would bow his head with his classmates, but he would pray only at synagogue or at Hebrew school, which he attended three times a week. By age 18, Cantor had become a master at blending in to his surroundings.

Not much has changed. "He keeps his own counsel," says Larry Sabato, a political analyst at the University of Virginia and longtime Cantor observer. "He doesn't easily share. He is fairly quiet by nature, precise and rarely bombastic. He is very bright—you can tell he gets the whole picture—but he has always been reserved." As one Republican staffer says, "he'll drink a glass of wine with you," but even then, don't expect him to reveal much. He'll likely bring a policy brief with the bottle.

Cantor looks back on his time at Collegiate fondly, but for college, he wanted something different. He eschewed the prep liberal-arts schools that many of his friends chose, enrolled at George Washington University in downtown Washington, D.C., and signed up for political science. During his first semester, near the end of Reagan's first year in office, he began trekking to Capitol Hill, itching to be a part of the action. To no one's surprise, he soon found it, through Rep. Tom Bliley, a Richmond Republican and friend of the family who had been elected to Congress the previous year.

Cantor began to intern for Bliley that winter, filing papers and taking calls. "I came up here on a pretty regular basis," he says. Bliley quickly became Cantor's political mentor. He took a liking to Cantor's soft-spoken manner and offered the undergraduate a spot as his driver during the summer of 1982, when he would be campaigning for reelection. Cantor signed on and became an influential campaign aide at age 19, helping the pipe-smoking Catholic congressman hustle to events. "I really got to see firsthand the workings of grassroots politics," Cantor says. "I saw the real nuts and bolts of how you run a campaign."

Following the election, Bliley urged Cantor to stay involved.

But the young Republican was not ready to run for office. During his junior year, Cantor studied abroad at the University of Edinburgh, in Scotland. “It was awesome,” he says. “You major in politics there, not in political science.” To him, that sounded grand. During one break, he traveled to the Soviet Union. “[Konstantin] Chernenko was in power. Just to get back to London was a big breather,” he laughs.

A law degree was next. In August 1985, Cantor headed to Williamsburg, Va., where he enrolled at William and Mary Law School. He stayed close to Bliley and remained active in politics when he was home. But at the time, Cantor was set on joining the family business once he finished his education. His father advised him to go to Columbia University to get a master’s degree in real-estate development so that he could jump right in.

It was in the Big Apple that Cantor met Diana Fine, a young, socially liberal investment banker from a prominent Miami Beach family with numerous ties to Florida Democrats. She lived in Greenwich Village, a world away from his dingy Upper West Side haunts, and he fell in love soon after meeting her on a blind date. She was smart, pretty, and on the fast track at Gold-

was doing in real estate. “I have always had a real affinity for urban planning,” he says. “Land planning is what makes communities work; it’s what drives people in terms of careers, their employment base, shopping habits, and retail tastes.” Understanding what “drives people, how they choose to live,” was integral to both of Cantor’s jobs, and is a skill that remains useful to this day, he says, as he learns about the complex districts within the GOP conference. He surveys each like a business project.

Cantor did the same in central Virginia, educating himself about every nook and cranny in the area, memorizing voting patterns and idiosyncrasies. Bliley was still in Congress in the Nineties, by then a rising committee star. Cantor was interested in succeeding him, but he kept his focus on Richmond. His state legislative record was a case study in chamber-of-commerce conservatism. Cantor was a major advocate for business, from large corporations to mom-and-pop shops. Democrats controlled the governor’s mansion and both chambers, so “I learned how to work in a minority,” he says.

By 2000, Bliley was ready to retire. Cantor was seen as his natural successor. But state senator Stephen Martin challenged

The debt-ceiling negotiations have elevated Cantor in the eyes of House conservatives—and bestowed on him the honor of Republican Obama Despises Most.

man Sachs to boot. They married in 1989, moved to Richmond, and had their first child, Evan, in 1990.

For the next couple of years, Cantor worked alongside his father, mapping out growth strategies and building the company. But he caught the political bug. When he heard that a state-house seat would be opening in 1991, after Virginia’s political map had been redrawn, he took six months away from work and began to plot his campaign. He was 27 years old. Two older local Republicans were also eyeing the seat, but Cantor used his parents’ connections and years of sweat equity to convince GOP voters.

Not everyone embraced Cantor, who, some scoffed, was another slick lawyer with jet-black hair. The nomination was handled caucus-style, with hundreds of Republicans assembling to pick candidates in the fall of 1991, so Cantor took care to make a strong impression on the trail. The night of the caucus, Cantor, along with his wife and parents, entered the fray optimistically. “It was held in a steamy high-school gymnasium,” Cantor says. “We walked through the door, went through the process, and ultimately had 800 people come out for us on this hot night, right as school was getting back.”

CANTOR coasted to victory that November and began a nine-year stint in the legislature. He also kept helping his father with the family business, which had begun to supervise large projects, from shopping malls to business parks. “Remember, Virginia’s legislature follows the Jeffersonian model, so I felt I could still have a career and do this,” Cantor says. Politics also did not seem too far removed from what he

Cantor for the GOP nomination. Martin, an evangelical Christian, was accused of having ties to front groups that sent anti-Semitic mailers to primary voters. Martin denies the charge to this day, but when a group called him “the only Christian” in the contest, Cantor saw a new, dirtier side of politics. His wealthy family and big-dollar backers also became an issue, with Martin railing against both.

Near the end of the campaign, things became so uncomfortable for his family that Cantor sent Diana and the kids to her cousin’s home in Chapel Hill, N.C., to avoid the bitter final week. “I told her that we would win this thing, but we could not let ourselves become distracted,” he says. On election night, Cantor did win, barely, topping Martin by fewer than 300 of the more than 40,000 votes cast.

After the primary, Cantor brought his family home and began to reach out to Martin’s backers. “You go forward,” he explains. “I really am a person who does not look back much. I know that can be a detriment. But one of the things I had to do was make sure that those who supported him knew that I shared their values, too.”

Cantor easily won the 7th congressional district that fall, taking the seat once held by James Madison. Bliley advised him to talk to Rep. Tom DeLay of Texas, who at the time was the majority whip. A few weeks later, he was asked to join the whip team, a rare honor for a freshman. He relished the role. “That is where you get a lot of information,” he says. “When you come back into town and people wonder what’s going on in Washington, you want information, and that was the attraction for me.” He also enjoyed getting to know members. “I have always been very curious about people,” he says. “Seeing what makes

them tick, what their backgrounds are, I am always curious about that.”

Cantor’s colleagues pegged him as one to watch. In November 2002, Rep. Roy Blunt, a Republican of Missouri and then the incoming majority whip, phoned him late at his office. Blunt had some news: Cantor was going to be his second-in-command, the chief deputy whip, during the next session. Cantor was shocked. He wanted to climb the ladder, but he never expected that kind of promotion to come so quickly.

Cantor backed Blunt for majority leader in February 2006, following Tom DeLay’s resignation. Yet Boehner, in an upset, beat Blunt. Cantor, who stayed chief deputy whip, began to work closely with the Ohio Republican for the first time. When Blunt stepped down from the minority-whip slot in 2008, Cantor won the position, working as Boehner’s right-hand man. The relationship between the pair, however, has never been especially warm. Boehner, one Republican aide says, is a cigar-loving backslapper, the kind of guy who lives for golf and fine Merlot. Cantor does not golf, keeps kosher, and doesn’t mind spending evenings checking in with his staff via his BlackBerry or iPad. As one member tells me, “They don’t click, to put it mildly.”

The majority leader begs to differ. “We’ve had a very productive working relationship,” Cantor says. “We meet regularly, at least three, four times a week, maybe more. I have a very open dialogue with him. Both of us are team players. We share a philosophy of governance.” That may be, says one committee chairman, “but Cantor also takes a position one inch to the right

on almost every issue, and everyone sees right through that. He is always cordial, sure, but we can see what he’s up to. Every conference meeting is a dance between the two, seeing who can sound more conservative.”

Cantor’s allies are quick to point out that he is not afraid to challenge House conservatives, even though he often courts them and rallies behind their causes. In late July, as Boehner unveiled his final debt-limit plan, a package of cuts tied to an extension, Cantor addressed the conference and told them to stop “whining” and “grumbling” about the proposal’s specifics, which some Republicans felt did too little to address the deficit. “The debt-limit vote sucks,” he said, according to sources in the room. He reminded his colleagues that in divided government, a half-loaf is better than what Reid and Obama were cooking up.

The speakership, many Republicans predict, is the next step for Cantor, should Boehner step down in coming years. Cantor, of course, downplays such talk, but the debt-ceiling negotiations have only elevated him in the eyes of House conservatives—and bestowed on him the honor of Republican Obama Despises Most.

Boehner, to his credit, has taken Cantor’s rise in stride. At a book party last year for *Young Guns*, the policy manifesto co-authored by Cantor, Ryan, and McCarthy, Boehner took the microphone before the small crowd in Johnny’s Half-Shell, a popular restaurant on the Senate side of Capitol Hill. He gazed toward his lieutenants. “The three of them know my job is to make sure that they’re well-qualified and ready to take my place,” he cracked—“at the appropriate moment.” **NR**



The Last of LUGAR?

A conservative Indianan prepares to take on the president's favorite Republican senator

BY JOHN J. MILLER

WHEN Barack Obama was running for president, there was one Republican besides George W. Bush whom he wouldn't stop talking about. "Politics don't have to divide us," he said at his campaign kickoff in 2007. "I've worked with Republican senator Dick Lugar . . ." Obama dropped the name of the senior senator from Indiana during his first presidential debate with John McCain, and then again during their third debate: "If I'm interested in figuring out my foreign policy, I associate myself with my running mate, Joe Biden, or with Dick Lugar." Obama even ran advertisements that showed him with Lugar.

To the surprise of many, the Hoosier State wound up giving its electoral votes to a Democratic presidential candidate for the first time since 1964 and for only the second time since the Depression. "I saw those ads," says Richard Mourdock, Indiana's Republican treasurer. "My reaction was: You've got to be kidding me." Mourdock assumed that they'd disappear in a day or two. "It was an implied endorsement. I thought Lugar would pick up the phone and ask for the ads to go off the air. That didn't happen. You can make a case that Obama won our state's eleven electoral votes because of those ads."

Democrats may have flourished in Indiana in 2008, but Republicans roared back in 2010. They won every statewide office, picked up two congressional seats, and gained commanding majorities in the state legislature. Mourdock collected more than a million votes as he coasted to reelection. Now he has set his sights on a new office—the one currently held by Lugar. In February, he announced for the Senate.

Mourdock plans to oust the Republican heavyweight by tapping the energy of grassroots conservatives and tea-party activists, repeating last year's insurgent performances by Mike Lee in Utah, Marco Rubio in Florida, and Pat Toomey in Pennsylvania. Between now and May 8, 2012, when Indiana primary voters head to the polls, the Lugar–Mourdock race could become one of the most bitter and hard-fought Republican contests in the country.

Richard E. Mourdock, who will turn 60 in October, was born and raised in Ohio, the son of a state trooper. After graduating from Defiance College, he moved to Indiana, where he earned a master's degree in geology from Ball State and spent the next three decades working for oil and coal companies. He started to take an interest in politics in 1984, when he found himself living in "the Bloody Eighth," a southern-Indiana congressional district that briefly captured the nation's attention. A Republican, Rick McIntyre, had narrowly defeated the Democratic incumbent, Frank McCloskey, in a tight race that required a recount.

Democrats in Washington refused to seat McIntyre, hired their own auditors, and eventually proclaimed McCloskey the winner by four votes. House Republicans marched out of Congress in protest, but they were powerless to change the outcome. "I was outraged," says Mourdock. "The election was stolen."

After McIntyre lost a rematch two years later, Mourdock decided to run for Congress. He came up short in the 1988 GOP primary but captured his party's nomination in 1990 and 1992, losing the general election both times to McCloskey. "Newt Gingrich asked me to try again in 1994, but I'd had enough," says Mourdock, who might have discovered that the third time's a charm in what became one of the best years ever for congressional Republicans. Instead, he won a spot on his county commission and served for eight years. In 2002, he failed to get the GOP nod for secretary of state. Four years later, he won election as state treasurer and he is now in his second term.

Mourdock is a mainstream conservative: pro-life, opposed to gay marriage, and committed never to support a tax hike. As a trained geologist who worked in the energy industry, he speaks with authority on the need for more domestic production, as well as the dangers of global-warming alarmism. He's a history buff, too. Recent readings include *Lincoln's Sword*, a study of Abraham Lincoln's rhetoric by Douglas L. Wilson. On the day of our meeting at a hotel in Indianapolis, Mourdock wore a yellow tie with blue script on it. "I can't remember if this is my Emancipation Proclamation tie or my Gettysburg Address tie," he said. (A close inspection revealed that it was the Emancipation Proclamation tie.)

Lugar sensed his vulnerability to a conservative challenger last year, announcing that he would seek reelection in August, the earliest he has ever declared his intentions. "I wanted to make it well known that I'd be a candidate," he says. Now in his sixth term, Lugar is the longest-serving Republican in the Senate, so he also may have wanted to put down the inevitable speculation that he would retire rather than try to become an octogenarian senator (he'll turn 80 next year). Lugar is old enough to have briefed President Eisenhower as a young officer in the Navy. He was elected mayor of Indianapolis in 1967 and senator in 1976. When Obama coozied up to Lugar in 2005, he wasn't just trying to burnish his bipartisan credentials by co-opting a mild-mannered Republican. He was also hoping to offset his relative youth and inexperience by hanging out with an elder statesman.

IN most of his Senate races, Lugar has won about two-thirds of the vote, but that's been against Democratic opposition. In 2006, his last election, the Democrats didn't even bother to run a candidate against him, even though that was a good year for their party—the year of Nancy Pelosi. Perhaps they knew what they were doing. In 2010, only four Republican senators registered more liberal voting records, according to the American Conservative Union. In a separate analysis, *National Journal* ranked Lugar as the Senate's fourth most liberal Republican. He's a moderate to the core: a pro-lifer who voted to confirm both of Obama's nominations to the Supreme Court, a hawk on farm subsidies who opposed the ban on earmarks, and a foe of Obamacare who has supported more federal spending on health care. Lugar also has favored stronger gun-control laws, minimum-wage hikes, and the DREAM Act, which would provide an amnesty to illegal aliens who attend college or serve in the military.

Lugar is best known for his interest in foreign policy, especially for his work on nuclear security with Sam Nunn, a former Democratic senator from Georgia. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which seeks to dismantle Russian missiles, is commonly known as “Nunn-Lugar.” When Obama joined the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2005, Lugar took the young Democrat under his wing. They traveled together to Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan. “We had some very good observations,” says Lugar. “I appreciated his interest in the Nunn-Lugar program.” The warm relations continued as the two men co-sponsored a minor piece of legislation to expand Nunn-Lugar. Then came the presidential election. On the campaign trail and in those television ads, Obama countered claims that he lacked foreign-policy experience by citing his work with Lugar.

What did Lugar make of all this? “I was startled,” he says. “That raised the attention level considerably.” Yet he didn’t do anything about it. The rock star Tom Petty recently asked Republican presidential candidate Michele Bachmann to stop playing his song “American Girl” at campaign events, but Lugar didn’t see fit to ask Obama to quit using his image in television ads. “I suppose it’s a free country,” he says. “I had no ability to expunge it.” Democrats were delighted that he didn’t even try. “If Lugar was really upset, he would have asked to have the ad removed,” says Kip Tew, who ran the Obama campaign in Indiana. “The effect of the ad was to give moderate Republicans a permission slip to vote for Obama.” As Democrats gloated, Indiana conservatives fumed.

In the White House, Obama continued to collaborate with Lugar, who pushed for ratification of the New START treaty, an arms-reduction pact with Russia. Last December, as it went before the Senate for approval in a lame-duck session, conservatives tried to postpone its consideration until January, when a new Senate with more Republicans would convene. Lugar worried that delay spelled doom, so he teamed up with Democrats to make sure his future GOP colleagues couldn’t block it. “I just got off the phone with Dick Lugar,” said Obama on December 22, after New START’s ratification. “I told him how much I appreciated the work he had done and that there was a direct line between that trip we took together when I was a first-year senator and the results of the vote today on the floor.” When a Fort Wayne, Ind., television station asked Lugar about tea-party critics who had voiced concerns about the treaty, he launched a terse counterstrike: “Get real.”

“I have great respect for Lugar and I’ve voted for him many times,” says Mourdock. “But he has moved from the mainstream to the left of the party. He’s a big-government Republican. Now is not the time for Lugar’s foreign-policy expertise. Indiana needs someone with business knowledge, someone who believes in limited government.”

Last summer, GOP activists began to approach Mourdock about running against Lugar. He says he didn’t take it seriously at first. “What did I ever do to you?” was his stock response. But the suggestions kept coming. After the election, Mourdock began to consider a race. “When Lugar refused to do away with earmarks in the lame-duck session, I decided to get in,” says Mourdock. “I’ll be the first to admit that in the world of budgets, earmarks are a rounding error. But I thought it was important.”

A handful of other conservatives had expressed interest in taking on Lugar, so Mourdock set about clearing the primary field, knowing that his only chance of success depended on a one-on-one matchup against the incumbent. He accomplished this by



Richard E. Mourdock

February, when he declared his Senate candidacy along with endorsements from 68 of Indiana’s 92 Republican county chairmen. This was an impressive feat given Lugar’s longtime service, as well as an expression of deep dissatisfaction with the senator. Mourdock remains an underdog, but an upset is well within the realm of possibility.

IN the near term, Mourdock will have to raise more money. He amassed about \$450,000 in the first half of this year—hardly a pittance, but a sum that will need to improve in the months ahead. Lugar, by contrast, has just put together the two most lucrative fundraising quarters of his career, a haul of almost \$1.9 million. The senator admits that he feels a sense of urgency. “I’m working hard,” he says. Outside groups may try to even the odds. In July, the Club for Growth, a fiscally conservative political action committee, made what it calls a “six-figure ad buy,” running television commercials critical of Lugar. “We haven’t made a final decision about our ultimate role,” says club president Chris Chocola, a former Republican congressman from Indiana. “Lugar is beatable, but Mourdock needs to do a better job of fundraising.”

Even if Mourdock sputters out, he may be able to claim a small victory: Lugar has been acting like a conservative lately. Earlier this year, Lugar refused to co-sponsor the DREAM Act, which he had been eager to do as recently as December. He boasts of his votes against Obamacare, cap and trade, and new financial regulations. He has also become a born-again detractor of Obama’s foreign policy, especially on Libya. “It did not pose a threat to the United States,” he says. “I had an opportunity to say that directly to the president in the situation room at the White House.” He complains that Obama has ignored the provisions of the War Powers Act, which says presidents must receive the consent of Congress before committing the United States to extended military actions.

He’ll probably keep this up for a while. Yet there’s no telling how Lugar will behave in a seventh and presumably final term, when Obama’s favorite Republican senator knows he’ll never again have to explain himself to conservative primary voters. **NR**

To Reform Immigration, Legal and Illegal

Three policy packages for presidential aspirants

BY MARK KRIKORIAN

MEMBERS of the chattering classes keep hoping the immigration issue will just go away. I was once interviewed on a radio show along with an activist on the other side who said Mexico's falling birth-rate would mean that pretty soon we'd be scratching our heads wondering what all the fuss over immigration policy was about. That was nearly 25 years ago. In 2006, Mexican president Vicente Fox said that in ten years we'd be begging for Mexican workers, but they wouldn't come, because they'd all be employed at home. And just recently, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story on the coming end of the Mexican immigration flow, a meme eagerly picked up by Michael Barone, Linda Chavez, and other columnists.

There's a germ of truth here: The flow of illegals across the Mexican border has indeed slowed during the recession. But the tapering off of mass immigration that is said to be just over the horizon always will be. There are nearly 40 million immigrants in the United States—about one in eight residents—and, even during the worst part of the recession, more than 1 million people moved here annually from abroad.

Until the fabled end of immigration actually comes, Republican presidential candidates will need to address the issue. For all their proper focus on government spending and debt, control of our borders remains a central concern of Republican primary voters, and for a large share of independents and Reagan Democrats. What's more, the usual platitudes are no longer convincing them; having mobilized to stop the Bush-McCain amnesty, and eyeing with suspicion the current administration's hijinks, voters are more educated than ever. Merely posturing about ever-higher fences, without engaging the issue as a whole, is no longer sufficient for a candidate to be taken seriously by voters concerned about immigration.

Before the last cycle of presidential primaries, I laid out a ten-point immigration plan with achievable goals for a nominee to embrace. This time, I want to do something a little different: lay out three packages of policies—a basic plan, an upgraded plan, and a premium plan—regarding immigration enforcement and numbers, some that a president could implement by himself, others requiring legislation.

The basic package consists of items that any serious Republican aspirant should support. With regard to illegal immigration, there are two main goals: fencing and mandating the use

by all employers of E-Verify. With regard to legal immigration, also two goals: ending the visa lottery and eliminating brother-sister chain migration.

Five years ago, Congress mandated the construction of some 700 miles of fencing, and the administration claims that this mandate has been fulfilled. In fact, most of the result is not the two layers of reinforced fencing required by the law; only about 1 percent of the border with Mexico has this. Of the nearly 700 other fenced miles, close to half has only Normandy barriers, which are designed to stop trucks from simply driving over the border but otherwise are so unimposing that your grandmother could hop over one. (Heck, even I can hop over them, and have.) The other half is actual fencing—pedestrian fencing, in Homeland Security lingo—but almost all single-layer, and varying in design from one contractor to the next. Double fencing with roads allowing agents to patrol in between, supplemented by remote sensors and cameras to alert agents to breaches, and forward operating bases right along the border to cut response times—that the deployment of all this is needed should almost go without saying.

But even this stripped-down basic package has to include more than just hardening the border. Limiting the demand for illegals by weakening the attraction of employment is at least as important as limiting the supply by fencing. The policy objective here to ensure that all new hires are screened through E-Verify, something House Judiciary Committee chairman Lamar Smith is working to make mandatory. Smith's bill also simplifies the use of E-Verify, ends penalties for innocent paperwork errors, and codifies the process through which employers are informed about existing employees whose names and Social Security numbers don't match. There has been controversy among immigration hawks about the bill's preemption of certain state and local activity in this area, but since the states with the most illegals (California, New York, Illinois, even Texas) are unlikely to pass E-Verify mandates on their own, a federal measure is the only way to get it done.

It's not enough for a candidate to say he's against illegal immigration but in favor of legal immigration. The inevitable question then is: How much legal immigration, and by whom?

The most indefensible feature of our legal immigration system is the diversity visa lottery. It was invented in 1986 as a way to grant amnesty to Irish illegal aliens and has since morphed into a program that provides green cards at random to foreigners—most from the Middle East, Africa, and the former Soviet bloc—without any real standards concerning education or job skills. Each year's 50,000 winners have friends and family back home, many of whom will then also want to immigrate. And the 15 million people who applied last year developed expectations of moving to the United States that could never be met, thus encouraging illegal immigration.

Another legal-immigration no-brainer concerns the 60,000 adult siblings of U.S. citizens who are allowed to migrate to the United States each year simply because of their brothers or sisters. Adult-sibling immigration means an ever-larger share of the globe's population has a claim to enter the United States, as the siblings of earlier immigrants enter with their spouses, who have their own siblings, whose spouses in turn have their own siblings, and so on. No other country allows this, and there's

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simply no “family reunification” rationale for admitting from abroad whole new families of adults.

These two changes alone—ending the visa lottery and chain migration—would reduce future legal immigration from about 1.1 million to about 1 million a year.

AN upgraded package would include everything in the basic package, plus the following legal- and illegal-immigration reforms.

The first is to double deportations. Much of the reduction in the illegal population will come voluntarily, as illegal aliens come to understand they will not be able to find work or live a normal life here. But that is no reason to let up on deportations. Unfortunately, the Obama administration is doing just that. It has touted the “removal” of nearly 400,000 aliens each year (a statistic that also includes the exclusion of people *trying* to enter the country), but in fact the steady increase in deportations we saw since the mid-1990s has come to halt. Doubling the number of aliens deported, both violent criminals and ordinary illegal aliens, is a practical goal. Achieving it would require expanded use of “expedited removal,” an authority granted by Congress to remove illegal aliens without going through the court system,

wives, and dependent children of American citizens would still allow in a pretty large number—more than 350,000 of last year’s 1.1 million new legal immigrants would still have qualified—but it would prevent endless chains of relatives from taking over the immigration flow.

The upgraded package would reduce future legal admissions to about 700,000 per year.

THE premium package includes everything from the first two, ends birthright citizenship, and reduces the number of immigrants entering the country on skilled-worker or refugee/asylum grounds.

Each year, some 300,000 children are born to illegal-alien mothers, acquiring U.S. citizenship at birth. In addition, thousands more come here on temporary visas to give birth, then depart once they receive their children’s U.S. birth certificates and passports. It’s a matter of debate whether the 14th Amendment to the Constitution actually grants citizenship for children born to illegals or tourists, and thus whether changing our citizenship rules must be done through legislation or constitutional amendment. But it should be done in either case.

The first two packages have already addressed the biggest

The Obama administration has touted the ‘removal’ of nearly 400,000 aliens each year, but in fact the steady increase in deportations we saw since the mid-1990s has come to halt.

along with more detention beds to hold illegals so they don’t run off while in proceedings, expanded partnering with local law enforcement through the Secure Communities and 287(g) programs, and arresting illegal aliens in worksite raids, something the Obama White House has essentially prohibited.

Second, we should fully implement the US-VISIT program, which is supposed to check in and check out foreign visitors, verifying their identities with biometric information, allowing us better to know who’s entered, who’s departed, and who’s remained here as an illegal alien. Congress has repeatedly demanded the completion of this system, which was first mandated in 1996, and there’s been progress, but the administration has announced that it has no intention of finishing the job. At present, the information is collected from outbound air travelers voluntarily at airport kiosks—hardly a secure approach. The vast majority of foreign visitors (most of them Canadians and Mexicans crossing overland on ostensibly short visits) are not being checked in or out at all.

The third component would be to go beyond the basic package in ending chain migration. For obvious reasons, we grant special immigration privileges to the foreign-born spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens: Husbands, wives, and minor children should be together. But there is no equally obvious reason to extend similar privileges to adult children or parents, or to the newly married spouses of non-citizen green-card holders. To do so obscures the relationship between citizenship and immigration rights. Limiting family immigration to the husbands,

problems with the legal immigration flow—its slide into nepotism through chain migration. This premium version focuses on two other immigrant categories: skills-based immigrants and those seeking refugee/asylum admissions. Each of these broad groups comprises roughly 150,000 immigrants per year and should be radically reduced—my preference would be to cut them by two-thirds, to 50,000. The wailing and gnashing of teeth from business lobbyists about skilled foreigners turned away from the golden door is baloney; while the skills category does enable the immigration of some truly exceptional workers, research shows that it admits large numbers of average workers who appeal to employers mainly as cheap labor. Something similar is true of the refugee/asylum category—some who qualify for it truly have no other option, but most use it simply as an alternative means to move here for work or to join relatives. Sharpening the focus of both these categories will not undermine their purposes, but will result in lower numbers of immigrants.

The premium package would lead to a legal immigration flow of about half a million per year, much less than today’s level but still higher than the historical average over the past two centuries.

None of these packages encompasses every element of immigration reform. Unaddressed concerns include temporary workers, dual citizenship, and the State Department’s continued role in issuing visas. But these three packages will, I hope, help both candidates and voters think through some of the most important aspects of this vital issue.

NR



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

TO: Studio Personnel
FROM: Production
RE: Captain America

This weekend's excellent box-office grosses for *Captain America* have been incredibly gratifying. The movie is performing very well nationally, and we're on track for another record weekend. Kudos to the *CA* team—marketing, production, post, etc.—and let's keep pushing for a major DVD release in the fall!

It's not too early to begin thinking about *CA2* and *CA3*. We're trying to rush *CA2* into production at the beginning of the autumn, for a holiday '12 release. *CA3* will follow quickly for a late-summer '13 release.

What we need to do, though, is begin thinking about what *Captain America* might mean in two years. *CA1* was all about patriotism and the strength of the American idea. *CA2* and *CA3*, though, will be released during 2013, which economic forecasters predict will be the final collapse of the American Century. Unemployment figures will still be roughly 9 percent, food prices will be higher, the nation's debt burden will be crippling, and an aging, dispirited population may not respond to such a message.

Let's brainstorm ways we can adjust the franchise to capture the American zeitgeist in 2013.

Some thoughts:

1. Captain Mandarin: Replace Chris Evans with a Chinese actor. Benefits: Quickly adjust to changing economic environment. Drawbacks: Rampant DVD piracy cuts into back-end.

2. El Captain Americas: More inclusive approach involving our neighbors to the south. *CA* may be more of a “free agent” in this narra-

tive. U.S. government/society not necessarily the “good guys.” Benefits: Audience more comfortable with non-contextual nudity, cheap production in Venezuela. Drawbacks: Irritating ranchito music.

3. Dr. Captain America: The aging American audience might appreciate a smaller-scoped hero. Not necessarily someone who can fly and save whole countries, but someone who can see senior citizens on time in a doctor's office and can catheterize a patient quickly and efficiently. Benefits: Ready-made villain in Medicare. Drawbacks: Audience dying out quickly.

4. Cap'n America: Replace Chris Evans with a comic actor in the vein of Zach Galifianakis. Adjust the story and tone to reflect a more “wacky” and “tongue-in-cheek” perspective. Dispense with uplift and patriotic themes and aim for a broader, more teenage-appealing “gross-out” comedy. Benefits: Production cost, DVD sales. Drawbacks: Hard to see a *CA4* or *CA5*.

5. Little Captain America: Reboot the series with younger actors, this time very young, in early pre-teens. Concentrate storylines on small-bore kids'-perspective issues—school, parents, friends, etc.—and think about animation. Benefits: Cheap to produce, actors less costly. Drawbacks: Parents/managers on set, actors grow older awkwardly.

6. Captain Bombay: Do the Bollywood version. Benefits: It's the Bollywood version. Drawbacks: It's the Bollywood version.

7. Captain Globe: Expand the vision of the character so that he serves as an advocate for the entire globe. Replace Chris Evans with a slightly more international-looking actor. Concentrate on environmental and global themes. Benefits: Takes

emphasis off the idea of American decline. Drawbacks: An audience downer.

8. Captain Wheelchair/Captain Gay/Captain Outsider: Explore the option of making Captain America one of society's traditionally “outsider” identities. A wheelchair-bound and/or gay *CA* might refresh audience's perceptions of the franchise. Benefits: Wheelchair stunts are cheaper to orchestrate, gay characters currently popular. Drawbacks: Hard to picture a flying wheelchair, lose teenage-boy audience with gay-romance theme.

9. Dark Captain America: Make American decline the central theme. A broken-down or alcoholic *CA* living in a dystopic America with rampant violent crime and economic collapse will reflect current American reality in 2013. Benefits: Cheap to film in Detroit. No sets necessary. Drawbacks: Must film in Detroit, hard to insure production against violent attack.

10. Captain America vs. Captain America: This is an off-the-wall idea, but worth exploring. Deal with the struggles and the ramifications of a “superhero” in a litigious society. Make it more of an “Aaron Sorkin” kind of treatment. The patent and copyright issues inherent in the superhero genre. Benefits: No stunts, need courtroom set only. Drawbacks: Need to interest Sorkin in the project (\$\$\$) and unclear if it will have action-hero-adventure appeal with all the talking and the depositions.

These are all just starting-off points. The key here is, we want to think “outside the box” about this promising new franchise. Please have each department brainstorm on this issue, and we'll discuss further at the next all-production meeting.

Thanks!

Statism Down Our Throats

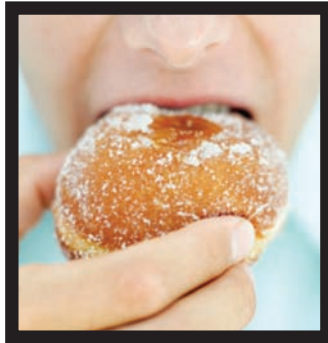
PEOPLE who see everything as a problem to be solved by the application of exquisitely calibrated governmental force remind you of the maxim: When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. To be specific, a nail that can be pulled out and given to someone else who lacks a nail for historical reasons or possibly deep-rooted gender inequity. Since this person also lacks a hammer, you'll have to buy him one, but he'll have to take Hammer Training, or possibly Hammer Retraining if he previously used a wrench, and we'll need to set guidelines for the handle to make sure it doesn't fly off and hit someone uninsured. Not a federal issue, you say? Hah: He could still hit himself on the thumb, and that makes it a public-health issue.

Yes, "public health," the Commerce Clause of the people who want to change what you're doing. Enter Mark Bittman, a food writer who penned an op-ed for the *New York Times* about the wisdom of taxing unhealthy—i.e., delicious—foods. "The resulting income should be earmarked for a program that encourages a sound diet for Americans by making healthy food more affordable and widely available."

Then they'll eat their broccoli! Well, as Reason.com pointed out: "An adult on a 2,000-calorie diet could satisfy recommendations for vegetable and fruit consumption in the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans at an average price of \$2 to \$2.50 per day, or approximately 50 cents per edible cup equivalent." Vegetables are less expensive than cigarettes. Unless, of course, you go to an organic store for something fertilized with albino-ox manure and irrigated with lark's tears, but since organic is healthier—because, you know, it doesn't have, you know, chemicals—there will be a push to make sure the subsidized sprouts are pesticide-free. The doughnut tax will be trebled so people won't have to take out payday loans for kale. It's either this or bankrupting Medicare with spiraling costs associated with the Bakery-Industrial Complex.

Bittman justifies it with the usual assertion: "Public health is the role of the government, and our diet is right up there with any other public responsibility you can name, from water treatment to mass transit." The private diet is the public responsibility. So much for "keep your laws off my body," eh? If you declared yourself romantically involved with a sirloin and took your meals in bed, the insistence that government "stay out of our bedrooms" would be instantly dropped, and the nutritional equivalent of the Saudi morality police would whip you with sticks until you replaced the mashed potato with broccoli.

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.



Granted, mass transit is a public responsibility; look only to Article 16A, which says that "the Congress shall be responsible for getting people from one place to another, and a transfer must be given if demanded, but shall not be valid for a return trip, no matter what you say the other driver told you." Municipal water systems are absolutely necessary as well, since private systems would mean your tap would gush forth a chunky broth of mouse noses and cattle offal. "Public health" shuts down any objections to privatizing these functions, and gives the statist the moral force to tax and regulate however they like. Besides, it works. Putting up signs forbidding someone to smoke within 20 feet of a building's entrance saves lives. Let them smoke within 19 feet and people would be dropping like flocks of birds heading into a wind farm.

No, it's all part of public health. You're putting the wrong things in your body and that's everyone's business. Oh, and stop the War on Drugs. And please keep smoking because we need the taxes. But don't smoke. Thank you.

Isn't it hard to determine what's "bad" food, if someone has it in moderation? I exercise. I have a dish of ice cream once a week. And I'd pay a tax based on the assumption I sit in a La-Z-Boy peering over my walrus belly at the idiot box, sucking a slurry of liquefied Oreos. Should a poor person pay more because he buys a bag of Fritos to give the kids a rare treat, or is that okay if he gets a sprouts voucher?

Isn't it likely that people will continue to eat exactly what they want, and the poor may fail to be swayed by posters and PSAs about the joys of slimy cooked carrots? How can this micromanagement of something so personal and infinitely varied ever work? Simple: "We have experts who can figure out how 'bad' a food should be to qualify, and what the rate should be."

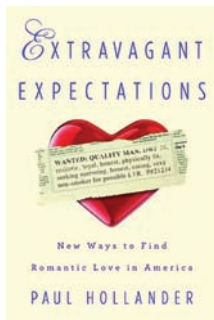
Experts! The best and brightest graduates of that arcane and dismal science, Digestive Economics. Don't think the author's some eat-your-peas killjoy, though. "It's fun—inspiring, even—to think about implementing a program like this." Really? Fun? Inspiring? Even well-paid dentists aren't that happy about putting their hands in other people's mouths.

Here's a thought: Watching TV makes people sedentary and bulbous. You want to combat obesity, slap a fat VAT on television—the actors, the crew, the production companies, the networks, the set makers, the companies that put satellites into orbits. Tax them per hour of broadcast at a rate that makes the tube go dark for half the day. It's for your own good. Don't start weeping about "freedom" here, because you'd just be watching Fox anyway. Now, if you were watching a documentary about something important, like the effect of teak logging on the psyches of stressed elephants, well, we could talk about a waiver. Experts say it might work. **NR**

Books, Arts & Manners

Love in the Land of the Free

MARY EBERSTADT



Extravagant Expectations: New Ways to Find Romantic Love in America, by Paul Hollander
(Ivan R. Dee, 264 pp., \$27.95)

HERE'S something genuinely new under the summer sun: a book that can be enjoyed simultaneously by anyone with an interest in modern sociology—and by anyone who has ever read or placed a personals ad. Put differently, it's a book for everyone interested in understanding how, and why, the pursuit of love and sex today differs so radically from what came before.

The author, sociologist Paul Hollander, is hitherto best known for an academic résumé that includes the London School of Economics, the University of Illinois, Princeton, Harvard, and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; and 14 books and many articles on sociological and historical subjects. His fearless and erudite writing during the Cold War about the seduction of so many Western intellectuals made him a hero in all the right precincts, and a well-deserved scourge in all the wrong ones. As Jay Nordlinger noted in these pages almost ten years ago, on the occasion of Hollander's *Discon-*

tents: Postmodern and Postcommunist, he is “an idea man, a logic man,” one who “has always been underrated, or perhaps underadvertised.”

Now Hollander brings his powers to bear on the one and only area of life where more lies are told even than under Communism: namely, matters of the heart. He boldly imports Emile Durkheim—along with heirs such as Christopher Lasch and Robert Nisbet—to the hitherto virgin territory of love, contemporary American-style. In so doing he exposes without flinching the contradictions of today's pursuit of romantic happiness. Readers cannot help but enjoy Hollander's reflections, as he surveys sources as disparate as pop sociologists, real sociologists, and classical European romantic novels—and engages in what has to be the closest examination ever of personals ads by anyone not scanning them for the obvious reason.

Different though this turf may be from that of Hollander's previous books, *Extravagant Expectations* is nevertheless a logical outcome of the author's fascination with the varieties of deception and self-deception, particularly in his adopted homeland of America (he hails from Budapest). “Loneliness,” he observes, “is a modern idea and state of mind. I have been well aware that there are many lonely people in America, along with a bewildering array of efforts devised, or improvised, to alleviate loneliness.” What intrigues him, he writes, is the seeming paradox between romantic expectations and romantic reality—particularly in a country founded in part on the radical notion of the pursuit of happiness itself. “Clearly,” he observes, “idealistic and benign socio-political intentions and arrangements have been compatible with a great deal of individual unhappiness.” It is this paradox that spurred his current book.

Why that dramatic contemporary gap between romantic expectation and romantic reality? One force, the author argues, is the blurring of the line between the marketplace for goods and the marketplace for people—what might infelicitously be called (by me, not by him) the consumerization of romance. “Both printed personals and Internet dating ser-

vices,” he notes, “are emblematic of modern consumer society: They offer a bewildering abundance and variety of choice, raise questions about the truthfulness of claims made on behalf of the ‘products’ or ‘services’ offered, and stoke the expectations of potential consumers.” Accustomed to chronically shopping for stuff, many Americans unthinkingly take the next step and shop for people.

Hollander is surely correct in observing that the language of the marketplace, of selling oneself, has come to litter modern love—even in precincts whose inhabitants consider themselves to be free of any taint of commerce, such as that of the readers of and personals advertisers in *The New York Review of Books*. Noting how often women describe themselves as “stunning,” “attractive,” “very attractive,” and so on, for example, Hollander asks: “How many ‘stunning’ women such as those described . . . could be out there awaiting eager partners?” Such is not to focus unfairly on women; “men too,” he notes with the dry wit frequently on display in the book, “are capable of implausible self-presentations.” Again, to judge by the personals ads, there is apparently no shortage of men who are well-off, sensitive, thoughtful, handsome, adventurous, sophisticated, and otherwise the answer to many a single woman's prayers—though there is also, as is proven by the ads' existence, an inexplicable system-wide failure of such women to have recognized these stupendous gifts in real life.

Hollander believes that there is something peculiarly American about the “extravagant expectations” of those and other souls. In a particularly fascinating passage comparing ads in *The New York Review of Books* with their counterparts in the *London Review of Books*, he depicts the contrast between the societies as mirrored in their personals ads. Unlike the Americans, he observes, the Brits aren't even trying to sell themselves—at least not in the same way; there, irony and self-deprecation rule instead. Witness as exemplary, “Bald, short, fat, and ugly male, 53, seeks short-sighted woman with tremendous sexual appetite.”

How did Americans come to this diffi-

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cult romantic pass? Modernity, observes Hollander alongside his fellow sociologists, has frayed the bonds that once joined individuals to clan and communities quite beyond any ability to knit them back together. One consequence has been an increased reliance on the bonds to others that do remain in the hands of modern men and women—primarily, romantic bonds. And so romantic love is made to pull more weight than it ever had to before, or indeed than wiser souls ever would have assigned it. “Modernity,” summarizes the author, “intensifies expectations and the quest for intimate relationships which, it is hoped, will compensate for the loss of community and a stable worldview.”

These are wise words, and similar insights abound in these pages. Yet while Hollander’s book exhibits the boldness of applying modern sociology to an area of life left largely untouched by it before, it also demonstrates some of the limits of that approach. The problem with Durkheim and the rest of the distinguished pack is not that they are insufficiently broad. It is rather that they are all too much so. In particular, the sociological lens is insufficient to distinguish clearly between the two largest armies clashing by night in all those ads and Internet lists: men on one hand, and women on the other.

To understand the way we live now is to see, yes, that modernity has shredded the ties that once bound us to one another. But it is also to see that that shredding has been different for the different sexes. Consider those selfsame personals ads, through which sex differences come loud and clear. It is almost always men, and almost never women, who advertise for an emotionally neutral sexual relationship. It is almost always women, and almost never men, who stress the desirability of financial security in a partner. Women sometimes mention families; men, not so much. And so on into every cliché ever penned on the subject, “post-feminist” age or no.

The enduring truth of two different sexual natures makes one wonder whether the fundamental force behind today’s often bewildering mating game is not so much the disparity between commercial and romantic life—though Hollander is surely right in drawing attention to that fascinating paradox. Perhaps there is a more prosaic force that has loosed a thou-

sand untold consequences on the world, including perhaps some of the loneliness charted in this book: the Sexual Revolution.

As the author notes, for example, aging is particularly hard in an America that is youth-obsessed and exposed ubiquitously to “standardized beauty”—a sound phrase covering everything from commercials for cosmetics to Internet pornography. But, one is forced by the example to wonder, is it equally hard for all people? Are women who are surrounded by children and grandchildren in middle and old age as likely to feel lonely and shut out as some other women—namely, those who bought the revolution’s promises and ultimately denied themselves the rewards of family; and who are now aging coquettes embittered by their competitive disadvantages against any woman years or decades younger?

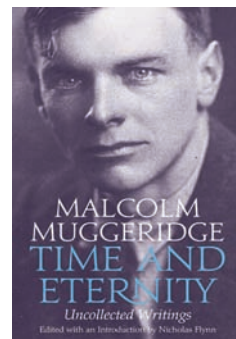
The questions seem to answer themselves. It is no doubt true, as Durkheim observed, that (in Hollander’s paraphrase) “the rise of expectations is integral to having choices and options,” and that having too many choices runs the risk of enervating the consumer, whether one is hunting for laundry soap in Walmart or for a foot fetishist on Craigslist. But is it indeed the mere *fact* of so much choice that overwhelms the modern romantic mind—or is it rather that so many adults have bought the revolution’s lie that their natures are interchangeable, effectively making an ignorant army of both sides in the battle of the sexes?

In sum, it may be the Sexual Revolution—its seismic severing of human nature from human nurture—that best explains the “increasing amount of confusion and conflicting desires and preferences” that Hollander correctly ascertains. Surely submitting this addendum to his fascinating account will be taken as a friendly amendment. In the end, he is among the few lately to have looked into the tea leaves of modern romance and found something new to say. He has said it, moreover, with a fresh eye, new insights, and a humane and at times even humorous heart. Fans of his previous work will not be surprised by having their high expectations met. But they will be pleased to see that this latest book is not only informative and interesting, but also entertaining as real sociology rarely is—in all, an extravagant accomplishment.

NR

Apocalyptic Witness and Wit

M. D. AESCHLIMAN



Time and Eternity: Uncollected Writings, by Malcolm Muggeridge, edited by Nicholas Flynn (Orbis, 237 pp., \$24)

IN the course of a long, varied life, several of whose chapters were truly a “rake’s progress,” Malcolm Muggeridge (1903–90) managed, alternately and sometimes simultaneously, to amuse, inspire, and offend. Truth, he found out and said, orally and in print, is often in very bad taste. Yet he had a long and enviable line of admirers, including Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, William F. Buckley Jr., Ronald Reagan, and Mother Teresa. He was one of the great English prose writers of the last century.

Historians on both sides of the Atlantic—including A. J. P. Taylor, Paul Johnson, and Richard Pipes—have praised his 1933 dispatches from Stalin’s Russia about the great Ukrainian terror famine engineered by Marxist “Scientific Socialism,” and his subsequent 1934 satirical-documentary novel *Winter in Moscow*, about the willing credulity of Western fellow-travelers in Russia. His two-volume autobiography, *Chronicles of Wasted Time* (1972–73), is one of the great pieces of satirical-confessional literature of the modern period. Overall,

Mr. Aeschliman is a professor at Boston University and the University of Italian Switzerland. A friend of Malcolm Muggeridge, he edited a paperback edition of Muggeridge’s 1934 novel *Winter in Moscow*.

“Muggeridge wrote some of the best things in English in [the 20th] century,” the Oxford historian Norman Stone has said: “His account of *The Thirties* (1940) is one of the wisest and funniest books” ever written about Great Britain.

As a television personality, Muggeridge made a series of documentaries that did something to counteract the avalanche of appalling idiocy that has been a hallmark of television as a medium. He made films on his English Socialist childhood, Russia, India under the British Raj, the life of Jesus, the travels of St. Paul, and the lives and works of Blake, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (the latter portraits also published as the 1976 book *A Third Testament*). His 1969 documentary film *Something Beautiful for God*, made in

tor of the satirical magazine *Punch*; and regular editorialist, essayist, and reviewer for *The New Statesman* and such American journals as *Esquire* and *NATIONAL REVIEW*. All the while he was publishing novels, plays, and literary essays of high distinction; several of the latter are reprinted in this new anthology edited by Nicholas Flynn, *Time and Eternity*.

To say that Muggeridge’s own personal life was vexed is an understatement. He was a Dostoevskyan character (Dostoevsky indeed was one of his favorite writers), blessed by a beautiful, cultured, loving wife, the favorite niece of the prominent Fabians Sidney and Beatrice Webb, but one to whom until the 1960s he was hardly faithful. Like so many brilliant people raised in the left-wing, avant-garde milieu—then (the 1920s) and

Eastern Europe to Stalinism; and the treasonous collapse of Western pro-Communist or fellow-travelling intellectuals, especially in Britain and France (he knew the Cambridge spies well).

With regard to the Soviet threat, he mocked the frequent obtuseness of the leaders of the Western anti-Communist cause, to which he was doggedly loyal from the early 1930s onward: In a brilliant satirical essay, “Senator McCarthy McCarthyised, or The Biter Bit,” he put Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the dock for actually aiding the worldwide Communist cause (a point also famously made by Whittaker Chambers to WFB).

Underlying all of his concerns was a sense that Christianity and the churches were collapsing: a fear that Muggeridge’s friend George Orwell shrewdly noted as

Muggeridge’s life was restless and peripatetic, a series of kaleidoscopic, global chapters stretching over nearly nine decades and several continents in an apocalyptic century.

India, treated the life and work of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and has become a modern devotional classic. Muggeridge’s interviews with figures such as de Gaulle, Solzhenitsyn, Svetlana Stalin, and WFB are works of high distinction and importance—a kind of “saving remnant” in a medium dominated by vulgarity and amnesia.

Muggeridge’s life was restless and peripatetic, a series of kaleidoscopic, global chapters stretching over nearly nine decades and several continents in an apocalyptic century: boyhood as the son of a working-class London Fabian, studies in Natural Science at Cambridge (where he fell under Anglo-Catholic influence), teaching stints in both India and Egypt in the 1920s, editorial writing on the left-wing *Manchester Guardian*, service in Russia as *Guardian* correspondent (1932–33), work in the International Labour Organization of the League of Nations in Geneva, editorial work back in India on the imperialist *Calcutta Statesman*, London journalism, and work during World War II as a British intelligence agent in Mozambique and then Paris (for which he was later decorated by de Gaulle). After the war, he served as deputy editor and Washington correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph*; edi-

now—he was afflicted and disfigured by its celebratory immoralism and experimental promiscuity combined with haughty, self-righteous, public-political moralism: what Michael Polanyi calls “moral inversion,” which Dostoevsky himself had clairvoyantly depicted and mocked in *The Devils*.

The sense of impending apocalypse intensified his own existential anxiety, throughout his life. He witnessed, after all, the collapse of empire; the collapse of capitalism (1929) but also of British Socialist hopes (the MacDonald government); the collapse of eschatological, utopian hopes in the Soviet Russian nightmare; the collapse of the League of Nations in its inadequacy to halt the onset of World War II; the collapse of humanity in the Nazi Holocaust; the collapse of

obsessing him early on in their friendship. People who knew him well came to realize what his published diaries (1981) later showed in detail, that he was—from his time at Cambridge in the early 1920s onward—a God-haunted soul, a skeptical fideist who increasingly saw modern smugness about secular “progress” as utterly derisory, and completely disconfirmed by the facts of 20th-century history: the destruction of traditions, the breaking of nations, the massacre of peoples, the dissipation and disorientation of the individual conscience. Finding the hero-worship of secular saints—Marx, Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao, and Che—ludicrous, he increasingly valued examples of what he took to be real honor and decency: Gandhi and de Gaulle; the writers Orwell, Waugh, and Solzhenitsyn; Mother Teresa, pro-life activists, and obscure priests working with Down-syndrome children.

Unlike many members of the British upper classes and intelligentsia, on the left and the right, Muggeridge was never snobbishly anti-American. On the Kennedy glamour cult promoted by the American media, reaching its apotheosis in the toadying literary servility of Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and Theodore Sorensen (author of texts that he praised as John F.



“Sorry, Dear, but it was either this or tighten the money supply.”

Kennedy's), Muggeridge wrote in the mid-1960s: "To an American well-wisher like myself it is deeply distressing and disturbing to find the worst kind of fatuity dredged up by upholders of our Monarchy applied now to a President of the United States. One longs for some authentic American voice—a Mark Twain, an H. L. Mencken, even a Will Rogers—to send the whole ghastly performance up, [at least] in the interest of a great American tradition of human equality and the self-respect that goes therewith."

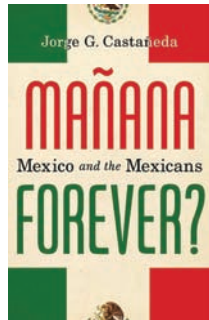
Muggeridge's relation by marriage Beatrice Webb, who with her husband Sidney was at the center of the British Socialist-utilitarian project, had become by the mid-1920s an uncritical admirer of Soviet Communism. Fascinated by Malcolm but increasingly worried by his apostasy from the Socialist-utilitarian line, she wrote in her diary even before he went to Russia, "I think Malcolm is a mystic and even a puritan in his awareness of loyalties and human relationships" (Jan. 19, 1931). What would sustain Malcolm and make him better, wiser, and happier during the next 60 years was a growing faith in God, Christ, and Christianity that would enable him to apply his friend Hugh Kingsmill's critique of utopian "Dawnism" to all projects of secular salvation: Leninist-Stalinist, Fascist-Nazi, Labour-Socialist, Maoist, Castroite, capitalist-consumerist, or American Hippie-Yippie-egalitarian-eroticist. (Regarding this last, he wrote in 1971: "The liberated Yippies . . . have reversed the Fall, sicked up the forbidden apple, and returned to the Garden of Eden, where they summon us all to live.") "Dawnism" is what Eric Voegelin called "immanentizing the eschaton." Cynical, libertine atheism, meanwhile, denies any ennobling transcendental hope or idealism whatsoever.

Though poorly proofread and naïvely introduced, Nicholas Flynn's new anthology is an excellent introduction to Muggeridge's work. It contains his 1933 *Guardian* dispatches on the Ukrainian terror famine; his great satirical attack on Bertrand Russell (which first appeared in *The New Republic*); wonderful, appreciative essays on Tolstoy, Leonard Woolf, W. Somerset Maugham, and Solzhenitsyn; and much else of value by the man Paul Johnson rightly called "a great scribe."

NR

Faraway, So Close

DUNCAN CURRIE



Mañana Forever?: Mexico and the Mexicans,
by Jorge G. Castañeda (Knopf,
320 pp., \$27.95)

WHETHER or not the late Mexican military ruler Porfirio Díaz (1830–1915) ever actually said, "Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States," his alleged quip has recently taken on a darker significance. Mexican border cities known for being tourist havens and manufacturing hubs have turned into cauldrons of violence. Their proximity to the American behemoth is still a huge economic advantage, but it has also made them ground zero for vicious turf wars between narco-gangs competing over access to the world's most lucrative illegal-drug market. Meanwhile, a steady flow of U.S. weaponry bolsters cartel firepower. One can only imagine the exasperation in Mexico when news broke of "Operation Fast and Furious," the mind-bogglingly ill-conceived U.S. program under which federal officials deliberately allowed guns to reach Mexican organized-crime members in hopes of tracking them. (The guns were subsequently tied to dozens and dozens of shootings, including the December 2010 murder of U.S. Border Patrol agent Brian Terry.)

On the other hand, bilateral security cooperation has reached unprecedented levels, and the Mexican government is finally starting to develop the intelligence capabilities and legal tools necessary to combat the drug mafias. The

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violence has been spreading, but it remains heavily concentrated along the U.S. border, the western coast (where drugs are produced and also enter Mexico from South America), and various inland shipment routes. Until just a few years ago, overall Mexican crime rates were on a long-term downward trend. Despite the volcanic eruption of drug slayings, Mexico still has a much lower homicide rate than Brazil (to say nothing of Colombia, Venezuela, or El Salvador), and its sprawling capital city has a much lower homicide rate than Washington, D.C.

Indeed, there is more to the past decade of Mexican history than Wild West-style bloodbaths. The authoritarian Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its 71-year hold on the presidency in 2000, and pluralist democracy has become firmly entrenched. Mexico boasts a larger middle class, greater educational opportunities, stronger public institutions, better economic management, and a sounder financial system than it did prior to the 1994–95 peso crisis (which triggered its worst recession since World War II and prompted a U.S.-led bailout). Between 2007 and 2010, its ranking in the A. T. Kearney Foreign Direct Investment Confidence Index climbed from 19th to eighth. According to the World Bank, it is now easier to do business in Mexico than in any other Latin American country (including Chile).

Such positive signs are easy to overlook amid gangland beheadings and other atrocities. Given all the hyperbolic talk of Mexico as a "failed state," the moment is ripe for a thoughtful, nuanced portrait of America's southern neighbor that explains both the complex dynamics of the drug violence and the broader challenges facing Mexican society. Jorge Castañeda's new book *Mañana Forever?* succeeds on the latter count, if not the former.

Born into a wealthy political family and educated at Princeton and the University of Paris, Castañeda served as Mexican foreign minister from 2000 to 2003, under the first non-PRI government since the 1920s, before launching a quixotic independent presidential bid. (His father, Jorge Castañeda Sr., was Mexico's top diplomat between 1979 and 1982.) Now 58 and a professor at NYU, he writes in strikingly blunt terms

about the cultural impediments to Mexican progress, arguing that deeply rooted character traits—such as an aversion to conflict and competition, a resistance to collective action, a cynical disrespect for the rule of law, and a tortuously ambivalent view of the United States—have retarded his home country's maturation. Castañeda stresses the need for a Mexican Charles de Gaulle: a bold leader who could effect “a fundamental shift in attitudes” toward foreign investment, protectionism, corruption, and America. Without such a shift, “the social and economic transformations Mexico requires are implausible.”

Mexicans may chafe at being lectured by a privileged academic who has spent so much of his adulthood living abroad. And indeed, Castañeda's tone can often seem scolding. As for the substance of his case, one recalls the famous words of Daniel Patrick Moynihan: “The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself.”

In the spirit of Moynihan, Castañeda demonstrates that cultural variables have jaundiced Mexican politics, but he also concludes that wise political stewardship could modernize Mexican culture. Unfortunately, Mexico has an antiquated three-party system that discourages compromise, stifles policy innovation, and allows presidential candidates to win election with a mere plurality. (The current Mexican president, Felipe Calderón, secured a razor-thin victory with less than 36 percent of the vote.) The only way to break the logjam and guarantee that future Mexican governments enjoy a real electoral mandate, says Castañeda, is (1) to hold a national referendum on key constitutional issues and (2) to require the top two presidential vote-getters to compete in a runoff election if neither receives a majority on the first ballot.

A healthier political system would make it easier for Mexico to pursue structural economic reform. As Castañeda emphasizes, the country needs more investment (particularly in the energy and telecom sectors), more competition, a more efficient tax regime (its revenue take, as a share of GDP, is the lowest in the OECD), and tougher curbs on monopolistic practices. (The World Economic

Forum reckons that Mexico is a less competitive economy than Sri Lanka or Jordan.) In the area of public security, Castañeda rightly condemns the corruption and inadequacy of state and local police forces, which are “irretrievably compromised” with organized crime. He favors gradually replacing them with a national police force, and also establishing a national criminal code. (The vast majority of crimes in Mexico are nonfederal and go unreported.)

For all its persistent troubles, Castañeda's native land has become “a middle-class society, with an incipient but vibrant democracy, an open economy, and one of the world's most thriving and multifaceted cultures.” Since the completion of NAFTA, Mexico has signed free-trade deals with countries throughout Latin America, and also with the European Union, Israel, and Japan. At least one of Castañeda's proposals for further North American integration—a single currency—is laughably unrealistic, and others (such as “infrastructure and social cohesion funds” modeled on the Marshall Plan and U.S. aid to Iraq) seem highly unlikely in an era of looming fiscal retrenchment.

Castañeda is also unduly sanguine about Mexican assimilation in the United States. No doubt, Mexicans have much to learn from their successful brethren north of the border. But according to the latest “assimilation index” compiled by Duke University economist Jacob Vigdor, Mexican immigrants are “poorly assimilated in an absolute sense and show few signs of progress over time.” Indeed, Vigdor calculates that, as a group, they were actually less economically and civically assimilated in 2009 than they were in 2000. For that matter, various social indicators (nonmarital childbearing, school-dropout rates, gang activity, welfare dependency) suggest that many Mexican Americans are assimilating downward into an underclass culture.

Immigration remains one of the two most combustible issues in U.S.-Mexican relations. The other, of course, is drug violence, to which Castañeda devotes precious few pages. Some of the hardest-hit areas were—or still are—leading symbols of Mexican prosperity. In 2005, *AméricaEconomía* magazine ranked Monterrey as Latin America's safest city. Now the rich industrial

center is plagued by grisly mayhem between the Gulf Cartel and their erstwhile allies, the Zetas. In 2007, a British investment publication hailed Juárez as North America's top “large city of the future.” Since 2008, it has experienced levels of gangsterism that make the ghettos of West Baltimore look like downtown Cedar Rapids.

Sturdier, more transparent legal institutions would help mitigate the violence, and Mexico is slowly building them. (In this noble effort, it deserves greater U.S. assistance for police training and judicial reform.) But institution building is profoundly difficult even in favorable circumstances, let alone when some of the most powerful criminal organizations on the planet are terrorizing public officials and private citizens. Drug legalization may seem a radical way to deplete the revenue and muscle of the cartels, but it is inching closer to mainstream acceptance.

Indeed, a growing number of former Latin American presidents—including Vicente Fox and Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico, Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil, and César Gaviria of Colombia—now advocate treating drug use primarily as a public-health concern rather than as a criminal matter. Zedillo, Cardoso, and Gaviria—along with legendary Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker and Reagan-era secretary of state George Shultz—were all members of the Global Commission on Drug Policy, which in early June published a report declaring the “war on drugs” a failure and urging governments to experiment with “legal regulation of drugs.”

Castañeda has previously expressed support for legalization, but he does not tackle the subject in this book. The germane question is not whether legalizing drugs is a “good” policy option, but whether the social consequences of prohibition—both for consumer and producer countries—are worse than those of legalization. As we ponder that question, we should also consider a poignant statement made by Mexican poet Javier Sicilia, whose son was killed by drug traffickers in March. Speaking recently to a crowd in El Paso, Texas, the grieving Sicilia reminded Americans that “behind every puff of pot, every line of coke, there is death, there are shattered families.”

NR

Songs and Tanks

JAY NORDLINGER

LAST month, a singer named Ibrahim Kashush was leading crowds in Syria. They were demonstrating against the dictatorship and for democracy and freedom. Kashush entertained, inspired, and delighted them with his songs and slogans. With his jokes, too. He was absolutely fearless—recklessly fearless—in challenging and mocking the dictatorship. The dictatorship, of course, was not amused. They slit his throat.

The singer's friends set up a Facebook group in his honor. Fearless themselves, they vowed to "sing for freedom in Syria's squares, even if the price is slaughter."

Twenty-some years ago, protesters were singing in Estonian squares. This movement is captured in *The Singing Revolution*, a one-hour documentary to be shown on PBS this month and next. It comes from a longer film of the same name, made in 2006. The filmmakers are James and Maureen Tusty, husband and wife. Their film has a companion book, also called *The Singing Revolution*, written by Priit Vesilind.

Why is PBS showing the documentary? We are in an anniversary year: It has been 20 years since the Soviet Union fell and Estonia reemerged, along with other inmates of "the prisonhouse of nations."

Like the Welsh and some others, the Estonians are a singing people. Every five years, they have a nationwide song festival. The first was held in 1869. Traditionally, something like a third of the population shows up. They sing songs that help bind them together as a people.

There are 1.3 million Estonians today, living in their lovely land on the Baltic Sea (and the Gulf of Finland, and other bodies of water). For centuries the object of conquest and occupation, Estonia enjoyed two decades of independence, from the first world war to the second. On August 23, 1939, Hitler and Stalin, through their representatives Ribbentrop

and Molotov, signed their pact. And that was that.

About the Soviets' treatment of the Estonians, I will say little. The film says a lot. It is basically too awful to bear. Then came the Nazis, another chapter without prettiness. Then the Soviets returned, "liberating" the land. Also Russifying it. Eventually, 35 or 40 percent of the population was Russian.

At one time, Estonia was a member of the League of Nations. It sent athletes to the Olympic Games. Now it was just an SSR, a Soviet socialist republic, one of the 15. It did not appear on many maps. The writers of the preface to the companion book say something striking, something quirky: "Even philatelists lost interest" in Estonia, since the country, or former country, "no longer issued her own postage stamps."

Regardless of what the outside world thought, Estonians themselves did not forget they were Estonian. They continued to hold their song festivals. The official fare was paeans to Stalin and such. But they still sang their own songs, unofficially.

In 1985 came Gorbachev, and, with him, *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The Estonians, like others, saw their openings—and took them. The film quotes Trivimi Velliste, an Estonian historian and revolutionary, later a diplomat and politician. He says that Gorbachev made one "fundamental mistake: He didn't realize that

when you give free speech to people, things can get out of hand."

Estonian revolutionaries—simple democrats, independence-seekers—held their first rally in August 1987, on the anniversary of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Mart Laar, another historian, revolutionary, and politician, describes what happened: Leaders of the rally began to talk, and were not arrested. Somewhat amazed by this, they talked some more. Still not arrested, they talked even more.

The next summer, there were six consecutive nights of song, as Estonians found their collective voice. "Estonian I am, and Estonian I will be, as I was meant to be." These concerts, or rallies, or "sing-ins," took place on the song-festival grounds. On the second night, a man on a motorcycle whipped around the perimeter, bearing an Estonian flag. A flag that had been banned for 50 years. It electrified the crowd, many of whom were seeing their national colors in public for the first time.

In the film, a beautiful woman—i.e., a typical Estonian woman—remembers these nights of singing. She says, "I still have chicken skin" (goosebumps), thinking about them.

August 23, 1989, was the 50th anniversary of the pact. More than a million Balts formed a human chain, stretching from Tallinn in the north to Vilnius in the south. In March 1990, Estonians formed their own parliament. One harrowing

ON A THEME OF D'ALIBRAY

Such a fine day rides on the soft air,
Laura, please pay heed to the new season,
That laughs at the clear sky and sings of love:
Spring is smiling because she is young, and so fair.

This flower that brightens the forest all around—
Is not one that will bloom here always.
Earth has already summoned it to her breast:
The heat, singeing petals, numbers her days,

Meanwhile you're wasting precious hours of youth,
Ignoring the clear signals of Mother Nature
(Who shows to each of us a singular truth).

If June will not serve you as a looking glass;
If it cannot make you fall in love,
At least it may show how all beauty must pass.

—DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

day, two months later, Russians loyal to the USSR nearly took it by force. These citizens were organized in a group—more like a mob—called Interfront. When Interfront besieged the parliament, Estonians hurried to the site en masse. “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!” they chanted. They won this standoff and allowed the Russians to retreat, unmoled.

Where was Gorbachev in all this? Doing nothing, letting the captive nations go? He tried a little repression in Lithuania. That was in January 1991, when most of the world was eyeing the

quibbles, of course, because one always does. For instance, why can’t interviewees give their testimony without music in the background? Must there always be a soundtrack? And when events turn ominous or ugly, so does the music—just as in any number of bad TV shows. The story here is dramatic enough without the aid, if we can call it aid, of music.

But, again, this is a fine and gratifying documentary—gratifying, in part, because it is anti-Communist. Even at this late date, 2011, I am unused to seeing such a film. When I was coming of age, you were pounced on if you criticized, or even questioned, life behind the Iron Curtain. That was “poisoning the atmosphere of détente.” The language of this film, the narration, is bracing, and truthful. For example, “In 1941, Hitler betrayed Stalin and broke their agreement.”

That should be a completely unremarkable and uncontroversial statement. But my professors didn’t talk that way. Did yours?

The film has a lot to say about the power of music, and the Estonian voices, swelling in chorus, are powerful and moving indeed. I too had chicken skin. There might even have been a tear. But let’s face it: Music can take you only so far.

Priit Vesilind’s book begins, “Estonia sang its way to freedom.” He doesn’t really mean that. He is no fool. He’s simply exercising poetic license. A blurb for the book reads, “A courageous people showed the world that Soviet tanks were no match for Estonian song.” In my opinion, that is not just a poetic or fanciful statement, but also a slightly offensive one.

Hungarians in 1956 were very brave, and they might have been good singers, too. Same with the Czechs in 1968. In fact, the Hungarians and the Czechs are two of the most musical peoples in the world. But they were run over with tanks. The Syrians, right this second, are bravely singing. And, just like the Estonians, they’re chanting, “Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!” Unlike the Estonians, they are being killed, in large numbers. Some 2,000 have died so far. Bashar Assad does not suffer from the squeamishness of Gorbachev.

“But Gorby had no options!” people like to say. Back in the late 1990s, I heard Condoleezza Rice scoff at this assertion,

in a memorable way. “Oh, he had options, all right. He had 390,000 troops in Germany”—in Germany alone. He could have done tremendous damage, in many places. He could have squashed rebellious people like bugs, just as his predecessors had. But he did not.

At the Oslo Freedom Forum last year, I talked to Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader. He, too, put the matter in a memorable way: “Gorbachev had the instruments of rape, and did not use them.” He won the Nobel peace prize for refusing to rape. That prize has been given for less admirable reasons.

At that same forum, Estonia’s Mart Laar spoke. He said, matter-of-factly, that freedom revolutions can go wrong, as in Tiananmen Square. The key requirement in such revolutions, he said, is international pressure: Estonians had the gift of international pressure. But did the Chinese? Do the Syrians?

In a recent phone conversation, Laar pointed out that Syrians have one thing the Estonians lacked: the new media, including the Internet. That is a valuable tool. If you can keep the state from monopolizing information, you have gone a long way. And no matter what, said Laar, a people under dictatorship “must try”: must try to win their freedom. “You never know how weak a dictatorship is until you test it. You may fail—you can easily fail—but you must try.” And the less fear you have, the better.

Above, I noted the grisly fact that the Syrian authorities slit Ibrahim Kashush’s throat. Here is another fact: They cut out his vocal cords. They don’t have time for subtlety, Assad’s boys. Here was one singer who would no longer sing. Nonetheless, those other Syrians have vowed to sing on.

A journalist on al-Arabiya’s website wrote, “The murderers understood the threat conveyed by Kashush’s deeds. Hundreds of thousands of people memorized and chanted his slogans as they laughed, clapped their hands, and rejoiced.” His voice “became the voice that united the demonstrators” in Syria and beyond, Arab citizens “who reject the repressive regimes, the torture, the arrests, and the disappearances of people.”

One of Kashush’s chants went, “Come on, Bashar, get lost. Take your brother Maher and take off. Get lost, get lost. Freedom is very near.” **NR**



coming Gulf War. Soviet forces killed 14 in Vilnius. A week later, they killed six in Riga. Those are paltry numbers, by Soviet standards. Estonians thought it was their turn next, that they would be cracked down on—but the crackdown never came.

It was a very close call, however. Events leading to independence were tense and terrifying. This was particularly true in August 1991, when the hard-line Communists in Moscow staged their coup. Soviet tanks raced into Estonia, to crush independence. But Yeltsin jumped on a tank of his own, Gorbachev returned to Moscow, and by mid-September Estonia was a member of the United Nations.

The Singing Revolution chronicles all this in deft and moving fashion. It is a fine and gratifying documentary. I have my

Avec Moi Le Déluge



RICHARD BROOKHISER

I WAS arriving early for a dinner appointment in midtown. The cabbie made a wrong turn several blocks away, so I got out to walk. The sun was leaning over the Hudson and a skyful of coastal clouds marched over the island. One I noticed was much larger than the size of a man's hand.

Touches, stains: That cloud began to unleash itself in propulsive drops. A big ugly modern office building offered a sheltering porch, tall but deep. Unless the rain blew horizontally we would be fine in here.

"We" were a growing crowd of rain refugees. The first claim staker was a white-haired lady smoking a cigarette. These days a smoker in the city is odd enough to draw attention. Maybe she had fallen asleep, a brunette, in the Lindsay administration. We were joined by a young woman, zipped up in a windbreaker, standing silently by herself; by a UPS guy in his dress browns, pushing a handtruck of packages; by guys from the building leaving work late, their heads and their Bluetooths turning this way and that.

I was unprepared. I long ago gave up buying good umbrellas because I always lose them—to cabs, to coat-check girls, to the dark aisles of movie houses. Instead I steal them from my wife—small colorful numbers, in zebra stripes or leopard spots; or I buy cheap black junkers from holes-in-the-wall run by Africans: After a few good gusts they break their backs and die in a garbage can while I buy another. But I had brought no umbrella with me. Nor had I taken a rain-

coat. The hot, humid weather that produces thunderstorms is just the kind that makes wearing or carrying a raincoat hateful. I took an inventory of my clothing: a light linen sport coat; a short-sleeved linen shirt; light linen pants; socks; driving shoes (and of course gatkes, though hopefully they wouldn't come into play). Not much in the way of useful rain gear. I was not even carrying a tabloid, so I couldn't make a paper hat. But I still had time to watch and wait.

Various comrades, more pressed, braved the elements. A woman in a white blouse and some bright skirt saw a cab coming along the cross street, improbably vacant. She dashed out, waved and shouted, snagged it: well done. A young man in his office suit tried his luck with the traffic surging down the avenue. It was not to be. The cabs, full and indifferent, passed him by. He tried sheltering himself by hitching his jacket up over his head. In half a minute it was streaming like a fisherman's slicker in Winslow Homer. Better luck next downpour. Pedestrians dressed down for the season

ing, with a few slim projections overhead. He made a reasonable calculation. Unprotected, I stayed put; no sense risking everything in the bravado of imitation.

Besides, I was waiting for something. Thanks to climate and location, the city lies under wonderful skies. A few weeks earlier I had had occasion to take the Staten Island ferry. The sun hid behind a cloud and sent out rays like God making some grand undecipherable gesture. The only words to describe the sight were those of the old carol: "and glory shone around." Tourists crowded the rail and snapped pictures of New Jersey as if it were the Grand Canyon. And well they might. On dry land the buildings block out big chunks of the view, but they also lead the eye up, to the unfolding show.

When the sun shines after it rains, there comes a sign that Jews and other primitive peoples believed they could decipher. My wife had to analyze the Book of Genesis for her most recent book, and I read it along with her. The Bible is right to put it first for many reasons, not least

Every edge in the pavement
became a gutter, every gutter
was a gorge.

did all right: A big guy in board shorts and an armless T skipped across the intersection in flip-flops. A woman in a blue sun (*sic*) dress plodded along stoically, resigned to fate.

These summer thunderstorms in the city can be intense. Judging by the splash patterns on the street, the rain swept by in sheets; sometimes the sheets curled like dragons. The bounceback of water from hard surfaces added an extra little mist. Every edge in the pavement became a gutter, every gutter was a gorge. The expression "raining cats and dogs" supposedly comes from the dead feral animals that would be flushed down the streets of early modern cities. Trash collection and the ASPCA have spared us the cargo, but the flow now still sufficed. Summer storms, though, can be as short as they are sharp. These are not the long baths, life-giving or dismal, of spring or fall. I had noticed that the sky was not deeply dark. A man in our cave who had an umbrella decided to walk on. He picked a course along the lee of our build-

its unstinting record of cussedness: murder and perversion, of course, but also stubbornness, envy, and trickery. Nor is God spotless: He plays favorites, sets up people to fail, changes His mind. The Flood is one of His characteristic moments: the act of a brilliant parvenu, Michael Bloomberg or Rupert Murdoch, imaginative and vulgar: "Let's start over." Then, when the waters recede, He adds the rainbow, the gesture that almost makes us forgive Him. "There will be child murderers and Hitlers—those will be your fault; there will also be tornadoes, dementia, and cancers, which you might try to pin on Me. But I won't do this again. I promise."

Just as the rain stopped, down the cross street in the slice between buildings I saw a section of the colored arc. I wanted to tell the UPS guy, but he had gone. So I went over to the silent young woman, who had unzipped her windbreaker. "Look—a rainbow."

"That is so *cool*. Thank you."

We went our ways.

NR

How Weird How Soon?

FROM London's *Daily Mail*: "Scientists have created more than 150 human-animal hybrid embryos in British laboratories."

You don't say. Now why would they do that? Don't worry, it's all perfectly legit, the fruits of the 2008 Human Fertilisation Embryology Act. So some scientists have successfully fertilized animal eggs with human sperm, and others have created "cybrids," using a human nucleus implanted into an animal cell, or "chimeras," in which human cells are mixed with animal embryos.

Writing my new book about the post-American world, I had to resist the temptation to go too far down this path. If you start off analyzing unsustainable debt-to-GDP ratios and possible downgrades of U.S. Treasury debt and suddenly lurch into disquisitions on a part-Welsh-part-meerkat chimera, the fiscal types tend to think you've flown the coop. Yet as I contemplate the prospects of the developed world I confess I do find myself wondering: How weird how soon?

Transformative innovation requires a socio-economic context: A few years back, a European cabinet minister explained to me at great length that governments had enthusiastically supported both the contraceptive pill and abortion because there was an urgent need for massive numbers of women to enter the workforce. A few years hence, developed nations will have a need for *anyone* to enter the workforce. Japan is the oldest society on earth. China, as I always say, is getting old before it gets rich. Europe is richer but lazier: Fewer than two-fifths of eurozone citizens work, and over 60 percent receive state benefits. If you track, as prudent investors should, GDP vs. median age in the world's major economies, this story is going nowhere good.

When President Sarkozy's government mooted raising the retirement age from 60 to (stand well back) 62, the French rioted. "Retirement" is a very recent invention, but it's caught on in nothing flat to the point that most Western citizens now believe they're entitled to enjoy the last third of their adult lives as a 20-year holiday weekend at government expense. And that two-decade weekend is only getting longer: Developed societies now face the prospect of millions of citizens' living into their nineties and beyond and spending the last 20 years in increasing stages of dementia—at state expense. That sounds pricey, whether you rely on immigrants to tend them (as in Europe) or "humanoid" "welfare robots" (as the Japanese are developing).

So the disease the West would most like to cure is Alzheimer's. How would you do that? The obvious way to experiment would be one of these human/animal hybrids the British are hot for: You'd inject human material (brain cells) into animals that are closest to man (primates). As it happens, that's the plot of this summer's new movie, *Rise of*

the Planet of the Apes, which title suggests the experiment went somewhat awry. "If you start putting very large numbers of human brain cells into the brains of primates," worries Prof. Thomas Baldwin, co-author of a new report for Britain's Academy of Medical Sciences, "suddenly you might transform the primate into something that has some of the capacities that we regard as distinctively human—speech, or other ways of being able to manipulate or relate to us." "The closer an animal brain is to a human brain, the harder it is to predict what might happen," warns Martin Bobrow, professor of genetics at Cambridge University.

So the Brits retain a bit of squeamishness in this area: They're aware of the pitfalls of injecting Ozzy Osbourne's brain into an orangutan. Who might be less concerned about this fine ethical line? It was recently disclosed that China has a herd of 39 goats with human-style blood and internal organs created by injecting stem cells into their embryos, the work of Prof. Huang Shuzheng of Jiao Tong University.

I wonder what else the Chinese are sticking human stem cells into. I'm sure they'll tell us when they're ready.

The Coming of Age changes everything. The developed world will have insufficient numbers of young people to sell new stuff to: That's an economic issue. But a distorted societal age profile doesn't stop there: Switzerland, once famous for expensive sanatoria where one went to prolong life, is now doing gangbusters business with its "dignified death" resorts. With the increase in demand for "assisted" suicide at their general hospitals, the Dutch are talking about purpose-built facilities: You have an Ear, Nose, and Throat Hospital, so why not a Death Hospital? After all, it's more "humane" than the alternatives—for example, the mini-epidemic of missing centenarians in Japan: Tokyo's oldest man was supposedly Sogen Kato, 111 years old. Last year, police broke into his daughter's home and discovered his mummified corpse, still in his bedclothes. His relatives were arrested for bilking the government of millions of yen in fraudulent welfare payments. Tokyo's oldest woman was supposedly Fusa Furuya, 113 years old. When welfare officials called at her home, her daughter said she was now living at another address just outside the city. This second building turned out to have been razed to put a highway through. "Human bonds are weakening," a glum prime minister, Naoto Kan, told parliament. "Society as a whole tends to sever human relationships."

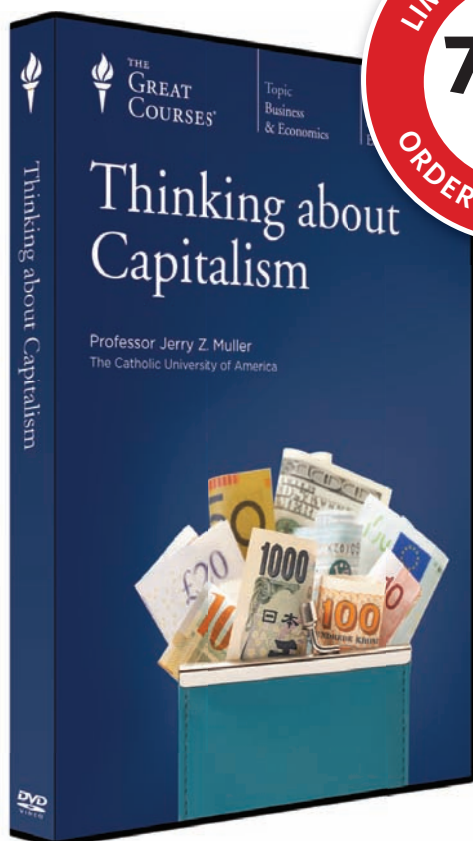
Like I said: How weird how soon? Dutch drive-through death clinics on Main Street. Japanese welfare robots doing the jobs humans won't do. British scientists breeding a Brit-animal hybrid class purely for the purposes of experimenting on them. And at a research facility somewhere deep in the Chinese hinterlands, an ape injected with human brain cells waits for the midnight shift change to bust through the security fence . . .

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