



**Nouri al-Maliki, left,  
and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim**

# CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

*The "Bold Colors" Conservative Voice in  
Washington*

Issue 105 - April 9, 2008

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## New Iraqi Moment?

by Donald Devine

*Issue 105 -April 9, 2008*

Talk about a radical shift in policy. On March 25 Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki ordered security forces to attack strongholds of the Mahdi Army loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr and other opposition militias in the southern port city of Basra to bring these “criminal gangs” under his authority. The operation would be conducted wholly by Iraqi armed forces, he bragged. President George Bush called the initiative by the Iraq army acting on its own “a defining moment” for the future independence and success of the nation and predicted a “victory” and “rebirth” for Iraq.

One day later, in the face of fierce resistance, the Iraqis were forced to call in the Americans. The U.S.—without substantial ground troops in southern Iraq—could commit only special forces but also substantial air power to support the attack. In response, the Mahdi forces broke Sadr’s self-proclaimed truce and attacked in the northern and central cities of Karbala, Najaf, Kut, Abu Dasheer, Shulla, Diwaniyah, Kafa, three towns near Nasiriyah, towns near Babel, and especially in Baghdad and its Sadr City headquarters. According to the Interior Ministry, 1,100 were killed in Basra and Baghdad alone.



**Nouri al-Maliki, left,  
and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim**

Three days later Premier Maliki admitted he did not appreciate how widespread and fierce would be the resistance—he apparently thought Sadr would wait for him to mop up one area at a time—and went into negotiations. Representatives of his legislative coalition and Sadr’s met in, of all places, the holy city of Qom in Iran! Sadr agreed to tell his supporters to cease fire and Maliki agreed that arrests and detentions would stop and that releases of captured militiaman would be discussed. In other words, the militias broke the joint Iraqi and U.S. operation. It truly was a defining moment.



In supporting the agreement, Maliki Dawa party leader Ali al-Adeeb said it would “benefit all sides” and denied that the Basra attack ever targeted any political party, including Sadr’s or that there was any political purpose to the operation. Yet, one American official told a reporter two days earlier that U.S. authorities suspected that Maliki’s and Shiite coalition partner Abdul Aziz al-Hakim’s Supreme Islamic Iraq Council party’s purpose was to gain advantage in the upcoming election. If so, this failed miserably as Sadr not only can claim success but also to being called a peacemaker.

The more things change in Iraq, the more they stay the same. After it all settled down, nothing really changed. As we reported here six months ago (<http://acuf.org/issues/issue92/070922news.asp>),

The British movement of troops from southern capital Basra to their nearby fortified airfield will allow the Shiite factions to decide the matter. Critically, Gen. Petraeus testified that other than a small number of special forces operations, he will not deploy U.S. troops to occupy the south. A top American military official told the Washington Post there is no disagreement on the overall strategy in the south, with both the British and the Americans believing that they should not interfere with the fighting among the three Shiite groups in the south, and that they should instead simply let a

victor emerge. This represents a radical change from stay-the-course. The president was clear in his address about this “transition in our mission.

It was not the Maliki attack on a competing political faction that was new but the momentary support by U.S. forces of one group of Shiite forces over another that was the true shift in position. But it did not last long.

The facts on the ground have long been clear, at least since your editor’s visit to Iraq in November 2005. The nation itself is an artificial creation of foreigners. At best, it is a loose federation of numerous Shiite, Sunni and Kurd militias, parties, tribes, extended families and commercial interests. Even in the peaceful Kurdish region, there are at least two major militias, one controlled by the regional leader supported by his party, militia and clan allies and the other by the national president and his supporting groups. The Sons of Iraq created by the U.S. from the Sunni insurgency—now 90,000 in number and supported by a stipend of \$300 per month per soldier by the U.S.—in theory is a police force but in fact is several militias loyal to tribal chieftains and “politically based” factions tracing back to the Saddam regime, according to Diyala province brigade commander Col. Jon Lehr.

Everything in Iraq is faction. There is not even a real national army. The nominal Army was organized by the prior Interior Minister, Bayan Jabr, who was formerly a top Badr Brigade commander, and he made sure his militia manned most of the key positions. If conditions change Hakim’s Badr Brigade could just as easily be allied with the Mahdi against Dawa. If the major factions could be satisfied with regional fiefdoms, Iraq could survive with some modicum of peace and stability. As we concluded then “While neither President Bush nor his opponents will ever admit directly that the U.S. will step back and let the forces on the ground work out the details of the regionalization of Iraq, that is what his military leaders wanted from the beginning and is in fact what is taking place.” This prediction was off course for a few days but quickly reasserted its logic.

It is also significant that presumptive Republican nominee John McCain chose to separate himself somewhat from Mr. Bush in the very middle of these events. In a World Affairs Council speech, he committed himself to victory over terrorism and in Iraq but declared himself a “realistic idealist” to separate himself from the Wilsonian idealism many attribute to the president while at the same time associating himself with Bush’s rhetoric against “outdated autocracies” and for world freedom and an alliance of democratic nations. Yet, McCain emphasized caution, in an obvious contrast with the incumbent, stressing “We must not act rashly or demand change overnight.”



**John McCain**

It is difficult to conceive that former Commander McCain would dissuade the military chiefs from their policy of moving U.S. troops to fortifiable positions and reducing their numbers to free soldiers for other possible trouble spots and let the local forces (minus al-Qaeda) sort things out for themselves. Even Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama will be forced to follow the same path, perhaps at a somewhat quicker rate. Basra was a few day interruption of a path toward an endgame for Iraq that has been set for years. Only the politicians insist in fighting the inevitable.

*Donald Devine, the editor of Conservative Battleline Online, was the director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management from 1981 to 1985 and is the director of the [Federalist Leadership Center](#) at Bellevue University.*

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## No Brain-Dead Liberal

by Michael D'Virgilio  
*Issue 105 -April 9, 2008*

There has been quite a little hubbub created by [a confession written by David Mamet](#), the great theater and film writer and director, in which he claims he is no longer a "brain-dead liberal." This confession was made in the *Village Voice* no less, a left wing rag if ever there was one.

As I was reading the piece I couldn't help thinking this was some kind of a joke. He can't really be serious, I thought.

Yet he was making a very solid argument for conservatism. When he praised the writing of Thomas Sowell and called him "our greatest contemporary philosopher," I became fairly certain that he wasn't joking. Mamet also mentioned Paul Johnson and Milton Friedman, two towering figures of the right.



Maybe he really was being serious. I think in psychological terms I was experiencing [cognitive dissonance](#).

What interested me most was that it seemed his whole rationale for leaving the left is a proper understanding of human nature. He was, like other liberals who've come right, mugged by reality:

I took the liberal view for many decades, but I too have changed my mind.

As a child of the '60s, I accepted as an article of faith that government is corrupt, that business is exploitative, and that people are generally good at heart.

Mamet understands now that although people are generally decent, they are not fundamentally good. This is a crucial distinction that has been the fault line between the right and left for over 200 years.

The left side of that line dividing two fundamentally different views of human nature gave us the bloody, cataclysmic failure of the French Revolution, and the right set forth the still successful American Revolution.

Those on the left side of this divide see human beings as perfectible and their behavior as fundamentally determined by social structures, while those on the right side see flawed human beings requiring the guidance of law, social mores, and traditions while naturally owning rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This point of view rejects social engineering and government fiat dictating what to do in every area of life.

Of government Mamet further writes:

Well, in the abstract, coming from my time and background, I thought it was a rather good thing, but tallying up the ledger in those things which affect me and in those things I observe, I am hard-pressed to see an instance where the intervention of the government led to much beyond sorrow.

After saying this, Mamet is certainly out of the club now. He says that he thinks government intervention in individual choices (other than those that clearly and directly harm other people) is usually deleterious, which is certainly correct, but the modern political left, embodied in the

Democrat Party, believes government can do no wrong. So maybe Mamet has always been a bit out of step with his comrades on the left.

Culturally and creatively, some on the left are reacting angrily to the loss of one of their most prized possessions as a powerful creative spirit seemingly possessing a leftist worldview. That is laughable. The left loves to look at itself as infinitely nuanced, as not stuck in looking at the world as black and white the way Neanderthal conservatives do.

[An amusing example](#) of this is from the English newspaper the *Guardian*, in which a British leftist laments the terrible loss Mamet's confession represents:

I am depressed to read that David Mamet has swung to the right. In an essay for the Village Voice, Mamet claims he is no longer a "brain-dead liberal" and increasingly espouses a free-market philosophy and social conservatism. As a citizen, Mamet is free to do as he likes. What worries me is the effect on his talent of locking himself into a rigid ideological position.

Is this not rich? Only conservatives can be locked into a "rigid ideological position". No wonder there aren't any talented conservatives in our world. They are just all locked up!

It so happens that I'm reading a book on Shakespeare, and he was actually one quite conservative fellow. He lived in Elizabethan England, after all, and was quite religious. Back then, depending on which government happened to be in power, the wrong religion could cost a person their head, or maybe charred flesh. After all this, he still became Shakespeare! Miraculously, those creative juices were somehow not all locked up by his religion or his "conservative" views.

In fact, ideologically rigid best describes what passes for modern liberalism. Have they even changed a fundamental position in the last 40 years? And everyone across the political and cultural spectrum would agree that there is an awful lot of crap and political cant in the movies, books, TV shows, music, art, etc., produced by supposedly flexible and open-minded liberals.

This is what the British leftist and many others on the left (and a bunch on the right, too!) just don't understand: except for totalitarian points of view, ideological predispositions or assumptions have very little to do with the quality of one's art. Great artists, no matter the medium, are great observers of the human condition. They refuse to make their art a propaganda vehicle for their political agenda, to fit it into a mold that reality just won't fit.

Mamet, a great observer, finally saw reality for what it is, and he decided he needed to leave his "brain-dead" liberalism behind. We should be happy for him, and for ourselves.

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## European Value Revival?

by Daniel Pipes

Issue 105 -April 9, 2008

Some analysts of Islam in Western Europe argue that the continent cannot escape its [Eurabian fate](#); that the trend lines of the past half-century will continue until Muslims become a majority population and Islamic law (the Shari'a) reigns.

I disagree, arguing that there is [another route the continent might take](#), one of resistance to Islamification and a reassertion of traditional ways. Indigenous Europeans – who make up 95 percent of the population – can insist on their historic customs and mores. Were they to do so, nothing would be in their way and no one could stop them.

Indeed, Europeans are visibly showing signs of impatience with creeping Shari'a. The legislation in France that prohibits [hijabs](#) from public school classrooms signals the reluctance to accept Islamic ways, as are related efforts to ban [burqas](#), [mosques](#), and [minarets](#). Throughout Western Europe, anti-immigrant parties are generally increasing in popularity.

That resistance took a new turn last week, with two dramatic events. First, on March 22, Pope Benedict XVI himself baptized, confirmed, and gave the Eucharist to [Magdi Allam](#), 56, a prominent Egyptian-born Muslim long living in Italy, where he is a top editor at the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper and a well-known author. Allam took the middle name Cristiano. The ceremony converting him to the Catholic religion could not have been higher profile, occurring at a nighttime service at St. Peter's Basilica on the eve of Easter Sunday, with exhaustive coverage from the Vatican and many other television stations.

Allam followed up his conversion with a [stinging statement](#) in which he argued that beyond "the phenomenon of Islamic extremism and terrorism that has appeared on a global level, the root of evil is inherent in an Islam that is physiologically violent and historically conflictive." In other words, the problem is not just Islamism but Islam itself. One commentator, "[Spengler](#)" of *Asia Times*, goes so far as to say that Allam "presents an existential threat to Muslim life" because he "agrees with his former co-religionists in repudiating the degraded culture of the modern West, and offers them something quite different: a religion founded upon love."

Second, on March 27, [Geert Wilders](#), 44, released his long-awaited, 15-minute film, *Fitna*, which consists of some of the most bellicose verses of the Koran, followed by actions in accord with those verses carried out by Islamists in recent years. The obvious implication is that Islamists are simply acting in accord with their scriptures. In Allam's words, Wilders also argues that "the root of evil is inherent" in Islam.

Unlike Allam and Wilders, I do distinguish between Islam and Islamism, but I believe it imperative that their ideas get a [fair hearing](#), without vituperation or punishment. An honest debate over Islam must take place.

If Allam's conversion was a surprise and Wilders' film had a three-month run-up, in both cases, the aggressive, violent reactions that met [prior criticisms of Islam](#) did not take place. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the [Dutch police](#) contacted imams to gauge reactions at the city's mosques and found, according to police spokesman Arnold Aben, "it's quieter than usual here today. Sort of like a holiday." In [Pakistan](#), a rally against the film attracted only some dozens of protestors.



This relatively constrained reaction points to the fact that Muslim threats sufficed to enforce censorship. Dutch Prime Minister [Jan Peter Balkenende](#) denounced *Fitna* and, after 3.6 million visitors had viewed it on the British website [LiveLeak.com](#), the company announced that "Following threats to our staff of a very serious nature, ... Liveleak has been left with no other choice but to remove *Fitna* from our servers." (Two days later, however, LiveLeak again posted the film.)

Three similarities bear noting: both Allam (author of a book titled [Viva Israele](#)) and Wilders (whose film emphasizes Muslim violence against Jews) stand up for Israel and the Jews; Muslim threats against their lives have forced both for years to live under state-provided round-the-clock police protection; and, more profoundly, the two share a passion for European civilization.

Indeed, Allam and Wilders may represent the vanguard of a Christian/liberal reassertion of European values. It is too soon to predict, but these staunch individuals could provide a crucial boost for those intent on maintaining the continent's historic identity.

*Mr. Pipes ([www.DanielPipes.org](http://www.DanielPipes.org)), director of the Middle East Forum, is suspending his column for several weeks.*

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## *Juno*

by Spencer Warren

*Issue 105 - April 9, 2008*

A pro-life film that is written and directed with consummate professionalism: *Juno* is a winner.

*Juno MacGuff* is an emotionally precocious 16 year old (played by the highly talented 20-year-old Ellen Page) living somewhere in suburbia. In the first scene, we see her getting way carried away with her boyfriend, whom she pertly calls by his surname, Bleeker (Michael Cera), whereupon she finds herself pregnant. Initially, she has only her hot girlfriend, Leah (Olivia Thirby) in whom to confide. Then she heads to a local abortion clinic, where she blurts out to the receptionist, "I'd like to procure a hasty abortion."

But for all her many wisecracks and bons mots – and her moment of recklessness -- *Juno* is a sensitive, serious and mature teenager. She recoils at the prospect of having her baby murdered in the "family planning clinic" that, notably, is depicted in seedy terms – the bored receptionist sporting a ring in her nose, the pop magazines in the tacky reception area that resembles an insurance agency rather than a medical facility. And so she accepts responsibility for her enormous error. She confesses, outwardly calm but trembling inside, to her understanding father and stepmother, and states she will have the child, whom she then plans to place for adoption.

Before the 1960s, a film on this subject would have portrayed the young mother experiencing profound shame and guilt, not to mention the grim disapprobation of those around her. Her parents would have hustled her away months in advance to give birth in secret. Obviously, we live in different times – shame has been abolished in modern Hollywood -- so the film is comical, light-hearted and very charming in mood; light rock songs fill the soundtrack. But it is a tribute to the outstanding, Oscar-winning original screenplay by Diablo Cody, whose first script this is (at the age of 28), and to the subtlety of director Jason Reitman, that the seriousness of the situation comes across strongly, just beneath the surface. It also is a tribute to the amazing young actress, Ellen Page, who has no trouble fully carrying this movie, as if she were a young Katharine Hepburn in a coming of age role. She is both strong and vulnerable, reasoning and emotional, cocky and in need of a strong shoulder.

Still pregnant, *Juno* finds an apparently ideal, upscale couple who desperately want to adopt a baby. Showing her young years, she becomes rather too friendly with them, especially the composer-husband Mark (Jason Bateman). After all the business of decorating the new nursery, and as the special event nears, he gets cold feet, however. But his wife, Vanessa (Jennifer Garner) still very, very much wants to be a mother, and as a result Mark leaves her. *Juno* is crestfallen that the perfect couple for her baby has broken up, but, in a particularly well-directed sequence, she faces this crisis with impressive maturity and decides to stick with Vanessa. Some may see this as endorsing single parenthood, but I do not make too much of it because a sincere, loving, very attractive woman like Vanessa will have little trouble finding another, better father for her new child.

At the end, the now wiser *Juno* has worked out her issues with Bleeker. The final shot in this short, appealing film is the opposite of the first scene. Instead of being in improperly "close" proximity, *Juno* and Bleeker are singing "Anyone Else But You" to each other as they stand at either side of the steps outside his house. In a long take, the director slowly pulls back the camera, ending the film with the distance and subtlety that was a hallmark of an earlier, more mature style of filmmaking. He thus leaves the audience with a memorable, understated image of *Juno's* moral catharsis: she has learned and grown up. And he has given us a worthwhile 90-minute moviegoing experience.

*Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline On Line's media critic*



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## ABC Warming Outrage

by Noel Sheppard

Issue 105 -April 9, 2008

As NewsBusters [reported](#), ABC's "World News" aired a disturbing global warming hit piece on Sunday that disrespectfully attacked an esteemed scientist and emeritus professor, referring to his work as "fraudulent nonsense" that is "going to cost lives, and cause us lost species, and cost major economic damage around the world."

The subject of the report, Dr. S. Fred Singer, has been receiving well wishes of support from across the globe since this segment aired, including at ABC News's [website](#) where virtually all of the currently 128 comments submitted have been highly critical of this story and the way Singer was treated.



With this in mind, Singer has formally asked ABC for an apology and a retraction (presented with permission):

### LETTER TO ABC NEWS

TO: Felicia Biberica Fiona Conway  
Producer Executive director ABC News  
ABC News  
W. 66th St.  
New York City 10023

Dear Ms Biberica and Ms Conway March 25, 2008

I share the anger expressed in nearly 100 postings (so far) at the shoddy handling of my interview aired on March 23: It was an appalling display of bias, unfairness, journalistic misbehavior, and a breakdown of ethical standards. It used prejudicial language, distorted facts, libelous insinuations, and anonymous smears. I urge you to read the postings; only one person offered any support to ABC, as far as I can see.

I put the following account on my website [www.sepp.org](http://www.sepp.org):

1. Interviewer Dan Harris used a man from Greenpeace who spouted conspiracy theories about me, showing someone's diagram that 'connects' me to groups alleged to be financed by oil companies. The only purpose I can think of is to suggest to viewers that I am in the pay of oil companies and that therefore my science is somehow tainted and not credible. First, the suggestion is completely false. I am not financed or supported by oil companies or by any industry. Then, Harris tried to suggest that I misrepresented by denying oil company support but admitting receiving an *unsolicited* donation. I draw a distinction --as would any reasonable person -- between being 'supported' and between a single charitable donation (constituting a tiny fraction of 1%) of all donations received. Finally, the word 'connected' is imprecise, and can mean anything from being on a mailing list to holding a position and receiving a salary. In my case it is definitely the former.

2. Dan Harris also referred to unnamed scientists from NASA, Princeton and Stanford, who pronounced what I do as 'fraudulent nonsense.' [The ABC website changed it to '*fabricated*' nonsense - perhaps on advice of ABC's lawyers.] They are easily identified as the well-known Global Warming zealots Jim Hansen, Michael Oppenheimer, and Steve Schneider. They should be asked by ABC to put their money where their mouth is and have a scientific debate with me. [I suspect they'll chicken out. They surely know that the facts support my position -- so they resort to anonymous

slurs.] Hansen is no longer the careful scientist he was but has turned into an ideologue willing to publish junk 'research'. Oppenheimer, who may still be on the payroll of Environmental Defense, an activist lobbying group, has negligible credentials. Schneider has not published significant research in years. Both Hansen and Oppenheimer could be labeled as 'Contrarians' since they disagree with important conclusions of the UN-IPCC.

3. Dan Harris did mention my doubts about the lung-cancer effects of Second-Hand Smoke, about the danger of toxic waste (spent nuclear fuel), and about 'Nuclear Winter.' All true -- Dan did his research but withheld the full story. On SHS, I simply quoted from the experts (see attached review article from a noted medical doctor, specializing in lung disease). Nuclear fuel presents no technical problems, only political ones. France and Britain handle its disposal; why don't we? 'Nuclear Winter' (which burst onto the scene in 1983 -- and disappeared quickly) was basically a fraud, invented to shore up an ideological position. We disposed of it in a debate moderated by Ted Koppel on ABC-Nightline. But Harris left the audience with the impression that I am a 'career skeptic', and therefore my skepticism about manmade GW should be ignored.

4. Yours is supposed to be a news program not an opinion journal. Dan Harris completely ignored the new scientific evidence against anthropogenic (human-caused) global warming (AGW) and the fact that 100 other scientists presented papers that support this view. The Heartland Conference in NY had an attendance of more than 500, practically all of them AGW skeptics. That's news, but ABC ignored it.

Conclusion: ABC owes it to its audience and to me to make appropriate corrections -- an apology and retraction by Dan Harris on the World News program.

Sincerely,

S. Fred Singer, PhD (Physics, Princeton)  
Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia  
Fellow, American Geophysical Union  
Fellow, American Physical Society

Will ABC respond accordingly? Stay tuned.

*Noel Sheppard is an economist, business owner, and a featured writer at the prestigious [American Thinker](#). He is also a contributing writer to the [Business and Media Institute](#) and a contributing editor for [NewsBusters](#), where this first appeared. He welcomes your feedback at [nsheppard@costlogic.com](mailto:nsheppard@costlogic.com).*

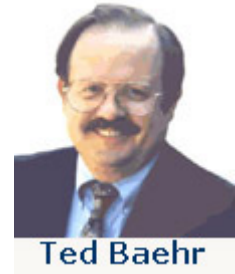
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## G-Movies Sell Better

by Ted Baehr and Tom Snyder

*Issue 105 - April 9, 2008*

The Motion Picture Association of America, which represents the six major movie studios in Hollywood and helps them crush their competition, was very excited recently about touting Hollywood's record-breaking year in 2007. Figures released by the MPAA showed that worldwide box office increased 4.9% from \$25.47 billion in 2006 to \$26.72 billion in 2007. In those totals, the domestic box office also set a record, increasing 5.4% to \$9.629 billion. What the MPAA didn't tell the press, however, is that total admissions in the United States and Canada increased only 0.3% in 2007, to 1.4 billion tickets sold. Also, that number represents a whopping 12% decline from contemporary Hollywood's best year in 2002, when it sold 1.599 billion tickets! Furthermore, the MPAA forgot to mention that annual movie admissions for the domestic box office in 2007 are still 29% below the 1.98 billion admissions in the middle 1960s, before the six major Hollywood studios' immoral ratings system (G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17) came into being and alienated family audiences and mainstream moviegoers.



Ted Baehr

Considering that the population in the United States and Canada has increased from about 210 million people to more than 336 million people, the number of ticket sales in North America has continued to drop – nearly 56% – since 1966, from 9.43 tickets sold per person to only about 4.17 tickets sold per person!!!

The situation is even worse if you go back to 1946, when the Golden Age of Hollywood was in its heyday, when 55% of the American population, about 78 million people, went to the movies every week, for about 4.0 billion ticket sales. Today, only between 27% and 30% of the American people go to movies every week.

Also in 1946, for example, Americans bought about 4.07 billion tickets at about 42 cents per ticket, according to the L.A. Times.

In other words, the amount of movie admissions today has declined 66%, or two-thirds, since the heights of the Golden Age, when Mr. Smith Went to Washington and when George Bailey learned It's a Wonderful Life!

Of course, since MOVIEGUIDE® started its Annual Faith & Values Awards Gala and Report to the Entertainment Industry in 1993, annual ticket sales for Hollywood have increased 27.4%. That's because Hollywood is making many more movies marketed to families, many more family-friendly with traditional moral values based on the Bible, and many more movies with Christian content. In fact, since we started the Faith & Values Awards Gala, and its Epiphany Prizes for Inspiring Movies & TV that lead to a greater love and understanding of God, the number of movies with positive Christian content has nearly quadrupled!

Furthermore, recent studies by us and other organizations, including The Nielsen Co., show that G-rated movies with no sex, no foul language, no explicit nudity, and no graphic violence make at least three to five times more money per movie at the box office than R-rated movies!

Thus, it has become ever more clear that, if Hollywood wants to make more money, it needs to ditch the cumbersome MPAA content ratings, stop making R-rated and NC-17 movies altogether, clean up the content of the remaining movies, and go back to the Code of Decency which fueled Hollywood's Golden Age from 1933 to 1966, when God and His values ruled the box office, instead of the values of senile hedonists like Hugh Hefner and angry radical atheists like Michael Moore.

Contrary to what many journalists and other pundits say, sex, obscenity and graphic violence usually don't sell that well.

Most moviegoers, and most non-moviegoers for that matter, want to see Good conquer evil, Truth triumph over falsehood, Justice prevail over injustice, and Beauty overcome ugliness. They also would like to take their whole family, including their grandparents, to the movies more often.

It's time for Hollywood to give the public what it really wants!

*Dr. Ted Baehr is the founder and Publisher of Movieguide® and Chairman of the Christian Film & Television Commission, as well as a noted critic, educator, lecturer, and media pundit. Dr. Tom Snyder is managing editor of Movieguide*

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## Congress Into Baseball?

by Paul Weyrich

Issue 105 -April 9, 2008

As a new season begins, baseball has much to tell us about what is wrong both with our nation and its government.

The *Report to the Commissioner of Baseball of an Independent Investigation into the Illegal Use of Steroids and Other Performance Enhancing Substances by Players in Major League Baseball*, otherwise known as the "Mitchell Report," shocked much of the American public upon its release in December 2007. The Report, a result of former United States Senator George J. Mitchell's twenty-month investigation into the use of so-called performance-enhancing drugs in major league baseball, contained many names that few expected to see on the list, including Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte, both pitchers. Clemens is a seven-time Cy Young Award winner, two more than any other pitcher, and is considered one of the greatest in baseball history.



Paul M. Weyrich

Commissioner of Major League Baseball Bud Selig noted when the Report was released that those it named potentially would face disciplinary sanctions. Whether he acts remains to be seen. Many blame Selig for encouraging drug use in order to boost interest in the game after the lengthy strike in the mid-1990s.

Clemens, his reputation and achievements under question, may find it difficult to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame, a significant blow considering how long he has been in the league and the many accolades he has won.

Such punishment, however, proved insufficient for many over-eager politicians in Congress anxious to wring some publicity out of the Mitchell Report. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform held the first of two hearings on the issue. The hearing was entitled "Myths and Facts about Human Growth Hormone, B12, and Other Substances" and included four witnesses – a deputy director of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, an associate professor of medicine at the Boston University School of Medicine, a professor of clinical pediatrics at the University of Virginia, and a medical doctor with the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, Hospital for Joint Diseases. What does a professor of pediatrics have to do with steroids in professional baseball?

The following day the Committee held another hearing on the subject. This hearing was much more prominent because Clemens himself testified, as did his trainer, who leveled the accusations against him in the first place, as well as an investigator on former Senator Mitchell's staff. During the hearing Clemens stated he "never used anabolic steroids or human growth hormone," while his trainer maintained that he had.

After the theatrics of the Congressional hearing subsided, one would have thought the issue would be closed. Wrong. It appears some Representatives need more publicity on the issue. Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-CA), Chairman of the Committee, and Thomas B. Davis, III (R-VA), Ranking Member, sent a letter to Attorney General Michael Mukasey on Wednesday urging the Department of Justice to investigate whether Clemens perjured himself and made knowingly false statements in his testimony.

*This* is what the resources of Congress and the Federal Government are being used for? Since when does Congress have authority over sports in the first place? The last time I read the United States Constitution there was no mention of a power to regulate athletics. But now we have had two days worth of testimony on the issue and a letter urging the Department of Justice, which is already strained morally and financially, to waste its limited resources on an investigation into something over which Congress has no jurisdiction.

After releasing the letter Davis stated, "For the good of the investigation and integrity of the Committee, we've asked the Department of Justice to get to the bottom of this." This is utterly ridiculous.

Shame on these Representatives for misusing their power.

The Justice Department ought to ignore this letter, the Congressional testimony, and everything else involved with the case. Sure, some performance-enhancing drugs are illegal. If Clemens acted unlawfully he should be punished by local law enforcement. He also should be denied induction into the Hall of Fame and have his records/achievements tossed out.

But let's be serious – Congress has no business in baseball.

*Paul M. Weyrich is Chairman and CEO of the Free Congress Foundation.*

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Editor**

## Rationing Food For Poor

by *Dennis and Alex Avery*  
Issue 105 - April 9, 2008

The World Food Program is preparing to ration food aid for the world's hungriest poor. Why? Primarily because we're burning food in our automobiles. The rich-country mandates for biofuels have doubled and tripled world food prices in less than three years.

The World Food Program's costs are rising by millions of dollars per week and the donations aren't, warns WFP executive director Josette Sheeran. The WFP is trying to feed more than 70 million people in 78 countries with voluntary contributions—but now can't afford to keep its agreed-upon commitments.



**Dennis T. Avery**

World corn prices are above \$5 a bushel, up from \$1.86 three years ago. Prices for wheat, soybeans, rice and even cotton are rising as they're crowded out of field space by biofuel crops. Pakistan says it will reimpose food rationing for the first time since the 1980s. China's food inflation rate is 18.2 percent, and the Chinese have blocked further expansion of their fledgling biofuel program.

Oxfam points out that the poor in the Third World must often spend 60-80 percent of their incomes for food, so the price increases are a drastic threat to their well-being.

In Yemen, the prices of mostly-imported bread and other staples have nearly doubled in recent months, with at least a dozen people killed in food riots.

The underweight proportion of the world's children under five had dropped by 20 percent since 1990—but that vital progress may now be reversed by the biofuel subsidies. Meanwhile, while U.S. and European officials stubbornly insist that burning millions of tons of corn, sugar and palm oil in our gas tanks has nothing to do with the soaring prices of farm commodities.

"The fundamental cause is high income growth," claims Joachim von Braun, the head of the International Food Policy Research Institute. He blames increased meat consumption in such high-growth nations as China and India. But both those big countries have largely supplied their own grain and meat increases over the past 15 years.

The commodity-savvy *Financial Times* is more realistic. "Biofuels will not feed the hungry," it warned in a recent editorial. ". . . the biggest structural change [in food pricing] is biofuels. In the space of a few years, the U.S. has diverted about 40 million tonnes of maize to produce bioethanol—about 4 percent of global production of coarse grains. That rapid growth is largely the result of subsidies—which must halt. The environmental benefits of maize biofuel are ambiguous at best and it should not be favored over growing maize for food."

The same should be said, of course, about the EU's new commitment to provide 10 percent of its transport fuel from land-hungry biofuels, grown both in the EU countries and imported from such species-rich environments as Indonesia and Thailand. One of the great apes, the orangutan, is directly threatened by palm oil plantations because the apes love to eat the palm seedlings. Thousands of orangutans have been captured and killed because the palm oil plantations are an "attractive biofuel nuisance."

U.S. corn farmers raised a record amount of grain last summer—but one-third of it is going into ethanol plants to "cure our addiction to foreign oil." That corn will produce perhaps 10 billion gallons of ethanol—but nets out to just 50 gallons worth of gasoline per acre. That's after subtracting the nitrogen fertilizer, the diesel fuel, the process heat for the ethanol plants—and ethanol's 35 percent fewer Btu's of energy per gallon.

Match 50 gallons worth of gasoline per acre against America's annual demand for 135 billion gallons of gasoline! If we doubled corn yields, we'd still not achieve much "energy independence." Nor would we feed the hungry.

*Dennis Avery is a senior fellow for Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C. and is the Director for Center for Global Food Issues ([www.cgfi.org](http://www.cgfi.org)). He was formerly a senior analyst for the Department of State. ALEX A. AVERY is the Director of Research at the Hudson Institute's Center for Global Food Issues. Readers may write them at Post Office Box 202, Churchville, VA 24421.*

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Editor**

## A Safety Market?

by John Goodman

*Issue 105 - April 9, 2008*

Think about the last time you ate out. Did you get mad cow disease? E. coli? Cholera? Some other form of food poisoning? No? Well, why not? The spate of unsafe toys, tainted drugs and unhealthy food stuffs appearing over the past 12 months - especially imports from China - prompts one to ask: Why do unsafe products get to the market and what is the best way to control them?

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman blames Milton Friedman. Friedman? Yes, Friedman. [In a piece that was way over the top even for Krugman](#), the columnist claimed that Friedman's belief in the power of markets rather than regulation is the cause of unsafe food.



**John Goodman**

But there is no lack of government regulatory power over food or products, in the U.S. or elsewhere. China in particular executed its top food and drug safety regulator for taking bribes. One can only wonder how much more government power Krugman would like to see exercised.

If the only thing standing between you and E. coli were the local public health inspector, you would have been dead long ago. Ditto for the other safety regulators. What keeps you alive is the desire of private enterprises to have you return as a loyal customer.

Businesses operating on narrow profit margins in highly competitive markets cannot afford a safety scare. That could bankrupt them. As a result, the private sector often goes way beyond what government requires and often does a better job.

For example, GlobalGap, a private enforcer of food standards in Europe, came into existence because European food retailers couldn't count on the European Union's 27 governments to do an adequate job. GlobalGap has 81,000 farms in 76 countries as members. It requires the registration of all pesticides used, the monitoring of pesticide residue and the tracking of all produce from field to ship to shelf. Wal-Mart and McDonald's are two users of its services ([see WSJ](#))

Interestingly, developing country governments - including Brazil and Egypt - are trying to shut down these private "regulatory" activities, claiming they are an unfair trade practice.

In David Henderson's [The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics](#) Kip Viscusi notes that the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) imposes \$149 million in employer fines each year and economists estimate that workplace injuries have been reduced a meager 2 to 4 percent as a result. By contrast, the \$245 billion employers pay in extra wages to induce employees to accept riskier jobs is 1,600 times more effective. Market incentives to create safer workplaces completely dwarf regulatory incentives.

What is the lesson for health care? We need a market for safety. Instead of a top-down, command and control approach (the Chinese way), we need a market in which safety is part of the package providers offer in competition with each other (the Milton Friedman way).

*John Goodman is President of the National Center for Policy Analysis*

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Editor**

## Profiting From Green

by S. T. Karnick

*Issue 105 -April 9, 2008*

A [new TV network, Planet Green, is about to provide a forum for allegedly "eco-friendly" lifestyle choices](#). In reality, this entire movement will make money for opportunists and phonies and hurt everybody else.

Emblemizing the takeover of the Green movement by commercial interests, Discovery Communications LLC has announced the launch date for the transformation of its low-rated Discovery Home network into [Planet Green](#), a channel devoted to—you guessed it—"green" lifestyle choices.



**S. T. Karnick**

The intent is certainly decent.

Or is it?

In reality, the change is just another moneymaking scheme as businesses take advantage of the environmental movement to encourage consumers to throw out perfectly good and usable products and replace them with more expensive ones. Similarly, businesses are using "eco-friendly" claims to encourage consumers to use services they don't need and that they would otherwise dismiss as poor uses of their money.

Like many new magazines and websites, Planet Green is intended to lure advertisements from companies seeking to persuade environmentally conscious individuals to buy their products and services, which are nearly always more expensive and less efficient—and in most cases less kind to the environment—than products and services not labeled green.

The examples of green products and services that actually harm the environment when used as replacements for traditional items are legion. It's good to save water, for example, especially if you live in one of the arid regions west of the Mississippi. But a great number of suggested means of saving water are entirely unnecessary and in fact stupid if you live in the Great Lakes region or the South. Why? Because the efforts to save water in such places require more energy and resources than it would take to continue current processes.

Consider, for example, the absolutely brilliant federal law banning homes from having toilets with a flush capacity above the government-mandated maximum. That means that people will often have to flush two or three times to accomplish what one flush used to do. They end up using more water than otherwise.

The same is true of the government-mandated switchover to fluorescent light bulbs. It will make tons of money for GE and other manufacturers but create much inconvenience for householders and can end up using significantly more electricity—because the bulbs do not achieve full radiance immediately, which incandescents do, which means that you have to leave the light on if you intend to go into and out of a room, instead of switching it on and off each time. [And there are numerous other problems with the bulbs.](#)

[That sort of inefficiency is repeated throughout the entire realm of "eco-friendly" products and services.](#) Environmental activists may pretend that efficiency is just around the corner, but they've never trusted American industry to make the right choices before, preferring instead to impose government mandates whenever possible, abridging the freedoms of businesses and individuals alike.

This is no different, and as businesses attempt to go with the political flow (always the wise course, alas) and find a way to profit from the nonsense we're all forced to live with, endeavors such as Planet Green are not something to be lauded but instead to be lamented.

Freedoms lost are extremely difficult to regain, and the economic destruction that will come from our current-day environmentally motivated loss of freedom will hurt everyone.

Everyone, that is, except those who can make money off of it or already have so much that they won't even notice the inefficiency and higher costs of falsely claimed "eco-friendly" business.

The rest of us will suffer the consequences of their arrogance.

*S. T. Karnick maintains the American Culture website, <http://stkarnick.com>.*

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## Pasta 317% More

by Alan Caruba

Issue 105 -April 9, 2008

On March 12, the American Baking Association, representing 85% of the total baking industry, led a "Band of Bakers March on Washington."

Everyone knows that food prices have increased, but few people know that it is government policies that have brought the nation to a point where we are facing a wheat shortage. Despite record-breaking wheat prices, the devaluation of the U.S. dollar has made the importation of wheat extremely attractive to foreign nations. Wheat exports are up more than 60% over last year. The result is a very tight supply situation at home and that, in turn, is driving up the cost of flour and wheat to American consumers. And that is why the bakers are marching.



Alan Caruba

The owner of a local pizzeria recently lamented to me about the cost of this staple of American fast food. From the flour needed to make the crust to the cost of the cheese, prices are requiring him to charge more and more. Now multiply his problem by every food product producer who uses wheat, starting with bread.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the price of a bushel of wheat went from \$4.71 in February 2007 to \$10.40 this year. *That's a 220% increase.* Pasta dishes will cost more too. Made from durum wheat, prices went from \$5.16 per bushel to \$16.40 by February 2008, a *317% increase.* The nation's supply of rye is exhausted requiring bakers to import it from Germany and the Netherlands.

Around the world, global demand for wheat is outpacing global production. The bakers call for a "rethink" of ethanol policies involving corn because wheat farmers, seeing the price of corn rise, are tempted to plant corn, rather than wheat. Ethanol is the single greatest scam perpetrated on Americans in modern memory. It literally *burns food* to provide a gasoline additive that drives up the cost of a gallon while reducing its mileage. The consumer is robbed in two ways at the pump. Yet, the energy bill recently passed by Congress actually increased the amount of ethanol to be used.

The bakers want the USDA to take some acres out of the Conservation Reserve Program, the program that pays farmers to leave idle some 35 million acres at a time when they are needed for the production of wheat to meet domestic needs.

When it comes to food--and oil prices too--Americans are looking at a perfect storm created by those in Congress who keep telling us that global warming is the threat, when the real threat is the bankrupting of American consumers with policies totally unconnected to real science.

We have arrived at this point thanks to the alarmism of the environmental movement, led by people like Al Gore, and perpetrated in Congress by the global warming cabal that includes Pelosi, Reid, Boxer, Lieberman, Warner, and even McCain.

The likelihood is that the nation's bakers are going to be joined by many more marchers in the weeks and months to come if this economic horror story is not put right.

Alan Caruba writes a weekly column posted on the Internet site of The National Anxiety Center, [www.anxietycenter.com](http://www.anxietycenter.com). He blogs at <http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com>

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## South America Hostility

by Bob Barr

Issue 105 - April 9, 2008



Bob Barr

Iraq and Afghanistan continue to enjoy top billing in America's newspapers and on our television news programs. With untold billions of dollars flowing regularly into that part of the world and American soldiers continuing to be killed there, it's no surprise our government and our media pay close attention. South America remains an afterthought for government policy-makers and news-show producers. Whether we like it or not, that may soon change, as well it should.

Military tensions between Venezuela and Colombia, for example, flared to a new and dangerous level when Venezuelan president and strongman Hugo Chavez massed armed forces at his country's border with Colombia and threatened military action. This saber rattling, Chavez said, was in response to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe ordering a small military force into its western neighbor, Ecuador, to track down and kill a Colombian guerrilla leader operating from what had been the safe haven of a neighboring country (and who reportedly maintained contacts with Chavez).

While the outward signs of hostility have cooled (the two leaders exchanged a formalistic handshake at a recent meeting), such disruptions in this part of the world — where the United States maintains significant, if often forgotten, interests — ought to concern all Americans (especially those who drive cars).

Although the publicly stated reasons for the tensions between the Colombian and Venezuelan leaders relate to Colombia's efforts to eradicate the leftist guerrilla threat that has plagued the country for decades, most observers know it is Colombia's openly pro-U.S. stance that really rankles Chavez. The entire South American continent has long chafed under the benign neglect of one U.S. administration after another. Chavez has proven quite adept at drawing on that deep resentment to bolster his own position. His ability to wield influence in this manner, of course, is strengthened greatly by virtue of the fact that Venezuela sits atop major oil reserves and provides nearly 13 percent of our country's daily oil imports (more than three times the amount of oil we import from Iraq).

Economic realities such as this should cause the United States to pay closer attention not only to Venezuela and other Andean countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Chile, but to the entire South American continent, which collectively is a massive trading partner for the United States. Not only oil, but huge quantities of raw materials and consumer products (coffee, for example) are offloaded daily at U.S. seaports and airports from ships and planes arriving from South America. American taxpayers, too, have a stake in what happens in this region. Billions in foreign aid flow into the region. On the darker side of the trade ledger, cocaine, marijuana and heroin from South and Central America fuel the appetites of drug users in American cities.

*Former congressman and U.S. Attorney Bob Barr practices law in Atlanta. To read more of this article and others, please visit [www.bobbarr.org](http://www.bobbarr.org)*

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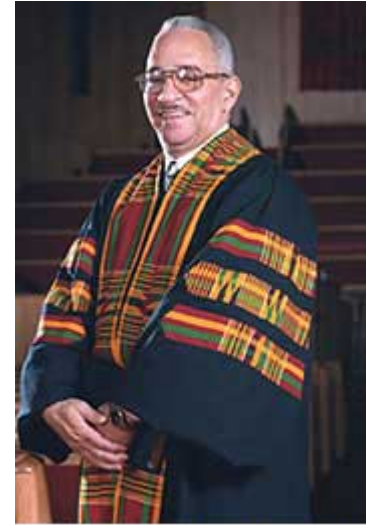
## Is Wright Right?

by Lisa Fabrizio

*Issue 105 -April 9, 2008*

With all the heated feelings and rhetoric surrounding the firestorm that is Rev. Jeremiah Wright, a bit of truth telling may be in order. Conservatives have demanded that Barack Obama repudiate all of the controversial statements made by his spiritual advisor, while supporters of the Illinois senator believe that he has sufficiently distanced himself from them. But what if there is actually some truth in Wright's allegations?

Barack Obama is said to be a tremendous orator, and the speech he delivered was hailed by many as superb and spiritually moving. And he should know about preaching and inspiring events; after all, his [justification](#) of same-sex unions based on the Sermon on the Mount earlier this month was quite illuminating. But, laying aside his racially-tinged, finger-pointing diatribe itself, let's go to the veracity of a few of his Pastor's statements and the extent to which Obama and those of his party may or may not be in agreement with them.



**Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright**

One of Wright's dependable mantras is that America is a country controlled by "rich, white people," who, according to him, are doing harm to people of color. To a certain extent this is true. There is a large group of people for whom it is politically expedient to keep blacks in "their place." But these rich white folks--let's call them limousine liberals--are those who support Barack Obama and the Democratic Party.

Almost from this country's founding, politicians of all stripes have been known to make promises to those in need of government largesse. But Franklin Delano Roosevelt used his New Deal coalition to form a solid Democratic base of big city political machines, labor unions, subsidized farm groups and ethnic and racial minorities, which purchased millions of votes via federal handouts.

This was honed into an art form in later years by Democrats who, unlike their predecessors, sought to keep those in need perpetually needy, and therefore dependable on Election Day. This is the ugly truth of modern liberalism. Keeping minorities dependant on government help instead of self-help is their goal; and race and class envy are their weapons. Indeed, in his "healing" speech, Obama identified our "corporate culture" as the "real culprits of the middle-class squeeze."

We used to salute as "Captains of Industry," risk-takers who invested their own money in order to found solid companies which used their profits to create jobs for all classes of people. These men drove the machine that fueled the American dream. Today, those once proud men are now shunned as "culprits" by liberals, some of whom have grown wealthy investing in the very corporations they seek to vilify and drive into submission via unionization, litigation, regulation and taxation. And when these burdens become too heavy to bear and these companies are forced to relocate offshore, they are deemed un-American.

Rev. Wright has famously said of the 9/11 attacks, that Americans were "indignant because the stuff we have done overseas is now brought right back to our own front yards. America's chickens are coming home to roost." And, despite the view of liberal relativists who believe there are no objective truths--such as, you're either with the terrorists or against them--this charge actually has a ring of accuracy to it.

Most Americans believe that "the stuff" we've been doing overseas for decades--liberating countless millions of people of all faiths and colors from brutal regimes and dictators in every corner of the world--is a major reason why thugs like Osama bin Laden despise us and our way of life. But a belief

that countries like America may be the only thing standing athwart bin Laden's dreams of global Islamist domination, is incomprehensible to liberals who believe that all American military actions are somehow 'imperial' in nature.

Probably the most outrageous claim of Rev. Wright is that our government lied about its involvement in inventing "the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color." Here, he's got the right church but the wrong pew. The real genocide perpetrated against all of the American people and particularly its people of color was, in a way, brought to bear by a branch of our own government. The U.S. Supreme Court, usurping the powers of the legislative branch and therefore the American people, discovered out of whole cloth the right of women to murder their own children in the womb.

You can total up all of the deaths that Wright and his ilk assign to the Imperial U.S. of A., and they wouldn't be a drop in the bucket next to the 40 million or so American children--one third of whom were black--whose lives have been brutally cut short by abortion and its supporters. And who are these supporters?

Well, the parent denomination of Wright and Obama's congregation, the [United Church of Christ](#), for one. In a 1996 [document](#), the UCC supported President Clinton's veto of the Partial Birth Abortion ban stating, "The directorate of the UCC's social action office first addressed the abortion issue in 1970, affirming freedom of choice for women, calling for church action supporting the repeal of overly restrictive abortion legislation and encouraging the expansion of sex education programs."

Wright has famously asked God to damn America and only time will tell if his invocation is worthy of God's ear. But one thing is certain; if we continue to elect politicians who would use racial hatred and class envy to hold people back; who would have us shrink in fear of "chickens coming home to roost" when confronted by our enemies; or would use His name to support the killing of unborn children; we will have damned ourselves.

*[Lisa Fabrizio](#) is a columnist who hails from Connecticut.*

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## Wright vs Hagee Problems

by Warner Huston

Issue 105 - April 9, 2008

Democratic Presidential hopeful Barack Obama has a Wright problem. That would be a Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. problem. It turns out that Barack Obama's "spiritual mentor" has a long, long history of [hatred against whites and the history of the U.S.A.](#) But then news began to surface that one of John McCain's religious supporters, John Hagee, has made many [harsh anti-Catholic statements](#) .



It is true that John Hagee has made bigoted statements against the Catholic Church. It is also utterly true that Jeremiah Wright has made racist, hateful statements against all whites and the history of this country.

But to imagine that the situations in which McCain and Obama find themselves are the same is disingenuous. The situations are not in any way comparable.

This is not another fawning excusing of a GOP candidate by a Republican apologist. I will inform you that I will not vote for John McCain under any circumstances. In fact, there are major differences between McCain's endorsement by Hagee and Obama's endorsement by a person with whom he had a 20 year long relationship.

The following points mark a stark difference between McCain/Hagee and Obama/Wright:

- In his book the *Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama called Rev. Wright his "[spiritual mentor.](#)" McCain has not made any such statement of Hagee.
- Obama had his children baptized by Rev. Wright. McCain's children never knew Hagee when they were young.
- Rev. Wright performed Obama's marriage ceremony. McCain had never even met Hagee until he became the frontrunner for the GOP nomination.
- Obama chose Rev. Wright's church and attended it for 20 years. McCain has never attended Hagee's church.

These points are extremely important and mark a completely different relationship between Wright and Obama and McCain and Hagee. It shows that Barack Obama had many decades of intimacy with Rev. Wright proving that Wright's anti-white speech could not possibly have bothered Sen. Obama very much if at all, much less have come as any surprise. Sen. McCain had only just met John Hagee proving that his anti-Catholic statements is not something that McCain could have had long or intimate contact with.

Of course, both candidates have disavowed their supporter's statements. Obama made his statement via the [Huffington Post](#) and McCain via the media [with a statement](#) to the Associated Press.

Barak Obama had 20 years to repudiate Rev. Wright's hate-filled speech and has only just now spoken up. It is impossible to believe that Obama only just now realized what Wright preaches and so it is reasonable to assume that Mr. Obama is only distancing himself from Wright now for political expediency.

There is no favoritism, no bias to the right among the U.S. media for covering Sen. Obama's pastor more than they have covered Sen. McCain's supporter, as some have claimed. The greater coverage of Wright is simply because Hagee's is but a campaign endorsement whereas Wright's is a 20-year intimate relationship, which has likely implications for Obama's whole outlook on life. And if the

recent comments by Obama's wife Michelle are any indication, this may have implications for the outlook on life of the entire Obama family.

*Warner Todd Huston is a Staff Writer for the New Media Alliance, Inc. ([www.thenma.org](http://www.thenma.org)).*

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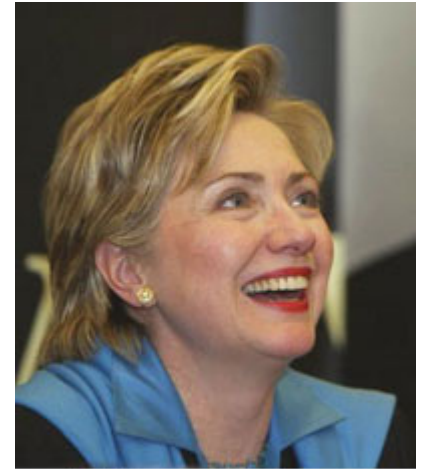
## Hillary Under Attack?

by Christopher Adamo

*Issue 105 - April 9, 2008*

So Hillary Clinton claims to have landed in the midst of a sniper attack, even having to duck and run for cover at the airfield on her trip to Bosnia in 1996. Is anyone surprised? Certainly nobody who has dispassionately observed the Clintons on the national scene over the past sixteen years could be surprised that it turned out not to be true.

The only people who are really astounded this time around are the Clintons and their very close supporters. Hillary's foray into being "human" (as she rationalizes her recounting of the incident), merely constitutes standard practice. Far more stunning is that the national media have opted to point out the fabrication, which is a great departure from their past willingness to abet the hoaxes of the former First Lady and husband Bill.



Hillary Clinton

Prior to their current infatuation with Senator Barack Obama (D.-II), the print and electronic media have diligently covered over the tracks of the Clintons. And on those occasions in which stories could not be completely buried, the media were still willing to participate in the ruse by shifting the focus away from the blatant dishonesty, and onto any number of rabbit trails, such as the "skill" with which the Clintons ostensibly dodged political bullets.

While any comprehensive list of Clintonian fraud would require volumes to catalog, a few memorable events should be recalled in order to remind the nation of the class of politician with which it is dealing. And, despite media claims that their personal activities were irrelevant to their official duties, deception and duplicity in the nation's highest office eventually exacted an awful toll.

From the start of his campaign in 1992, Bill Clinton palpably defined himself and the true nature of his political operations with the transparent disclaimer of having smoked marijuana (apparently too many witnesses were available to facilitate total denial), but saying he "did not inhale." No matter how many people saw him putting the funny little cigarette to his mouth, nobody could decisively prove that he had partaken of its intoxicating effect.

His implicit message to detractors was that he would simply never admit to any accusation that might present even the tiniest chance of an evasion. This pattern was incessantly repeated with tiring regularity throughout his administration and even after.

Of course the most notable episode involved a vehement denial of his tryst with Monica Lewinsky, weaving and dodging from pointed questions with such transparent and juvenile tactics as his dispute over the definition of "is," and later, when DNA evidence from the infamous blue dress eliminated any avenue of escape, his similar discussion of the definition of "sex."

Along with these incidents were innumerable others, such as his claims to have seated himself at the rear of public transportation in honor of Rosa Parks, or his fabricated childhood recollections of black Church burnings in Arkansas when in reality, none had occurred during that period. While easily relegated to the genre of mere pandering, these tales were brazenly dishonest, and ultimately indicative of the Clintons' utter contempt for the truth.

Throughout Bill Clinton's two terms in office, First Lady (now Senator) Hillary Clinton was his chief enabler, often going to the microphones to diffuse the latest lie or scandal. Hardly a stranger to such tactics, she has over time assembled an impressive quantity of her own.

From her "cattle futures" loss of memory to the mysterious disappearance/reappearance of the Rose Law firm billing records, Hillary Clinton ran the gauntlet of legal problems that would easily have sunk any public figure less adept at dancing away from the truth. And nobody in recent memory has been more flagrant in their taunting deflections of questioners than Hillary Clinton, who is probably best remembered for her sneering retort of "I do not recall," when queried about her dubious dealings by Congressional committees.

It was not the merits of her proposal but a "vast right wing conspiracy" that was why her extreme health care plan failed and cost her Democratic Party to lose control of the House of Representatives in the following election.

For nearly two decades, the Clintons regularly dissembled with virtual impunity. But with the advent of the Barack Obama phenomenon, the liberal media no longer saw any reason to disgrace themselves on behalf of the Clintons. And if Obama does clinch the Democrat nomination, an unbroken succession of petty lies and juvenile story telling may be the only sorry remains of the "Clinton legacy."

*Christopher Adamo is a Staff Writer for the New Media Alliance, Inc. ([www.thenma.org](http://www.thenma.org)).*

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Editor**

## All New Deal Bankers?

by Warren Coats  
*Issue 105 -April 9, 2008*

Thanks for your well considered thoughts on the Fed in your editorial, "All New Dealers Now"? I broadly share them but would like to give a somewhat different slant to two points.

The Fed's actions with Bear Sterns are very similar to the orderly demise of the 905 banks in the late 80s that you mention. Just imagine so many bank failures without the economy collapsing (as it did during the Great Depression). Bear Stern's exists no more (or will soon be gone) and the market was spared potentially serious disruption. The U.S. has developed a very efficient approach to bank failure that actually makes it tolerable and acceptable for a bank to fail. In most parts of the world, without these tools, governments just aren't willing to risk a bank failure. They are always bailed out.



While I was at the International Monetary Fund, we convinced most Central and Eastern European transition countries to let insolvent banks fail, but they are the exception. So we should cheer the way Bear Sterns was allowed to leave the market. My concern is that it should not really be the Fed that takes the risk--that the collateral they took will not cover the value of the loan they made. The Treasury should take that risk as they did with the 905 banks you mentioned (through a cooperative arrangement between OCC and FDIC).

The second point is whether the Fed's policy is now too easy (fed funds rate too low). You are certainly right that we can't and shouldn't try to prevent business cycles that correct imbalances in the economy and yes the Fed largely caused this one (housing bubble) along with fiscal deficits that kept the dollar over-valued for too long to encourage the rest of the world to finance our deficit. These imbalances need to be corrected and there will be or is a recession, but maybe a mild one.

But the Fed should try to prevent over-reactions, which are also common in market economies. This is what they are trying to do on two fronts. First, they are trying to prevent shifts in risk assessments and preferences from freezing up financial markets. They are fighting a good fight on this front. They are not increasing liquidity but trying to prevent its collapse as banks hoard liquidity (increased demand for bank excess reserves). Liquidity, measured as the adjusted monetary base (basically the monetary liabilities of the Fed), has steadily declined over the last five years and has increased less the 2 percent from a year earlier.

"The drop in the fed funds rate is a different matter and is trying to soften the business cycle (not prevent it, I hope). The Fed has lowered its policy rate (fed funds interbank lending rate) very rapidly to 2.25%. I am inclined to think they are overdoing it some.

*Warren Coats of Bethesda MD is an international banking consultant and former associate at the International Monetary Fund*

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**Warren : Thanks for your very intelligent remarks. But I don't see why the Treasury should bear the risk either. The stockholders should. I also believe opening the loan window to non-bank firms does increase liquidity whether it is measured as such or not. More "money" (loans) is/are made available than otherwise "exists" (that is, is not being used elsewhere). A big reason the market cannot be "managed" is that such measures are**

**rough at best (Hayek) if not useless (Mises). I am afraid inflation is already getting close to uncontrollable. Gold is the only thing going up—at an obscene rate at that. As you said in another of your postings, gold is not perfect but it is telling us something very important now, I am afraid. Best, Don**

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Don, Yes, the shareholders should pay first, but that is easier said than done. Normally the only way to force owners to take the loss is through the process of bankruptcy. Generally bankruptcy is initiated by an unhappy creditor when a firm can't pay its bills, i.e. when it is illiquid. If it can't get a loan in the market to enable it to pay its bills it is probably insolvent as well. This is a good market test. But insolvency is hard to prove except after the fact and that is what bankruptcy is all about. Bankruptcy is a process of taking the firm from the owners and paying off the creditors under court direction. The firm shuts down and a liquidator takes control and sells off the assets. Only then can we know if it was insolvent or not. If not, the owners get something back (but not ownership of the firm, which no longer exists), if yes, the creditors lose the difference as a result of not being fully repaid.

This process just doesn't work for banks where creditors are largely depositors who can withdraw their funds (or try to) at any time. Increasingly countries, following the imperfect but pretty good U.S. example, exempt banks from bankruptcy laws and establish a special regime just for banks. Northern Rock is a good example of the problem when such special provisions don't exist. Northern Rock could not be sold without the agreement of the stockholders who were not willing to accept a zero price (which if it were insolvent is all they should get). Thus nationalization was the only sensible approach. By nationalizing Northern Rock the state had to compensate the stockholders for the value of what was taken, but if the bank was insolvent (negative capital), that would be zero. Then the state could sell the bank back to the private sector for whatever it was worth to the market.

This is tricky stuff in part because there is no objective measure of the value of a bank's assets other than from selling them (i.e. the bankruptcy process). What a good bank bankruptcy law should provide is for the regulator (in the U.S. case the insurer – FDIC) to take over the ownership of the bank when it is judged insolvent (giving shareholders nothing) and to quickly sell it as a going concern (rather than closing its doors, locking up deposits until individual loans could be sold or collected). But generally, and certainly in present market conditions, potential buyers will pay a much better price if the risks to the value of the bank assets can be limited. The regulator or insurer that took over the bank should have a better idea of the ultimate value of the bank's loan portfolio than potential buyers (they have had more time to examine it) and thus by guaranteeing their value (usually at something below book value) will save the taxpayers money (this assumes that the depositors are made whole) from the better sale price. An even bolder approach would allow the FDIC to give haircuts to depositors and other credits as part of the resale of the bank (actually the FDIC sells some or all of the assets to the buyer for which the buyer assumes all or most of the deposits – a purchase and assumption transaction). The whole thing is done over a weekend and the depositors are just informed on the next business day of the name change or ownership change and can move their deposits elsewhere after that as they like. In short, the whole process of bankruptcy liquidation (with out the requirement of public auctions of assets etc) is compressed into a weekend or a few days without serious interruption to the use of depositor funds. The idea that depositors would discipline banks because they might lose funds in bankruptcy never really worked. As I said in my earlier note very few governments were willing to risk the clean and pure closing of the bank via traditional bankruptcy. But the FDIC approach has worked very well. It does involve the state taking on some risks (unless you give depositors haircuts, which the FDIC never has). My point was that this risk should be taken by Treasury, i.e. tax payers in order to keep discipline in the process. The central bank can just print money, which is too easy and thus might cloud its judgment about when and what to guarantee. Finance Ministers really do care about protecting tax payers.

There is potential abuse in this system and it needs checks and balances but also needs to be somewhat heavy-handed with stockholders to be efficient. Without it we never could have closed so many banks with so little disruption.

On the second point about loans increasing liquidity: Yes, the loan increases liquidity, but the Fed has been taking it back elsewhere by selling t-bills to the market thus over all liquidity has not been increasing much. A second point is that if banks want more liquidity than before because of risk concerns (we would say the desired excess reserves has increased), which is what is happening when banks stop or reduce lending to each other and just keep those funds, then the Fed needs to increase the supply of reserves just to keep liquidity conditions the same. Warren

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**Warren , You make excellent arguments but I still disagree. It seems to me—in theory and practically--the risk should not be to the Treasury but to the stockholders, depositors, creditors, etc, in a “bankruptcy” solution (whether normal or special for banks)—and with haircut authority. I agree the Fed is not the right place. Today, FDIC is a mixed animal—partially an insurer which can take to bankruptcy (properly) and partially a government bail-out and risk accumulator. On FDIC Gary North says the reserve at the time he looked at it was listed at \$44 billion or 1.5% of the insured assets (today it is down to 1.2%) — but it was only \$34.7 billion on the Balance Sheet, of which only \$12 billion was available for sale—and these (and all of the rest) were in government securities!! So you don’t have to worry, the Treasury is already on the hook and will have to come up with money it does not have. FDIC can meet some of the risk but it just does not have much money. A private insurer that had this little reserve would be in jail. Best, Don**

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Don, We are agreed on the first best solution, but almost no country has been willing to take the risk of applying it. My second best is much better than the usual bailout. I am a pragmatist. Warren

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**E-mail the  
Editor**

## Diluting Oscar

by Renny Hartmann  
Issue 105 - April 9, 2008

I fell in love with the movies when I was about five and my parents took me to see an Abbott and Costello movie. There was no TV yet, and the moving characters on that huge screen were like a living day dream. I still see 30-40 movies a year, nearly every week. But only one of the esteemed Oscar nominees even played in my county, the George Clooney pix--which was a nice film but no more worthy of an Oscar nomination than my mixed collie dog's being nominated to the Westminster Kennel Club.

No one I know of saw all the best picture candidates this year, partly because few were in general distribution or played nationally. When years ago the Academy in its wisdom chose " Fargo" as a contestant, I stopped watching the Oscar broadcasts. Fargo was another senseless exercise in bloodletting supposedly forward looking for featuring a pregnant chief of police lumbering around in the snow as an icon of feminism.

"Crash" was a direct descendant of Fargo, nearly plotless, all heartless, and actually a perfect example of bait and switch marketing. At first, Crash was promoted in previews as a comedy featuring Sandra Bullock. When the film reached commercial screens, audiences could immediately see Ms. Bullock vanished from the movie in a few seconds, and every other character was a racist, sexist, drug dealer, corrupt cop, yadda with no possibly redeeming values. Then, as with "Natural Born Killers," the pr started offering Crash as satire, a scathing comment on modern society, a masterful "ensemble" production worthy of the highest praise.

It probably derives from California's culture where everyone simply hates everyone, ending up incomprehensible. After all, celebrities hate intrusive gardeners and snoopy detectives, so they identified beautifully with the negative, vile dialogue and characters' manners. It was just like home. But Crash was a miserable movie, and if anyone mentions it today as an Oscar winner, he/she will mostly receive vague and blank stares from people who never saw it then and haven't heard of it since. And there's the rub, as Hamlet would say. Picking Oscar choices from poorly-performing movies that audiences have not embraced or never had the opportunity to see cheapens and lessens the worth of the Oscars. If the Academy wants the Oscars to be a foreign film awards show, they should change the name and venue. They are killing the goose with the golden egg.

Young people do not go to theatrical movies. They are watching YouTube and their iPods. They are not developing an aesthetic for appreciating the magic that appears on the silver screen, which will eventually lead to the demise of the film experience. Hollywood should pay attention.

*Renny Hartmann is an adjunct college professor in New Jersey*



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Editor**

## Reader Comments

*Issue 105 - April 9, 2008*

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Editor: A quibble here, a quibble there, but you've nailed it in "All New Dealers Now?" Allbest. Neal Freeman

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Editor: It took me some time to work through the economics of your analysis in your "All New Dealers Now?" but it was worth the effort. If I can get it, so should the "experts." However, being in an election cycle, I'm not taking bets on political courage. Nonetheless, great piece, Rich Byman

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Editor: Bravo for your piece "All New Dealers Now?" Under Ben ("hit the panic button") Bernanke we are headed back to the 70s with inflation and sluggish growth. Larry Hart

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Editor: Regarding your "All New Dealers Now?" and E. J. Dionne's "advice" to conservatives, we have seen this liberal idea before. The capitalists are no good so the government is the perfect tool for the solution. Where is the history to support this nonsense? Capitalists are always in search of capital. The politicians are always after your freedom and money. Who should we trust? John Phelps, Vail, CO

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Editor: Regarding your "All New Dealers Now?" our government is nothing but a rip off and none of the people running for president is telling the American people the truth—it's all lies. Norman Crouch

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Editor: The article "\$3,000 Tax Increase" by Brian Riedl was very enlightening, and just another sign of the impending (and deliberate) collapse of the U.S. Economy as was referred to in your other article on the New Deal. The warning signs are all there, for those of us that choose to see them: our lawmakers are 'bent' on destroying the Middle Class in this country and throwing us into a Communist-style (read Socialist) society. It used to be that something like this would NEVER surface during an election year for fear that, should the public get wind of it, legislators would be given a one-way ticket back to "private" life. But the leaders of BOTH Houses of Congress have become so emboldened that they feel they can push whatever legislation they so choose and just 'dare' their constituents to "do something about it". And you know what? Barring a murder charge, or some other type of scandal, folks WILL literally) 'rubber stamp' their representatives/senators back into office. Whatever happened to the 'voting your wallet' concept? It's been said that every President since 1860 has been elected based on that principle. How come our legislators aren't held up to the same scrutiny? It's high time that WE, the people, start asking our representatives the age-old question that we face from OUR bosses every day: "What have you done for ME lately?" If that were to happen, I dare say that there would be a wholesale "changing of the guard" every other year! Thank You, Gary Mercatante, Woodhaven, Michigan

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Editor: We must have the most complicated tax system in the world that promotes chaos and cheating. If we did away with all of these agencies, like IRS, and had a straight sales tax, everyone would pay into the system including the illegal immigrants who are sending all of their cash back to Mexico (which has a housing boom while we all go into foreclosure). The Fair Tax idea is almost as crazy as what we have now. Why create another office to send refunds? I still contend there are ten percent of the highly educated, highly compensated supporting the other ninety percent of seniors, disabled, children, and immigrants not working. That same ten percent will leave this country as they grow weary of supporting everyone else. The answer to all of our problems is education. The Dumbing-Down of America is firmly in place and we are falling behind as a country. We no longer have a middle class in this country. Minimum wage, Social Security or SSI keeps people in poverty while our elected officials give themselves raises without question. It seems like we already have Universal Healthcare. When an immigrant crosses the border and has an anchor baby, they are secure for 18 years with social services and medical care you and I can't access. When will someone in Washington step up to the plate and say "Enough of the insanity, back to basics"? This is a sad time in these United States for We the People. M Dorin, FL

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Editor: I enjoyed reading the informative writing of Alan Caruba on "Experts Expose Warming." Like other authoritative authors I have read that rebut the fallacious reasoning of Global Warming proponents, I conclude that millions of public and private funds are being poured into a financial black hole. When the awaking comes, I surmise the impact on the US and foreign economies will approach the magnitude of the mortgage crisis. It will be interesting, and surely depressing, to see an analysis of the funds already spent and those projected to combat Global Warming. It also will serve the public interest to identify the long list of those who are profiting, directly and indirectly, from this hoax, starting with Al Gore. I respectfully urge Alan Caruba and his scientific friends to launch a full court press to enlighten the American public and politicians on the truths of the Global Warming scam. Sincerely, Albert J. Fern, San Diego

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Editor: Alan Caruba's "Experts Expose Warming" is a great article. I would like to send this article to some of my friends. How can I do that? Thanks, Gary Comer *[Editor: Just do it!]*

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Editor: Regarding your articles on John McCain, where are the McCain bumper stickers? Not one to be seen. Remember, the candidate with the greatest number wins the election 90%+ of the time. Why aren't Republican Headquarters open throughout the country working NOW for McCain. Like him or not he's our candidate. Wake up Conservatives and look at the alternative. PD

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Editor: Unless John McCain picks a conservative as VP, such as for instance Newt Gingrich, he will not bring in the conservatives. If he does not, the only hope that the Republican Party does have has been shunned by the very party that he supports. I of course am talking about former UN Ambassador Alan Keyes. He is the last of the true Reagan Republicans who actually worked for Ronald Reagan. That is why I support Alan Keyes! Robert Littlejohn

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Editor: I'm not seeing much in the way of explaining why John McCain is acting more like a Liberal Democrat every day. Don Keeney

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Editor: Although at this writing McCain seems to have a narrow lead, the Republicans have a way of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory and shooting themselves in the feet. Let's hope they keep their hard-toed shoes on this time. SW

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Editor: In the process of conducting research on the Center for Civic Education, I read with great interest Mr. Allen Quist's article on "Federally Funded Civics?" In addition to the distorting the facts in its civics program "We the People", the Center manipulates its funding from the U.S. Department of Education to generate book orders and to earn a profit on its sales of its texts to U.S. public schools. They have no competition. I have in front of me the Center's its IRS Returns (Form 990) for 2004 and 2005. The Center reported a textbooks sales profit of \$778,907 in 2004 and of \$943,279 in 2005. Through its U.S. Department of Education grant to support "We the People" at the high school level, the Center trains teachers. Each teacher completing the Center's training workshops receives a teacher's guide (\$18.50) and one "classroom set" of 30 books and other materials (\$320.00.) The Center tells teachers that its supplies of teacher and student texts are very limited. Subsequently, to implement the "We the People" program, U.S. teachers order copies of the Center's materials when they return to their schools. Most school systems opt for the Center's special package set for \$320.00 per unit - barely sufficient for one classroom. For FY2004-05, the Center reported to the IRS a gross profit of \$778,907 from sales of "We the People" materials to U.S. public schools (printing cost, \$225,342; net sales, \$1,004,249.) For FY2005-06, the Center reported to the IRS a gross profit of \$943,279. Some foreign schools also order materials, most using grant funds they have received from the Center from the Center's USAID and Department of State grants. The Center receives approximately \$25,000,000 annually in Federal grants from the U.S. department of Education, the U.S. Department of State and USAID. A bulk of the funding comes from the DOEd. The DOEd grant is too small and the Center is too distant from D.C. for the grant to be monitored effectively. The Center reports to the IRS that 99.8% of its funding is from Federal grants. The Center utilizes the profits from sales of its educational materials to: -conduct programs in countries not authorized in its grants, such as Cuba, the PRC and Algeria; -provide bonuses and first class travel for its executive director and his spouse; -lease an apartment in Dupont Circle for its executive director; -to lobby Congress in ways not allowable under Federal regulations, including two or three Congressional staff delegation visits to overseas programs each year; -to fund the participation of U.S. and foreign delegates to its annual international congresses; -to fund extensive international travel and production of a forthcoming "documentary" film by a former Disney executive. I have met Center staff and observed Center programs in operation overseas. I was stunned by their liberal political agenda, advocacy of an international civic education curriculum and their disregard of basic U.S. democratic values. The Center is a case study of the problems that arise when the U.S. Department of Education funds programs on a national level which would be far better managed locally. Also, the many of the excesses of the Center's management come from the arrogance that follows many years of Congressional earmarks and the lack of competition for Federal funding. Keep up the good work! A. Martin Chase

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