



Gov. Jon S. Corzine

CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

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Washington*

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

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Killing Local America

by Donald Devine
Issue 106 -April 23, 2008

So it is a conservative canard that government aid means government control?

Liberal New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine is out to prove the conservatives right. He recently announced in his state budget message that he would drastically cut or eliminate state aid to its 323 towns with populations of fewer than 10,000 if they did not consolidate themselves into larger, more "efficient" units. There is not much greater control than elimination.



Gov. Jon S. Corzine

Gov. Corzine won his reputation as a mergers and acquisitions chairman of the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs. He was into cutthroat capitalism and its engine of "creative destruction" and, after making his tens of millions in the investment field, he offered to take this same expertise into government, starting in the U.S. Senate. The old CEO became bored with legislation and left Congress to become top state executive. So in his first budget crunch he forced through an increased sales tax and in his second he demanded town consolidation. It's just like Wall Street, right--the larger the unit the more efficient the organization—economy of scale, right? Wrong.

Corzine should listen to his own mayors. Mayor Edward Campbell of little Gibbsboro responded that the governor ignored the fact that small communities can escape the limitations of economy of scale by competitive bidding and contracting with private industry and by greater use of part time employees. Collingswood Mayor James Maley noted that many municipalities, including his town and nearby Woodlynne, already have cooperative agreements that cut costs. Somerdale Mayor Gary Passanante pointed out that of the New Jersey towns with the 50 lowest effective municipal tax rates, 48 have populations under 10,000. Moreover, while big cities are declining in population, people are flocking to smaller communities. Rousseau actually declared that 10,000 was the ideal sized community.

The Governor's imperialistic attitude is noteworthy but even on the merits, where has this guy been—larger governments are more efficient? As early as the 1970s, the private sector learned that there was a limit to economies of scale and began breaking down and flattening large bureaucracies that could not compete efficiently. The last holdout was finance but even Corzine's own field followed early in the new century. The Federal Government had actually debunked the idea of economies of scale for governments as early as the 1980s. The U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations determined that contracting out to the private sector or other governments allowed the smallest local government to be as, or more likely, more efficient than larger local governments—since the later were typically dominated by public sector unions devoted to security rather than efficiency.

Where Corzine has been as governor, senator and investment-banker has been encased in the museum piece called modern "progressivism"—which is a corruption of both socialism and capitalism, not simply a moderate socialism as many on the right mistakenly believe. It combines the socialist value of equality with the capitalist means of economy of scale supposedly to create both capitalism with a heart and an efficient socialism. Unfortunately for the progressives, economy of scale was only one means used to create capitalist efficiency and not necessarily the most important, which is determined by what works best in a market setting, which neither socialism's elimination of private property nor progressivism's rule by the experts' plan allows. As a result, progressivism was not only more inefficient than capitalism because its plan was too inflexible to control the market's great complexity but even of socialism, which could use blunt force to break through the complexity, at least in the short run.



For many years after the market abandoned it as its talisman, economy of scale has been the dominant theorem of public administration. The virtual inventor of expert public administration in the U.S.--Woodrow Wilson—basically wrote the book on the subject as the dominant public intellectual of the early 20th Century, and then institutionalized them as governor of Corzine's own state—what is in the water there?--and as president. But Wilson's Federal Reserve did not prevent the Great Depression and may well have caused it.

Franklin Roosevelt made these ideas the center of his New Deal and they have been the dominant governing doctrine ever since. Yet, the Depression was not ended until World War II and his agencies could not prevent the ruinous stagflation of the 1970s—or today. As far as budgets, it is not small government that is threatening insolvency but Federal Medicare, Social Security and Federally-imposed Medicaid. As noted in its recent Trustees report Medicare, by far the largest, is already in the red and exhausts its trust funds as early as 2019 (and as John Goodman shows nearby, this is optimistic) and Medicaid is actually the greatest state financial drain.

Progressive ideology has not targeted local government for its expense but because it is too diverse and uncontrollable. Progressivism relies on "experts" to use concentrated government power to pursue the general welfare. Not only private markets but also what economists call the market of local governments diffuse power so the experts cannot control "problems." Too much freedom gets in the way of the experts' planning. So, public and private, diversity must be eliminated or controlled.

As recently as 1900, local government raised twice the revenue as the national government and six times as much as state governments. Then progressivism set out to eliminate small government diversity. From using the multi-service county rather than creating additional municipalities, to municipal consolidation reforms (creating one large city from scores of towns), to the encouragement of annexation of nearby unincorporated land, to simply making it difficult to create new municipalities, progressive reforms smothered new local governments. Today there are hardly more municipalities, townships and towns than there were at the turn of the last century, even with the incredible growth of population. For school districts, it is even worse. While there were 127, 000 independent school districts as late as the 1930s, now there are only 14,000.

But freedom has its own power. Local governments in the U.S. are still more powerful than in most of the rest of the world and most new settlement is in private local community associations. In New Jersey, Gov. Corzine's threats may have actually the opposite effect. The small towns are revolting. William Dressel, the head of the state Municipal League, traces such opposition to colonial times, stressing that "people like that sense of community. They like their sense of home town. Bigger does not mean better." Many are questioning the value of state aid if it can be cut so arbitrarily. The governor has made it obvious that state aid means state control. Most of the mayors claim they would rather give up the aid than lose their independence.

America became great as a nation of local government. When the great French social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in the early days of the republic, he reported that local and voluntary communities successfully solved their own problems and the national and state governments hardly existed locally. A rebirth of local independence is precisely what the U.S. needs today and Corzine's abuse of government power may be just the shot needed to rouse its fervor for community.

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Alexis de Tocqueville

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Beware Blueprints

by Paul Weyrich

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Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson, Jr. recently released the "Blueprint for a Modernized Financial Regulatory Structure," the Department of the Treasury's plan to overhaul America's financial system in the wake of the housing crisis and the Wall Street meltdown. Commentators are touting the changes as the most sweeping reforms since those implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the Great Depression.



Paul M. Weyrich

In his speech announcing the "Blueprint," Secretary Paulson stated that "the challenge is to evolve to a more flexible, efficient and effective regulatory framework." Among the short-term changes proposed is the creation of a new Mortgage Origination Commission designed to regulate the mortgage industry by evaluating each state's regulation of lenders and brokers. The report asserts that Federal legislation should establish uniform minimum qualifications for state licensing of lenders and brokers and that the Federal Reserve should implement national mortgage-lending laws. Over the long-term Secretary Paulson wants to eliminate some of the duplication currently in the system. To do so he proposes merging the Securities and Exchange Commission, which oversees the financial markets and is responsible for protecting investors, with the Commodity Futures and Trading Commission, which regulates the trading of futures contracts of oil, gold and wheat. He also would merge the Office of Thrift Supervision with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency so that the latter would regulate both national banks and financial institutions that operate like banks.

While I am not an economist, streamlining bureaucracy to reduce duplication and waste is generally a good idea, particularly if the separate bureaucracies govern similar institutions or trades. Where there should be more cause for concern is with a reactive or impulsive desire to over-regulate the industry. Secretary Paulson has said he wants to avoid this, but suggesting that the Federal Reserve issue national mortgage-lending laws without stating specifically what those laws should entail and what should be the limit of the Federal Reserve's power to tamper with the housing market is rather troubling.

There is a tendency in times of financial crisis to look to government as the solution. Yet government solutions often exacerbate the problem or permanently limit the free market. What should occur in this housing crisis is a market correction. In other words, the Federal Government should let home prices, which were inflated grossly, correct themselves to more realistic values.

Some economists also have criticized the Federal Reserve for lowering interest rates so much that inflation may become a serious problem. If this proves to be the case and the Federal Reserve has over-reacted to the crisis by lowering interest rates excessively, it would provide further proof that too much regulatory power should not be vested in one bureaucracy.

A free market is notoriously difficult to manage and predict because so many different forces govern it. Yet it has proven to bring the greatest wealth to the most people of any economic system in history. Certainly some regulation is needed to govern the human propensity toward sin and greed. But too much regulation will move us toward a statist economy. If this happens, the American entrepreneurial spirit may be stifled in a bureaucratic and legislative quagmire while real wages decline. And countless historical examples have shown that, if left to itself, the market does a much better job of correcting itself than bureaucrats who try to micro-manage prices, coinage, interest rates or wages.

On this subject the words of John Lennon and Paul McCartney may provide more guidance than reams of Federal Reserve legislation, "Let it be."

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Editor**

Hillary Hoover

by Thomas Brewton

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Here is Senator Clinton in the *Los Angeles Times*:

In the very first words she uttered reacting to John McCain's speech on the housing market crisis Tuesday, Hillary Clinton evinced part of her appeal to older voters: her frame of reference is theirs.

"It sounds remarkably like Herbert Hoover," Clinton said of McCain's assertion that he is not inclined – and probably never will be – to embrace aggressive, sweeping government efforts to confront the problem of rising home foreclosures

Specifically, McCain opined that "it is not the duty of government to bail out and reward those who act irresponsibly, whether they are big banks or small borrowers."

By mentioning Hoover, whose tepid response to the Great Depression helped keep the White House in Democratic hands for 20 straight years after he was bounced from office in the 1932 election, Clinton invoked what once was a can't-miss applause line among Democrats.



What are the facts?

President Herbert Hoover was a leading exponent of progressivism in government, despite his characterization by liberal historians as a laissez-faire conservative. So much so that Austrian School economists date the inception of the New Deal to the inauguration of Hoover in 1929. Much of what President Franklin Roosevelt did with disastrous results, from 1933 until late 1940, was merely a continuation and expansion of President Hoover's policies.

The problem was, not that Hoover was a laissez-faire conservative, but that his liberal-progressive policies failed miserably, just as President Roosevelt's did from 1933 until the outbreak of World War II.

As Amity Shlaes [wrote in the Wall Street Journal](#):

The premier line in the standard history is that Herbert Hoover was a right-winger whose laissez-faire politics helped convert the 1929 Crash into the Great Depression. But a review of the new president's actions reveals him to be a control freak, an interventionist in spite of himself. Hoover signed the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act, which worsened a global downturn, even though he had long lived in London and understood better than almost anyone the interconnectedness of markets. He also bullied companies into maintaining high wages and keeping employees on their payrolls when they could ill afford to do so. Perhaps worst of all, he berated the stock market as a speculative sinner even though he knew better. For example, Hoover opposed shorting as a practice, a policy that frightened markets at an especially vulnerable time.

President Hoover began his interventions in December 1929, shortly after the great Wall Street crash. His opening salvo was jaw-boning businessmen and threatening to retaliate with government regulations if businessmen allowed normal market forces to reduce wages to levels at which they could profitably resume production. President Franklin Roosevelt's active support of socialist and communist labor unions to force abnormally high wages continued Hoover's game in spades. Artificially-high wage costs in unionized industry were one of the two main factors, along with economic distortions induced by the Federal Reserve's 1920s over-expansion of the money supply

that kept unemployment at double-digit levels throughout the Depression. Unions' prevention of wage adjustments in ratio to sales price declines both held down resumption of full production, and kept the great majority that were non-unionized labor at even lower wages.

Time Magazine [reported](#) in its Monday, Dec. 02, 1929 edition:

Prosperity Pledgers

"I WILL APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD MAKE IT CONVENIENT TO ATTEND A SMALL CONFERENCE IN MY OFFICE ON THURSDAY MORNING AT 10 O'CLOCK TO DISCUSS MATTERS CONNECTED WITH MY STATEMENT OF LAST SATURDAY

"HERBERT HOOVER"

Phillip H. Gadsden, president of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, received this telegram, hastily "made it convenient" to go to Washington. For "my statement of last Saturday" was, as all the world knows, President Hoover's announcement of a series of conferences to devise means of preventing the Stockmarket decline from affecting U. S. business.

Thus, 36 major business leaders, ranging from Henry Ford to the heads of General Motors and General Electric, were summoned by the President's "invitation." The results, with the prominent exception of Henry Ford, were pledges not to lower wages, formation of a permanent national economic council to deal with emergencies, cheaper credit and further money-supply expansion by the Federal Reserve, and manifold pledges by business to expand expenditures for plant and equipment construction (surely one of the most bizarre and counter-productive measures imaginable for an economy that had fallen into recession precisely because of misaligned expenditures that resulted in vast over-capacity for production).

The Federal government itself pledged to increase its public building program from \$248,000,000 to \$423,000,000. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation later was President Roosevelt's primary financing vehicle for creating and funding "off the books" Federal agencies and for bailing out failing companies. It was created, not by Roosevelt, but by Hoover. None of this could be described accurately as laissez-faire capitalism.

One of the most detailed and best accounts of President Hoover's progressivism is Murray Rothbard's *America's Great Depression* (at Mises.org economic blog.):

Laissez-faire, then, was the policy dictated both by sound theory and by historical precedent. But in 1929, the sound course was rudely brushed aside. Led by President Hoover, the government embarked on what Anderson has accurately called the "Hoover New Deal." For if we define "New Deal" as an antidepression program marked by extensive governmental economic planning and intervention-including bolstering of wage rates and prices, expansion of credit, propping up of weak firms, and increased government spending (e.g., subsidies to unemployment and public works)-Herbert Clark Hoover must be considered the founder of the New Deal in America...

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in large part, merely elaborated the policies laid down by his predecessor. To scoff at Hoover's tragic failure to cure the depression as a typical example of laissez-faire is drastically to misread the historical record. The Hoover rout must be set down as a failure of government planning and not of the free market.

To portray the interventionist efforts of the Hoover administration to cure the depression we may quote Hoover's own summary of his program, during his Presidential campaign in the fall of 1932:

"we might have done nothing. That would have been utter ruin. Instead we met the situation with proposals to private business and to Congress of the most gigantic program of economic defense

and counterattack ever evolved in the history of the Republic. We put it into action. . . . No government in Washington has hitherto considered that it held so broad a responsibility for leadership in such times. . . . For the first time in the history of depression, dividends, profits, and the cost of living, have been reduced before wages have suffered. . . . They were maintained until the cost of living had decreased and the profits had practically vanished. They are now the highest real wages in the world.

Creating new jobs and giving to the whole system a new breath of life; nothing has ever been devised in our history which has done more for . . . "the common run of men and women." Some of the reactionary economists urged that we should allow the liquidation to take its course until we had found bottom. . . . We determined that we would not follow the advice of the bitter-end liquidationists and see the whole body of debtors of the United States brought to bankruptcy and the savings of our people brought to destruction."

...Characteristic of all Hoover's interventions was the velvet glove on the mailed fist: i.e., the businessmen would be exhorted to adopt "voluntary" measures that the government desired, but implicit was the threat that if business did not "volunteer" properly, compulsory controls would soon follow.

...The government was supposed to correct "our marginal faults"-including undeveloped health and education, industrial "waste," the failure to conserve resources, the nasty habit of resisting unionization, and seasonal unemployment. Featured in Hoover's plan were increased inheritance taxes, public dams, and, significantly, government regulation of the stock market to eliminate "vicious speculation."

...So "forward-looking" was Hoover and his program that Louis Brandeis [a prominent progressive and Supreme Court Justice], Herbert Croly of the New Republic [the most prominent liberal-progressive publication from World War I until the 1950s], Colonel Edward M. House, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and other prominent Democrats for a while boomed Hoover for the presidency.

So who is Herbert Hoover? Hillary Hoover for president?

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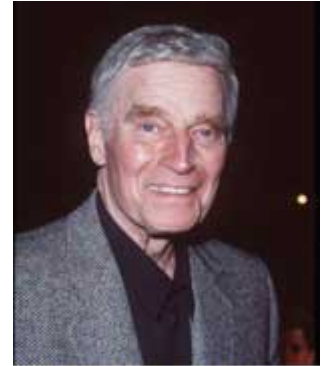
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Charlton Heston: An Appreciation

by Spencer Warren

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Charlton Heston was fortunate to arrive in Hollywood, when he did in 1950, aged 26. For the motion picture industry was entering its last period of greatness. During the 1950s the growth of television and suburbanization were reducing the huge audiences on which the large studio "production factories" relied for their dominant position. Trying to hold onto their audiences and bring back those who had left, Hollywood turned to historical, especially Biblical and ancient, spectacles, presented in the new widescreen CinemaScope and VistaVision, which the TV screen could never match. And no producer could have dreamed up a more perfect looking star for these films than the tall, handsome, granite-boned, physically imposing Mr. Heston.



Charlton Heston

Heston was the first to concede he wasn't the greatest of actors, but he did improve on his early efforts. He is rather wooden in his first important role, as the tough circus manager Brad Braden in Cecil B. DeMille's 1952 Oscar-winning *The Greatest Show in Earth*. Two years later, even the beautiful Eleanor Parker (best known to many readers as the countess in *The Sound of Music*) is not able to warm up his Christopher Leiningen in *The Naked Jungle* (1954); Heston appears more comfortable fighting alone against nature in the film's climax to save his South American cocoa plantation from an army of billions of ants.

As everyone knows, his biggest and, I believe, greatest role, came in 1956, as Moses in DeMille's opus, *The Ten Commandments* (1956). Indeed, Heston physically bears some resemblance to Michaelangelo's famous statue of Moses in Florence, which undoubtedly inspired DeMille and his makeup designers. Many dismiss and giggle at the arch style, flat direction and declamatory acting DeMille consciously employed for his Biblical and historical epics (e.g. *The Sign of the Cross* (1932), *Cleopatra* (1934), *The Crusades* (1935), *Samson and Delilah* (1949)), but this is not fair. DeMille's intent was similar to the hieratic style of religious art in the Middle Ages: his aim was to represent the holiness or monumental historical, heroic essence of his subject, which an objective, or realistic, representation would undermine. (By contrast, realism is the approach of recent decades: Compare the realistic TV mini-series, "Moses the Lawgiver," with Burt Lancaster (1974) or, at its most extreme, Martin Scorsese's 1988 *The Last Temptation of Christ*.)

Heston thus was perfect for DeMille. He *is* the on-screen Moses of the Bible: As the mighty Prince of Egypt and "son" of Pharaoh superintending construction of Sethi I's great treasure city, when he mercifully saves his real mother – unbeknownst to him -- Yochabel (Martha Scott) from the massive stone about to crush her; as he humbly accepts his true identity as a Hebrew; as the exile struggling through his tempering ordeal of hunger and thirst in the Wilderness; as the outnumbered man of courage, armed only with a staff, driving off the thieving Amalekite shepherds at Jethro's well, thus saving the priest of Midian and his seven daughters. And later (with a lot more makeup and hair styling), as the appointed prophet on his knees, speaking to God before the Burning Bush; as the returning savior demanding of Rameses (Yul Brynner), "Let my people go," casting the Ten Plagues on the arrogant Pharaoh and then presiding at his humble family table over the first Passover seder; and as God's chosen instrument standing on a rock and raising his staff to signal the opening and closing of the Red Sea. And, finally, as the recipient of God's Holy Law on Mount Sinai. For more than three hours, Heston's commanding presence is unforgettable. And, as he was to demonstrate also in his subsequent historical roles, he is most effective in believably combining strength and tenderness, power and humility. (One could hardly imagine Arnold Schwarzenegger, for example, encompassing such range.)

If one read the script alone ("Based upon the Holy Scriptures and other ancient and modern writings," the opening credits tell us), one's eyebrows might be raised, but Heston and the rest of

the wonderful cast (Edward G. Robinson, Anne Baxter, Judith Anderson, Vincent Price, Yvonne De Carlo as his wife, Sephora, John Carradine as Aaron, Nina Foch and others) become real characters from the pages of the Old Testament, whose words they speak with authority.

What also makes *The Ten Commandments* in my opinion one of the great films is the visual design of Albert Nozaki, Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler and the rest of Paramount's art/set department, drawing on work of the Biblical painter Arnold Friberg and scholarly research by Henry S. Noerdlinger, which was later published as a book by the University of California Press, *Moses and Egypt*. DeMille was so devoted to authenticity and detail that the tablets, "written with the finger of God," as Moses says (Exodus 31:18), embracing them as he descends Mount Sinai in the film, were carved in red granite cut from the top of the holy mountain – in the letters of Pre-Canaanite which preceded Hebrew. As George MacDonald Fraser writes in his *Hollywood History of the World* (1988), most impressive were:



...the Egyptian sets, the swarming brick-pits and endless construction works where the Israelites (and the film crew) were obviously serving with rigor, the enormous blocks of dressed stone moving ponderously into place, the massive pylon being erected before Pharaoh's city – it looked as though it was really happening, and with DeMille in charge it probably was. Loyal Griggs photographed it all superbly: one remembers best . . . the beginning of the Exodus, with the great confused rabble, twelve thousand strong, setting off into the desert, carts and children and old folk and farm animals ploughing up the dust, the screen teeming with detail, and Heston striding majestically away towards the Promised Land. [DeMille rejected composer Elmer Bernstein's initial score for this scene – a Hebraic melody -- demanding instead an up-tempo triumphal march, which Bernstein superbly delivered, and which adds so much to this spectacular, inspiring scene.] This is what historical films should be for, to set the legend in the mind's eye.

Of course, some of what we see is special effects, often "glass shots" – paintings of images matched with live action. (Today this is done with computers, which are no match for the artistry of those unsung studio artists.) Thus, the scene where Moses the Prince of Egypt, to rebut Pharaoh's skepticism of his building efforts, dramatically pulls back the curtain in Pharaoh's tent to reveal the new treasure city in all its stunning VistaVision glory, is grand Hollywood movie-making at its best.

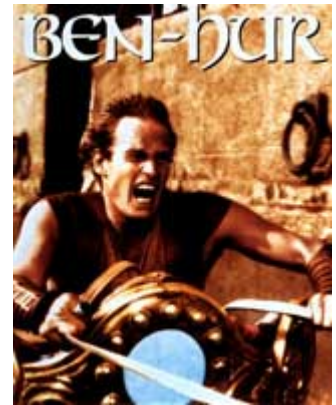
The parting of the Red Sea is arguably still the greatest special effects sequence in movie history. The surf washing up on the rock on which Moses is standing, as he and his flock look with wonder and fear upon the scene of the Lord closing the sea upon the pursuing Egyptian chariots, is another little priceless DeMille detail that makes the film so rich.

Then aged 74, DeMille, like all the great directors of the Golden Age, believed deeply in what he was creating, spiritually and artistically; even a major heart attack suffered in the heat of the Egyptian desert during filming did not stop him. This film was so personal to him that in the original theatrical release, before the film (which he also narrates) began, he appeared on screen, introducing his movie as a parable for the Cold War: "The Ten Commandments . . . are the charter and guide of human liberty," he intoned, "for there can be no liberty without the law." (This Judeo-Christian concept of liberty, the one our Founding Fathers believed, is the opposite of the moral liberationist, indeed, libertine, view of contemporary liberals, and repeatedly invoked by the Supreme Court.)

It took a big actor to stand out amidst DeMille's giant production. Heston was the man, his legacy as a unique movie star already assured. That shot of him with his prophet's beard, in his long robe, purposely striding forward, holding a child in his arms as he leads the Exodus, may be the noblest image of his career.

Fans of *Ben-Hur* (1959) will disagree, but I rank as Heston's other great film *El Cid* (1961). Rodrigo Diaz, "El Cid" (The Man) is as noble and selfless a hero as has ever graced a movie. At every turn he places his immense courage and prowess in battle at the service of God, his people, his King (even when treated unjustly), his family, and everyone he encounters. His chivalry rests on his humility.

Thus, we are introduced to Rodrigo (Heston) defending the Cross against a band of Moslem Moors in eleventh century Spain. He spares their lives upon their pledge never again to attack, for which he earns their admiration and respect--as well as the enmity of his King's court, for he has violated the royal command that such Moslem prisoners be hanged. But such are the Cid's gifts in battle and his inspirational leadership that the King must acquiesce in his role as defender of Spain against the Moslem occupiers and invaders from North Africa.



This tale of a warrior who is gentle and forgiving to all around him (Sophia Loren plays his wife), who loves and is loved by all, and who ultimately sacrifices everything for them, may show off Heston's range more than any other part he played. His selfless, undaunting courage is impressive because of how he underplays his role. In a rugged scene perhaps second only to the *Ben-Hur* chariot race (see below) in Heston's career, *El Cid* has to fight to the death against the most accomplished joustier in the land in order to restore his standing in court and win the city of Calahorra for his sovereign. Director Anthony Mann's touch is evident in the use of sound (the clash of armor and swords, the thunder of the two horses' hooves) and in the climax of the sequence: *El Cid* plunges his sword into the defeated opponent (with the camera on *El Cid* only), then raises it in triumph before his King (close-up of the blood on the sword), to the cheers of the throng.

El Cid builds up to one of Heston's greatest scenes. Having been virtually exiled, he has now been recalled as commander of the fortress of Valencia, which is under siege by the bloodthirsty Moslem general, Ben Yussuff (Herbert Lom). The two most spectacular shots of this epic frame the climactic siege. In the first, Mann, making the most of the widescreen, directs the long line of Ben Yussuff's horde galloping along the beach toward the fortress, their torches aflame against the black night. In the second shot, *El Cid*, now mortally wounded but refusing to let his army know, lest they lose heart, has himself tied to his white steed so that he can inspire his forces to victory. He then leads them out of their fortress against the enemy, galloping along the beach and, poetically, passing into legend. *El Cid* has lost his life liberating his country and saving his religion. His King, who once had selfishly banished him, is now lying on his knees in humble repentance and thanks.



Alas, this kind of grand filmmaking (complemented by Miklos Rosza's mighty musical score) is no more. Told on a massive canvas of spectacle by Anthony Mann, once again it required an actor with Heston's screen presence.

Mann was one of the leading directors of film noir crime dramas in the late 1940s (e.g., *Raw Deal* (1948) and *He Walked by Night* (1948), the latter mostly directed by Mann although "signed" by another). He also directed many of the best Westerns of the 1950's, six with James Stewart (e.g. *The Naked Spur* (1953) and *The Far Country* (1954)). *El Cid* gave him a much bigger canvas on which to work, and it is exciting to see his artistry really blossom. In the jousting scene above, as in all the superbly staged mayhem of his earlier films, Mann creates grim, but still suggestive, images of bloodshed—and, unlike so many contemporary films, in pursuit of a higher dramatic purpose. Indeed, Mann was one manly, muscular director. He brings a true magnificence to this film from the first scene: the "bin Laden" character, Ben Yussuff, blood virtually filling his eyes, stands against a hellish black sunset vowing holy war against the infidel Spanish Christians. Yet Mann also brilliantly manages the delicacy of *El Cid*'s final ride into legend – we do not have to see him die to understand what has happened. Mann's typically stunning, taut compositions, his always spectacular use of landscape, and his rugged but subtle handling of violence applied to this epic subject on a huge

screen, make *El Cid* unsurpassed among the epics of the late fifties and early sixties. Viewers watching these Heston films at home should remember they were made for big screens in big theaters (and I don't mean the Multiplex); seen at home, their impact is miniaturized.

Just as *The Ten Commandments* cannot be discussed without the parting of the Red Sea, Heston's career cannot be discussed without the chariot race in *Ben-Hur* (1959), still widely praised as the greatest action sequence in the history of movies. (The famous stunt director Yakima Canutt directed this sequence as well as the jousting battle in *El Cid*.) And Heston, ever the hero, actually drove his chariot with its team of four gleaming white Arabian horses in part of the sequence. Again he demonstrates his range of emotion when he turns round in his chariot to see, with some foreboding, his bitter rival and former friend, the Roman Messala (Stephen Boyd) crushed beneath the hooves of the other horses, his chariot having overturned. Heston further shows his vulnerable side in the scene shortly after the race, when he finds his mother (Martha Scott again) and sister (Cathy O'Donnell), whom he had thought dead, condemned in the lepers' colony. Desperate to greet them outside the cave where they live, he is told they do not want him to know they are alive. He is torn apart in anguish, when suddenly Jesus appears, bearing the cross. Shocked, he recognizes the man who had offered him water years before, when he had just been arrested by the Romans and, shackled, was dying of thirst on his death march. "I know this man," he whispers in wonder. Hearing his mother say someone must help this man, Ben-Hur follows Jesus.

Heston won his Academy Award as best actor for *Ben-Hur*, the first film to win eleven Academy Awards and which saved M-G-M from bankruptcy at the time. But I think the film is too long (the silent 1926 version is more compact, but with a good chariot race and a real sea battle). And the renowned director William Wyler's feel for spectacle is a bit stiff next to Mann's more spontaneous direction, not to mention DeMille's personal style.

No movie star played more historical figures than Heston. He played Andrew Jackson twice, Buffalo Bill, William Clark (of Rogers and Clark fame), Jefferson, John the Baptist, General Charles G. "Chinese" Gordon, Michaelangelo, Marc Antony (twice), Cardinal Richelieu (twice), Henry VIII, Sir Thomas More, Brigham Young – and Sherlock Holmes.

In *Khartoum* (1966) Heston plays Gordon, the British officer who earlier had suppressed the Arab slave trade in the Sudan, and who was sent in 1884 by his government to evacuate Khartoum in the face of a regional uprising led by the bin-Laden of the day, the Mahdi (played in dark skin by the inimitable Laurence Olivier). Gordon was a Christian mystic as well as an inspiring officer, and Heston once again is cast as the sensitive hero. In the climax, Gordon, calmly standing up to his fate, knowing a better world awaits him, is killed by the invading horde as Khartoum is overrun, the Gladstone government having dithered before sending a relief army too late.

Heston's other historical films of this period have their admirers. He helps defend the European compound besieged by the Chinese Boxers in 1900 in *55 Days at Peking* (1963), paints the Sistine Chapel as Michaelangelo while fending off the meddling Pope (Rex Harrison) in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965), and plays a Norman knight in *The War Lord* (1965). He also enjoyed one of his most rugged roles leading a cavalry raid into French-occupied Mexico in Sam Peckinpah's *Major Dundee* (1965). Earlier, Heston's other big Western role was as the rough and tough ranch foreman Steve Leech, jealous of Carroll Baker's attentions to Eastern dude Gregory Peck, in *The Big Country* (1958), directed by William Wyler. His other good films from the late fifties are *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1959), opposite Gary Cooper, and the film noir *Touch of Evil* (1958), cast against type as a Mexican investigator, Vargas, trying to uncover a narcotics smuggling ring run by corrupt American cop, played by the rotund Orson Welles, who also directed.

Heston's career in historical epics ended with the genre's demise by the later 1960's. His last really good film was *Planet of the Apes* (1968), the picture with the stunning final shot. He appeared in the new genre of elegiac Westerns as a down-and-out cowpoke defending a fatherless family in *Will Penny* (1968); reportedly, this was his favorite role. Still only in his late forties as the decade of the seventies opened, Heston found that the heroic, serious characters he was born to play in movies

with ambitious production values were becoming extinct. Particularly after *Soylent Green* (1973) and *The Three Musketeers* (1973), in which he plays the character part of Richelieu, his movie career gradually wound down over the next three decades. He did some theater and more television; in addition to well-known political work, he was so active in charities that in 1978 his peers in the Motion Picture Academy bestowed on him the prestigious Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award.

Charlton Heston was one of the last larger than life male stars, a heroic figure in grand, ambitious films that uplifted their audiences. (Kirk Douglas, age 91, is the last surviving male star of that period.) Like most of them, his characterizations may have been as much his personality as his acting, but he leaves an indelible legacy of roles and images that will inspire future generations. Of what stars today can that be written?

Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline On Line's media critic.

**E-mail the
Editor**

New Counter Culture

by L. Brent Bozell III

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

Washington Post writer Linton Weeks recently wrote a fascinating big-picture essay about the long, sad decline of sincerity and sentiment in America, symbolized by the public loathing of the 1975 Morris Albert pop song "Feelings." It wasn't merely the whoa-whoa-whoa chorus that drove the criticism, he suggested, but the mere act of the singer putting the heart on the proverbial sleeve that became phony, cheesy, hopelessly square.

It's been said before that we live in an age of irony, and irreverence is king. But Weeks added the irresistible term "Snark Ages" to characterize it: "The revolt against sincerity -- the Snark Ages, still upon us -- began as a rebellion against corny, over-the-top displays of emotion in movies, songs, TV shows. But the rebellion spiraled out of control, and any public expression of emotion, no matter how sincere, was a target for mockery. Old war movies and romantic dramas, taken seriously the first time around, were consumed by a younger generation as farce -- as 'camp.'"



Brent Bozell

That's all true. But 1975 is a little late to mark the beginning of a revolt against sincerity. The revolt began with the arrival of a "counterculture" that bloomed in the "Question Authority" 1960s. "Question Sincerity" could have been one of their buttons, but the revolt didn't speak to that directly. The leaders of the counterculture mocked everything their parents had been and all they had done. These enlightened people proclaimed themselves as the sincere ones, the opponents of plastic patriotism and flannel-suit conformity.

The Beatles sang "All You Need Is Love," but the counterculture thought love was overrated, especially if it meant long-term attachments, like marital fidelity. Love was a "groovy" feeling, but it had to be "free," which often meant it was best carried out in a long series of "random acts of kindness" with a string of strangers. The counter-culturalists professed to be apostles of love, but counseled self-absorption in narcotic highs. Timothy Leary advised "Tune out, turn on, drop out." He told his devotees to seek detachment from troublesome "involuntary" commitments and find happiness in "mobility, choice, and change." Sincerity in love doesn't happen without commitment, and it doesn't merge well with an ardent desire to seek mobility and change.

Even today, the counter-culturalists, now aging academics holed up in university English departments, see sentiment as an enemy. Weeks cited Temple's Joan Mellen, who demeaned sentiment as "friend to the status quo, and to passivity. A formidable enemy, of moral no less than of artistic integrity, in art as in life, in these beleaguered times it is best quickly identified, and then scrupulously avoided."

Hollywood's most influential cultural commissars also live by this code. They would claim to be the champions of authenticity, but in their endless attempts to persuade us through their "art," they often suggest that nothing is authentic on its face, that no one can be trusted and everyone deep down is a phony, living a lie. I'm not talking merely about the manufacturers of movies and television shows and music, but about the critics who constantly proclaim for the whole country what is the best in art, and the award-show managers that now slavishly follow what the critics pronounce.

Insincerity is also rampant in Manhattan, in national magazine publishing. There is no greater irony than Kurt Andersen, one of the founders of a Snark Ages trendsetter, *Spy* magazine, to proclaim to Weeks that "If someone were to look at 2008 culture from 1963, I suppose it would look strangely unsentimental." How priceless. Watch as the polluter looks out on his black oil spill of mockery and decides it isn't all good.

Weeks turned to experts who suggested that sentiment is strangled in our private lives as well. Dacher Keltner, a psychology professor at the University of California, theorized that the culture "has lost the capacity to be nice, to appreciate, to be modest, and even to be reverential -- all relatives of the appreciation family of emotions." Keltner added the theory that we spend more and more time with strangers than family and old friends, people who spur us to occasions he called "deep niceness."

But Weeks protested that people are still sentimental in their private lives, that they still say "I love you" to each other, they still send flowers and greeting cards, they still cry at funerals and at tear-jerker movies. Of course they do. We have not lost the ability to love and revere and be sincere. There are still songs and shows that reflect that feeling. They're just dismissed as hopelessly cheesy and square.

Throughout our lives, we privately resist the Snark Ages peer pressure of popular culture. Even today's young people can learn to reject it. Call it rebelling against the rebellion. Who's the counter-culture now?

Mr. Bozell is president of the Media Research Institute

**E-mail the
Editor**

Bordertown Confusion

by Thomas Sipos

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Hundreds (some say thousands) of women have been murdered in the Mexican town of Juarez over the years. Their raped and mutilated corpses scatter the desert. This is not fiction. The "women of Juarez" are real. Their murders continue to this day.

Who murdered them? NAFTA!

That's according to [Bordertown](#), a Hollywood "message movie" [now available on DVD](#). It tries to be entertaining as it preaches—and mostly succeeds. The movie's politics are so confused that libertarians, anarchists, feminists, Marxists, paleoconservatives, anti-globalists, and Gibby the cat should all find something to cheer.



The film has a typical "message movie" structure: an Earnest Outsider investigates an Important Issue, educating the audience along the way.

In this case, Jennifer Lopez is a Chicago reporter assigned to cover the Juarez murders. Her editor (Martin Sheen) rattles off statistics, sounding less like a jaded journalist than an activist/actor lecturing to the audience—perhaps because that is precisely what he is.

Lopez's character dislikes the assignment because Mexico is a career dead-end. But after she relents, she reconnects with her Mexican roots, discarding her blond hair dye to accept her authentically black tresses.

The intrepid reporter learns that Juarez, just across the Texas border, is a creation of NAFTA. It is a town full of maquiladoras, factories that assemble TVs and computers for the U.S. market. Maquiladoras exist all along the Mexican side of the border.

How are they to blame for the murders of women?

It's complicated.

[Bordertown](#) informs us that maquiladoras "hire mainly young women because they work for lower wages and complain less about the long hours and harsh working conditions. Most maquiladoras operate 24 hours a day. Many women are attacked while traveling to and from work in the late night and early morning. The companies provide no security for the workers."

You see, factories are responsible for workers' safety, not only on the job, but while they're commuting. (And perhaps at home, too?)

Yet there are libertarian nuggets in this film. By morally obligating businesses to protect their workers offsite, this film admits that the state has failed in its core duty. And [Bordertown](#) pulls no punches in this regard—its corrupt Mexican police not only fail to protect, they also cover up murders and frame innocent suspects.

So much for relying on the government—these women need guns! Yet when Lopez enters a dangerous situation undercover, she arms herself . . . with rocks. I'm not making this up!

[Bordertown](#) offers other libertarian insights. One rape victim/factory worker (Mexican actress Maya Zapata) says she'd rather live on her farm but the government keeps raising taxes to push people off their land, pressuring them to accept low-wage jobs out of desperation:

We cannot pay the taxes, so they tell us, go to the border and work in the maquiladora. Make money to keep your land. But there is no money here. The government and the factories take everything. All the money is for them. For us, nothing.

Actually, she gets \$5 a day, so when she says she gets "nothing," she presumably means wages are so low that she can't pay her taxes. And these taxes are clearly raised not for revenue (people can't pay them), but to create cheap labor. Thus does the government collude with business—perhaps for kickbacks.

Marxists call this *market exploitation*, but the rest of us will recognize it as *market distortion*.

The film also condemns the U.S. government, for not mandating worker protections in NAFTA. Lopez's character writes in her news story,

The screams of the women of Juarez are silent because no one will listen. Not the giant corporations who make their profits from the labor of these women. Not the governments of Mexico and the U.S. who benefit from the free trade agreement. All the evidence points to the fact that there are many killers. A whole culture of murder that gets worse the more it's denied and covered up. Covering it up is less expensive than protecting these women. Everything is about the bottom line. And so the death toll mounts.

She is right about there being many killers. "You want to kill a woman for any reason, you come to Juarez," a local journalist tells her.

Juarez is a bad town. Most slums are. And police rarely expend resources on poor victims. But this is an old story. It has nothing to do with NAFTA.

A U.S. Senator and the newspaper's corporate owner pressure Sheen's character to kill the story. They want to expand NAFTA to Central America, and they don't want bad press. Sheen's character tells Lopez's reporter that corporate America's news agenda is "free trade, globalization, and entertainment." Lopez's character snaps, "It isn't free trade. It's slave trade. It's a goddamn scam."

She means low wages and no police protection, yet she inadvertently makes a good point. The late Libertarian Party presidential candidate Harry Browne opposed NAFTA, as a form of managed trade (i.e., a scam), saying, "Free trade cannot be achieved through committee negotiations and lengthy regulations."

A Mexican industrialist tells the reporter, "I buy politicians on both sides of the border." Thus state and industry collaborate in [Bordertown](#). Marxists see this as global capitalism, but libertarians recognize it as statist corporatism, also known as economic fascism.

I recommend this DVD. It highlights important issues. The women of Juarez are real and deserve attention, irrespective of [Bordertown](#)'s confused politics.

Thomas M. Sipos is editor of California Freedom, the newspaper of the Libertarian Party of California. His bio and contact info are available [here](#). This first appeared in The American Culture.

**E-mail the
Editor**

State Control Children?

by Renny Hartmann

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

The Lefty Coast judicial system is attacking parents again by recently ruling that students may only be taught by "credentialed teachers." That's National Education and other union-speak for "No home schooling"—unless the parents happen to be certified public school teachers.

Interestingly, many private school teachers are not credentialed in any way and yet are perfectly capable of being hired, paid, and given rule over classrooms outside the state's particular vetting system.

This wisdom was produced by one Honorable H. Walter Croskey, an associate justice of the California Court of Appeals, 2nd District, Los Angeles and Ventura. He ruled on February 28, 2008, that all young persons six to eighteen in the State of California may only be instructed by those with a "teaching degree." Using a 1953 law under the Education Code that concerns mandatory school attendance (instituted in California in 1913), Croskey decided the State meant "parents do not have the right to home school their children."

Although State Superintendent of Schools, Jack O'Connell, assured, "...parents still have the right to home school their children" and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced what the courts do not resolve, his legislature will, 166,000 children could be directly affected by the decision. This judicial fiat fits well with a pattern in California of relegating parents to the back of the education bus.

In 2005, the US Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled in the case *Fields v Palmdale* that parents have no right to opt out of sex surveys, and Circuit Court Judge Rheinhardt and his colleagues, Judge Sidney R. Thomas and Senior Judge Donald Lay, said, "...there is no fundamental right of parents to be the exclusive provider regarding sexual matters to their children." Additionally, these justices proclaimed, "We also hold that parents have no due process or privacy rights to override the determination of public schools as to the information to which their students will be exposed while enrolled as students."

As a current college adjunct professor and retired public school teacher of 33 years, I find those last words more than chilling, because I know that much taught in any public school isn't worthy of a pinch of salt let alone the subjugation of enforced attendance on the vast population of children. Not only did I teach for decades with former anti-Vietnam War protestors who spent incalculable time indoctrinating their "students" with a virulent anti-Americanism but also I was all too often exposed to the faddism and anti-educational inanities like Whole Language and Math Education for Thinking (finally given up by the Math Teachers Council in September, 2006) that actually taught students to be stupid. They couldn't learn to read or compute from the popular methods espoused by liberal educators who are always looking for some cheap trick to make the tough work of education easy.

Now courts are telling parents and teachers that public schools are monolithically the first and last resort of information for children. The experts who will determine this body of knowledge are often "credentialed professionals" who graduate college with a C+ college average that allows them to become certified teachers: New Jersey permits such nonsense. It is only with gargantuan grade inflation that Stanford and Harvard could report up to 72 percent of students' receiving A's. Who are these people with such low skills that they deserved only a C average? These are the people Judge Croskey and his cohorts on the Ninth District Court of Appeals decree will provide all content for a child's education without concern or resort to parental rights or inputs.



Perhaps as the state closest to falling off the continent, California often offers a stark vision of the future, but other states and courts are also assiduously working to lessen parents' rights and separate children from them legally and socially. In New Jersey, twelve-year-old girls can have abortions without parental knowledge, although these children may have allergies to medications or chronic conditions of which they are not fully aware. The American Civil Liberties Union's opinion on parental notification is "Mandating parent involvement jeopardizes teenagers' health"; as if concern for one's twelve year old undergoing major surgery with anesthetic and risks of disability or even death were some cruel abuse only parents would inflict on their captive children.

Sometimes this liberal system of laws controlling minor children being constructed court by court and legislature by legislature seems, as the president of the Family Research Council, Tony Perkins, said, to come from people who have "never been parent to a seven year old." Or even from people who have never reached seven years of age themselves.

Renny Hartmann is an adjunct college professor in New Jersey.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Real Health Forecast

by John Goodman

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Today I'm going to let you in on a little secret about forecasting health care costs: All the forecasters cheat. Cheat? Yes, cheat.

There is nothing underhanded about it. For people who read footnotes and appendices, the information is all there. But for ordinary mortals, the projections you see are not what you think they are.

But let's back up. Why do you even care about forecasts of future health care spending? The rational reasons are: (1) to figure out what path we are currently on, (2) to decide whether the path is acceptable, and (3) if it is not acceptable, to figure out how to get off of it.



John Goodman

Turns out, however, that the estimators at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Social Security/Medicare Trustees have already done tasks (1) and (2) and decided that the future is so terribly awful, they cannot possibly wait for you or anyone else to do task number (3).

So what we get out of these agencies is not a real projection of the past into the future but one that has been tempered by ...the hope? ...the wish? ...the refusal to accept reality? ...or the fanciful belief that somehow, somewhere, in some totally unexplained way we will ...we must ...we have to ...get off the path we are on.

For example, the Medicare Trustees, after acknowledging that health spending has been growing at a rate that is 2 to 3 percentage points above GDP growth, assume that the growth rate will decline to the GDP growth rate over the next 75 years. The CBO, after acknowledging that health care spending per capita has been growing at a rate that is 2.1 percentage points faster than GDP per capita for the past 30 years, assumes much slower rates of growth for Medicare and Medicaid beginning in 2018 and thereafter.

Will those changes occur? Maybe. Maybe not. It still begs the question: What path are we really on?

Note: even after tempering, all the projections are bad. However, a new CBO

[http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/87xx/doc8758/11-13-LT-Health .pdf](http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/87xx/doc8758/11-13-LT-Health.pdf) contains an untempered projection that implies that:

- Within the next 50 years, by the time today's teenagers reach the retirement age, health care spending will crowd out every other program of the federal government.
- Well before that occurs, Medicaid spending at the state level will crowd out every other function of state government.

To avoid this unpleasant outcome and keep all other programs in place, we will have to double the size of government! A previous http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/82xx/doc8295/07-09-Financing_Spending.pdf estimates the needed tax rates at 66% for middle-income families and 92% for high-income families - assuming no increase in taxpayer resistance.

That is the path we are on. We will not get off of it with pen and ink. We will get off of it only with real reform. Sorry if I ruined your day.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

European Postal Model

by Don Soifer

Issue 106 -April 23, 2008

The U.S. Postal Service has announced that it will raise its prices again on May 12, after losing \$5 billion last year. This represents the second rate hike in as many years. It's also a step toward the annual price increases the agency has predicted since it was granted greater financial autonomy at the end of 2006.

Instead of trying to cope with rising costs simply by increasing prices on captive consumers each year, however, USPS could take a few pointers from its peers across the Atlantic. European posts are in the midst of an historic -- and potentially consumer-friendly -- movement toward postal "liberalization."

But American policymakers should learn as well from Europe's mistakes, for liberalization across the Atlantic has not been as complete as it could be.

Late last year, at a meeting in Luxembourg, the European Union resolved to open the last area of the protected mail market -- items under 50 grams -- to competition from private and foreign firms by 2011. Germany, the world's third-largest economy, completely opened up its postal markets to competition.

These market reforms are no small matter -- the EU's postal sector accounts for \$125 billion of economic activity.

But there continue to be detours in the necessary march toward a truly open market. In both the United States and Europe, postal labor unions fight fiercely against open markets and other cost-cutting measures, such as outsourcing of postal services, that would likely bring substantial benefits for consumers.

Germany's liberalization has been tainted by last-minute anti-competitive measures. In late December, just days before German postal markets were opened to competition, the German parliament approved the introduction of a Deutsche Post-defined minimum wage which all postal operators must pay. The law will inhibit private companies -- notably Dutch rival TNT Post and the German PIN Group -- from delivering mail in Germany at lower costs.

Deutsche Post already enjoys other advantages, including a value-added tax (VAT) exemption on letter stamps.

The Netherlands responded by indefinitely postponing the liberalization of its postal market, which had been slated to be opened up on Jan. 1. Recent acquisitions have made Deutsche Post the largest private mail provider in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, the 2011 target date for EU liberalization actually represents a two-year delay from its most recent goal. For 11 member states, an additional two-year extension has been authorized, pushing their liberalization deadline to 2013.

The official effort led by the European Commission (EC) is therefore admirable, but postponing liberalization is ultimately every bit as anti-consumer as the USPS's proposed rate hikes.

Indeed, consumers have much to gain from a liberalized postal marketplace. A 2005 study by Ecorys Research and Consulting suggested that full liberalization would cut prices by 20-25 percent while improving service for consumers.



Some policymakers in Europe are getting the message. A number of countries, including Britain, Finland, and Sweden, have already opened their postal markets completely to competition (i.e., for letters weighing less than 50 grams) or privatized former state monopolies.

But state-owned Swedish Posten and British Royal Mail, for instance, still deliver 90 percent of their countries' mail, with only a few significant competitors.

To be fair, progress will take time, as private companies work to build the infrastructure necessary to provide increased services. In order to facilitate the growth of competition, governments must be vigilant in ensuring that existing monopolies are not leveraged at consumers' expense.

By acquiring companies like DHL and Airborne Express, Deutsche Post has expanded ambitiously abroad since privatization. Some critics maintain that Germany's monopoly consumers have subsidized such aggressive ventures into foreign markets, and in 2002 the EC levied substantial fines against Deutsche Post for such behavior.

Despite bumps in the road, Europe's postal liberalization has real potential to deliver for consumers. The example is instructive for postal leaders in America, where labor unions are relentlessly fighting against efforts by Postal Service management to cut costs.

Instead of avoiding real reform by consistently raising prices for ordinary consumers, the United States ought to look to Europe for inspiration in finding ways to adapt to the rigors of a changed postal market.

Don Soifer is Executive Director of the U.S. Consumer Postal Council, www.postalconsumers.org.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Islam and Democracy

by Daniel Pipes

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

There's an impression that Muslims suffer disproportionately from the rule of dictators, tyrants, unelected presidents, kings, emirs, and various other strongmen – and it's accurate. A careful analysis by Frederic L. Pryor of Swarthmore College in the *Middle East Quarterly* ("[Are Muslim Countries Less Democratic?](#)") concludes that "In all but the poorest countries, Islam is associated with fewer political rights."

The fact that majority-Muslim countries are less democratic makes it tempting to conclude that the religion of Islam, their common factor, is itself incompatible with democracy.

I disagree with that conclusion. Today's Muslim predicament, rather, reflects historical circumstances more than innate features of Islam. Put differently, Islam, like all pre-modern religions is undemocratic in spirit. No less than the others, however, it has the potential to evolve in a democratic direction.

Such evolution is not easy for any religion. In the Christian case, the battle to limit the Catholic Church's political role lasted painfully long. If the transition began when Marsiglio of Padua published *Defensor pacis* in the year 1324, it took another six centuries for the Church fully to reconcile itself to democracy. Why should Islam's transition be smoother or easier?

To render Islam consistent with democratic ways will require profound changes in its interpretation. For example, the anti-democratic law of Islam, the Shari'a, lies at the core of the problem. Developed over a millennium ago, it presumes autocratic rulers and submissive subjects, emphasizes God's will over popular sovereignty, and encourages violent jihad to expand Islam's borders. Further, it anti-democratically privileges Muslims over non-Muslims, males over females, and free persons over slaves.

For Muslims to build fully functioning democracies, they basically must reject the Shari'a's public aspects. Atatürk frontally did just that in Turkey, but others have offered more subtle approaches. Mahmud Muhammad Taha, a Sudanese thinker, dispatched the public Islamic laws by fundamentally reinterpreting the Koran.

Atatürk's efforts and Taha's ideas imply that Islam is ever-evolving, and that to see it as unchanging is a grave mistake. Or, in the lively metaphor of [Hassan Hanafi](#), professor of philosophy at the University of Cairo, the Koran "is a supermarket, where one takes what one wants and leaves what one doesn't want."

Islam's problem is less its being *anti*-modern than that its process of modernization has hardly begun. Muslims can modernize their religion, but that requires major changes: Out go waging jihad to impose Muslim rule, second-class citizenship for non-Muslims, and death sentences for blasphemy or apostasy. In come individual freedoms, civil rights, political participation, popular sovereignty, equality before the law, and representative elections.

Two obstacles stand in the way of these changes, however. In the Middle East especially, [tribal affiliations](#) remain of paramount importance. As explained by Philip Carl Salzman in his recent book, [Culture and Conflict in the Middle East](#), these ties create a complex pattern of tribal autonomy and tyrannical centralism that obstructs the development of constitutionalism, the rule of law, citizenship, gender equality, and the other prerequisites of a democratic state. Not until this archaic social system based on the family is dispatched can democracy make real headway in the Middle East.



Daniel Pipes

Globally, the compelling and powerful Islamist movement obstructs democracy. It seeks the opposite of reform and modernization – namely, the reassertion of the Shari`a in its entirety. A jihadist like Osama bin Laden may spell out this goal more explicitly than an establishment politician like Turkey's Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, but both seek to create a thoroughly anti-democratic, if not totalitarian, order.

Islamists respond two ways to democracy. First, they denounce it as [un-Islamic](#). Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al-Banna considered democracy a betrayal of Islamic values. Brotherhood theoretician Sayyid Qutb rejected popular sovereignty, as did Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi, founder of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami political party. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Al-Jazeera television's imam, argues that elections are heretical.

Despite this scorn, Islamists are eager to use elections to attain power, and have proven themselves to be agile vote-getters; even a terrorist organization (Hamas) has won an election. This record does not render the Islamists democratic but indicates their tactical flexibility and their determination to gain power. As [Erdoğan](#) has revealingly explained, "Democracy is like a streetcar. When you come to your stop, you get off."

Hard work can one day make Islam democratic. In the meanwhile, Islamism represents the world's leading anti-democratic force.

Mr. Pipes (www.DanielPipes.org) is director of the Middle East Forum and the Taube/Diller Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University. © All rights reserved by Daniel Pipes.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Ethanol Kills Wildlife

by Dennis Avery

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

This is the worst moment in history to demand billions of gallons of biofuels from our farms.

I told the Sustainable Agriculture students at Iowa State University last week, "Human numbers are still expanding rapidly. With more people and higher incomes, we'd need to double farm output by 2050 even without biofuels. . . . Food needs will stabilize and then decline after 2050, but any wildlife species crowded off the planet by the huge land requirements of biofuels in the next 40 years will be gone forever."



Dennis T. Avery

Unfortunately, at least three-fourths of the world's wild species are in the warm tropics where we're now going to grow millions of acres of sugar cane for ethanol and put in huge palm oil plantations for biodiesel.

I told my Iowa audience, "the Great Plains where we sit today had 60 million bison, 100 million antelope, prairie dogs and an interesting set of grasses. That isn't many species, and those species have not gone extinct. But biofuels threaten thousands of species. Sugar cane takes less land per gallon of ethanol produced, but it's produced on tropic lands with much more biodiversity than the Great Plains. Indonesia sits at the juncture of two incredibly species-rich ecosystems, yet we're clearing it for biodiesel. Every bit of poor-quality land we sacrifice for biofuels carries far more species risk than growing high yields on high-quality land with pesticides, fertilizers and biotech seeds."

Meanwhile, burning those biofuels worsens the greenhouse gas problem. Two new studies in the journal *Science* (*T.* (Searchinger, 319:1238-40 and J. Fargione, 319: 1235-1238) point out that if the biofuels are grown on land converted from forest or grasses, the stored soil carbon gasses off into the air as CO₂.

As a result, I explained, corn ethanol is twice as bad for global warming as burning gasoline or diesel. And we are already using virtually all of the world's good farmland to produce food and feed. Essentially, all of the cropland for biofuels will have to come from clearing forests, plowing grasslands, or draining wetlands. This is ecologically criminal.

Biofuels also threaten the whole future of the sustainable farming movement. A world in which food prices have tripled, in which the World Food Program can't afford to buy food for the famine-stricken, in which the orangutans and the Sumatran tiger are being displaced from their tropical forests to grow biodiesel—this is not a world asking how to grow low-yield crops without pesticides. This is a world that wants higher crop yields.

Why did no one warn us about releasing the soil carbon before President Bush and the European Commission installed their mandates for huge amounts of corn ethanol and palm-oil-based biodiesel? Would the biofuel plants have been built if the Greens and the press had told us the whole truth? And for that matter, why did the governments allow themselves to be pressured into this black hole of higher food prices, lost forests, slaughtered endangered species?

The Consumer Federation of America claims that biofuels are lowering gasoline prices, but oil still costs close to \$100 per barrel. We've tripled the world price of grain in the past two years without making any dent in gasoline prices. When we rule out coal and nuclear energy, (thanks to the Greens) we automatically make gasoline impossibly expensive.

Corn ethanol is showing itself to be a massive error. Now how will the governments get out of the mandate before world wildlife disappears for all time?

Dennis T. Avery is a senior fellow for the Hudson Institute in Washington, DC and is the Director for the Center for Global Food Issues. (www.cgfi.org) He was formerly a senior analyst for the Department of State. He is co-author, with S. Fred Singer, of Unstoppable Global Warming Every 1500 Hundred Years

**E-mail the
Editor**

Man Who Fed the World

by Paul Driessen

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

During the "Eat This" segment of their docu-comedy series *BS*, Penn Jillette beat Teller in a round of their "Greatest Person in History" card game. Penn needed just one card: Norman Borlaug.

This Iowa farm boy and University of Minnesota agriculture graduate lived Thomas Edison's maxim to the fullest. "Invention," Edison once remarked, "is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." Dr. Borlaug did most of his 99% in the sweltering fields of Africa, India, Mexico and Pakistan.

At 94, and despite having cancer, the "Father of the Green Revolution" is still "an Energizer Bunny," his daughter Jeanie says. He serves as a consultant, attends occasional conferences, and graciously let my daughter interview him for a high school paper.



Paul Driessen

Decades ago, while neo-Malthusians were predicting mass famine, Borlaug used Rockefeller Foundation grants to unlock hidden (recessive) genes and crossbreed different wheat strains, to create new "dwarf" varieties that were resistant to destructive "rust" fungi. The shorter plants were also sturdier, put less energy into growing leaves and stalks, and thus had higher yields.

He also taught modern farming methods to Third World farmers and persuaded governments to lift price controls and permit the use of chemical fertilizers, thereby generating unprecedented harvests. Mexico became self-sufficient in wheat by 1960, India and Pakistan soon did likewise, and Borlaug next helped China, Indonesia, the Philippines and other countries achieve great success with wheat, corn and rice.

When the Nobel committee awarded him the 1970 Peace Prize, it said his work had saved a billion lives. Borlaug simply observed that "you can't build a peaceful world on empty stomachs and human misery." He later won the Presidential Medal of Freedom and Congressional Gold Medal.

In 1985, he began working with former President Jimmy Carter to bring a Green Revolution to Sub-Saharan Africa, emphasizing intensive modern farming methods with new hybrid and biotech seeds on existing fields, to reduce the need to slash and burn wildlife habitat, as soil nutrients are exhausted.

Unfortunately, their progress may be undermined by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and his misleadingly named Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. Annan says biotech crops are unsafe, untested, and likely to enslave poor farmers to mega-corporations and expensive seeds. He wants to battle Africa's chronic poverty and malnutrition with "traditional seeds" and methods.

Dr. Borlaug fears that would be a devastating failure. As he said during a 2005 biotechnology conference, sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality at the United Nations, he sees no way the world can feed its hungry population without genetically engineered (GE) crops, especially if it relies more on biofuels.

He has little patience for "well-fed utopians who live on Cloud Nine but come into the Third World to cause all kinds of negative impacts," by scaring people and blocking the use of biotechnology. These callous activists even persuaded Zambia to let people starve, rather than let them eat biotech corn donated by the USA. They also oppose insecticides to combat malaria – and fossil fuels, hydroelectric dams and nuclear power to generate abundant, reliable, affordable electricity for poor nations.

"Our planet has 6.5 billion people," says Borlaug. "By all means, use manure. You can't let it sit around. But if we use only organic fertilizers and methods on existing farmland, we can only feed 4 billion. I don't see 2.5 billion people volunteering to disappear." To feed everyone with organic and traditional farming, we would have to plow millions of acres of forests and other wildlife habitat, he calculates. If, instead, we continue to use commercial fertilizer and hybrids, and have strong public support for both biotech and traditional research, "the Earth can provide sufficient food for 10 billion people."

Producing 7 billion gallons of ethanol in 2007 required corn grown on an area the size of Indiana – plus vast amounts of water, insecticides, fertilizers and petroleum. It's a primary reason World Food Program operating costs rose 40% since June 2007, forcing the WFP to ration food aid, and millions to go to bed hungry. That is unsustainable – morally, economically and ecologically.

Biotech crops have higher yields; provide enhanced nutrition; are more resistant to insects, fungi and disease; and require less water and insecticides. New varieties are being developed that grow better in drought and flood conditions, and even supply vaccines and anti-diarrhea nutrients (as in Ventria Bioscience's GE-rice-based oral rehydration solution). Ongoing research will ensure that genes that once protected crop plants will be replaced by new ones, as plant pathogens continue mutating.

Genetically engineered crops are more stringently regulated and tested than any others – unnecessarily so, say many scientists. Americans have eaten well over a trillion servings of food containing genetically engineered ingredients, without a single instance of harm to people or habitats, notes former FDA biotech director Henry Miller – whereas organic spinach sickened and killed a number of people in 2007.

Biotechnology actually frees poor farmers from the shackles of Nature's destructive forces. They pay more for seeds, but less for insecticides and water, get higher yields and make more money. South African farmers who've switched to GE crops attest to this.

Elizabeth Ajele: "The old plants would be destroyed by insects, but not the new biotech plants. With the profits I get from the new Bt maize (corn), I can grow onions, spinach and tomatoes, and sell them for extra money to buy fertilizer. We were struggling to keep hunger out of our house. Now the future looks good. If someone came and said we should stop using the new maize, I would cry."

Richard Sithole: "With the old maize, I got 100 bags from my 15 hectares. With Bt maize I get 1,000."

Thandi Myeni: "The new Bt cotton means I only spray two times, instead of six. At the end of the day, we know the crop won't be destroyed and we will have a harvest and money."

Bethuel Gumede: "By planting the new Bt cotton on my six hectares [15 acres], I was able to build a house and give it a solar panel. I also bought a TV and fridge. My wife can buy healthy food and we can afford to send the kids to school."

Farmers in Brazil, China, India, the Philippines and other countries share similar stories.

His accomplishments have made Norman Borlaug a household name in parts of Africa, though not in America. That's partly because he did most of his work overseas. But it also reflects the fact that his favorable views on chemical fertilizers and biotechnology put him at odds with environmentalists and journalists who don't share his perspectives on these issues.

Leon Hesser's fascinating and inspiring account of Dr. Borlaug's life and successes may finally bring him the fame he deserves. "The Man Who Fed the World" does what I've always loved about biographies: it shows how one person can change the world. Now out in paperback, the book will

ensure that Norman Borlaug's incredible legacy will live on – as will the billion-plus people whose lives he saved.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Congress of Racial Equality and Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, and author of Eco-Imperialism: Green power · Black death.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Importance of Platforms

by David Keene

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

Karl Rove recently suggested that, "Party platforms were once the most important statement of the presidential campaign. No more." He went on, however, to warn that candidates should realize that unimportant as they may be, "they can still get you in trouble with your own party, or with the public."

They can indeed, but I'm not quite as sure as Karl that they aren't important, even in this day of candidate-centric rather than party-centric politics. I would certainly recommend that anyone interested in the power of the various factions within either party pay attention to the platform to see who's on top ... and who isn't.



David Keene

Those within the party who are as committed to policy as to their candidates look to the platform as a way of laying out what they can expect should their candidate win, and research shows that in recent decades they can reasonably expect that something like 80 percent of the pledges made in party platforms will be implemented by a successful candidate.

That's not because the winning candidate uses the platform as a guide, but because in most cases the platform reflects the desires of those who do the nominating and electing and because the final product generally reflects the nominee's views as well.

Back in 1984, then-Sen. Trent Lott (Miss.) chaired the GOP platform committee with John Bolton as his executive director. The two of them made it clear from the beginning that not even an incumbent president they admired should be able to dictate the terms of the platform.

They believed that the platform should be a manifesto of the party's goals and principles rather than the sort of catalog of administration accomplishments and program proposals that have made most recent State of the Union speeches so incredibly boring and meaningless. They fought with Reagan White House functionaries who shouldn't have worried during the drafting, because Ronald Reagan was in almost complete sync with his party — and the platform it drafted.

In recent years it has become commonplace to denigrate the importance of a party's platform, but there are times when much can be gleaned both from the struggle to write it and the direction it takes. In 1948, for example, the fight over a civil rights plank authored by then-Minneapolis Mayor Hubert Humphrey signaled the impending shift of the Democratic Party on an issue of transcending importance to both it and the country.

The Republican platforms of 1976 and 1980 tell as important a story about the shift of GOP priorities. Even though Reagan lost the 1976 nomination, the platform that year reflected the views of the emerging conservative majority within the party. President Ford's forces recognized this, announced that they weren't much interested in the platform and rolled over for the conservatives.

Reagan was proud of that platform. Speaking at the Conservative Political Action Conference in 1977, Reagan urged his followers to view it as a manifesto capable of attracting new voters to the GOP and thereby forged it as the framework for an enduring majority. Reagan declared, "This was not a document handed down from on high. It was hammered out in free and open debate among all those who care about our party and the principles it stands for.

"The Republican platform is unique," he declared. "It answers not only programmatic questions for the immediate future of the party but also provides a clear outline of the underlying principles upon which those programs are based."

By 1980, the new majority's dominance was reflected in an even more conservative platform that recognized the growing importance of social conservatives in the GOP coalition that would dominate our politics for so long.

The fact is that those who dismiss the importance of a party's platform are usually those who disagree with it and the people whose views it represents. Thus, when, in 1996, Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) decided to rewrite the party's abortion plank and failed, he dismissed the platform as meaningless, said he hadn't read it and announced that he wouldn't be bound by it. In fact, his failure reflected the simple fact that on this issue, at least, he was out of step with the party whose banner he was to carry in to the fall elections that year.

The question many Republicans are asking themselves as this year's convention approaches is whether as the GOP nominee, Arizona's Sen. John McCain will try to rewrite the party platform to conform to his views on a myriad of issues or whether he will allow the representatives of the Republican grass roots their say.

It will be interesting to see.

David Keene is the chairman of the American Conservative Union

**E-mail the
Editor**

Politicized Energy

by Alan Caruba

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

Recently I emailed a gentleman who is highly regarded, nationally and internationally, as one of the top strategic, military and economic long-range thinkers of our times. He is the author of several bestselling books about the way globalization is impacting the lives of the Earth's population.



Alan Caruba

In addition to having read his books and magazine articles, I occasionally visit his blog to read what he is thinking about currently. I noticed that he was casually referencing "global warming" in a post, so I emailed to let him know that there is no scientific proof or basis for the endless global warming claims. I cited all the usual data that disputes it and I provided the URLs of several websites that could provide him with even more.

His response was quite revealing. "It doesn't matter one way or the other. All the same fixes are required for sheer pollution reasons on a global scale given population increase and consumption increase. You're arguing the past." He would later post that, so far as the data debunking global warming, he was "beyond caring."

As I interpret this, no matter how utterly false the justifications are for the global warming hoax given by Al Gore, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and others, leading to efforts to replace, slow or deter the use of energy sources such as coal, natural gas and oil, this particular influential intellectual was beyond caring because the world's population was responsible for pollution and consuming too much of everything.

The "solutions" offered to stop a non-existent global warming include a Gore suggestion that "pollution" be taxed; that there must be a mandated reduction of all carbon dioxide emissions; the instituting of a bogus cap-and-trade credit system for all utilities, manufacturing, transportation, and other activities; biofuels, greater use of energy alternatives such as wind and solar; and ultimately, limits on how much energy people are permitted to use who drive cars, own homes, or run businesses of all kinds.

In California, for example, proposals and legislation has been put forth to eliminate the inclusion of fireplaces in the construction of new homes and that heat or cooling should be controlled by a central command that will monitor individual energy use and, without concern for the welfare of the individual user, determine the temperature of their living space. This is Big Brother writ large.

The federal government long ago imposed standards on how much mileage a car or truck must have for each gallon of gas consumed and has since mandated that each gallon must include the engine-destroying, energy-poor addition of ethanol. The ethanol mandate has created higher prices for food as corn and wheat supplies diminish.

This is the same government that has already banned the sale of incandescent light bulbs in the coming years. In time, it proposes to eliminate the use of all light bulbs except fluorescent ones that both consume less energy and give less light.

It is the same government contemplating declaring the thriving polar bear population "endangered" for the sole purpose of putting areas off limits that are believed to be rich in new oil reserves, not unlike the prohibition on extracting oil from ANWR.

It is the same government that has declared 85% of the nation's continental shelf off-limits to any exploration, discovery, and extraction of our own oil and natural gas reserves.

Are you beginning to see a pattern here?

The International Herald Tribune published an article by Andrew Ross Sorkin on March 20 titled, "At island retreat, Branson and friends seek to save a world 'on fire'." It was an astonishing revelation as it described a retreat hosted by Richard Branson, "the British magnate" among whose guests was Larry Page of Google, Jimmy Wales of Wikipedia, and Tony Blair, the former British prime minister who is now a senior advisor to J.P. Morgan Chase.

Richard Stromback, the chief executive of Ecology Coatings, "joked that a gathering like this might seem nefarious to some people." The reporter noted that, "Many executives and financiers, including some in attendance at the retreat, have a lot of money riding on global warming."

Look nefarious? Yes, it does. Some of the ultra-rich have a stake in the global warming hoax as a means to further enrich themselves.

If that means cloaking their opinion that the world's population needs to be reduced by appearing concerned for the fate of the planet, than there is no better way of doing that than advancing the goals of the environmental movement.

This is why "strategic thinkers" looked away when the use of DDT was banned worldwide and millions, particularly in Africa, continue to needlessly die from malaria.

This is why "strategic thinkers" looked away when one of the world's most extraordinary and affordable refrigerants and fire suppression chemicals, Freon, was banned from use worldwide with a bogus claim that "ozone holes" were destroying the atmosphere.

But my strategic thinker guru says, "You're arguing the past." No. I am arguing the future.

I am arguing about issues such as private property and the right to use it for personal gain and profit, the bedrock foundation of our economy, guaranteed in our Constitution. It is becoming a scare commodity as the U.S. government continues to declare vast areas as U.N. heritage sites, wildlife refuges, national parks, and other excuses to deny their use as sources of timber, coal, natural gas or oil.

I am arguing about the Green Revolution of genetically modified crops that can feed the vast population of the Earth without using more forested land. Despite this, supplies of corn and soy are being depleted for the purpose of *burning* these food sources as fuel. The nation's supply of wheat has been depleted as acreage is diverted to grow these crops and the cheaper dollar underwrites increased exports.

What better way to reduce the world's population than a manmade famine?

Meanwhile, the great engine of the world's economy and the beacon of liberty to the world is being undermined by environmentalists who will not face the facts and those who expect to benefit from their agenda.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

Dems Up For Congress

by Scott Rasmussen

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

The latest Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey found that, if the Congressional Election were held today, 43% of American voters say they would vote for the Democrat in their district and 37% would opt for the Republican ([see crosstabs](#)).



Last [month](#), those numbers were 44% Democrat and 40% Republican. March represents the fourth straight month that the Democrats' lead has been in the single digits. It's also the fourth straight month that support for the Democrats has been at 43% or 44%. Before that, support for the Democrats had been at the 45% level or higher for ten straight months.

Democrats now lead by fifteen among women while Republicans lead by just three among men. The Democrats lead in all age groups with the exception of adults between the ages of 40 and 49, where the two parties are tied at 42%.

Democrats have reclaimed the lead among unaffiliated voters this month. Among those voters, 31% would vote Democratic, 25% would vote Republican, 10% would choose another Party, and 34% are not sure.

Just [13% of Americans currently give Congress good or excellent marks](#) for their legislative efforts (see [monthly results](#) since Election 2006).

While the GOP has closed the gap on the Generic Congressional Ballot in recent months, [the number of people who consider themselves to be Democrats has soared at its highest level](#) in years.

Thirty-six percent (36%) of voters say Democrats are Very Likely to retain control of Congress following the 2008 elections. Another 36% say they are Somewhat Likely to retain control.

[Rasmussen Markets](#) data shows that Democrats are overwhelmingly favored to retain control of both the House and Senate (current prices: House [90.2%](#) Senate [90.4%](#)). *Numbers in this paragraph are from a prediction market, not a poll. We invite you to participate in the Rasmussen Markets--[it costs nothing to join](#).*

Forty percent (40%) of voters see most Democrats in Congress as politically liberal. That number is unchanged since last month. Forty-one percent (48%) say most Democrats in Congress are politically moderate. ([see tracking history](#)).

Perceptions of Republicans in Congress have shifted a bit to the right—45% now see most Republicans in Congress as politically conservative. That's up from 43% a month ago and 40% two months ago. Thirty-eight percent (33%) see the GOP legislators as politically moderate, down five points from last month ([see tracking history](#)).

Scott Rasmussen is president of Rasmussen Reports and has been an independent pollster for more than a decade. Rasmussen Reports is an electronic publishing firm specializing in the collection, publication, and distribution of public opinion polling information. The Rasmussen Reports [ElectionEdge™](#) Premium Service for Election 2008 offers the most comprehensive public opinion coverage ever provided for a Presidential election.

**E-mail the
Editor**

GOP Improbably Tied

by Joseph Barrett

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

Regarding Scott Rasmussen's recent article in ConservativeBattleline "Dems Still Up", it looks like that has changed already. An Associated Press-Ipsos national poll just released begins, "Republican Sen. John McCain has erased Sen. Barack Obama's 10-point advantage in a head-to-head match-up, leaving him essentially tied with both Democratic candidates."

Amen--Amen --That is what I argued in my earlier piece in February. We are a 47%-47% nation--this election is still about both candidates securing their base 47%.



John McCain

Once more to my Republican/Conservative fiends ---in the election of 2004 President Bush won about 51 % of the national vote --today his approval rating is about 30%. So that means--sort of--that 21% of this year's electorate is comprised of people who voted for this president and now dislike him. Someone on the right better start dealing with this fact of political life. Hint the 21% is not full of doctrinaire conservatives--although there are a lot of dissident Democrats and independents. In 1980 they were called Reagan Democrats.

This 21% is--I think--prone to vote for Mc Cain---but they have to be wooed back. The Dems just have to create an atmosphere in which these people say--" To H-ll with it."

Juts an observation from a bedroom confined ex Political Junkie

About 6% of the electorate swings back and forth. They will determine the next president. They do not like this president---rightly or wrongly --but they just do not like him for many reasons. I think a lot of it can be summed up in the fact that many Americans just get the feeling this president --just does not give a tinkers damn about average Americans--sort of the typical Republican disease.

Still, the polls now show the Republican nominee is improbably ahead. If the Democrats can not win this election they better go into re-think and stop listening to Chris Matthews, Keith Olbermann and the rest of the left-wing crew leading them over the cliff.

Joseph Barrett is a (conservative) Democratic strategist living in Silver Spring, Maryland.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Secrets of Clintons' Taxes

by Tom Fitton

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

So now we know why the Clintons waited so long to release their tax returns. Of course, a lot of press attention has been given to the amount of income reported by the Clintons -- \$109 million over the last eight years -- and, indeed, that number is staggering. (I believe that puts them in the top .01% of taxpayers) But of more concern to me is the source of some of these funds.

Take, for example, billionaire businessman Ron Burkle. You will recall that Burkle was a major contributor to the Clintons' campaigns and to their legal defense fund before hiring Bill Clinton to work for his Yucaipa firm.



According to the newly released tax records, Bill Clinton earned \$15 million as a consultant for Burkle. Now, Hillary did admit on her 2003-2004 Senate Financial Disclosure Statements that Bill Clinton's Yucaipa income was "more than \$1,000." So, technically, I guess, she didn't lie. But \$15 million!? And for what? Burkle admitted in one news report that Clinton spent about an average of 10 hours per week on Yucaipa business. That's a pretty paltry investment of time, given the enormous amount of compensation.

Which leads to the question...

What does Burkle expect in return for his investment? And what does Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the ruling sheik of Dubai, who is another Clinton/Yucaipa partner, expect from his dealings with Bill Clinton? Given that the Clintons' presumably share the same bank account, Hillary is every bit as indebted to Burkle and Dubai's leader for their largesse as her husband. And, whether she's in the Senate or in the White House, Hillary is in a position to return required favors.

Bill Clinton also raked in a whopping \$51.9 million in speaking fees, many coming from foreign interests and governments. Same question: What do these foreign interests expect in return for their investment?

The Clintons' tax returns also raise red flags related to the Clinton Family Foundation. The Clintons claim \$10.3 million in charitable donations on their returns and, according to The Wall Street Journal, "nearly all the donations went to the Clinton Family Foundation, which has disbursed only half the money." The Journal notes that virtually all of the donations came after Hillary announced her candidacy for president, and that some of the donations reek of "politically targeted philanthropy."

So I guess I can see why Hillary failed to report her role as Treasurer of the Clinton Family Foundation a shocking five times on her Senate Financial Disclosure statements. Clearly she didn't want anyone doing any digging on the foundation's activities, as suspicious as they are.

Judicial Watch will, of course, continue to review these records and I'll be sure to report our findings in future installments of The Weekly Update.

Tom Fitton is President of [Judicial Watch](#), a nonpartisan educational foundation that fights government corruption.

Reader Comments

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

**CONSERVATIVE
BATTLELINE
ONLINE**

Editor: I thought your commentary on "New Iraqi Moment?" was spot on. It amazes me that so few see and express the obvious as you do. Factionalism is the great bane of the Middle East and always has been. It created and then destroyed Lebanon. This thing will have to sort itself out, but only the participants can do that, not the U.S. Will we withdraw at some point? Of course. Will there be a bloodbath? Of course. Regards, Alan C

Editor: Thanks for another, great, informative article, "New Iraqi Moment?" What can we do about it? How, as conservatives, do we win??? Do you believe that there is a way for us to win within the Republican Party? If so, why? If we couldn't have won during the past 14 years, by what leap of faith does one believe it's likely we'll win going forward, especially from this point in our domestic political affairs? How about encouraging the writers to prescribe actions to be taken to win what we know must be won? By now, we're steeped in cause and effect, analysis and policy recommendations -- all good and accurate. We read a great article like this one, get excited and then end up looking at the floor, waiting for the next great article because no one in Washington is acting on our issues and we are slowly being strangled. They pay lip service to us to fund their campaigns and nothing else. Meanwhile, reading an article like Lisa Fabrizio's we get excited again to find that there are people who actually "get it", and then go back to frustration because no one is acting on the knowledge. Isn't it time to cut away from these dithering, misguided and leaderless moderates and forge a strong, policy effective party for them to follow? Sincerely, Jeff Dover

Editor: Regarding "New Iraqi Moment?" we should have shot that bastard Sadr. I see Iran's strings in this! John Miska

Editor: To have a real "New Iraqi Moment," I think President Bush, needs to go into Iraq and make a dessert out of that place. If we do not, Obama, or Hillary is going to cause us to be a 3rd world country. President Bush needs to leave with a bang. If he will drop bombs without telling the liberal media, and let them know about it after the fact, we Americans will be much better off. In fact, if he will attack immediately, I will send McCain a contribution, and I don't even like him because he is too liberal, but I have to stick with my party. Lois Seaman

Editor: Regarding Michael D'Virgillio's "No Brain Dead-Liberal" about David Mamet's move toward conservatism and his high praise for Thomas Sowell, what a sweet success for Sowell! What a liberating epiphany for Mamet. Lisa Miller, Alexandria, VA

Editor: Loved the Mamet article, "No Brain Dead-Liberal" by Michael D'Virgillio. That's it....get it wider distribution! I just loved it! KC Mali

Editor: Regarding Daniel Pipes' "European Value Renewal?" now it's America's turn to fiddle while our Nation burns! We are watching Europe start to say enough to the Islamic-Muslim creep while we ignore the problem. Perhaps Europe is waking up to the fact that America will no longer be able to protect them from themselves and they are taking a stand. The question remains, who will save America from herself? Viv Cardenas, Colorado

Editor: Daniel Pipes' optimism in "European Value Renewal?" in viewing the future of (Western) Europe, based in part on the conversion of a single semi-prominent Muslim to Christianity, is somewhat misplaced. He fails to note the generally laissez-faire attitude of many Europeans to this cultural invasion that is winked at or even embraced by the socialist elites who run the continent. The greatest tragedy in Europe is a general repudiation of its history and cultural institutions, including the Christian Church, which defined it as the center of civilization and enlightenment for so long. The most striking example is that of the Archbishop of Canterbury who proclaims that integrating Sharia law into the existing British legal system is 'inevitable.' That would be a form of suicide. He also cites the preference of many Muslim émigrés to Europe for a Westernized lifestyle. Well, of course they do. The worst living conditions in the West are preferable to those found in most Muslim countries. What he fails to note is that much of the Muslim wrath directed at the West is a form of class envy. They are taught theirs is the greatest civilization that ever was and therefore our greater prosperity is a result of forging a pact with the devil – literally. Their Koran teaches that prosperity is achieved through conquest as opposed to being good stewards of what we have as taught in the Bible. They're reminiscent of the Mugabe hordes which dispossessed hard working prosperous farmers in Rhodesia only to discover that the farms didn't grow by themselves. They actually had to work the fields. In one generation the nation went from one of the most prosperous to being the most impoverished – another Western plot, no doubt. Many of the general European population are indeed impatient with their leaders' indecision and compromising attitude towards the Muslim cult but few are prepared to do much about it since they are so accustomed to accepting the bland assurances they receive. Several generations of socialism will produce that apathy. The difficulty is that the protesters have no moral basis because so many have rejected their spiritual heritage and thus rely on nationalistic appeals that are quickly dismissed as being jingoistic. Without a spiritual awakening in Europe, I cannot share Mr. Pipes' optimism. James C. McAlister, Tampa, FL

Editor: I liked the article by Lisa Fabrizio, "Is Wright Right?" Only in America can a man like him carry the name Reverend before his own. He ought to be ashamed but something tells me that he and those in his congregation are not. Even Obama and his wife show no real serious indignation about Wright and his teachings. 20 years of listening and having him as a friend and spiritual advisor say's it all as to what they really believe. And to think they are so close to being the next president and first lady. Go to <http://vote-itz-ur-right.com>. Boyd Lieberman (<http://an-american-for-sovereignty.com>)

Editor: Fabulous!!!! Lisa Fabrizio hit the nail on the head in "Is Wright Right?" We are going down the tube because we are killing our own flesh and blood. May God have mercy on our Souls and our Nation. Ilene LaFleur

Editor: Thank Lisa Fabrizio for her "Is Wright Right?" Concerning Abortion, well said. I only wish the darkness could be removed from the eyes our Liberal "Christian" friends. I just don't think I'll ever understand how some people truly believe abortion is a right or that a woman enjoys ownership of her womb in the sense that her own will is the only governing agent. This logic "Edges God Out". God's will for the child, the man's will or even the greater family's will seem to be eliminated! In that

case, so is the child. I can't argue with her notion that even "loving" Christian Pastors like the Rev ignore the real consequences of Liberal "Theology". They don't seem to see the Plantation Mentality hidden in much of the Left's urge to rescue the "Downtrodden". Best regards, Peter Kouris

Editor: Regarding Dennis and Alex Avery's article, "Rationing Food for the Poor", gee, if we could extract all of the methane from sewage especially that which is generated in Washington D.C., we could run our cars on 'natural' gas and not need oil or corn. Sincerely, Gerard M. Reitmeyer

Editor: Turning a food grain into fuel has always been just another way to increase the income of a special interest group, the farmers, just another market for the farmers' product, corn. As the information taken from Dennis and Alex Avery's article, "Rationing Food for the Poor", points out the farmer produced more corn over raising other crops because corn was the crop they could make the most money from. And who bears the blame in the end for the corn being consumed for fuel instead of being available for food? Government subsidies. The better answer to America's fuel problems would have been to have cars and trucks manufactured that are more fuel efficient. America should also promote the development of different sources such as solar energy to run vehicles on. The problem has always been in attempting to feed the world's hungry that politics in these different parts of the world has gotten in the way and the food didn't reach those needy. Those in charge stole the food and sold it for their gain. Maybe the real answer would be to teach the world's hungry how to grow their own food supplies instead of just providing food for them. Cecil Adams

Editor: Thanks for Warner Huston's article "Wright vs Hagee Problems." My, Mr. Obama, what big ear(marks) you have. Mike Bates

Editor: Regarding Warner Huston's article "Wright vs Hagee Problems" McCain's "gaffe" is miniscule compared to Hillary's lies, Obama's liberal views or Dean's screaming. Publish a real, unbiased article that compares each of these. Frank Henderson *[Editor: Is that not what Mr. Huston said about Wright compared to Hagee?]*

Editor: Regarding Noel Sheppard's "ABC Warming Outrage", the whole Climate Change issue must be put into perspective vis-a-vis the Peak Oil Crisis. Everyone needs to ask themselves, their associates, all sitting elected officials and those seeking office, especially the office of President of the United States, "What is more threatening in both the long and short terms, a beneficial 1 degree F rise in average world temperatures over the past 100 years, or a 1 percent decline in world oil production over the last 100 weeks - with steepening declines forecast? Furthermore, can our economy better deal with declining fuel inventories in an environment of persistent warming, or in an environment of declining average temperatures over the next several decades, the most likely scenario given the highly reliable solar inertial motion (SIM) model forecasts of climate change?" Solar cycle # 24 will tell the tale. The problem is not global warming. The problem is the end of cyclical warming coincident with the onset of Peak Oil. John A. Jauregui

Editor: So since the science indicates there actually is global cooling as Alan Caruba demonstrates in "Experts Expose Warming", how do we get the message across and shut Al Gore and his ilk up? Thanks, Loren Ransier

**E-mail the
Editor**