



Pope Benedict at U.N.

CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

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Internationalist Pope?

by Donald Devine

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Was Lou Dobbs right that “the pope is blasting our society; here he is, I guess, in many ways insulting our country, talking about the need to be welcoming, taking up the issue of illegal immigration without any comparison to the rest of the world?” Congressman Tom Tancredo criticized him too. Are conservatives right to be concerned about Benedict XVI’s “welcoming internationalism”?

“Pope calls for multilateral agenda” was one headline describing his United Nations speech. Benedict himself asked Americans to “continue to welcome the immigrants who join your ranks” and for the world to pursue a “greater degree of international ordering” and even that the world community was unable to solve its problems because its consensus views are “subordinated to the decisions of a few, whereas the world’s problems call for interventions in the form of collective action by the international community.”



Pope Benedict at U.N.

Is the U.S. that “few” that is stifling word progress? President George W. Bush did not think so, calling the pope’s U.N. speech “awesome.” But Fidel Castro praised it too, as the “antithesis” of the Bush policy of “brutality and force.” A former speechwriter for the president, writing for the neocon Wall Street Journal editors, positively cheered that the pope did “nothing close” to criticizing Bush on Iraq, even though Benedict opposed the original invasion. Interestingly, both Castro and the Journal writer noted it was not easy to categorize his message. The “few” may have been the U.N. Security Council rather than the U.S. alone.

While he may have criticized the U.N.’s ruling body, it is clear Benedict thinks collective rather than nation-state action alone is necessary to promote a just world order. On the other hand, he also said that “Every State has the primary duty to protect its own population from grave and sustained



violations of human rights, as well as from the consequences of humanitarian crises, whether natural or man-made.” So the nation-state comes first but “If States are unable to guarantee such protection, the international community must intervene with the juridical means provided in the United Nations Charter and in other international instruments.”

So, Benedict is an internationalist, right, ready to turn control to the U.N.? Indeed, he went further in limiting national sovereignty:

The action of the international community and its institutions, provided that it respects the principles undergirding the international order, should never be interpreted as an unwarranted imposition or a limitation of sovereignty. On the contrary, it is indifference or the failure to intervene that do the real damage. What is needed is a deeper search for ways of pre-empting and managing conflicts by exploring every possible diplomatic avenue, and giving attention and encouragement to even the faintest sign of dialogue or desire for reconciliation.

What is that, “provided” the U.N. follows its own and other universal principles of peace and order? Here is what he was actually promoting. Benedict set important limits to international pretensions and actions. He even recognized that the sovereign nation “states have established [the] universal objectives” of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the first place and that it was they

who founded the U.N. to honor them. He specifically noted that these U.N. objectives "do not coincide with the total common good of the human family," although they "undoubtedly represent a fundamental part of that good." That is, the U.N. Declaration is not a complete statement of human rights and morality but it does have enough of the full natural law to provide a basis for consensual international action.

The total natural law does not come from the international community at all:

It is evident, though, that the rights recognized and expounded in the Declaration apply to everyone by virtue of the common origin of the person, who remains the high-point of God's creative design for the world and for history. They are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts and present in different cultures and civilizations. Removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception, according to which the meaning and interpretation of rights could vary and their universality would be denied in the name of different cultural, political, social and even religious outlooks. This great variety of viewpoints must not be allowed to obscure the fact that not only rights are universal, but so too is the human person, the subject of those rights.

The primacy of the individual person, natural law, unalienable rights, creative design?--these ideals actually can be traced to an earlier Declaration acknowledging self evident truths for all peoples that was crafted not so far away from where Benedict spoke. He was too diplomatic to say straight out that the endowment by a Creator required by that Declaration to give the human person value is not a universally accepted basis for agreement nor is natural law. They are not accepted universally, may we be so impolitic to mention, but are regarded as universal mainly from the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Western Civilization that the speaker himself represented? This was even more apparent as he continued:

In the context of international relations, it is necessary to recognize the higher role played by rules and structures that are intrinsically ordered to promote the common good, and therefore to safeguard human freedom. These regulations do not limit freedom. On the contrary, they promote it when they prohibit behavior and actions which work against the common good, curb its effective exercise and hence compromise the dignity of every human person. In the name of freedom, there has to be a correlation between rights and duties, by which every person is called to assume responsibility for his or her choices, made as a consequence of entering into relations with others.

Explicitly bringing freedom, rules and individual responsibility into consideration rounds out his message. The type of institutional structure the pope was describing is what the great Nobel theorist of limited government, F.A. Hayek, called essential to safeguard human freedom--the rule of law. Indeed, this section by the pope about the importance of rules and freedom could have been written by Hayek himself.



But rules by themselves are not sufficient.

Experience shows that legality often prevails over justice when the insistence upon rights makes them appear as the exclusive result of legislative enactments or normative decisions taken by the various agencies of those in power. When presented purely in terms of legality, rights risk becoming weak propositions divorced from the ethical and rational dimension which is their foundation and their goal.

Rights must be based on deep tradition or reason rooted in concrete human nature and sentiments, or as the pope prefers, in both tradition and reason, and even more through "a vision of life firmly

anchored in the religious dimension," which even an agnostic like Hayek cited as the actual historical and cultural source of the public morality necessary for a free society.

To achieve this society, however, "the religious sphere" must be "kept separate from political action," Benedict demanded. Social freedom is in tension, to be "understood as the expression of a dimension that is at once individual and communitarian--a vision that brings out the unity of the person while clearly distinguishing between the dimension of the citizen and that of the believer" (perhaps a teaching moment for unitary Islam?). He is also concerned about pressure to "move away from the protection of human dignity towards the satisfaction of simple interests, often particular interests"—perhaps a teaching moment for the realist school of foreign relations? Yet, the conservative-realist Sharon Statement always set the American foreign policy goal not to advance national interest alone but to promote the "just" interests of the U.S., recognizing the same need to balance interest with justice.

Benedict even declared an international obligation to care for the environment. But he makes the necessary qualifications, requiring that "international action to preserve the environment and to protect various forms of life on earth must not only guarantee a rational use of technology and science, but must also rediscover the authentic image of creation. This never requires a choice to be made between science and ethics: rather it is a question of adopting a scientific method that is truly respectful of ethical imperatives." It is in this same context that the pope asked Americans to "continue" to welcome immigrants, because they are people loved by God and as such deserve a degree of protection as a similar moral imperative.

This is a large agenda for an "international community" that conservatives are not even certain exists. There certainly is a United Nations but it is ruled by its Security Council and bureaucracy but it is not clear that Benedict accepts this as the "international community" and, even if he does, he only invests it with diplomatic authority, not force. He requires that it follow fair and accepted rules including its own, obtain a general consensus before action, and respect individual freedom and responsibility. Even the U.N.'s greatest American critic, former ambassador John Bolton, has always maintained there was a proper U.N. role, only he required that limitations similar to those set by the pope be observed by the U.N. and that the U.S. carefully protect its own legitimate interests in the process.

Finally, Benedict limits international power over nation states and other organizations in an even more fundamental way. In the very sentence where he demanded a large international role, he drastically limited that role by requiring that any collective action be "inspired and governed by the principle of subsidiarity." Subsidiarity is the traditional Catholic moral principle that nothing should be done by a higher level organization that can be done properly by a lower one—the U.N. should not do what a nation state should, the nation state should not do what a regional state can do, a state should not do what a local government should, a government should not do what the private sector can, and neither government nor private organizations should infringe on what associations, family and the individual can do for themselves.



Fidel Castro

This strong moral limit to the power of international bodies—and to the power and reach of national governments too--changes everything about rule by higher level authorities. Everywhere, even in the better societies today, central governments are reaching out in the name of welfare to reduce individual freedom and responsibility. The demand for subsidiarity is a limit to that nearly universal overreach. To friends of liberty, the restatement of that moral right by this important world leader at the very podium of the United Nations itself was worth the entire visit.

Stressing the primacy of rules and freedom rather than state power forcing morality is an almost revolutionary view these days. Hayek seemed the last major moral voice insisting on the primacy of fair rules to support human rights, freedom and responsibility. Now Benedict has added his own

powerful if humble voice, even adding: "The promotion of human rights remains the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities between countries and social groups, and for increasing security." Take that Fidel Castro and all his lesser progressive ilk lauding the moral superiority of the government taking and redistributing private property as the better solution to force justice, rather than relying on general rules of fairness to promote human rights as Hayek insisted.

Benedict is an internationalist—after all he is a man for all nations--but one who insists all power is limited by the value of the individual person, "who remains the high-point of God's creative design for the world and for history."

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Save Dollar--Raise Interest Rates

by Brian Wesbury and Robert Stein

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For many years top-level policymakers from around the globe bemoaned the US trade deficit and implicitly suggested they would like to see the dollar lose value against other major currencies. Now, the dollar has been beaten down so much they are talking about stability and hinting that governments may "intervene" in the currency markets if the dollar keeps falling.



The problem is that when it comes to the value of the dollar no policymakers matter as much as those at the Federal Reserve. Ultimately, the value of the dollar versus other major currencies depends on shifts in monetary policy both here and abroad.

Just follow the path of the Euro over the last decade. When it was first introduced on January 1, 1999, the exchange rate was \$1.18/Euro(€). Although many analysts predicted the dollar would weaken against the new currency, the opposite occurred. The dollar appreciated 44% against the Euro in less than two years. At \$0.82/€ in late 2000, the Euro was so weak that some thought it would not survive. That, of course did not happen. Since then the dollar has depreciated 48% and today stands at \$1.58/€, an all-time low.

None of this is a mystery. The Fed was too tight in the late 1990s, culminating with unwarranted rate hikes between 1999 and 2000, which caused the dollar to soar. These rate hikes also pushed the economy into recession and caused deflation.

Then the Fed panicked, cut rates to an absurdly low 1%, and held them there too long. This excessively accommodative monetary policy led to a sharp decline in the dollar.

Interestingly, after the dollar had dropped to \$1.34/€ in December 2004, it stabilized and did not approach that level until mid-2007. But once the Fed started cutting rates again in September 2007, the dollar dropped like a rock. In fact, it has now fallen so rapidly that some analysts think we are witnessing a currency crisis and are arguing that the US Treasury and other major Financial Ministries around the world intervene on the dollar's behalf – buying dollars and selling other currencies.

We believe these efforts would be futile. As long as the Fed targets interest rates, currency intervention must be "sterilized." Intervention means that dollars would be taken from the market, increasing scarcity. This would push US interest rates up as liquidity was squeezed. But in order to bring interest rates back down to the target rate the Fed would have to inject liquidity.

In other words, the only way to permanently reduce the amount of dollars in the system and force up the value of the dollar is for the Fed to raise the target rate.

In the pursuit of a stronger dollar there is no substitute for tighter monetary policy. That policy shift is not going to happen in the next couple of months. But the Fed will not stay loose forever. Once it shifts gears, we expect it to be aggressive, helping provide some real lasting buoyancy for the dollar, not just hot air.

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Obama's Muslim Childhood?

by Daniel Pipes

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As Barack Obama's candidacy comes under increasing scrutiny, his account of his religious upbringing deserves careful attention for what it tells us about the candidate's integrity.

Obama asserted in [December](#), "I've always been a Christian," and he has adamantly denied ever having been a Muslim. "The only connection I've had to Islam is that my grandfather on my father's side came from that country [Kenya]. But I've never practiced Islam." In [February](#), he claimed: "I have never been a Muslim. ... other than my name and the fact that I lived in a populous Muslim country for 4 years when I was a child [Indonesia, 1967-71] I have very little connection to the Islamic religion."



Daniel Pipes

"Always" and "never" leave little room for equivocation. But many biographical facts, culled mainly from the American press, suggest that, when growing up, the Democratic candidate for president both saw himself and was seen as a Muslim.

Obama's Kenyan birth father: In Islam, religion passes from the father to the child. Barack Hussein Obama, Sr. (1936–1982) was a Muslim who named his boy Barack Hussein Obama, Jr. Only Muslim children are named "Hussein".

Obama's Indonesian family: His stepfather, Lolo Soetoro, was also a Muslim. In fact, as Obama's half-sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng explained to [Jodi Kantor](#) of the *New York Times*: "My whole family was Muslim, and most of the people I knew were Muslim." An Indonesian publication, the [Banjarmasin Post](#) reports a former classmate, Rony Amir, recalling that "All the relatives of Barry's father were very devout Muslims."

The Catholic school: [Nedra Pickler](#) of the Associated Press reports that "documents showed he enrolled as a Muslim" while at a Catholic school during first through third grades. [Kim Barker](#) of the *Chicago Tribune* confirms that Obama was "listed as a Muslim on the registration form for the Catholic school." A blogger who goes by "[An American Expat in Southeast Asia](#)" found that "Barack Hussein Obama was registered under the name 'Barry Soetoro' serial number 203 and entered the Franciscan Asisi Primary School on 1 January 1968 and sat in class 1B. ... Barry's religion was listed as Islam."

The public school: [Paul Watson](#) of the *Los Angeles Times* learned from Indonesians familiar with Obama when he lived in Jakarta that he "was registered by his family as a Muslim at both schools he attended." [Haroon Siddiqui](#) of the *Toronto Star* visited the Jakarta public school Obama attended and found that "Three of his teachers have said he was enrolled as a Muslim." Although Siddiqui cautions that "With the school records missing, eaten by bugs, one has to rely on people's shifting memories," he cites only one retired teacher, Tine Hahiyari, retracting her earlier certainty about Obama's being registered as a Muslim.

Koran class: In his autobiography, *Dreams of My Father*, Obama relates how he got into trouble for making faces during Koranic studies, thereby revealing he was a Muslim, for Indonesian students in his day attended religious classes according to their faith. Indeed, Obama still retains knowledge from that class: [Nicholas D. Kristof](#) of the *New York Times*, reports that Obama "recalled the opening lines of the Arabic call to prayer, reciting them [to Kristof] with a first-rate accent."

Mosque attendance: Obama's half-sister recalled that the family attended the mosque "for big communal events." Watson learned from childhood friends that "Obama sometimes went to Friday prayers at the local mosque." Barker found that "Obama occasionally followed his stepfather to the

mosque for Friday prayers." One Indonesia friend, Zulfin Adi, states that Obama "was Muslim. He went to the mosque. I remember him wearing a sarong" (a garment associated with Muslims).

Piety: [Obama](#) himself says that while living in Indonesia, a Muslim country, he "didn't practice [Islam]," implicitly acknowledging a Muslim identity. Indonesians differ in their memories of him. One, Rony Amir, describes Obama as "previously quite religious in Islam."

Obama's having been born and raised a Muslim and having left the faith to become a Christian make him neither more nor less qualified to become president of the United States. But if he was born and raised a Muslim and is now hiding that fact, this points to a major deceit, a fundamental misrepresentation about himself that has profound implications about his character and his suitability as president.

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Iconic Bette Davis

by Spencer Warren

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The centenary of one of the iconic stars and most esteemed actresses of Hollywood's Golden Age, Bette Davis, is being honored in festivals around the country and at the Motion Picture Academy in Los Angeles. Born April 5, 1908 in Lowell, Massachusetts, as Ruth Elizabeth Davis, she made her first film in 1931, reached her peak in the later 1930's and 1940's, and made her final film in 1989, the year of her death.

Miss Davis's signature roles were in highly colored melodramas that were the specialty of the studio where she was under contract for twenty years, Warner Brothers. This style will be most familiar to readers from *Casablanca* (1942). These films actually wear their years better than some of the more solemn, ambitious films made at other studios during this period, such as MGM, the "Tiffany" of Hollywood.



Michael Curtiz, the biggest Warners director, who was behind the camera for *Casablanca*, didn't think much of Bette early in her career because, compared to all the other leading ladies, she was a plain Jane, appearing to lack sex appeal. Over his protests the young actress won the part of a Southern belle vixen in 1932's *The Cabin in the Cotton*. Flirting with an earnest young man in front of his girl, the bleach blonde Bette wins his attention with the first of the many priceless lines that would help define her career: "Ah'd like to kiss ya, but Ah just washed ma hair." Here she first demonstrated how she could make up for her lack of beauty with the force and energy of her acting.

Ambitious even by Hollywood actor standards, Bette had to crawl and scratch for good parts. Her big break came when Warners loaned her to RKO to play the Cockney tramp, Mildred Rogers, who lures into the gutter a shy, serious medical student, Philip Carey, suffering from a club foot (Leslie Howard) in Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (1934). Here she had to become ugly and repulsive, not exactly the formula for stardom in those days. But her overwhelming, raw intensity stunned audiences at the time. In her big scene she tells off the pathetic student, having in a fit of rage turned his apartment into a shambles and burned his valued stock securities after he twice took her back when she ran off with other men (even after the two had been engaged!). She even returned the first time with another man's baby, whom poor Philip cared for as his own. She screams how much she never really could stand him, despite the show she put on. Reaching fever pitch, drawing her arm across her lips, she hollers that after he would kiss her she was so disgusted, "I'd wipe my mouth, WIPE my mouth." Further going against the path taken by most other actresses, she dies in the end, by then as emaciated a character as ever appeared on the screen. Bette Davis truly earned success by going against the grain. She also was more of a character actress, unlike most women stars, who relied more on their beauty and personality.

Back at Warner Brothers, Bette won the Oscar as best actress the following year for *Dangerous*, which was a consolation prize for not winning for *Of Human Bondage*. But she revolted against the tawdry roles and cheap films to which she was being relegated by studio-head Jack L. Warner. Demonstrating in real life the same iron will she portrayed on screen, still in her twenties, she risked her young career by fleeing to England in order to escape the straight-jacket studio contract that bound most stars to their studios with no choice of roles. (And most earned their money in those days – in the early-mid thirties, for example, Bette was making five or six films a year.) She lost the subsequent lawsuit and returned to Hollywood, but Warner had finally got the message. His studio got away from its "cheapie" style and started to bankroll ambitious movies, like the Errol Flynn *The Adventures of Robin Hood* and Bette's *Jezebel*, both released in 1938.

This was a lavish antebellum Old South drama that cashed in on the national mania ignited by publication of *Gone With the Wind* in 1936 and by the ongoing search for the ideal actress to play

Scarlett O'Hara in the movie, a part Bette lusted after but did not get. Here she is Julie Marsden, an untameable "filly" whose stubborn ways cost her the love of her banker fiance, Preston Dillard (Henry Fonda). Her set piece scene is where she shocks the Louisiana establishment by wearing a pink dress to the lavish local ball; all the other girls of course are dressed in white. Angered, Preston forces her to dance with him, on and on, accompanied by Max Steiner's famous waltz, until they are the only ones left on the floor, surrounded by the enraged aristocracy. In this way he breaks the stubborn filly. (Note, as I have emphasized in earlier essays and reviews, how in these films the plot is dramatized and visualized with minimal dialogue, in contrast to the reliance on lots of talk in many modern films.) Julie loses Preston – horrors – to a Yankee girl, but proves her mettle in the climax when she risks her life to save his, tending to him in the sick quarter of town amidst a yellow fever epidemic. Bette won her second Oscar in three years.

Bette fought not only for better parts in films with more expensive production values, but also for better directors. William Wyler, with whom she had an adulterous affair and who reportedly was the great love of her life, directed *Jezebel*, as well as two of her many other hits of this peak period: *The Letter* (1940), based on another Maugham work, in which as a bored wife in the East Indies she murders her lover, and *The Little Foxes* (1941), from the Lillian Hellman play. Another top director was Edmund Goulding, who guided her to another Oscar nomination right after *Jezebel*, for *Dark Victory* (1939). Here Bette is Judith Traherne, a high-living, shallow society woman (the young Ronald Reagan plays one of her "set") who lives for nothing but pleasure until she is diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor. Bette memorably manages the character transformation into a serious, sensitive woman; the final scene, as she is going blind and retires to her bedroom to await the end, is perhaps the most unforgettable of her career.

Now Bette was rolling out one hit after another – she was nominated for best actress four straight years from 1939 to 1942 and again in 1944. Her most famous film may be *Now, Voyager* (1942). She is the repressed young Boston spinster, Charlotte Vale, dominated by her tyrannical mother (Gladys Cooper), who is opened to life under the wise, understanding guidance of a psychiatrist, Dr. Jaquith (Claude Rains). On a South American cruise she falls in love with Jerry Durrance (Paul Henreid, the same year he played Victor Laszlo in *Casablanca*), only to learn he is the father of a young girl and trapped in a loveless marriage. Charlotte returns home and, as a result of a number of plot twists, she finds herself entrusted with the care of Jerry's daughter, Tina, like her, a girl with a troubled past with which Charlotte can empathize. Charlotte becomes her de facto mother. Tina knows nothing of the mutual affection between Charlotte and her father, who comes to visit. This leads us to one of the signature romantic climaxes and one of the most famous scenes in Golden Age Hollywood movies. Divorce is out of the question. But the couple don't have to marry because they find their love in their selfless devotion to Tina. This is their pact for life. Standing on the porch, night having arrived, Jerry says to Charlotte, "Shall we have a cigarette on it?" He lights two cigarettes between his lips and gives one to her. "Will you be happy, Charlotte?" he asks. And as Max Steiner's renowned Oscar-winning love theme fills the soundtrack and the camera turns skyward, Charlotte responds, "Don't let's ask for the moon. We have the stars."

Needless to say, even putting aside the sentimentality, a film like *Now, Voyager* would not be made today because it centers on an unconsummated love of selfless devotion. The main characters cannot do as they please and gratify their desires. What a reactionary concept in twenty-first century America! This helps to explain why one of the staples of Golden Age Hollywood, the romantic tear-jerker, has become extinct.

By the later 1940's, Bette's career at Warners was fading. Her last film under contract there, which she hated but which today is something of a cult classic, was *Beyond the Forest*. The advertising tagline was: "She's a midnight girl in a five o'clock town." Sporting a black wig, Bette is Rosa Moline, the very bored wife of the very noble and boring Dr. Joseph Moline (Joseph Cotten) in a small Wisconsin town. She is given another famous Davis line: Shuffling down the stairs one morning and looking upon their modest, boring, small living room, she cracks as only she can, "What a dump!" The high point of the film is her desperate scene on the dark, rainy Chicago streets; she has run off to the big city chasing after the smooth businessman with whom she had an affair, Ned Latimer (David Brian), only to learn that she meant nothing to him – he repeatedly refuses to see her when

she comes, luggage in hand, to his office. Once again, a big emotional scene, this time of the protagonist's total mental collapse, is dramatized visually, as Bette, with nowhere to go, drags her suitcase through her literal nightmare of despair (while on the soundtrack we hear Max Steiner's sarcastic arrangement of "Chicago, Chicago." Bette once said "Max knew more about drama than any of us."). True, this may not be high drama, but as directed with his usual passionate professionalism and emotional force by King Vidor, it's a memorable scene and film.

What was Bette to do, now aged 41 and cast off by her studio after several flops? Not for the first time, her career won new life, with the part of a lifetime as the grande dame of Broadway, Margot Channing, in *All About Eve* (1950). Bette was born for this part and it is the most serious, accomplished acting of her long career. As Margot, at her swank penthouse party, finally begins to recognize how the seemingly sweet ingénue she took in off the streets, Eve (Anne Baxter), is a queen bitch out to steal her career, and her man (Gary Merrill, shortly to become Bette's real-life fourth husband), she launches the evening with another famous Bette line: "Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night." Directed and written by Joseph L. Mankiewicz at Twentieth-Century Fox, this is a straight drama, unlike the melodramas in which Bette specialized at Warners. She seems more relaxed, not feeling the need to give off the sparks that ignited her earlier roles. Bette was ranked behind Katharine Hepburn, as the number two movie actress of all time in an American Film Institute poll ten years ago. But she didn't have quite the number of prestigious roles enjoyed by many of the others near her on the list (e.g. Greta Garbo, Ingrid Bergman).

Bette's last famous role was as the over-the-top, deranged, vindictive former child movie star, Baby Jane Hudson, literally torturing her rival sister, former child star Blanche (Joan Crawford) in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962). Directed by the sometime over-the-top Robert Aldrich (*Kiss Me Deadly* (1955), *The Dirty Dozen* (1967)), what makes this film special is that in real life the two now aging grande dames of Hollywood were fierce rivals and made no secret of it. Bette considered Joan a poseur who relied only on personality, not acting ability. So her tormenting of her poor, wheelchair-bound sister in their dated mansion has a special ring of truth. When Blanche tells Jane that if she weren't crippled in her wheelchair, Jane could not be doing to her all these horrible things, Bette taunts Blanche with her last great movie line: "But ya are, Blanche. Ya are!"

Bette Davis does not appear to have been a happy woman, with her three divorces (a fourth husband died on her). She had three children, one of whom, after writing a nasty "tell all Mommie Dearest" book about her, was cut out of her will. The Warners director Vincent Sherman wrote in his memoir about their affair in the 1940's and how Bette recognized she had sacrificed her personal life on the altar of her career.

Allow me to close with my two favorite Bette Davis movies, whose plots underline the strong moral substance of the movies that Americans flocked to in this bygone, pre-1960s era. The first is *The Old Maid* (1939), directed by Edmund Goulding, based on the novel by Edith Wharton and stage adaptation by Zoe Akins. In the Civil War South, Charlotte Lovell (Bette) makes a woman's grievous mistake with the young man she loves, Clem (frequent co-star George Brent), who earlier had fallen for the wiles of her selfish sister, Delia (Miriam Hopkins). Except Delia, after having come between them, jilted Clem for a wealthy man, and Clem had gone to Charlotte for sympathy. Charlotte later gives birth out of wedlock and Clem is killed at Vicksburg. Her daughter, Tina (Jane Bryan) is raised as a foundling, until the sisters agree that Delia, who is now an aristocratic widow, should adopt Tina. Charlotte becomes the spinster aunt of the household. And oh! How she suffers in this movie. Because Charlotte is always trying to teach Tina moral virtue, as opposed to the spoiling she gets from her "mother" Delia, Tina comes to hate her "aunt." And Charlotte's unending, silent suffering is compounded by the knowledge that Delia bears some responsibility for wrecking her life and consigning her to the place of the stern spinster aunt, alienated from her little girl. As the film proceeds, the competitive, mean Delia sticks the knife into Charlotte more and more, often in front of the girl, in order to buy the girl's affections for herself. And Delia's knife is even sharper than appears because in real life Bette had had an affair with Miriam Hopkins's husband, director Anatole Litvak. And, perhaps even worse, Miriam had played Jezebel in the play Warners bought for Bette and which became Bette's Oscar-winning performance! What is more, Miriam Hopkins was one

actress who could match Bette on screen, her selfishness playing off Bette's silent suffering. (They were teamed again in 1943 as rival author "friends" in *Old Acquaintance*.)

After ninety minutes of this torrent of emotional blood-letting, everything works out for the best – with, to be sure, the ideal of self-sacrifice preserved. Charlotte had been on the verge of revealing the truth to Tina before deciding to take the secret to her grave. But at least Tina then comes to appreciate Charlotte's years of devotion, doing only what was best for Tina. In the finale, as Tina boards a carriage with her new husband to head off to what we know will be a good life, she bids good-bye to the now aged woman she still believes to be her ever caring spinster aunt -- and Goulding's camera moves in on a close-up of the proud Charlotte for the end, leaving this viewer with tears in his eyes. Yes, this is soap opera, but the high professionalism of the film from all concerned, not least Bette's subtle portrayal of silent suffering, raises it to a higher level.

My other favorite Bette Davis movie is *A Stolen Life* (1946), directed by the little known but accomplished Curtis Bernhardt. Bette plays twin sisters on Martha's Vineyard: the bad sister (Patricia Bosworth) whom the men all love because of her alluring, superficial qualities, and the good sister (Kate), a painter, whom the men ignore because her good qualities are seen as unexciting and boring. Both fall for the handsome man in town Bill (Glenn Ford), and of course he marries Patricia, leaving Kate to suffer alone with her painting. Later, Patricia and Kate are together on their sailing boat when they encounter a fierce storm. Kate awakens on the rocks to learn Patricia has drowned and Bill can now be hers. So she decides to assume the identity of her popular sister. However, she comes to see that the marriage had gone on the rocks (like the sailing boat) because one cannot live life based on the superficial qualities; it's what people have deep down that counts, and Bill had been greatly wounded by Patricia's bad behavior. Over time, Kate finds that what Bill wants and needs is the other sister, i.e. herself. Indeed, we see him falling in love with Kate as he comes to see her qualities. (The pause in relations between Bill and Patricia, which is continued once Kate assumes her sister's identity, covered the film with the Hollywood Production Code then in force, which of course would never have permitted the unmarried couple to live as if they were married.)

So in the end Kate dramatically reveals her true self, they become married and live happily ever after. Playing two opposites obviously was right up Bette's alley, and as always, she made the most of her opportunity.

Bette Davis fought hard for what she accomplished, and there can be no doubt that her legacy will be celebrated at her bi-centenary, after decades more movie-going pleasure for future generations.

Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline On Line's media critic.

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Editor**

Spotlight on "Expelled"

by L. Brent Bozell III

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

I confess that when the producers of Ben Stein's new documentary "Expelled" called, offering me a private screening, I was less than excited.

It is a reality of PC liberalism: There is only one credible side to an issue, and any dissent is not only rejected, it is scorned. Global warming. Gay "rights." Abortion "rights." On these and so many other issues there is enlightenment, and then there is the Idiotic Other Side. PC liberalism's power centers are the news media, the entertainment industry and academia and all are in the clutches of an unmistakable hypocrisy: Theirs is an ideology that preaches the freedom of thought and expression at every opportunity, yet practices absolute intolerance toward dissension.



Brent Bozell

Evolution is another one of those one-sided debates. We know the concept of Intelligent Design is stifled in academic circles. An entire documentary to state the obvious? You can see my reluctance to view it.

I went into the screening bored. I came out of it stunned.

Ben Stein's extraordinary presentation documents how the worlds of science and academia not only crush debate on the origins of life, but also crush the careers of professors who dare to question the Darwinian hypothesis of evolution and natural selection.

Stein asks a simple question: What if the universe began with an intelligent designer, a designer named God? He assembles a stable of academics – experts all -- who dared to question Darwinist assumptions and found themselves "expelled" from intellectual discourse as a result. They include evolutionary biologist Richard Sternberg (sandbagged at the Smithsonian), biology professor Caroline Crocker (drummed out of George Mason University), and astrophysicist Guillermo Gonzalez (blackballed at Iowa State University).

That's disturbing enough, but what Stein does next is truly shocking. He allows the principal advocates of Darwinism to speak their minds. These are experts with national reputations, regular welcomed guests on network television and the like. But the public knows them only by their careful seven-second soundbites. Stein engages them in conversation. They speak their minds. They become sputtering ranters, openly championing their sheer hatred of religion.

PC liberalism has showered accolades on atheist author Richard Dawkins' best-selling book "The God Delusion." But when Stein suggests to Dawkins that he's been critical of the Old Testament God, Dawkins protests – not that Stein is wrong, but that he's being too mild. He then reads from this jaw-dropping paragraph of his book:

"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, blood-thirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."

Dawkins has a website. Its slogan is "A clear-thinking oasis."

It's understood that God had nothing to do with the origins of life on Earth. What, then, is the alternate explanation? Stein asks these experts, and their very serious answers are priceless. One theorizes that life began somehow on the backs of crystals. Another states electric sparks from a

lightning storm created organic matter (out of nothing). Another declares that life was brought to Earth by aliens. Anything but God.

The most controversial part of the film follows Stein to the Dachau concentration camp, underlining how Darwin's theories of natural selection led to the eugenics movement, embraced by Adolf Hitler. If there is no God, but only a planetary lab waiting for scientists to perfect the human race, where can Darwinism lead? Stein insists that he isn't accusing today's Darwinists of Nazism. He points out, however, that Hitler's mad science was inspired by Darwinism.

Now that the film is complete, the evolutionist prophets featured in the film are on the warpath inveighing against it, and the alleged idiots who would lower themselves to watching it. Richard Dawkins laments how the film will solicit "cheap laughs that could only be raised in an audience of scientific ignoramus." Minnesota professor and blogger P.Z. Myers predicts the movie is "going to appeal strongly to the religious, the paranoid, the conspiracy theorists, and the ignorant — which means they're going to draw in about 90% of the American market." Myers and Dawkins now both complain they were "duped" into appearing in the movie (for pay).

Everyone should take the opportunity to see "Expelled" – if nothing else, as a bracing antidote to the atheism-friendly culture of PC liberalism. But it's far more than that. It's a spotlight on the arrogance of this movement and its leaders, a spotlight on the choking intolerance of academia, and a spotlight on the ignorance of so many who say so much, yet know so very little.

Mr. Bozell is president of the Media Research Institute

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Editor**

"Dark Past" or Complex Past?

by S.T. Karnick

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Two vintage Hollywood films recently shown on the Turner Classic Movies channel beautifully illustrated the change in the American mind, especially among the nation's elites, between the first and second halves of the twentieth century.

The films, *The Dark Past* (1948) and *Blind Alley* (1939), were presented as part of the movie channel's month-long look at psychologists in cinema. Both films were based on a 1930s play, *Blind Alley*, in which an escaped criminal and his gang take over a group of people gathered at a hunting lodge, to use the place as a hideout while they wait for a boat to take him and the gang to safety.



During a long night of waiting, the head of the household—a psychiatrist and college professor—psychoanalyzes the gang leader and figures out just what drives him to commit crimes.

The two movies are very similar in plot, but entirely different in their meanings. *The Dark Past* exemplifies the common mindset among American elites during the second half of the twentieth century: that criminal behavior is caused by bad environmental conditions that set people off on the wrong path, and that crime can be reduced by curing criminals of the mental pathologies caused by these conditions.

Hence in *The Dark Past* the psychiatrist, played by Lee J. Cobb, sets about to cure the gangster, Hal Walker (William Holden), through use of Freudian techniques. Ultimately, he discovers the single traumatic event that set Walker down the wrong path, and although the gangster must be taken into custody at the end, the psychiatrist announces rather proudly and with great certainty, "He'll never kill again."

He's probably right, in that Walker will undoubtedly be executed for having murdered a prison warden earlier in the film, but that's not what the psychiatrist means, of course. In fact, to drive the point home, the filmmakers bookend the movie with a scene in which Cobb's character, who works as a police psychiatrist, uses the film's main story line, this event from his past, to illustrate his claim that people would not commit crimes if someone would just "give them a break" at some crucial time in their life.

The 1939 version, *Blind Alley*, takes an entirely different approach. In this one, the psychiatrist, Dr. Shelby (Ralph Bellamy), analyzes the gangster, Hal Wilson (Chester Morris), with something quite different in mind. The psychiatrist tells his wife, "I'm going to stop him. . . I'm going to see that he doesn't kill anybody else. I'm going to destroy him—take his brain apart and show him the pieces. It's the only weapon I have."

Dr. Shelby knows full well that the gangster will have to kill the hostages, including Shelby, his wife, and their son, in order to avoid their informing the police as soon as he leaves, and also to ensure that they can't testify that he killed one of their party earlier in the evening.

The Dark Past simply ignored the issue of the hostages' likelihood of informing the police if left alive when the gangster leaves, and Walker has only wounded one of them in this version, not killed anyone in their presence.

It is interesting to note that the more "realistic" 1940s film makes less psychological and logical sense than the more frankly entertaining earlier movie. Some of the scenes in *The Dark Past* are nearly identical to scenes in *Blind Alley*, in fact, yet the meaning is completely different—the very opposite, actually.

For in *Blind Alley* there is never any doubt that Wilson *chooses* to do the things he does, regardless of how circumstances may have pushed him about in life. In *The Dark Past*, by contrast, Walker is forced into crime by an inner torment caused by a single trauma in his early years. It was, to be sure, a serious trauma, and it came on top of (and surely sprang from) physical (and, one presumes, mental) abuse by the boy's father.

Hence, *The Dark Past* explicitly asserts that the criminal is ultimately not fully responsible for what he has done.

The ostensibly more realistic and sophisticated film, *The Dark Past*, actually reflects a need for certainty and easy answers, whereas those who made and appreciate the seemingly simpler and less ambitious film, *Blind Alley*, are more comfortable with ambiguity and philosophical complexity.

The Dark Past, after all, represents a belief that people aren't ultimately responsible for their actions, and hence we must seek cures for what drives some of us to commit crimes. That makes things very simple: just cure these people, preferably before they harm others.

Blind Alley, by contrast, reflects the understanding that even if there are philosophical dilemmas to be considered, people will run wild if we don't hold them responsible for their actions. So we will.

In addition, *Blind Alley* does not present Wilson as a monster; during the psychotherapy scenes he is shown quite sympathetically. However, while according the gangster the basic sympathy due any human being, *Blind Alley* refuses to whitewash his actions. Whereas in *The Dark Past* Walker's trauma—his commission of a terrible betrayal while a young boy—is motivated by physical and mental abuse, in *Blind Alley* the same abuse is present, but Wilson admits that he committed the betrayal because the police offered him money to do so. In other words, he made a conscious choice to do it.

Another crucial difference is in the vitally important flashback scene in which the boy's betrayal occurs. In *The Dark Past*, the man he betrays looks vicious and cruel. In *Blind Alley*, by contrast, he looks fearful and vulnerable. The betrayal is thus much less likely to be seen as justifiable in *Blind Alley* than in the remake.

All of this shows a far greater ability to tolerate ambiguity and philosophical complexity than is manifested in *The Dark Past*.

Finally, in the end of *Blind Alley*, Dr. Shelby uses the "cure" as a means of disarming the gangster Wilson, to render him psychologically unable to shoot the police in effecting an escape. In *The Dark Past*, the cure is real, as noted earlier—which means the fortuitous circumstance of Walker having spent some time with a psychiatrist transforms him from a criminal into a better man. Hence circumstances, not individual choices, are once again shown to be responsible for human actions.

Thus the two films represent two antithetical philosophical positions that have warred throughout modernity. On one side is the Rousseauian notion that human beings are inherently good and are corrupted only by society. On the other is the idea that people are neither born perfect nor perfectible, and that society is necessary to constrain people's darker desires.

And this dilemma plays out even in the most seemingly simple places in popular culture.

S.T. Karnick is editor of the [The American Culture](#) , where this first appeared.

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Editor**

Gas Tax Holiday

by Timothy Carney

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

With gasoline prices averaging over \$3.38 for a gallon of regular, [Sen. John McCain](#) has proposed a summertime gas-tax holiday. It's probably the most eye-catching and voter-pleasing plank in the economic platform the presumptive nominee unveiled on Tax Day, but it certainly has its detractors: those on the receiving end of the gas tax.

Every dime Americans pay into taxes ends up in someone else's pocket. In the case of gasoline taxes, the beneficiaries are mostly the corporations that get state and federal contracts for road building and repair. Sure enough, one of the first objections to McCain's gas-tax holiday came from the American Road & [Transportation Builders Association](#) (ARTBA).



Tim Carney

The federal fuel excise tax adds 18.4 cents to every gallon of gasoline you buy. That money does not go into the same general fund as your income taxes; it instead is placed in the Federal Highway Trust Fund (FHTF). FHTF money for the most part is spent on highways. To a degree, this resembles a user fee: People who use the roads are paying for the roads.

Of course, people who drive only on local roads pay the gas tax, too, even if they don't use the highways. Tolls would be a direct way to ensure that highway users paid for highway building and repairs, but ARTBA and contractors in general oppose tolls.

ARTBA's president, [Peter Ruane](#), last summer wrote a letter to [The Wall Street Journal](#) opposing a plan by many governors to shift road management over to private companies that would institute tolls.

But high gasoline prices get drivers pretty upset. Democrats try to capitalize on this anger by assailing oil companies for their "windfall profits." But in many parts of the country, the government pockets more from each gallon you buy than [Exxon](#) does.

The average state gas tax is 15.5 cents per gallon, and the highest is more than 32 cents. [Georgia's](#) 7.5 cents-per-gallon tax is the lowest, meaning all Americans are giving at least 25.9 cents per gallon to state and federal governments, comparable to the oil company's per-gallon profit.

For McCain, promising a cut in gas taxes is a good way to gain media attention, address the struggles of middle-class families in this economic slowdown, and build his bonafides with skeptical tax-cutting conservatives.

ARTBA, whose members see the highway trust fund as the source of their revenues, immediately issued a press release warning that "this proposal would have severe negative economic impacts," which is kind of like your children objecting that a cut in allowance will have "severe negative economic impacts."

Reading through ARTBA's lobbying filings, you detect an ideological consistency. The association "lobbied for increased airport infrastructure investment through raising the passenger facility charge;" "urged Congress to fully fund the federal highway and transit programs and increase aviation investment;" "urged members of Congress to provide increased resources...;" and "urged [committees] to generate new revenues...." The consistent philosophy here is tax and spend.

The rest of the industry is the same. The [American Public Works Association](#), whose members are contractors and government agencies, held a Web seminar titled "Innovative Funding — Getting to

the End of the Rainbow.” Among the “innovative funding techniques” pushed in this program were “street fees” and sales taxes.

Unfortunately for taxpayers and drivers, McCain’s proposals don’t threaten these tax bandits too much. He called for a one-time suspension of the tax, from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

After complaints from the highway lobby and liberal groups that cutting gas tax would deplete their slush fund, McCain quickly called for that FHTF hole to be filled by general revenues — the income taxes you paid last month.

Gas taxes are among the irritating to drivers but among the most coveted by the tax bandits: politicians who like distributing the money and labor unions and contractors who enjoy receiving it. When McCain proposed even a minor tweak to the scheme, he felt the heat from the vested interests.

We may need new highways, and of course highways always need repair. It’s better that drivers pay for these roads than non-drivers, but a more demand-driven system — such as tolls — would give us the roads we want. Instead, we get the roads the politicians and the road builders want.

Timothy Carney is a columnist with the Washington Examiner, where this first appeared.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Hillary Health, Again

by John Goodman

Issue 106 - April 23, 2008

Barack Obama had it right from the beginning. Hillary's health plan, he said, would try to force people to buy something they cannot afford and then impose a heavy fine on them when they don't buy it. At the end of the day, they will be worse off than they were at the outset.

Now Hillary has a rejoinder. She says she will limit the amount people have to pay in premiums to, say, [5% or 10% of their incomes](#).

What's wrong with that? A lot. Here are 10 problems that spring to mind. [To avoid the charge of hypocrisy, let me say upfront: I have always favored a kinder, gentler version of individual pay-or-play, [outlined here](#) and elsewhere]



John Goodman

1. Failing to Control Costs. For the past three or four decades, per capita health care spending has been growing at twice the rate of income and there are no signs it is abating. Sen. Clinton has no realistic proposal to change that fact. In fact, no Democratic presidential candidate has had any plausible plan for cost control, unless you count Dennis Kucinich (who implicitly endorsed health care rationing). So no matter what the situation in year one, a mandate will require more of family income in year two. [More still in year three](#).

2. Imposing a Tax. A mandate is a tax. Forcing people to buy something they do not want to buy is equivalent to taxing them - at least at the margin. And because of (1), it is a tax that will claim a growing share of income through time.

3. Creating an Entitlement. A pledge to limit an individual's burden to no more than 5% or 10% of income is the equivalent of creating a new entitlement for everyone who reaches the cap. How big would this entitlement be? That depends on how you define income and what health expenses you include. The average household already spends 5.6% of income out of pocket on health care and health spending for all purposes is 20% of personal income for the nation as a whole!

***Note:** The Medicare Trustees the other day said we have already [promised more than \\$100 trillion in Social Security and Medicare benefits](#) over and above premiums and dedicated taxes. And the Congressional Budget Office finds that on the current path, Medicare and Medicaid will crowd out every other federal government program by midcentury. [Hillary's plan](#) would extend this entitlement madness to everyone else.*

4. Creating Perverse Incentives for Employers. Our employers pay our health insurance premiums because tax subsidies encourage them to do so. Yet Hillary's cap offers a more enticing subsidy, to be had by shifting more of the premium payment back to the employee. This perverse incentive wouldn't exist if the plan were rational. As Victor Fuchs and Ezekiel Emanuel point out, economic studies show and common sense confirms that the employer premium payment is a substitute for money wages. Employees (not employers) pay for their own health care benefits by accepting less in wages. [So in calculating the employee burden, we should always add together the employer and employee premium shares](#).

5. Perverse Incentives for Employees. Rising health care costs have been crowding out wage increases for low- and middle-income workers. For that reason, cost control is in everyone's self interest. But under Sen. Clinton's premium control cap, employees would no longer have an interest in cost control. They would face the same incentives now faced by Medicare and Medicaid patients - to spend, spend, spend.

6. Paying for Health Care by Taxing Capital. Sen. Clinton estimates that her plan will cost about \$110 billion a year. She would pay for about \$60 billion of that amount by repealing the "Bush tax cuts for the rich." Which means raising the tax rate on capital gains and dividend income for wealthy people. Which means taxing capital. Which means a lower capital stock and a smaller national income in the future.

Note: It's always bad to tax capital to pay for current consumption. To tax capital to pay for wasteful health care spending that promises miniscule health benefits at the margin is really, really, really bad.

7. Ignoring the Latest IRS Returns. To add to this list of misery and woe, there have been no tax cuts for the rich. Their tax rates are down, but their tax payments are way up. And there is every reason to think that reversing the process and raising rates will cause total tax payments to go down. This gives a whole new meaning to the idea of all pain and no gain.

8. Making Things Up. Sen. Clinton plans to pay for the remaining \$50 billion by eliminating waste and inefficiency. Her ideas are all the latest fads: electronic medical records systems (designed in Washington, D.C.), pay-for-performance (bureaucrats telling doctors how to practice medicine), and evidence-based medicine (more bureaucrats telling doctors how to practice medicine). Have similar ideas saved money anywhere before? Not that anyone can verify.

9. Taxing the Poor. Sen. Clinton is not totally unrealistic. She acknowledges that there may be a need for more revenues. In that case, what better source to turn to than, well, poor people. "I'm a big believer in raising tobacco taxes," she says - even though they hit low-income families the hardest. She acknowledges that "at some point there's going to be diminishing returns," by which I think she means there is only so much you can squeeze out of the smoking class. But short of that point, "sure, why not? I don't have any objection to that."
<http://www.ncpa.org/pub/st/st300/st300.pdf>

[This is an amazing admission by the way. Politicians who favor tobacco taxes almost always say the goal is to discourage smoking, not to maximize tax revenue from smokers.]

10. Regulating Insurance Company Overhead. Imagine a law requiring General Motors to spend no more than 15% of its revenues on "administrative overhead." Would that be a good idea? How about for Microsoft? Or Xerox? Forget for a moment that no one knows how to measure "administrative costs." What if we did know what these words mean? Is that something government should regulate? Hillary is willing to consider it for health insurance even as she proposes a laundry list of new administrative duties for insurers - better chronic care management, better preventive care management, electronic medical records, etc.

Is that enough wrong to convince you Hilary Health is not much better the second time around than the first?

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

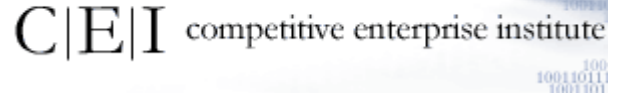
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Flawed Financial Blueprint

by Richard Morrison

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

In [a new study \(http://cei.org/node/20573\)](http://cei.org/node/20573), Competitive Enterprise Institute scholars size up the Treasury Department's recent proposal to restructure the way financial institutions are regulated, finding that the plan has serious flaws and would effect a massive, and unnecessary, expansion of federal power.



The authors, CEI Senior Fellow [Eli Lehrer](#) and Center for Entrepreneurship Director [John Berlau](#), evaluate the 220-page Treasury document *Blueprint for a Modernized Financial Regulatory Structure* on a point by point basis, praising its sensible elements and taking the planners to task for missteps in their policy brief "A Flawed *Blueprint*: A Free Market Analysis of the Treasury Department's Financial Regulation Proposal."

"In some cases the *Blueprint* does ask important questions about what government should do. In fields as diverse as insurance and mortgage lending, it asks fundamental questions and comes to sensible solutions," write Lehrer and Berlau. "However, in far too many other places, it proposes creating new bureaucratic structures with new powers and new missions as if these will automatically result in a better financial system for the United States. They will not."

Motivated in part by widespread unease over dislocations in the subprime mortgage market, the *Blueprint* includes an array of proposals, many of which had previously been under consideration independent of problems in the housing sector. Thus, the report takes something of a "kitchen sink" approach to financial regulation, including provisions relating to insurance chartering, credit unions, payment systems, deposit insurance and more. It is not clear what, other than a poorly defined desire for "stability," the long term goals of the *Blueprint* actually are.

"America needs a fundamental rethinking of its system of financial regulation that asks questions about what activities properly fall under governmental regulation, which ones might be dealt with through semi-private means, and which ones belong entirely in the hands of the free market," write Lehrer and Berlau. "The *Blueprint* fails on this fundamental count."

Richard Morrison is Director of Media Relations at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. CEI is a non-profit, non-partisan public policy group dedicated to the principles of free enterprise and limited government.

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Editor**

Earth Day Riots

by Alan Caruba

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Since 1970, April 22 has been celebrated as Earth Day. It is generally regarded as the date of the birth of the modern environmental movement.

This year it was greeted with something different—food riots. It was not a coincidence. The food riots occurring around the world are the consequence of the environmental movement's insistence upon government mandates for biofuels, based on its claims that this would reduce global warming and save the planet.



Alan Caruba

Earth Day had its antecedents in the United Nations international environmental program. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has been the leading proponent of the dangers of manmade global warming endangering the planet. But it is all based on computer models rather than actual empirical science. It was all so speculative that an extensive environmental campaign in the 1970s warning of a coming Ice Age was changed to one that began in the 1980s about "global warming."

Consider the bad "science" in Rachel Carson's claims about DDT that resulted in its ban. As a result, millions have since died for lack of the protection it affords against malaria and other insect-borne diseases. A full-scale attack on all pesticides and herbicides, critical to disease control and the world's food supply, continues.

In 1968 Paul Ehrlich's book, "The Population Bomb", included the presumably scientific claim that "the battle to feed all of humanity is over." He later claimed the Green Revolution, based on the modification of crops to resist drought and predation, would fail. Wrong again. The linking of population and food consumption is a consistent environmental theme.

The claim that greenhouse gas emissions must be drastically reduced is an attack on all forms of industrialization, i.e., corporations and the globalization that require the use of energy resources such as coal, natural gas, and oil. Energy is the single reason for America's and the world's economic growth and the enhancement of life through all manner of technologies involving transportation, communication, and agricultural advances.

By blocking access to energy such as the ban on oil extraction in ANWR or off the coasts of the United States, by lobbying against the building of coal-fired and nuclear electricity generation plants, by arguing for inefficient, highly subsidized solar and wind alternatives, Greens are creating a national energy crisis. How insane is it to ban the purchase of incandescent light bulbs?

There is no scientific justification for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon dioxide represents a minuscule 0.038% of the Earth's atmosphere and increases in CO2 always follow climate change. It does not initiate it.

Environmentalists have spread lies about all manner of food consumption. Eating beef is high on their list of grievances. Not incidentally, corn is a major feedstock for beef and other animals that are part of our daily diet. The Associated Press recently reported that "Worldwide demand for corn to feed livestock and to make biofuel is putting enormous pressure on global supply." From prehistoric times to the present, meat has been one of mankind's most invaluable sources of our health.

The result of all the misinformation and resulting bad policy has been less energy, poorer quality food and increasing costs for food, especially for the very poorest and most vulnerable in the less developed world. The increasing violent and widespread food riots occurring worldwide are a direct result of the way the price of corn and soy has been artificially driven upward by environmental

demands for "biofuels." When Congress set in motion the mandate that countless bushels of corn be diverted as a food source for humans and livestock to the production of ethanol, it started a cascade of food shortages worldwide that were further exacerbated by weather related crop failures.

Next year Earth Day would be a good day to begin to take back the Earth from those who would deceive us and harm us.

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>.

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Editor**

Climate Myths

by Paul Driessen

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

America is in the throes of a major housing and financial downturn, soaring food and energy costs, rising unemployment and near recession. But legislators, bureaucrats and presidential candidates are falling all over themselves to restrict fossil fuel use, advance climate change legislation – and thereby increase energy prices, oil imports, and costs for families and businesses.

Now even President Bush wants action on climate change. “Reasonable and responsible” legislation is needed, the White House asserts, to avert a “regulatory nightmare” that from overlapping state and federal rules. Are we supposed to think costly *federal* regulations, emission mandates and hidden cap-and-trade taxes are reasonable and responsible?



Earth warmed slightly over the last quarter century, as it emerged further from the Little Ice Age, and humans likely played a role. However, literally hundreds of climate scientists say catastrophic climate changes and dominant human influences are over-hyped myths.

Our planet has experienced numerous climate shifts, they point out, including prolonged ice ages, a 400-year Medieval Warm Period and a 500-year Little Ice Age. Climate scientists still don't understand what caused these events – or the temperature roller coaster of the last century: as carbon dioxide levels rose steadily, temperatures climbed from 1910 to 1945, fell between 1945 and 1975, and increased again from 1975 to 1998, notes Syun-Ichi Akasofu, founding director of the International Arctic Research Center.

Five of the ten hottest years in US history were in the 1920s and 1930s. Average global temperatures stabilized in 1998, and then fell 1.1 degrees F the past twelve months, satellite measurements show. Ice core data demonstrate that, over thousands of years, rising temperatures *preceded* higher atmospheric carbon dioxide levels, by hundreds of years – the exact opposite of climate chaos hypotheses. Interior Greenland and Antarctica appear to be gaining ice mass; they're certainly not melting.

These inconvenient facts have forced alarmists to rely on computer models that generate Frankenclime monsters realistic enough to scare people into believing climate Armageddon is nigh.

Climate models do help scientists evaluate possible consequences of changing economic growth, emission, cloud cover and other variables. But they can't reproduce the actual climate of the past century. They cannot make accurate predictions, even one year in the future, much less fifty. They do not represent reality, and should not be relied on to guide public policy.

Models reflect the assumptions and hypotheses that go into them – and our still limited understanding of complex, turbulent climate processes that involve the sun, oceans, land masses and atmosphere. They do a poor job of dealing with the effects of water vapor, precipitation and high cirrus clouds on temperatures and climate, because the underlying physics aren't well understood, notes MIT meteorology professor Richard Lindzen.

Like the UN's politicized IPCC climate control panel, models also place too much emphasis on carbon dioxide. They pay insufficient attention to extraterrestrial factors like changes in the Earth's irregular orbit around the sun, solar energy levels, and solar winds that appear to influence the level of cosmic rays reaching Earth, and thus the formation of cloud cover and penetration of infrared radiation from the sun. They likewise fail to incorporate the profound effects that periodic shifts in Pacific Ocean currents have on temperatures and sea ice in the Arctic.

When the US National Assessment compared the results of two top-tier computer models for US geographic regions, the models frequently generated precisely opposite rainfall scenarios, University of Alabama at Huntsville climatologist John Christy points out. Depending on which model was used, the Dakotas and Rio Grande valley would supposedly become complete deserts or huge swamps; the Southeastern US would become a jungle or semi-arid grassland.

Fully 85 percent of all the energy Americans use comes from fossil fuels. Less than 0.5% is wind power, which generates electricity only eight hours a day, on average. Over half of our electricity is produced by coal, because it is plentiful and affordable, and modern power plants emit few pollutants, but do generate abundant plant food (the same carbon dioxide we exhale when we breathe).

Any climate change regime would impose higher prices and new restrictions on coal-generated electricity, oil and gas drilling, air and ground transportation, and heating, air conditioning, agriculture and manufacturing. In fact, any facility or activity that generates more than 250 tons of carbon dioxide per year could be heavily regulated: bakeries, breweries, soft drink makers, factories, apartment and office buildings, dairy farms and countless others. Permit, regulatory, oversight, anti-fraud monitoring and polar bear endangerment rules would cost billions in still more highly regressive, hidden taxes.

Energy-killer activists want to slash US carbon dioxide emissions some 80% below 1990 levels by 2050, to stabilize global CO² levels, even as China, India and other developing countries continue their economic and emissions boom. The last time the United States emitted such low amounts of CO² was 1905! Where and how will your family and business achieve 80% emission reductions?

Welcome to the good old days – to Eco-Camelot, where “the climate must be perfect all year.” Poor minority and blue-collar families will be in for some serious belt-tightening, millions of jobs will head overseas, and demand for unemployment benefits, mortgage bailouts and energy welfare will soar, as state and federal coffers run dry.

Worst, in the end, all the cutbacks and sacrifices won't make any difference, because our climate is not driven by carbon dioxide – but by the same natural forces that have caused major and minor climate changes since the dawn of time, say scientists like Roy Spencer, Robert Balling and Fred Singer.

Climate change is no longer science. It's politics – and Democrats would be thrilled if a Republican president took the lead – and Republicans take the blame when the bills start rolling in.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Congress of Racial Equality and Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise, and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power · Black death* (www.Eco-Imperialism.com).

**E-mail the
Editor**

Gore Ads vs. Facts

by Dennis Avery
Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

Al Gore is launching a \$300 million ad campaign to support the banning of fossil fuels. At the same time, the most recent news is that up to 400 billion barrels of light, sweet crude oil for America's future can be pumped from under Manitoba and North Dakota. That's more oil than Saudi Arabia and Russia put together.

Will America listen to Mr. Gore and give up its autos, airplanes, air conditioners and the rest of modern life if the oil to power them is affordable and "home-grown"?



Dennis T. Avery

This high-quality oil isn't controlled by Moslem zealots, or hidden under a federal wildlife refuge. Moreover, it can now be cost-effectively retrieved with computer-directed horizontal oil wells, probably at \$20 to \$40 per barrel.

What is the alternative? Because we have listened to Vice President Gore and his friends, the U.S. is blocking new coal-fired power plants. With no coal to burn, natural gas is becoming impossibly expensive. Biofuels are proving worse for the environment than gasoline. Nuclear is "dangerous." Erratic and expensive windmills have seemed the best the West could do.

But the Bakken Formation in the Great Plains holds a monster oil deposit. Estimates of its potential range as high as the U.S. Geological Survey's figure of more than 400 billion barrels. The Saudis have 260 billion barrels of proven reserves, the Russians just 60 billion.

Until recently, Bakken was thought too expensive to drill. But oil is now at \$100 per barrel. Even more important, new computer-controlled drills can go sideways for hundreds of feet to suck the petroleum out of oil-bearing shale strata, instead of just punching short vertical holes through shallow rock layers. At the higher end of its potential, Bakken could change the political economics of the world. One hundred billion barrels would be worth \$9 trillion at today's prices.

In evaluating the massive Gore media campaign, Americans should also consider:

- The net global warming since 1940 is a miniscule 0.2 degree C, even after 70 years of unprecedented human CO² emissions.
- Meanwhile the forcing power of additional CO² has declined by perhaps three-fourths. There can't be much left.
- Seven years ago, NASA discovered a huge cloud-controlled "heat vent" in the sky over the Pacific. It emitted enough heat during 1980-2000 to have dealt with a doubling of greenhouse gases.
- The earth has not warmed since 1998, despite a continuing rise in atmospheric CO².
- NASA now admits the oceans "stopped warming" about 4-5 years ago. The end of the warming trend was documented by 3,000 high-tech Argo ocean-diving buoys.
- The planet actually cooled in 2007, attested by three major temperature monitoring sites. The decline was apparently predicted by a downturn in sunspots that began in 2000.

The earth's recent warming seems to be part of the moderate natural 1,500-year climate cycle controlled by the sun—which was discovered in the Greenland ice cores in 1983. The three discoverers of the cycle won the Tyler Prize, the "environmental Nobel," in 1996.

Short-term, there's a strong 80 percent correlation with both the sunspots and the cycle in Pacific sea temperatures. Both now seem to be predicting a moderate 22.5-year decline in global temperatures. We had a similar decline from 1940 to 1975—also while CO² levels were rising. Such

"double sunspot cycles" factor heavily in our records of rainfall, droughts and monsoons, as well as in temperatures.

Bottom line: We now find massive man-made warming only in unverified computer models that have consistently predicted far more warming than we've gotten. With a downturn in temperatures—and lots of homegrown oil—Al Gore's anti-fossil ad campaign may not be fully persuasive.

Dennis 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.

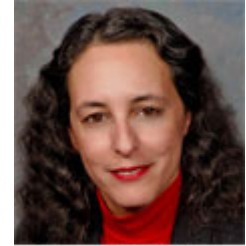
**E-mail the
Editor**

The People or the Constitution?

by Lisa Fabrizio

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

Gilbert Keith Chesterton once famously said, "[It's not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting. It's that it has never really being tried.](#)" Part of the reason is that too many folks feel that Christianity--with its moral absolutes and especially its prohibitions--is outdated and unworthy of modern interest. One might also apply this gem of wisdom to those who rail against the U.S. Constitution; another apparently obsolete belief system.



Lisa Fabrizio

One such of those is Sanford Levinson, a law professor at the University of Texas and the author of a book called, "Our Undemocratic Constitution: Where the Constitution Goes Wrong (And How We the People Can Correct It)." Mr. Levinson, it seems, is feeling a bit hostile toward some of the foundational aspects of the law of the land, calling it, "a distinctly 18th century document that inflicts significant damage upon our 21st century reality."

In an opinion piece for the [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), Levinson laments the veto power of the President: "We are long overdue for a national discussion of whether we are well served by our peculiar form of government that places such a power in the hands of a single individual." This alone should be enough to send shivers down the spine of those who revere our unique system of checks and balances. But there's more.

When the Founders wrote and ratified the Constitution, many were dead set against the enumeration of specific rights listed in the Bill of Rights. The thinking was, if we only set out certain rights as inviolate, a future government might trample at will on the rest. Sadly, we have seen that this is all too true. Even the beautifully and plainly written 9th and especially the 10th Amendment-- The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people--have not stopped the carnage.

In fact, many of our current problems are a result of too much monkeying with the Constitution. For example, Levinson and others complain about the dangers of a 'lame duck' president with veto power, but had the 22nd Amendment not interfered with the process, this fear would be practically non-existent.

The idea of electing the president popularly instead of using the Electoral College is one of the main planks of liberals everywhere, and one that is planted even in the minds of our schoolchildren. Levinson writes;

Lest one believes that presidents, at least, represent the country as a whole, one must realize that our bizarre system of electing presidents through the Electoral College assures that almost no candidates any longer run truly national campaigns. So even if first-term presidents are held accountable via having to run for re-election, they focus only on a mixture of their "base" and "battleground" states, which leads to remarkable pandering to the latter and an almost total disregard for "wrong-color" states.

Surely the professor realizes that if the Electoral College were scrapped, candidates would only need to campaign in areas of concentrated population; namely, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and other liberal strongholds. But, isn't that the point?

And if supporters of the popular election of the executive have their way, the next thing to go would logically be the present form of the U.S. Senate. After all, the principal that gives the less populous states a say in the election of the president, is the same which sustains their equality in the upper house.

What Mr. Levinson and others like him fail to acknowledge can be summed up in the very title of our nation; the United States of America. In other words, the Constitution was set up to loosely govern a federation of smaller governments; those of the individual states. The president was meant to be elected by the states and not by purely democratic means. The Founders were well acquainted with the dangers of direct democracy.

That is why the noxious 17th Amendment, which called for the popular election of senators, so upset the delicate balance between the states and the federal government. Senators, as opposed to representatives in "The People's House," were intended to be chosen by state legislatures to protect the interests of those states against federal power, not to add to it.

Just as the cure for our wounded public morality is more religion, not less; so too, the only cure for our governmental woes is greater adherence to the Constitution as written, and not its constant dilution. Because, just as religion reigns in sinful human behavior, the restrictions placed on Washington by the Constitution should similarly curb governmental abuse. It's not the U.S. Constitution that has been found wanting; it is those who have sworn to uphold it.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

Sore Losers

by David Keene

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

Those who win elections find it easy to extol the virtues of democracy and the wisdom of voters smart enough to choose them rather than their opponents, but losers tend to be far less enthusiastic about either.

This simple fact was brought home to me recently. I was in Milwaukee to attend a political conference and found conservatives there basking in the afterglow of an election in which a conservative candidate for the state's Supreme Court ousted a liberal incumbent. His victory was widely covered nationally, as the state's court had been in the hands of liberal judges until that election, so conservatives were cheering the outcome.



David Keene

Liberal politicians, commentators and newspaper editorialists, however, were outraged at the outcome and were quickly concluding that the state's voters are just too darned dumb to be entrusted with such weighty matters as voting on Supreme Court candidates. Some argue that the good guy — that would be the liberal — lost because the voters were hoodwinked or because the election turned on the wrong questions. Others were convinced that since the incumbent was black, the outcome was proof that Wisconsin's voters must be racists or worse. The governor, a liberal whose desires could be thwarted by the new court majority, decried the election results as a "tragedy" for all these reasons.

Liberals certainly don't have a monopoly on whining when they lose. We conservatives do it all the time. Losing candidates of all persuasions would far rather blame their opponent's unfair tactics or the media or the ignorance of the voters to whom they had to appeal for support rather than their own inadequacies or positions on the issues. This isn't news.

What is, or should be, news is the tendency on the left these days to conclude from all this that if voters aren't smart enough to make the right decisions, they shouldn't be allowed to decide at all. Thus, in Wisconsin, as Milwaukee Journal Sentinel columnist Patrick McIlheran pointed out, Democratic legislators quickly proposed abolishing judicial elections because, as he put it, "[Wisconsin voters] cannot be trusted to choose a judiciary."

Now, the argument over whether judges ought to be appointed or elected has gone on in many states for decades or longer, and a case can be made for either means of choosing judges, but Wisconsin liberals were happy enough with the electoral process when they were winning; when voters were smarter. It was only when they came up short in a crucial election that they decided some things are just too important to trust to the people.

There appears to me to be growing support among liberals for policies that would short-circuit the democratic process out of a conviction that voters who don't agree with them or vote as they should are evil, misled, misinformed or ignorant. The possibility that intelligent, informed, good-hearted people could actually disagree with them is unthinkable. Thus, to reduce the role of such folks, they come up with schemes to control or reduce the impact of political speech, shut down talk radio and demonize or even criminalize the utterances of those whose views they find offensive.

The liberal response to an electoral failure in Wisconsin is in sync with the liberal view that Bush had to have stolen the last election because smart, informed voters would never have voted for him and that unions shouldn't be required to win the support of those they seek to represent in an election because since workers don't always side with them there has to be something wrong with the system.

I've always believed that voters tend to be smarter than the politicians who dismiss them. They're pretty good at spotting phonies and tend to make their decisions based on the real issues raised in campaigns rather than the issues on which the candidates appealing to them for support would like. They're not always right, but in the long run their record is better than that of the folks who would shut them up and out.

Still, ours remains both a free and democratic country. Losers have a right to whine and even to believe that the voters who reject them are stupid, but things can get dangerous when those who come up short at the ballot box conclude that the system has to be changed to protect them and their views from the whims of an electorate too unenlightened to give them the support they think they deserve.

It is down that road that one runs into Hugo Chavez and, eventually, Robert Mugabe.

David Keene is the chairman of the American Conservative Union

**E-mail the
Editor**

Ignoring Education

by Paul Weyrich

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

Throughout this prolonged presidential campaign the three main candidates – Senators John S. McCain III (R-AZ), Barack H. Obama (D-IL), and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) – have spent most of their time arguing about the war in Iraq, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the housing crisis, the economy and healthcare. Oh yes, and change of one sort or another, although the specifics of their calls for change are difficult to discern. Of course, details do not provide good soundbytes for the nightly news, whereas “change” does, but educated voters will want to know what they should expect for the next four years.



Paul M. Weyrich

One of the issues the candidates have not discussed is education. What is the role of the Federal Government in education and what do they propose to do about the abysmal public schools in America? These questions and more for the most part have remained unanswered in their speeches. A quick perusal of their campaign websites, however, gives some revealing answers about their positions on education.

McCain, the Republican nominee, begins by stating that he “understands that we are a nation committed to equal opportunity, and there is no equal opportunity without equal access to excellent education.” Fair enough. He proceeds to note that parents should be able to choose the school their children attend, criticizing Members of Congress who send their own children to private schools but refuse to support school choice for others. Then he uses another “c” word – “we should let [schools] compete for the most effective, character-building teachers, hire them, and reward them.” Choice and competition, two very effective tools for reforming our schools. I would add a third “c” to that list – curriculum – but, as education should be a local issue, curriculum must be reformed at the state or district level.

Finally, McCain claims that he will “pursue reforms that address the underlying cultural problems in our education system - a system that still seeks to avoid genuine accountability and responsibility for producing well-educated children.” What these cultural problems are he does not say. Most likely they would begin with the stranglehold teachers’ unions have over the education system, stifling any dissent from or attempt to change the status quo. There is also the problem of family structure and support in many working-class families but the President of the United States cannot impose a top-down change in the nuclear family. The family is the building block of American society, not another social group to be manipulated by bureaucrats and politicians (though some certainly are trying).

Clinton is more precise in her education proposal. She begins by explaining her previous work with children, including a stint as a staff attorney for the Children’s Defense Fund and various posts in Arkansas before her sojourn as First Lady. Her current education proposal outlines new policies for each stage of education, beginning with early childhood. She wants prekindergarten for all four-year olds and nurse home visitations to help new parents develop parenting skills. The former would do nothing to change the current dismal state of education while the latter would be an expensive and invasive new mandate.

For K-12 Clinton proposes ending No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which is not a bad idea. She also wants to “recruit and retain thousands more outstanding teachers and principals, especially in urban and rural areas” and “cut the minority drop-out rate in half,” although her solution is to throw \$1 billion more at them, providing “multiple pathways to graduation,” whatever that means. My favorite, though, is her goal of creating “‘Green Schools’ in order to reduce energy costs and eliminate environmental hazards that can hinder children’s development.” What more do I need to say. Education problem solved right there!

Obama's layout is similar to Clinton's but begins by listing the five problems with American education as he sees them. They are NCLB's lack of funding, America's low scores in reading and math, the high dropout rate, teacher retention and soaring college costs. To alleviate these problems, Obama wants to expand Head Start, help states move to voluntary, universal pre-school; fund NCLB; make math and science a national priority (while not mentioning history or English); and create and fund various other programs geared specifically toward poor and minority students.

All three candidates fail to address properly the problems in American education. McCain is on the right track by emphasizing competition and choice but he lacks specific proposals. Clinton and Obama both want public education at an earlier age, which is unlikely to solve our problems, and to throw more money at a broken system instead of doing the really difficult task of repairing the system and cleaning out those who want no change, no choice, no competition.

What these candidates should offer is a return to local control, an emphasis upon improved and more rigorous curricula, school choice and competition, and a significant reduction in the power of teachers' unions. These would begin the process of improvement that we desperately need and make education more flexible and responsive to peoples needs. And that is real change we could believe in.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

A Culture Project

by Michael D'Virgilio

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

The Ivory Tower Leans Left," [the Wall Street Journal](#) informs us, in [an interesting recent article](#).

To say that the academy "leans" left is a bit of an understatement. It's more like Academe is grossly dominated by the left, but the point of the article is to investigate why this is so. WSJ Deputy Taste Editor Naomi Schaeffer Riley reviews a study about exactly this question and makes some interesting anecdotal points and conjecture on others.

She concludes that it may just be because conservatives don't like hanging out with people who get doctorates and thus don't pursue careers in academia.

OK, then. Now we know.

But the real question, the most important question, isn't why this is so, but whether it is a good thing.

Should conservatives abdicate from any involvement in higher education, and K-12 public education for that matter, and leave it all to the left?

The obvious answer should be, hell no!

At least, I think the answer should be obvious. The vast majority of America's children spend several hours a day from age four until they are eighteen or twenty-one being indoctrinated by a liberal education industry. There are plenty of classically liberal and conservative alternatives in the private sector, but not many parents are able to take advantage of them.

In addition, most kids do not have parents who can or will teach them to question the liberal bromides, platitudes, silliness, and outright lies they hear daily, let alone teach them to resist and think for themselves. After all, most parents have been educated in the same system.

The consequences of this leftist hegemony are obvious: the left largely sets the cultural and political agenda in America.

But the conservative movement can't control who chooses to go into higher education, right?

Of course we can't, but that doesn't mean there isn't anything we can do. There are alternatives other than total control and utter abandonment of the battle, although most conservatives seem to forget this (and the left certainly lives by that notion.)

I've decided to do something about this, and the general cultural weakness of the conservative movement and conservatism in general.

Culture will always trump politics. If we are to move America back to the founding principals that made this country the greatest on earth, it won't be through politics only, or through the intellectual foment around politics only, at which conservatives are very good. Instead, it will come through what I call the four great cultural influence professions.

These are:

- Hollywood , entertainment, and the arts;
- academia and education;

- law, the legal profession, and the courts; and
- journalism and media.

Conservatives must think about how these cultural influence professions affect culture, and should recruit young conservatives to make their careers within them.

Until our culture strongly reflects conservative, traditional values, political efforts will not bear very much fruit, and none of it will be long-lasting. We've tried changing America through politics, from the top down. Memo to conservatives: It doesn't work.

The frustration among conservatives today is palpable, because in spite of the magnificent growth of the movement and of conservative voices throughout the media, the philosophy of liberal statism still dominates American politics, even more than during the 1990s, and this is true in both political parties, although less so among Republicans.

What is urgently needed is a conservative or classically liberal movement that will change things from the bottom up. The right must seek to influence culture first, and then politics will largely take care of itself. Our political efforts will certainly bear more fruit—America will come to look more like the society our founders envisioned, and less like the society FDR and the Un-American Civil Liberties Union have given us today.

And instead of just talking about this, I and a few other likeminded individuals are doing something about it. We're not ready to share it with the world just yet, but will soon be in a position to do so. In the meantime, I can tell you some of the principles behind it, and hope to enlist your support as we move forward.

It is a project that takes into account the inability of politics alone to create the kind of society in which we wish to live: one that respects the principals of our founding, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, of ordered liberty before a Creator who gave us rights that do not come from government. It is a society of government that is limited in its scope, maximizes personal responsibility and denies the temptation of victimhood.

We will not get such a government until we have a culture that feeds its people the positive vision of such a society. What we need is a culture project.

**E-mail the
Editor**

The Lawyers' Party

by Bruce Walker

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

The Democratic Party has become the Lawyers' Party. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton are lawyers. Bill Clinton and Michelle Obama are lawyers. John Edwards, the other Democrat candidate for president, is a lawyer and so is his wife Elizabeth. Every Democrat nominee since 1984 went to law school (although Al Gore did not graduate.) Every Democrat vice presidential nominee since 1976, except for Lloyd Benson, went to law school. Look at the Democrat Party in Congress: the Majority Leader in each house is a lawyer.



The Republican Party is different. President Bush and Vice President Cheney were not lawyers, but businessmen. The leaders of the Republican Revolution were not lawyers. Newt Gingrich was a history professor; Tom Delay was a small businessman; and Dick Arney was an economist. House Minority Leader Boehner was a plastic manufacturer. The former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist is a heart surgeon.

Who was the last Republican president who was a lawyer? Gerald Ford, who left office thirty-one years ago and who barely won the Republican nomination as a sitting president, running against Ronald Reagan in 1976. The Republican Party is made up of real people doing real work.

The Democratic Party is made up of lawyers. Democrats mock and scorn men who create wealth, like Cheney, or who heal the sick like Frist, or who immerse themselves in history like Gingrich.

The Lawyers' Party sees these sorts of people, who provide goods and services that people want, as the enemies of America. And so we have seen the procession of official enemies in the eyes of the Lawyers' Party grow. Against whom do Hillary and Obama rail? Pharmaceutical companies, oil companies, hospitals, manufacturers, fast food restaurant chains, large retail businesses, bankers and anyone producing anything of value in our nation.

This is the natural consequence of viewing everything through the eyes of lawyers. Lawyers solve problems by successfully representing their clients, in this case the American people. Lawyers seek to have new laws passed, they seek to win lawsuits, they press appellate courts to overturn precedent, and lawyers always parse language to favor their side.

Confined to the narrow practice of law, that is fine. But it is an awful way to govern a great nation. When politicians as lawyers begin to view some Americans as clients and other Americans as opposing parties, then the role of the legal system in our life becomes all consuming. Some Americans become "adverse parties" of our very government. We are not all litigants in some vast social class action suit. We are citizens of a republic which promises us a great deal of freedom from laws, from courts, and from lawyers.

Today, we are drowning in laws, we are contorted by judicial decisions, we are driven to distraction by omnipresent lawyers in all parts of our once private lives. America has a place for laws and lawyers, but that place is modest and reasonable, not vast and unchecked. When the most important decision for our next president is whom he will appoint to the Supreme Court, the role of lawyers and the law in America is too big. When lawyers use criminal prosecution as a continuation of politics by other means, as happened in the lynching of Scooter Libby and Tom Delay, then the power of lawyers in America is too great. When House Democrats sue America in order to hamstring our efforts to learn what our enemies are planning to do to use, then the role of litigation in America has become crushing.

We cannot expect the Lawyers' Party to provide real change, real reform or real hope in America. Most Americans know that a republic in which every major government action must be blessed by nine unelected judges is not what Washington intended in 1789. Most Americans grasp that we cannot fight a war when ACLU lawsuits snap at the heels of our defenders. Most Americans intuit that more lawyers and judges will not restore declining moral values or spark the spirit of enterprise in our economy.

Perhaps Americans will understand that change cannot be brought to our nation by those lawyers who already largely dictate American society and business. Perhaps Americans will see that hope does not come from the mouths of lawyers but from individual dreams nourished by hard work.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Reader Comments

Issue 107 - May 7, 2008

**CONSERVATIVE
BATTLELINE
ONLINE**

Editor: I appreciate your ConservativeBattleline. I was reading the issue on Governor Corzine killing local government in New Jersey. In New York, governors Pataki and Spitzer were into this too, as well as the legislature; and the heat is on local government to consolidate. In addition, administrative units are being reworked to cut off local people and government from centers of government such as Albany and tie them to radical regional, eco-focused units--if the reworking of agencies to be governed from the seat of the Adirondack agency is any indication. Carol W. LaGrasse, President, Property Rights Foundation of America, Stony Creek, NY

Editor: "Killing Local America" is simply brilliant. It presents a perfect distinction between conservative and liberal, right and wrong. I have already forwarded it to my politically concerned friends, some, I must confess, are liberals. Peace, Rich Byman

Editor: Regarding "Killing Local America," as a former president of the Deer Park Board of Education in Suffolk County, New York, I can attest to the fact that local control of our school districts is far more efficient than having out-of-touch bureaucrats on the state or federal level dictating to parents and taxpayers how their children should be educated. One has to look no further than here in New York State where politician from both major parties pass various programs that are requested by politically powerful special interest groups with little or no input from local parents or taxpayers. The cost of these "mandates" is then forced upon local school boards who are then required to implement the programs and pay for them by increasing local property taxes. The big government educational bureaucrats are happy, the state and federal politicians take credit for the programs, while the local Boards of Education are blamed for increasing property taxes to the point where middle income families are forced to sell their home making real estate brokers and developers happy too. Is it any wonder middle income taxpayers are calling for a third party. Jack Coughlin, Chairman , Deer Park Conservative Party

Editor: Re "Killing Local America," our government is too big, too out of control, too many taxes, too many controls, too many freedoms being attacked, too many root causes of problems not being sought after (by the destructive liberals), too many fees, too many registrations and re-registrations, too many lawyers witting too many laws, too many liberals messing with OUR Constitution. Let's face it, government is getting bigger and bigger because the liberals have it feeding off of itself. We are on a path of self destruction. I spent 18 years in the US Army defending this great Nation and the freedoms we enjoy. I have spent over 16 years as a Judge in my home town. It's all about money, greed, corruption and self serving politicians who serve themselves and their greed based agendas. Sign me up for a revolt. I want MY government back. Richard Christensen

Editor: In regard to "Killing Local America," consolidation of municipalities may cause a backlash but I think the real problem is the encroachment by local, state and federal money to the lowest social

denominator. When citizen's groups receive money to clean parks for example, they have no interest in cleaning their own "natural habitat." Citizen groups are more interested in the outside promises and "give me" rather than the interior and hence they don't really need all of their neighbor's consent, volunteerism or donation. When local, State and Federal agencies assume the majority of social services, the social services go on far longer than if there were a thriving church and not for profit base drawn entirely from local resources. Prior to FDR's time the communities handled aptly their social service needs through direct neighborly involvement and care. Alexis de Tocqueville saw the tremendous spirit of our nation in the vast diversity of private involvement. The pull by progressives to redistribute wealth rather than roll up their sleeves themselves, is killing this Nation's spirit-- laying atrophied the muscle that controls our heart. Lisa Miller

Editor: "State Aid"? "STATE AID"?????? Just where does this governor in your editorial "Killing Local America" think he gets the money to "aid" the smaller towns? He gets it from the towns, of course. This is so typical of the type of politician elected today. Everyone who didn't vote, or voted without knowing who they were voting for, deserves the havoc these idiots inflict. How did this buffoon get into office? Why, he was VOTED IN, of course! We have the same problem in Phoenix, Arizona. We have a buffoon for a mayor, elected by a voter turnout of 17%. That is absolutely shameful. I am ashamed of the citizens of this United States. Look at the Congress we have....all elected...and not only that, but RE-ELECTED, time and time again..... Ted Kennedy comes to mind....we have mayors reelected in the country who were convicted of drug use, a president with no sense of morals, who cheated, then lied about cheating. How do I get into Canada? Ms. Barbara Wolfe, Phoenix, Arizona

Editor: Re "Killing Local America," so what do ya' do, when this country is run by corrupt, power-hungry, fools? J Kruse

Editor: The Governor Corzine of "Killing Local America is a well to do "Capitalist"--not in the sense he created and marketed a product to make his money! He was a "Specialist" in "raping" and legal "swindling" of corporations!! Why would anyone expect him to be of "Good Moral Character" in his political career? His tenure is fraught with scandalous relationships, economic "terrorism" of small communities, and overall ineptitude to be "creative" in a business sense, like cutting costs!! New Jersey sadly deserves him and until the voters "wise-up" and vote in some conservative and honest "Pol's" they will have his "Knee" on their necks!!! Bob Langelius, Sr., White Plains, NY

Editor: I loved the article by Mr. Brent Bozell--"New Counter Culture"--I always enjoy his perspectives. But I think the topic is even more complex. I would first of all suggest that it is cynicism rather than mere irreverence that characterizes our times. This is why contemporary writers who wish to depict deeply feeling people in their novels frequently set their stories sometime in the past, when such feelings seemed less improbable. But ironically, a byproduct of this humanity-eroding cynicism has been the emergence of "false emotionalism." We see it exhibited on "reality" television all the time. People yell and scream at one another -- or they weep and wail -- when once they may have kept the exhibition of such feelings for private moments. We also see the "hugging" phenomenon. As soon as something tragic occurs, total strangers embrace one another. While sometimes this is an expression of spontaneous empathy, often it is merely another form of the "touchy-feely" false emotionalism that further depreciates the expression of true feelings. As an old fashioned sentimentalist who loves a good tear-jerker, I thank you and Mr. Bozell for the article. I did not know that Mr. Bozell is the President of the Media Research Center. I will now look into joining that organization. Best, Marlena Thompson, Falls Church, VA

Editor: Amen to Dennis Avery's "Ethanol Kills Wildlife." What makes me mad is that the media isn't reporting any of it, and when they do they tend to stand behind the ethanol industry. Thank you for this article. Raymond Put

Editor: I would like to say that Spencer Warren's commentary on Clint Eastwood's "Letters from Iwo Jima" is one of the finest and to the point commentaries that I have ever had the privilege to read. Mr Warren has written, almost exactly, what I would have liked to express to Mr Eastwood, those that were involved in the production of the movie, and all of the bleeding hearts that want to find "good" and humanize those that we fought against in World War II. I can only imagine that the next project after "Letters from Auschwitz: the Misunderstood Camp Guards," Mr Eastwood and Mr. Spielberg will attempt to produce "Letters from Moscow: the Truth about Loveable Uncle Joe;" "Letters from Hanoi: Jane, Giap and Ho, The Forgotten Heroes of Viet Nam" and "Letters from Baghdad: Saddam, A Loving Father's Correspondence with his Two Misunderstood Boys." I am one of the few "under 50" people that Mr. Warren refers to, that still understand what our country went through, and have continued to endure throughout our most recent history. Our worst enemy is not the Japanese, the Nazis, The Stalinists, the Vietnamese or the Muslims. Our worst enemies are within our own borders and share our very own culture. The likes of Spielberg, Eastwood, Clinton, Streisand... I could go on... it is these people and those that look upon them as leaders and allow them to do their thinking for them, they are the true enemies of this nation. They are leading our once great nation down a path that the rest of us know is the wrong direction. I can only say that Mr. Warren has hit it right on the head, and I wish the people that need to read and hear what Mr. Warren says in his commentary, could be made to do so. Not that it would matter, because those that are truly blind such as the people that Mr. Warren refers to, can never be made to see. Thank you for a great piece. Jeff Rufolo

Editor: Thank you for ConservativeBattleline. Keep it coming. The Rotags

**E-mail the
Editor**