



**California's Chief Justice
King George**

CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

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Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

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Legal Lawlessness

by Donald Devine

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

It is an incredible era when the very worst lawlessness occurs at the very highest levels of the judicial system. The judges have ample company at every level of government below them today but it is surely worse when an unelected body made independent of public pressure to assure neutrality instead decides to use that autonomy to arbitrarily subvert the rule of law.

It has taken a generation of political activity to limit the excesses of the 1960s Supreme Court--finally to appoint a relatively non-activist majority, at least to minimize the worst abuses. Obviously, these thoughts come to mind in the face of the recent California Supreme Court decision overruling both a 1977 statute and a 2000 public referendum restricting marriage to a union between a man and a woman, which was especially shocking since California had one of the most liberal domestic partnership laws in the nation, granting homosexual couples "virtually all of the legal benefits and protections of marriage," as The Washington Post put it.



**California's Chief Justice
King George**

It is the extremism that strikes one. For a 4 to 3 court majority to completely disregard the legislature and a 61 percent public majority is one measure. But the judicial fanaticism that does not allow any compromise on such a major matter stings even more. Even Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton support marriage for a man and a woman and civil unions for homosexuals as an explicit means for a compromise acceptable to both sides. Perhaps this could avoid the years of contention that followed a similar case of judicial activism over abortion that has not healed to this day. But the California court would have nothing of it. It was its way, headless of any consequences. It is not for nothing that even before this decision the media had tagged Chief Justice Ronald George as "King George."



William Howard Taft

The California majority specifically justified its intervention as necessary to override the "deeply rooted prejudices" of citizens and legislators. Judges, of course, have no prejudices. They did limit the ruling to say that no religious body would be forced to change its policies nor would any official holding different views be forced to officiate at single-sex marriages. Yet, if the reason for refusing to treat homosexual unions as marriage is deep prejudice, these exceptions could not survive the court's own "compelling interest test." Some future court would logically be required to end these limitations, as occurred with abortion and undoubtedly was understood by the California justices when they made this bow to public opinion. The court minority was not fooled:

A bare majority of this court, not satisfied with the pace of democratic change, now abruptly forestalls that progress and substitutes by judicial fiat, its own social policy views for those expressed by the people themselves.

Not surprisingly, the decision provoked a political reaction. One million signatures were delivered to state authorities to place a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to overrule the court majority. But amendment opponents such as California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger now say the judges have spoken and all must obey the law. This is pure nonsense. Law is not just what judges say it is. Clearly, constitutional amendments override judges and their decisions are not even

supposed to be immune from public debate. As federal Circuit Judge and future president and Chief Justice William Howard Taft wrote in 1895:

The opportunity freely and publicly to criticize judicial action is of vastly more importance to the body politic than the immunity of courts and judges from unjust aspersions and attack. Nothing tends more to render judges careful in their decisions and anxiously solicitous to do exact justice than the consciousness that every act of theirs is to be submitted to the intelligent scrutiny and candid criticism of their fellow men. In the case of judges having a life tenure, indeed, their very independence makes the right freely to comment on their decisions of greater importance, because it is the only practicable and available instrument in the hands of a free people to keep such judges alive to the reasonable demands of those they serve.

The matter goes even deeper. The first principle of the English jurisprudence from which American law evolved is that everyone is subject to the law, king, commons and courts. The philosopher who most influenced both, John Locke, defined real law as "established, settled, known law, received and allowed by common consent to be the standard of right and wrong and the common measure to decide all controversies between them." It is set by a representative legislature that "neither must or can transfer the power of making laws to anybody else." The whole point of a rule of law is that it is based on the settled, common beliefs of the people and their legislature, not to be invented by judges—or anyone else--as fashion dictates.



F. A. Hayek

This view of law as based on common beliefs was uncontested in America until the early 20th Century, when it was challenged by the legal-positivist progressives under the leadership of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., the most influential jurist of "law without values" utilitarianism, Malthusian economics, state-regulated eugenics and compulsory sterilization, and judicial supremacy. Substituting expert pragmatism for common consent, progressivism is forced to create positive law on every subject based on the specific facts of every case, unguided by tradition or common morality. As Nobel laureate F.A. Hayek, following Locke, demonstrated, this violates the rule of law because law must have general rules that all people in general circumstances can understand beforehand. Progressivism even at its best produces too many rules for people to follow. There is a law on everything so that no one can know the tax code, business regulations or even the criminal law so no one can understand and follow them. At its worst, progressivism produces so many conflicting rules on so many specifics that the laws produce nonsense.

Progressivism so dominates law today that even to understand the older, traditional view it is necessary to return to an earlier America when it worked. In the early 19th Century, Alexis de Tocqueville was dispatched by the French government to investigate the new nation's prison and legal system. After exhaustive investigation, he was amazed to discover there was none. In fact, there was no evidence of the national government at all outside the capitol city. Still, the U.S. functioned, indeed better than Europe, he concluded. The law was understood in every citizen's heart and did not need copious statutes. There were state judicial systems but they were decentralized to counties, which in turn were dependent on towns, juries and voluntary communities that mostly were limited to the control of violence. Even then, local notables were mostly called upon to settle disputes brought by their neighbors outside of court. Only the most serious cases that could not be settled locally were brought even to county authorities.

This idea of law was based on an even older view. The Apostle Paul had said:

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church. I say this to

shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already.

Disputes should be settled by the community not the state and goodwill should predominate over legalisms. The letter of the law stifles but the spirit frees, was the center of the understanding. Law is only a last resort and the fewer the better. God needed only ten. Nothing could be more foreign in America today. Everything is settled by going to the legal authorities—and it has produced nonsense as a few recent examples at hand show. A mother is arrested for child abuse for moderately disciplining her own child. A teacher is charged for not reporting “sex abuse” to the sheriff concerning a high school student carrying a nude picture of his girlfriend. A day care worker is cited for not reporting a teacher who had lightly shaken a child. A college issues a formal complaint to a student who was reading a book about the Ku Klux Klan for committing “racial harassment” because other students could be offended by the cover, even though the book was critical of the KKK. Millions of passengers have air flights cancelled to assuage a Congressional demand for more technical inspections that had nothing to do with safety. Three insurance company CEOs are forced by prosecutors, who did not have sufficient evidence to bring formal charges, to resign so the authorities could save face for earlier claiming these less than perfect business decisions were crimes.



This is a legal system that has lost any sense of rationality. Fortunately, most things are still settled privately in the U.S., by families, neighbors, communities, churches, associations, schools, businesses and the rest. But the non-governmental entities must respond effectively before it is too late. The progressive obsession with rules and laws is slowly wearing down common understandings based on traditional morality and good sense. How can parents teach these if they are not allowed to discipline? Can child care centers be loving to children if they are required to report to authorities every touch? How long can schools effectively train students if they must report every rude picture to the sheriff? How can a businessman take risks to increase efficiency if mistakes have criminal consequences?

The inevitable consequence of positivist law is that no one will do anything. Everyone will act like a bureaucrat, which is the unintended result of progressive nanny-statism. It is more than time to reverse course and return “established, settled, known law” to the center of social life. In the spirit of St. Paul, perhaps it should begin with religion taking back the institution of marriage from the state as was the case before modern times, declaring independence from the whims of the modern King Georges trying to define by dictate what was set by religion from the beginning.

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

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Editor**

U.S. Loss = D.C. Gain

by Timothy Carney

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When I bought a town house on [Capitol Hill](#) in 2004, my friend and fellow conservative journalist [David Freddoso](#) suggested that I had to worry about a second threat in addition to the possibility of a future broad housing slowdown.

"But what about the fact that Republicans control the [White House](#) and Congress? They're going to shrink the government, which will drive down demand for property in Washington," David exclaimed.

Then we both had a good laugh at the outdated idea of the [GOP](#) as the party of small government. As an investor in D.C. property, I have taken a long position on the size of government even as every week I agitate for smaller government. Economic data continue to show that the government sector and this entire region are having a swell time even as the rest of the country slows down.



Tim Carney

In this year's first quarter, the federal government added 13,800 new workers while the rest of the economy lost 232,000 jobs, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). The job figures have received attention recently — most prominently with a [USA Today](#) article linked by Drudge — but they are not the only numbers that reflect the Beltway Boom.

In December 2006 — the last month for which the [Census Bureau](#) has such data — the federal payroll was \$14 billion. The average government employee makes more than the average private-sector worker.

While not all government spending happens on the Potomac and not all government employees live in the Washington area, the Beltway region is the prime beneficiary of taxpayers' mandatory generosity.

[Maryland](#) became the richest state in the nation in 2006, with a median household income of more than \$65,000 — 34 percent higher than the national average. [Virginia](#) is ranked ninth, and even the [District of Columbia](#), where 20 percent of the population is below the poverty line, ranks above average in household income.

Virginia's Loudoun is now the richest county in [America](#), according to the Census Bureau's measure of median household income, followed by [Fairfax](#), also in Virginia, and Howard in Maryland. [Montgomery](#) in Maryland is near the top of the list, as are Virginia's [Prince William](#) and [Arlington](#). This is the fruit of the Republican Party's failure to curb government when it controlled all three branches of the federal government.

As columnist [Terry Jeffrey](#) put it when these numbers first came out: "The next time a liberal tells you cutting taxes is a break for the rich, tell them they have it backwards. The taxes we pay go to the rich in places like [Loudoun County](#)."

Powering the Beltway Boom is not simply government spending, but also regulation, tax-code tweaks and all species of federal control. Most government intrusions enrich not only federal employees, but also K Street lobbyists.

Businesses and other organizations spent \$2.8 billion on lobbying the federal government last year — nearly twice the total from 1999. As government gains more control over the economy, a good lobbyist becomes worth that much more.

To a business, bigger government is more threatening, but it also provides more opportunities to pocket handouts, mandate your product or push regulations to crush smaller competition.

Signs of the lobbying boom abound. In the past few months, we've seen early retirements from [Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss.](#), former [House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill.](#), and Reps. [Albert Wynn, D-Md.](#), and [Richard Baker, R-La.](#), all to become lobbyists.

Baker now heads the [Managed Funds Association](#), once the quiet lobbying group for hedge funds and private equity, but now an expanding (1,800 percent growth in two years) lobbying powerhouse.

Companies increasing their D.C. presence is one reason new buildings are constantly going up downtown. The region still has relatively few Fortune 500 corporate headquarters beyond the obvious defense contractors — [Lockheed Martin](#), [CACI](#), [DynCorp](#) and [General Dynamics](#), for example — but the health care industry is steadily widening its footprint around the Beltway, and not because the muggy summers are good for your lungs.

Now nobody should begrudge this region its growth. Government employees are working men and women trying to make ends meet like most Americans. It's not our fault government keeps getting bigger (not mine, at least). It's the rest of the country that keeps electing big-government politicians.

As our deficits balloon and bigger government stultifies the economy, at least we can take solace that America's loss is this region's gain.

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

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Editor**

Israel's 60th Perils

by Daniel Pipes

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Two religiously-identified new states emerged from the shards of the British empire in the aftermath of World War II. Israel, of course, was one; the other was Pakistan.

They make an interesting, if [little-compared pair](#). Pakistan's experience with widespread poverty, near-constant internal turmoil, and external tensions, culminating in its current status as near-rogue state, suggests the perils that Israel avoided, with its stable, liberal political culture, dynamic economy, cutting-edge high-tech sector, lively culture, and impressive social cohesion.



Daniel Pipes

But for all its achievements, the Jewish state lives under a curse that Pakistan and most other polities never face: the threat of elimination. Its remarkable progress over the decades has not liberated it from a multi-pronged peril that includes nearly every means imaginable: weapons of mass destruction, conventional military attack, terrorism, internal subversion, economic blockade, demographic assault, and [ideological undermining](#). No other contemporary state faces such an array of threats; indeed, probably none in history ever has.

The enemies of Israel divide into two main camps: the Left and the Muslims, with the far Right a minor third element. The Left includes a rabid edge (International ANSWER, Noam Chomsky) and a more polite center (United Nations General Assembly, left-liberal political parties, the mainstream media, mainline churches, school textbooks). In the final analysis, however, the Left serves less as a force in its own right than as an auxiliary for the primary anti-Zionist actor, which is the Muslim population. This latter, in turn, can be divided into three distinct groupings.

First come the foreign states: Five armed forces that invaded Israel on its independence in May 1948, and then neighboring armies, air forces, and navies fought in the wars of 1956, 1967, 1970, and 1973. While the conventional threat has somewhat receded, [Egypt's](#) U.S.-financed arms build-up presents one danger and the threats from weapons of mass destruction (especially from Iran but also from Syria and potentially from many other states) present an even greater one.

Second come the external Palestinians, those living outside Israel. Sidelined by governments from 1948 until 1967, Yasir Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization got their opportunity with the defeat of three states' armed forces in the Six-Day War. Subsequent developments, such as the 1982 Lebanon war and the 1993 Oslo accords, confirmed the centrality of external Palestinians. Today, they drive the conflict, through violence (terrorism, missiles from Gaza) and even more importantly by driving world opinion against Israel via a public relations effort that resonates widely among Muslims and the Left.

Third come the Muslim citizens of Israel, the sleepers in the equation. They benefited from [Israel's open](#) ways to grow in numbers and to evolve from a docile and ineffective community into a assertive one that increasingly rejects the Jewish nature of the Israeli state, with potentially profound consequences for that the future identity of that state.

If this long list of perils makes Israel different from all other Western countries, forcing it to protect itself on a daily basis from the ranks of its many foes, its predicament renders Israel oddly similar to other Middle Eastern countries, which likewise face a threat of elimination.

Kuwait, conquered by Iraq, actually disappeared from the face of the earth between August 1990 and February 1991. Lebanon, under Syria's control since 1976, could be officially incorporated by Damascus at any time. Bahrain is occasionally claimed by Tehran to be a part of Iran. Jordan's existence as an independent state has always been precarious.

That Israel finds itself in this company has several implications. It puts Israel's existential dilemma into perspective: If no country risks elimination outside of the Middle East, this is a nearly routine problem within the region, suggesting that Israel's unsettled status will not be resolved any time soon. This pattern also highlights the Middle East's uniquely cruel, unstable, and fatal political life. The Middle East's deep and wide political sickness points to the error of seeing the Arab-Israeli conflict as the motor force behind its problems.

Israel having survived countless threats to its existence over the past six decades, and it having done so with its honor intact, offers a reason for its population to celebrate. But the rejoicing cannot last long, for it's right back to the barricades to defend against the next threat.

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Jimmy Stewart: American

by Spencer Warren

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If any actor can be called the quintessential American movie star, it has to be James Stewart, who was born 100 years ago, May 20, 1908, in the town of Indiana, Pennsylvania. His 6 ft. 3 inch lanky frame, his open sincerity and idealism (especially in his earliest roles), his obvious goodness and his determination, represent true Americana. A real-life hero as a bomber pilot in World War II, Jimmy (as he liked being called), was the son of a hardware store proprietor and attended Princeton, from which he graduated in 1932.



James Stewart

Stewart got his start on the stage, where he met his lifelong friend, Henry Fonda. Entering films under contract to MGM in 1935, the first part of his career saw him cast often as a small town or country boy, innocent and pure. In his second screen appearance, in *The Murder Man* (1935), starring Spencer Tracy, he had a short role working in a small town newspaper, playing a bit of a rube. Then he played Jeanette MacDonald's younger brother in trouble with the law in the musical operetta *Rose Marie* (1936), and the murderer in the second of the popular "Thin Man" series starring William Powell and Myrna Loy, *After the Thin Man* (1936). In another early part, in *Born to Dance* (1936), Stewart was the young sailor on leave in New York, falling for Eleanor Powell's Broadway star, even singing to her (creditably) Cole Porter's "Easy to Love."

This period culminated in Stewart's great role as the naive, young, idealist Senator Jefferson Smith, taking on Washington's entrenched, cynical pre-inside the Beltway power elite in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) – one of the most anti-Washington (and anti-journalist) movies ever made. Two of his best films leading up to *Mr. Smith* were as Jason Wilkins, the ambitious only son of a poor, stern rural pastor (Walter Huston) in pre-Civil War Ohio, in *Of Human Hearts* (1938) and as yet another young kid from the sticks, Private Bill "Texas" Pettigrew, who falls head over heels for a Broadway musical star (Margaret Sullavan) in *The Shopworn Angel* (1938).

These little known, modest films are two of the very best of Stewart's long career. In *Of Human Hearts* (based on a true story, *Benefits Forgot*), Stewart's ambitions to escape the poverty-stricken life of his devout parents by studying medicine bring him into conflict with his father, Ethan. They even come to blows in a scene notable for its typically under-stated, pathos-filled direction by Clarence Brown, one of MGM's top directors. Later, Stewart, now an expert surgeon in the Civil War, is called to the White House by President Lincoln for what turns out to be a lecture on a son's responsibilities to his mother. Poor Mrs. Wilkins (Beulah Bondie, who also played Stewart's mom in *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)), now a widow, sold most of her few possessions – even trying to pawn her wedding ring -- to put her son through medical school, yet he stopped writing to her. Thinking he has been killed in the war, she has written to the President for assistance in finding his grave. Yes, this may sound corny, but thanks to the delicate writing and Brown's understatement – and to the great character actor John Carradine's compelling performance as Lincoln -- this is a beautiful, heartfelt scene and movie of the kind they really do not make any more. Carradine *is* Lincoln, and I would have to say his is the greatest depiction of Lincoln on screen. (Among his many, many other memorable character roles, Carradine played a rough cod fisherman in *Captains Courageous* the year before, the lay preacher Casy in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), and the Nazi beast Reinhardt Heydrich in *Hitler's Madman* (1943)). When *Of Human Hearts* opened in MGM's palatial Capitol Theater at Times Square, the audience burst into applause when Lincoln appeared on screen.

In *The Shopworn Angel*, the sweet goodness of Stewart's wet-behind-the ears soldier on leave in New York just before being shipped out to France (this is the First World War) melts the heart of the cynical, hard-edged glamour queen he falls for, Daisy Heath. Except that this serves to renew her

relationship with her pin-striped manager, Sam Bailey (Walter Pidgeon). The story focuses on Daisy's efforts to let Bill down gently, without hurting him, and on the simultaneous blossoming, thanks to the young soldier, of her long-time liaison with Sam into true love. Their relationship is made quite palpable – with the actors' clothes on, of course – by the artfulness of the script and the accomplished direction of H.C. Potter. The plot turns on the kind of self-sacrifice that was a staple of movies of that era, and may surprise viewers in the end. Potter's direction of the final scene – no dialogue necessary -- is masterly, and very moving. This is a perfect movie for St. Valentine's Day, and is available on VHS, but not yet on DVD.

By the end of the 1930s, with *Mr. Smith* and his second hit of 1939, in which he played yet another simple country boy, the Western *Destry Rides Again*, opposite Marlene Dietrich, Stewart was established as a leading star. He won the Academy Award for best actor the following year as a wise-cracking reporter in *The Philadelphia Story*, opposite Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn. But everyone recognized this was a consolation prize for *Mr. Smith*, for which he was bested by Robert Donat's still beloved performance as the English "public" (i.e. private) school teacher in *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. Stewart made another classic in 1940, again opposite Margaret Sullavan, *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), directed by the great Ernst Lubitsch. The stars work together as sales clerks in a small ladies' gift shop in pre-war Budapest. They don't like each other. Each also is engaged in a correspondence with an anonymous person of the opposite sex whom each is convinced is that special other. Wait till they find out the identities! This was remade as *You've Got Mail* in 1998, with the internet substituting for the city post office, but lacks the special Lubitsch middle European warmth and charm.

Now, having reached the top, Stewart, age 32, months before Pearl Harbor, signed up with the Army Air Corps. Frustrated by the public relations role he had been assigned, he acquired the necessary training flying hours at his own expense and went on to command twenty combat bombing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe. He always carried with him the copy of the 91st Psalm his father had given him before he left for overseas. Earlier, among his PR assignments, in December 1941 Stewart hosted a radio program, "We Hold These Truths," celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights. Almost one-half the population, more than 60 million, then the biggest audience in radio history, listened in. At the end, Stewart reprised his great role as Senator Jefferson Smith, giving an impassioned plea for democracy, then introduced President Roosevelt. Stewart was one of many actors, directors and other Hollywood figures who saw combat in the war, many, like him, in their thirties or even forties (e.g. Clark Gable, John Ford).

Stewart returned to his career five years later with his most famous and beloved role as George Bailey in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946). There is little more to be written about a film that all readers must know well, except that the film did not do well on its release, finding its audience only with Christmas broadcasts on television in the 1970s. Some have written that George's life crisis and nightmare were too dark for audiences in the forties, although this sequence reflects the influence of popular film noir crime dramas of the time. Ironically, showing the darker side of his characters helped to renew Stewart's career after he turned forty, and the 1950s marked his peak as a leading star.

Frank Capra was the key director in the first chapter of Stewart's career. Anthony Mann and, later, Alfred Hitchcock, were instrumental in the second chapter. For it was under Mann that Stewart moved beyond his earlier persona, portraying more rounded, adult characters with a dark edge in six Westerns they made in the 1950s, beginning with *Winchester '73* (1950). Stewart's Lin McAdam set the characterizations for the other Mann-Stewart Westerns: here he is out to avenge a past wrong against his evil brother (Stephen McNally). The pattern is varied in some of their other Westerns, with Stewart playing the tough leader with the strength to protect the wagon train or the prospectors against the bad guys, but who doesn't want to get involved because he is embittered by a past experience, only to be forced by his moral conscience to take the right, heroic action in the end.

I rank as the best of these, and one of the best Westerns ever made, *The Naked Spur* (1953). Stewart plays Howard Kemp, a bounty hunter searching for a slick, ruthless killer, Ben Vandergroat

(the great Robert Ryan). He is forced to allow an old prospector (Millard Mitchell, best known as the producer in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952)) and a wise-guy cavalry officer (Ralph Meeker) just dishonorably discharged from the Army to join him when he captures Ben, along with Ben's girl, Lina (Janet Leigh). As the five journey through Indian country (they comprise the entire cast), Mann lays bare how grim human nature can be through the interactions of the four men, three of whom are at one another's throats. We learn the source of Howie's inner rage from a past betrayal. The tension is conveyed visually by Mann's typically taut compositions and elevated by his superb use of landscape (the characters framed against majestic blue skies and mountains, an artistry at which Mann was perhaps second only to John Ford. See my comments on Mann's epic direction of *El Cid* at <http://www.acuf.org/issues/issue106/080420med.asp>).

The finale is vintage Mann, as the climax is filmed against particularly compelling scenery – here a cliff overlooking a steep gorge and its roaring river, where the film's human conflicts are resolved amid death and the protagonist's catharsis. Stewart later commented that his favorite movies were Westerns “because they're told against the background of a very dramatic period in our history” and “give people a feeling of hope, an affirmative statement of living.” And, one might add, they portray men of courage, heroes to look up to, such as Stewart's. (In fairness, it must be noted that Stewart, good as he was as an actor, was more of a personality star than an actor star, like, say Bette Davis, and he is not at his best in the film's highly emotional final scene.)

Hitchcock directed four films starring Stewart: *Rope* (1948), *Rear Window* (1954), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) and *Vertigo* (1958). *Rear Window* features one of Stewart's best performances. Famous as daring magazine news photographer L.B. Jefferies, he spends the entire film trapped in his wheelchair (until the vintage Hitchcock climax, that is) with a broken leg, observing, as something of a voyeur, the lives of his neighbors in their New York apartments facing the courtyard during a hot summer, pre-air-conditioning. Thanks to the alert, inquisitive eye of his girlfriend, Grace Kelly (in gorgeous full bloom), he discovers a murder in one of the apartments facing his window. This is one of Hitchcock's greatest films and, given the film's limited space and action, demonstrates his unsurpassed mastery of his art.

Stewart served Hitchcock well as the typical Mr. American family man on vacation, with Doris Day as his wife, in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*; this was a role he would repeat several times in the 1960s. Their child's kidnapping by a spy ring entangles them in a Hitchcockian web of mystery and suspense. Stewart then played a more troubled character in the film many regard, this writer included, as Hitchcock's ultimate masterpiece, *Vertigo*. His San Francisco detective, Scottie Ferguson, has retired from the force after his involvement in a roof-top accident which killed a patrolman he was trying to help -- thus his petrifying fear of heights. As a private eye on a job for an old friend, he becomes obsessed with a certain beautiful blonde (Kim Novak – Hitchcock usually wanted blondes as his lady stars). His wounded, vulnerable protagonist unknowingly finds himself in a Hitchcockian swirl of events that serves ultimately as a metaphor for the director's Catholic view of life. (That's the best I can do, friendly reader, without giving anything away.) This is one of the handful of Stewart's greatest films.

We cannot leave the decade of the fifties without mention of three other films, two from 1950. The first movie, *Broken Arrow*, was the second of a series of path-breaking postwar films that depicted Indians in a more balanced light and which showed white people in the wrong. Stewart is Tom Jeffords, a trader who marries an Indian girl (Debra Paget) and tries, unsuccessfully, to broker a peace between Cochise and predatory whites. The second film, *Harvey*, gave Stewart perhaps his third greatest role (after *George Bailey* and *Jefferson Smith*) as the eccentric, whimsical Elwood P. Dowd, who teaches the disbelieving people around him some truths about life and goodness with the help of his best chum, his (invisible to everyone else) pooka, Harvey. Harvey is a white rabbit standing about six feet tall (or maybe a little more) and accompanies Elwood much of the time visiting local bars and befriending everyone they meet. For this, his family tries to have Elwood committed. Detailed information can be found at Elwood's website for Harvey on the internet. I had the great privilege of seeing Stewart perform this play live, opposite Helen Hayes, on Broadway in the early 1970s. I will never forget how he brought the house down when he called Harvey out to take his bows, amid thunderous cheers, raising his arm high to pet his distinguished (though

invisible) friend. (Actually, since Stewart stood six feet three inches, this means Harvey must have stood about six inches taller than six feet!)

The third film of the fifties is *The Spirit of St. Louis* (1957), based on Charles Lindbergh's account of his famous first solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927. In light of his wartime service, playing Lindbergh meant a great deal to Stewart, although he was a bit old for the part. Naturally, for most of the film he is alone in the cockpit of his one-engine aircraft, a problem solved by Billy Wilder's clever direction and Stewart's sincere, knowing performance. Once again, he excelled in giving life to a simple American hero.

The last classic movie Stewart appeared in is one of the two last great classic Westerns, John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). (The other widely regarded last great classic Western, made the same year, is Sam Peckinpah's *Ride the High Country*.) He plays a young lawyer out of his element trying to tame a Western town, but John Wayne, also playing a much younger man than he was at the time, has to put things right. Thereafter Stewart starred in a number of respectable films, mostly Westerns, through the 1960s. He had two television shows in the first half of the seventies and appeared infrequently on television and screen until his last performance as a rocket science professor in 1992.

Stewart was a staunch conservative, a friend and supporter of Ronald Reagan (and a frequent White House guest during his presidency), who also actively backed Richard Nixon (if he can be called a conservative) and Barry Goldwater. Like Goldwater, he served, as a brigadier general, in the Air Force Reserve. For his war service, among his many honors, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. One of his sons, Ronald, a Marine officer, was killed in action in Vietnam in 1969. Stewart was awarded the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by President Reagan in 1985.

James Stewart was an unpretentious, regular guy who kept close to his roots and did not let Hollywood go to his head. A very eligible bachelor for many years, he married for the first and only time in 1949 and by all accounts remained always faithful to his vows; his wife, Gloria, died in 1994. They had twin daughters, plus her two sons by a previous marriage, whom Stewart adopted. He gave his Oscar to his father, who kept it in the window of his hardware store. Stewart returned to his hometown of Indiana, Pennsylvania in 1958 as the guest of honor at a Boy Scout testimonial dinner celebrating his fiftieth birthday. (Remember his Senator Jefferson Smith was a Boy Scout activist in the film.) He told everyone:

"My father has been almost fanatical in his determination to keep our family together – and he has done it. . . . I've settled down three thousand miles from Indiana. I've traveled to points in the world three times that distance. At times I've stayed away several years at a stretch, but I somehow have never felt that I was very far from here. . . . somehow I don't feel that I have ever been away."

On his screen persona, Stewart said on another occasion: "I have my own rules and adhere to them. The rule is simple but inflexible. A James Stewart picture must have two vital ingredients: it will be clean and it will involve the triumph of the underdog over the bully."

As Simon and Garfunkel called out decades ago for a baseball immortal, we might ask today: "Where have you gone, Jimmy Stewart?"

Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline On Line's media critic.

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Editor**

Moyers Loves Wright

by L. Brent Bozell III

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

The Bill Moyers PBS interview of Barack Obama's long-time minister, Reverend Jeremiah Wright, underlined once again that our tax dollars don't fund programs championing racial harmony. They fund programs that celebrate black radicals, militants, and kooks. Moyers came to Rev. Wright's side not to condemn him or even challenge him, but to praise him and defend him. As he implored Wright to explain his "God damn America" sermon, Wright at least said he was free in America to denounce America. To which Moyers replied: "Well, you can be almost crucified for saying what you've said here in this country."



Brent Bozell

Bill Moyers wants us to see Jeremiah Wright as the Jesus Christ of our time?

Moyers cast him as a demonized victim: "Did you ever imagine that you would come to personify the black anger that so many whites fear?" All this was pandering of the worst sort, since the Wrong Reverend Wright and his mouthpieces have been talking up the idea of the media crucifying him, even as the Obama-loving media have labored to downplay his speeches and keep him out of the headlines. Wright lapped up every ounce of sympathy Moyers brought, and fully agreed that he and Martin Luther King have been "crucified by corporate-owned media," since they are willing to decry racism, militarism, capitalism, and America.

He accepted the Moyers premise: "That's true. But you can be crucified, you can be crucified publicly, you can be crucified by corporate-owned media. But I mean, what I just meant was, you can be killed in other countries by the government for saying that. Dr. King, of course, was vilified. And most of us forget that after he was assassinated, but the year before he was assassinated, April 4th, 1967 at the Riverside Church, he talked about racism, militarism and capitalism. He became vilified. He got ostracized not only by the majority of Americans in the press; he got vilified by his own community."

Pardon me if I can't exactly remember Walter Cronkite vilifying Martin Luther King for opposing the Vietnam War.

Wright's answer underlines something that our race-obsessed press is missing. This controversy is not simply about race. This minister is a radical leftist. Along with leftists like Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson, Wright loves how Rev. King denounced the American war machine in that 1967 speech, as this "demonic destructive suction tube," and smeared black and white American soldiers, who allegedly would unite in destroying the poor Vietnamese: "we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago."

The America-hatred flowed in that speech, just as it does from Reverend Wright: the Vietnamese "move sadly and apathetically as we herd them off the land of their fathers into concentration camps where minimal social needs are rarely met. They know they must move on or be destroyed by our bombs."

Radical leftists ignored how the concentration camps came to Vietnam after the Americans withdrew.

Moyers and Reverend Wright are two peas in a pod in thinking the "corporate-owned media" were part of the war machine, then and again now. Moyers asked Wright why Americans were so intolerant of criticism of their country: "What is your notion of why so many Americans seem not to want to hear the full Monty? They don't want to seem to acknowledge that a nation capable of greatness is also capable of cruelty?"

That's turning patriotic Americans into straw men who can't acknowledge our soldiers are "capable" of cruelty. Clearly, some soldiers go astray, and then they are prosecuted. But Moyers & Wright & Co. suggest by their rhetoric that cruelty is our military modus operandi, approved at the highest levels of bureaucracy, and that cruelty is typical, and universal, even if bravery and charity are much more common. That's why they hate America.

Bill Moyers should be seen by more people as more like Jeremiah Wright – a bitter old man who spins vile conspiracy theories about America as a ruthless warrior-state. It should come as no surprise that he and Wright would see bilious eye to bilious eye on how this country has been ruined by conservatives, those cruel racists, those capitalists, and those militarists. God damn America!

The week before his Wright interview, Moyers denounced ABC's Charlie Gibson and George Stephanopoulos for raising questions Obama didn't want raised. He called it "journalistic narcissism." But this interview was typical Moyers narcissism. He thinks every other liberal journalist isn't giving Wright enough time and space to speak the truth. He wants to be the referee of the national conversation, and he wants it to be an incredibly one-sided diatribe, a radical Wright sermon on how America needs to be purged of its poisonous conservatism.

Mr. Bozell is president of the Media Research Institute

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Editor**

Dangerously Responsible TV

by S.T. Karick
Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Washington Post TV critic Tom Shales exemplified the horrified reaction by saying debate moderators Charlie Gibson and George Stephanopolous "turned in shoddy, despicable performances."

The rest of the leftist pseudointelligentsia did likewise, although audiences did not find it shoddy and despicable enough to turn it off—on the contrary, it garnered the highest audience of any debate during this election cycle.



Republicans, of course, are used to entertaining debate "questions" that openly attack them and their positions, but for Democrats, used to a relatively free ride from the goofball leftists that make up almost the entire U.S. news journalism profession today, such an innovation is appalling.

It's interesting that neither the politicians nor their media amanuenses never seem to realize that such a free ride is sure to make Democrats weaker campaigners than they would otherwise be, and the hostility toward Republicans must surely improve their campaigning ability. Let's not tell them.

The [AP story provides the amusing details](#) of the furor over the ABC newscasters' appalling descent into behavior dangerously resembling responsible journalism.

S. T. Karnick is editor of The American Culture, where this first appeared

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Editor**

Heath Without Price

by John Goodman

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

The biennial Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care (<http://www.dartmouthatlas.org>) is out and the findings are as eye-popping this year as they have been in the past.

Among chronically ill patients in the last two years of life:

- New Jersey patients spent almost three times as many days in the hospital as patients in Utah.
- Patients in Manhattan had 3½ times as many hospital days as patients in Bend, Oregon.
- Among teaching hospitals, the variation in the amount spent was more than four to one.



John Goodman

So what impact did this wide variation in care have on the health of patients? Not a whit.

- There is no evidence that extra care and extra spending produce better outcomes, and some evidence that they produce worse outcomes.
- Further, variations in care correlate with variations in supply: the more hospital beds, the more bed days; the more CT scanners, the more scans; the more cardiologists, the more cardiac care, etc. [See Associated Press Article] http://www.examiner.com/a-1324494~Hospital_Capacity_Drives_Costs.html

Is this the whole story? I'll shelve that question for another day. For the moment, what do we make of all this?

Before anyone launches into another bash-the-American-health-care-system tirade, be forewarned. Researchers have found wide variations in medical practice from doctor to doctor, town to town, region to region - all over the world. The type of health care system doesn't seem to matter very much.

So what's going on? I'll start with the conventional theory. Then add four of my own.

1. The Venal-Mercenary-Doctor Theory. The conventional theory is "supply induced demand." Providers convince patients to want whatever health resources are available. Why would they do that? Fee-for-service payment is often blamed. Providers make more money if they can convince patients to demand unnecessary care. Anyone who has spent much time around doctors will recognize this theory as mainly poppycock.

2. The Doctor-as-Altruistic-Agent-of-the-Patient Theory. In case anyone hasn't noticed, we have made health care free (or almost free) to patients all over the developed world. Now if you were a physician advising patients and the perceived cost of virtually every resource was zero, what advice would you give? It's a no-brainer: Use every resource in sight as long as there is some marginal benefit, no matter how small. With willing patients, the only thing restraining usage will be limits on supply and the occasional (managed care) limit on demand.

3. The Patients-Acting-as-Their-Own-Doctors Theory. Who needs doctors to induce demand? Any curious soul armed with a computer can find all kinds of ways to spend (other people's) health care dollars for his or her own benefit. In fact, 113 million Americans have searched the Internet for health information. http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/190/report_display.asp

4. The Misguided-Donor/Misguided-Legislator Theory. Why do resources differ from place to place? It usually comes down to arbitrary decisions by donors and politicians (far removed from real patients). Suppose a donor pays for an MRI scanner and also pays for the technical staff and the radiologists. Treating these costs as fixed, the marginal cost of a scan is almost zero. So it makes sense to run the scanner around the clock. If a second scanner becomes available, it makes sense to run that one around the clock as well. Ditto for the third. And the fourth. You can do an awful lot of scanning before the marginal benefit gets all the way to zero.

5. The Medicine-As-Art-Rather-Than-Science Theory. Imagine three ways of approaching your job. First, as an artist - relying on experience and judgment but also wafting wherever the spirit moves you, with no bad consequences. Second, as a business manager - being forced to compare profit and loss on every decision with bankruptcy always a threat. Third, as a scientist - being constantly under the scrutiny of your colleagues, with professional reputation hanging in the balance.

Our system (and, indeed, the health systems of all developed countries) gives doctors the freedom to choose approach number one.

Years ago, [a RAND study found](#) widespread variation of medical practice and concluded that one-third of all care was unnecessary. Yet as explained in Patient Power and again in [Lives at Risk](#) even among RAND's expert panels there were wide differences of opinion. Absent economic and scientific pressure, conformity of treatment modes is unlikely to ever occur in medicine.

Bottom Line. I believe theories 2, 3, 4 and 5 explain 80% to 90% of everything we observe, while the conventional explanation (theory 1) explains a small part of the remainder. Wide variation in the use of health care resources is not a surprise. It is the natural and inevitable consequence of a system in which normal market forces have been systematically suppressed and nobody ever faces a real price for anything.

John Goodman is President of the National Center for Policy Analysis

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Editor**

Ten Truths About Oil

by Alan Caruba

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Having written about the energy industry and issues now for a long time, I hope I can be forgiven for being enraged by the comments by Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) in response to President Bush's recent press conference. There is simply no way to describe them other than false.

The Democrat Party has long made "Big Oil" their favorite punching bag, confident that the public has no idea what influences the price and supply of oil. Saying anything favorable to Big Oil is immediately deemed evidence that one is in their pay and whatever facts are offered are therefore invalid.



Alan Caruba

There are, however, some simple truths about Big Oil that cannot and should not be ignored. To do so leaves everyone at the mercy of energy policies that have created the situation in which the United States finds itself today.

Fact #1. The combined ownership of oil reserves by the independent, investor-owned oil companies such as ExxonMobil, Conoco-Phillips, BP, Chevron and others is barely 4% of the total known oil reserves in the world. By itself, ExxonMobil's share is 1.08%.

Fact #2. Oil is a global commodity sold on mercantile exchanges for whatever price it can command. Speculation in oil prices is the primary reason they have been driven to utterly insane costs per barrel. It has nothing to do with actual supply and demand.

Fact #3. No nation on Earth is or can be "energy independent." The geopolitics of oil is complex, but as nations such as China and India have seen their economies grow, their need for oil grows with it and thus they compete with long established industrialized nations for existing oil supplies. This competition has an impact on prices.

Fact #4. The OPEC nations, those in the Middle East and including Venezuela, control 77% of the world's known oil reserves. Like Russia and Mexico, where the oil industry is controlled by the state, it is generally poorly managed. Several Big Oil companies that were induced to undertake exploration and development in Russia and Venezuela actually had their assets nationalized or stolen at prices well below their investment and value.

Fact #5. Energy is the master resource. All nations with any hope of growing their economies require it, mostly in the form of electricity, but also for oil's role in transportation. The failure to have a national long-range energy policy that is based in reality can severely impact energy prices.

Fact #6. The United States has, for years, pursued an energy policy based on environmental myths such as "biofuels" in which corn is turned into ethanol to reduce the import of oil, but it costs as much to produce ethanol as to refine oil and it provides less mileage per gallon, thus negating any reason for this additive. Likewise, suggesting that wind or solar energy can generate anything more than its current 1% of the nation's electricity needs ignores their unreliability and the fact they are heavily subsidized, a form of hidden consumer tax.

Fact #7. It costs billions to explore, discover, extract and transport oil. It takes lots of lead-time as well. The United States Congress has, for decades, refused to permit the extraction of vast oil reserves in ANWR despite the fact it would have little or no impact on the Alaskan wildlife reserve. In addition, Congress has declared 85% percent of the nation's coastal, offshore areas off-limits to any exploration for oil or natural gas.

Fact #8. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, under the mandate of Congress, requires Big Oil to refine oil into some seventeen different formulations in the name of clean air. With three grades of gasoline, that means that refiners must produce some 45 different blends. The quality of air in America is excellent, but the cost of gasoline at the pump continues to rise as the result of these mandates.

Fact #9. America imports two-thirds of the oil it uses. All of its transportation runs on oil. The population continues to grow. Failure to encourage the construction of a single new refinery since the 1970s puts a further strain on the ability of Big Oil to provide the nation's oil and diesel fuel needs.

Fact #10. Democrats continue to demand that Big Oil's profits be confiscated in some fashion and some of the inducements offered to explore for more oil be ended. Because the costs of exploration, extraction, refining, and transporting of oil represents billions, the actual profit margin of a company like ExxonMobil is about 10%, well below what industries such as pharmaceuticals and banking enjoy.

For these and many other reasons, Americans are being impoverished at the gas pump because Congress has dithered and failed in one of its most important responsibilities.

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.com>.

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Editor**

Internet Regulation?

by Cord Blomquist

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) recently introduced the [Internet Freedom Preservation Act of 2008](#) (H.R. 5353). This legislation would impose “network neutrality” regulation on all Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Proponents of the legislation believe that neutrality regulation is necessary in order to prevent ISPs from blocking websites and other Internet-based services—becoming de facto censorship boards for new media. However, in attempting to prevent this unlikely nightmare scenario, advocates of this regulation risk denying ISPs the tools needed to manage the traffic of tomorrow’s Internet.

Supporters of neutrality regulation (like Ben Scott of the Washington-based advocacy group Free Press) claim that without new laws, Internet providers will act as “[gatekeepers](#),” dictating what content consumers may access. Yet these claims make little sense when we consider how little leverage ISPs really have in today’s competitive landscape.

New, broadband-grade wireless offerings like Sprint’s [Xohm Wi-Max](#) service and multiple [LTE-based networks](#) are bringing new choices to nationwide markets. Franchise reform efforts in several states have allowed more wired connections to reach consumers as well. With more ISP choices than ever before, and numerous bold projects on the horizon, whatever leverage incumbents have now is quickly dwindling.

Neutrality regulation’s supporters underestimate how well the American public understands Internet technology and values the freedom to view what they want online. [Bloggers](#)—the citizen journalists of cyberspace—are poised to react to any discriminatory behavior from ISPs. Content portals like YouTube and iTunes also have an overwhelming incentive to reject threats from ISPs to pay-up or suffer degraded service quality.

The increased amount of competition in broadband has shifted power toward content providers and consumers—and ISPs are keenly aware of this. It would be economic suicide for any ISP to engage in tactics of extortion that neutrality-regulation advocates fear. Any such action would incite media uproar and customers would flee in droves to the expanding field of competing broadband options. To say that content discrimination is inevitable, or even likely, betrays how out of touch the pro-regulation side of this debate is with the reality of today’s Internet economy.

But this bill does more than prohibit bad actions that will never happen. It also prevents ISPs from employing sensible network management that is vital for addressing the growing demands of Internet users.

Some ISPs have identified the benefits of curbing bandwidth-intensive applications such as peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing programs like BitTorrent. In comments filed last month, Bell Canada argued that [such curbing is in subscribers’ interests](#), explaining that 95% of their customers suffer on account of the file sharing of the other 5% of users.

[Recent reports](#) lend further credence to claims that P2P traffic is a major culprit behind network congestion. According to [AT&T](#), in three years time, 20 typical households will consume as much bandwidth as the entire Internet does today. Between price increases, [bandwidth caps](#), and [protocol discrimination](#), it is far from clear which course of action to deal with this flood of information will be best for average users. But by abolishing network management techniques that target specific applications, ISPs will have fewer options to deal with overloads.



Rep. Ed Markey

Freedom to innovate and explore new solutions has been crucial to the Internet's success—handing over control of private networks to government threatens this freedom. Nearly every regulatory regime suffers from “mission creep,” the tendency of politicians to impose ever-greater restraints and regulations. Deterring unlikely, hypothetical discrimination is hardly a justification for turning over a crucial vehicle of free expression to political control.

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Editor**

Warming Facts Irrelevant

by David Keene

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

President Bush recently attempted to make the best of a bad political situation with a speech on “global warming” that satisfied few of his critics and upset many of his friends.

Word on the street before the president spoke was that he was going to go much further than he did in adopting Al Gore’s view of the world. There were reports of infighting within the administration, for example, on whether the speech would include a “cap-and-trade” scheme such as that being proposed not just by the Gore camp but by some Senate Republicans.



David Keene

What the president did do was cede the basic argument to the global warming crowd and try to stake out what the administration must hope will be perceived as a more “reasonable” approach to dealing with the problem than that proposed by those who believe the sky is falling.

From a purely political standpoint, Bush seemed to be accepting the view that the public has made up its mind on the general question and that Republicans and Democrats will henceforth be judged on what they intend to do about solving it. While scientists who actually study such things may continue to wonder whether the earth is getting warmer and, more importantly, whether whatever climate change is taking place is caused by man or sunspots, the political community is certain that catastrophe waits just around the corner and that whatever happens will be our fault.

Thus, while Al Gore’s movie was rife with foolish errors and outright fantasy, he got a Nobel Prize while his detractors were being labeled “Global Warming Deniers” who should be ignored, ostracized or perhaps even declared “criminals” in the mad rush to save the Earth.

Gore himself, who has made a mega-fortune jetting around the world as the Paul Revere of the global warming crowd, has himself suggested that the only people who disagree with him are crackpots, crooks and agents of giant corporations that will profit from the destruction of the planet on which we live. The scientific credentials of those who raise questions are dismissed and their arguments are ignored in a hail of personal attacks the likes of which we haven’t seen in recent years.

Many of the scientists who attended a recent New York conference sponsored by the well-regarded Heartland Institute, an Illinois-based conservative think tank, that demonstrated fairly conclusively that the so-called scientific consensus on the question is no consensus at all have since been attacked in the media for daring to disagree with the alarmists. They should have expected no less.

Contributors to The Competitive Enterprise Institute, another group critical of rushing to judgment on climate change, have been threatened with a congressional investigation for supporting such a group.

Interestingly, Heartland received dozens of letters from grade-school students in California filled with hate for sponsoring the conference. The letters were part of a classroom project instigated by teachers who, having already indoctrinated their charges, are now mobilizing them in the war on those with whom they disagree. Heartland and others can expect more of the same as the California Public Utilities Commission recently authorized a surcharge on everyone’s electric bill to fund a \$600 million “state think tank” to fight the good fight against global warming — an effort that will include increased “educational” efforts of the sort now going on in the schools of California and many other states.

All of this has convinced many in the White House, and in political circles generally, that the science no longer matters. Global warming may or may not exist, and if it does, the proposals to deal with it may or may not be reasonable, but politically something drastic will have to be done to assuage the fear that unless we act now, it'll be too late for all of us.

In the Senate, John McCain's (R-Ariz.) pal Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.) and Virginia Republican John Warner are sponsoring legislation that will, if passed, cost this country an estimated 4 million jobs and reduce per capita income by as much as \$7,000. This is a high price to pay to keep away a boogeyman that may not exist, and to the president's credit, he wants to avoid paying that price.

So to Bush's credit, he refused to join Sens. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and John McCain on the slippery slope to economic disaster, but he may have made it more likely that before they are done they'll end up helping Al Gore destroy millions of jobs and reduce the standard of living of every American.

David Keene is the chairman of the American Conservative Union

**E-mail the
Editor**

23-Year Global Cooling

by Dennis Avery

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Now it's not just the sunspots that predict a 23-year global cooling. The new Jason oceanographic satellite shows that 2007 was a "cool" La Nina year—but Jason also says something more important is at work: The much larger and more persistent Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) has turned into its cool phase, telling us to expect moderately lower global temperatures until 2030 or so.

For the past century at least, global temperatures have tended to mirror the 20-to 30-year warmings and coolings of the north-central Pacific Ocean. We don't know just why, but the pattern of the last century is clear: the earth warmed from about 1915 to 1940, while the PDO was also warming (1925 to 46). The earth cooled from 1940 to 1975, while the PDO was cooling (1946 to 1977). The strong global warming from 1976 to 1998 was accompanied by a strong and almost-constant warming of the north-central Pacific. Ancient tree rings in Baja California and Mexico show there have been 11 such PDO shifts since 1650, averaging 23 years on length.



Dennis T. Avery

Researchers discovered the PDO only recently—in 1996—while searching for the reason salmon numbers had declined sharply in the Columbia River after 1977. The salmon catch record for the past 100 years gave the answer—shifting Pacific Ocean currents. The PDO favors the salmon from the Columbia for about 25 years at a time, and then the salmon from the Gulf of Alaska, but the two fisheries never thrive at the same time. Something in the PDO favors the early development of the salmon smolts from one region or the other. Other fish, such as halibut, sardines, and anchovies follow similar shifts in line with the PDO.

The PDO seems to be driven by the huge Aleutian Low in the Arctic—but we don't know what controls the Aleutian Low. Nonetheless, 22.5-year "double sunspot cycles" have been identified in South African rainfall, Indian monsoons, Australian droughts, and rains in the United States' far southwest as well. These cycles argue that the sun, not CO 2, controls the earth's temperatures.

Dr. Henrik Svensmark's recent experiments at the Danish Space Research Institute seem to show that the earth's temperatures are importantly affected by the low, wet clouds that deflect more or less solar heat back into space. The number of such clouds is affected, in turn, by more or fewer cosmic rays hitting the earth. The number of earthbound cosmic rays depends on the extent of the giant magnetic wind thrown out by the sun.

All of this defies the "consensus" that human-emitted carbon dioxide has been responsible for our global warming. But the evidence for man-made warming has never been as strong as its Green advocates maintained. The earth's warming from 1915 to 1940 was just about as strong as the "scary" 1975 to 1998 warming in both scope and duration—and occurred too early to be blamed on human-emitted CO 2. The cooling from 1940 to 1975 defied the Greenhouse Theory, occurring during the first big surge of man-made greenhouse emissions. Most recently, the climate has stubbornly refused to warm since 1998, even though human CO 2 emissions have continued to rise strongly.

The Jason satellite is an updated and more-accurate version of the Poseidon satellite that has been monitoring the oceans since 1992, picking up ocean wind speeds, wave heights, and sea level changes. Jason is run by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and a French team.

How many years of declining world temperature would it take now—in the wake of the ten-year non-warming since 1998—to break up Al Gore's "climate change consensus"?

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

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Editor**

Ethanol Economics

by Warren Coats

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

It is often useful to bring an economist's perspective on issues of interest to most of us. In a nutshell that perspective, the lens through which I see and filter events, consists of a very short list of facts and opinions.

The first overriding fact is scarcity. The world has limited resources at any moment. We can talk about how to distribute them, the zero sum game of redistribution Marx wrote about, or how to increase them, creating "The Wealth of Nations" that Adam Smith wrote about.



Warren Coats

To an economist, the fact of scarcity raises the issue of how given resources should be allocated to maximize their value. In this one paragraph I will distill most of what economics is ultimately about. We can reduce scarcity (increase goods and services) by consuming less now (investing in equipment, technology, and education to increase our productivity) in order to have more to consume in the future. We can also increase the benefit (utility as we say) from existing resources by allocating them to where they are most valued. Marx thought that central planners could do that best and Adam Smith thought that free markets worked much better. Markets allow individuals to cast their own individual votes for what they want the economy to produce by buying it. Thus existing output goes where it is most wanted (most valued). The market makes room for diversity of tastes (for a price) while central planners generally don't.

But that is only the consumption half of the picture. Markets also reward producers with profits for investing in the production of what consumers most want, thus encouraging and rewarding them for producing more of it. Market economies have produced and continue to produce wealth and income for the masses that Marx never would have thought possible.

Behind these broad general propositions lies the belief, supported by overwhelming evidence, that people respond to incentives. Market prices profoundly influence where and how hard people work and what is produced. People value and respond to other things as well. The moral values that we and our neighbors hold and live by also profoundly influences the quality of our lives. Our desire for freedom is tempered and balanced by our desire for security (from physical attack and hunger). The interplay among these sometimes conflicting factors gives rise to the major themes of political debate. The major filter through which I view all public and private policy issues whether something passes a cost/benefit test (is it likely to result in benefits greater than it costs) and whether it creates or contains incentives that encourage desirable behavior. The other is fairness.

Here is a quick example of my economists perspective on a topical problem—food (especially grain) prices. The Washington Post recently ran an outstanding series on its causes and consequences. A major factor is President George Bush's very wrong headed subsidies for the production of corn for ethanol. If the government provides financial incentives (contrary to the market's pricing of corn) to grow more corn, farmers will grow more corn. But what are the consequences? Where does the extra corn come from? It comes from providing less corn for the other things it is used for, reducing other grain crops to make the land available for corn and cutting down trees to create additional land for growing corn. Added to other factors increasing the demand for grains, the government's corn for ethanol program has had catastrophic consequences for the prices of corn and other grain crops and of chickens, eggs, beef, and other animals up the food chain that eat corn.

Why did Bush do this? He wanted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from gasoline by increasing the use of ethanol. But he relied on bad science. "Although ethanol was once promoted as a way to slow climate change, a study published in Science magazine February 29 concluded that greenhouse-gas emissions from corn and even cellulosic ethanol 'exceed or match those from fossil fuels and therefore produce no greenhouse benefits.'" By encouraging an expansion of acreage, the

study added, the "use of U.S. cropland for ethanol could make climate conditions dramatically worse. And the runoff from increased use of fertilizers on expanded acreage would compound damage to waterways all the way to the Gulf of Mexico." [Washington Post, April 30, 2008, page A01]

But this is not all. The administration rejected Brazil's offers to provide the environmentally superior ethanol from sugar cane. Why? Because Brazilian farmers don't vote in American elections. Along with contributing to a world wide food crisis, Bush's ethanol policy is creating a new constituency of government supplicants whose livelihood is enriched by the existence and continuation of this costly and harmful program. It reminds me of our costly and wrong headed sugar beet subsidies introduced to replace Cuba's long-ago Castro-boycotted sugar--and still with us.

Farmers are responding to price incentives but they are not the market prices reflecting public demand but rather government distorted prices that are producing benefits much below what they cost.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

Wright's Theology

by Lisa Fabrizio

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Not too long ago, all three cable news networks showed the Rev. Jeremiah Wright's National Press Club speech on "the black religious experience," live and in its glorious entirety.

Listening to Wright's unapologetic, egotistic, racist rantings, one is tempted to believe that he is working for the Clinton or McCain campaign. But I couldn't shake the old saying that even the devil quotes scripture. If you have not had the chance to view it, I encourage you to stop right now and take the time to [read](#) or [watch](#) the entire speech. Nearly every word of his separatist manifesto is dripping with supercilious disdain, especially for those of "European heritage;" a term he uses repeatedly in a sardonic and derisive manner.



Lisa Fabrizio

The main thrust of his talk centered around the differences between "European" and black Christian worship; particularly what he calls the "prophetic theology of the black church," or black liberation theology. He explained that liberation theology was first propagated in Latin America and was adopted in the 1960's by Dr. James Cone, whom he identifies as a good friend, citing his "inimitable and incomparable contributions he has made and continues to make in the field of theology." What are these "incomparable contributions?" Here's one from Cone's book, *A Black Theology of Liberation*:

Black theology refuses to accept a God who is not identified totally with the goals of the black community. If God is not for us and against white people, then he is a murderer, and we had better kill him. The task of black theology is to kill Gods who do not belong to the black community ... Black theology will accept only the love of God which participates in the destruction of the white enemy. What we need is the divine love as expressed in Black Power, which is the power of black people to destroy their oppressors here and now by any means at their disposal. Unless God is participating in this holy activity, we must reject his love.

He continued by explaining the theories of Dr. William Augustus Jones; that the way we perceive God (theology) affects the way we see ourselves (anthropology) and therefore the way we order our lives (sociology). Ergo, "If I see God as male, if I see God as white male, if I see God as superior, as God over us and not Immanuel, which means 'God with us', if I see God as mean, vengeful, authoritarian, sexist, or misogynist, then I see humans through that lens...And I order my society where I can worship God on Sunday morning wearing a black clergy robe and kill others on Sunday evening wearing a white Klan robe."

Might this kind of thinking have colored Barack Obama's views on rural whites who "cling" to religion and guns out of bitterness? Wright's influence can also be perceived in another of Obama's odd religious statements. Wright has said of 9/11, "You cannot do terrorism to others and have it not come back to you." He purports that this view is based on the Bible's Golden Rule; kind of like Obama's [quizzical citation](#) of the Sermon on the Mount to justify the gay lifestyle.

But Biblical clarity doesn't seem to matter to Wright who said, "[T]he Christianity of the slaveholder is not the Christianity of the slave." Now, this would have come as a great surprise to St. Paul who said, "For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3: 26-29)

Make no mistake about it, this speech has really painted Barack Obama into a corner. In it, Wright used the term "black church" no less than 25 times, making it very clear that should Obama wish to repudiate him, he must take on the entire black church; or at least the one he attended for 20

years. Indeed, Obama has said that "I can no more disown [Wright] than I can disown the black community." But even should Obama go on to disavow every word Wright has ever spoken in public or private, he cannot erase the fact that he is a member of a church that [specifically espouses](#) black liberation theology, as most helpfully described by Jeremiah Wright and James Cone.

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

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Editor**

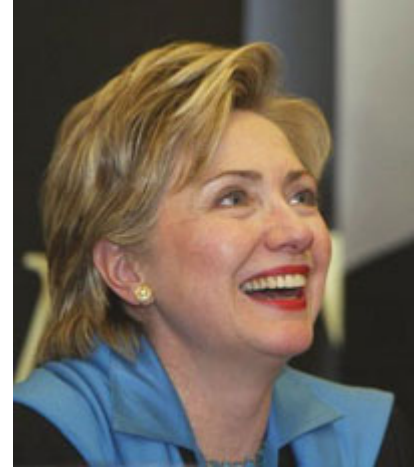
Blue Collar Hillary?

by Quin Hillyer

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

One of the more bizarre developments of this campaign season has been to see Hillary Clinton, of all people, turned into an electoral favorite of blue-collar white voters. The reality is that very few people in politics have more contempt for white workers than does this product of Park Ridge, Wellesley, the Senate Watergate Committee, and the super powered Rose Law Firm.

This is the woman who, according to three, independent, respected, credible witnesses, at least one of them a strong Clinton supporter, responded to Southern whites workers voting Republican in 1994 by telling her husband: "Screw 'em. You don't owe them a thing, Bill. They're doing nothing for you; you don't have to do anything for them."



This is the woman who last year insulted the whole state of Mississippi in an interview with Iowa's famous columnist David Yepsen, noting the lack of elected women in both states: "How can Iowa be ranked with Mississippi?" she asked. "That's not what I see. That's not the quality. That's not the communitarianism, that's not the openness I see in Iowa."

This is the woman whose mentor and philosophical guiding light, Saul Alinsky, wrote that the white working classes were always "[s]eeking some meaning in life, [so] they turn to an extreme chauvinism and become defenders of the 'American' faith. Now they even develop rationalizations for a life of futility and frustration."

This is the woman who tried to foist a massively bureaucratic health care plan onto the American people in 1993 and 1994, but when told that her plan would be devastating to the small mom-and-pop shops that provide most jobs in America, dismissed those concerns with these words: "I can't be responsible for every undercapitalized entrepreneur in America."

(This was the same government-knows-best health plan of which Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan said that "anyone who thinks [it] can work in the real world as presently written isn't living in it.")

In terms of policies, her actions and positions have been directly opposed to the interests of blue-collar workers who pay taxes. Take welfare reform, for instance. Perhaps the single most successful programmatic reform in the past 30 years, it saved taxpayers tens of billions of dollars, gave people incentives to find jobs, and quite arguably played a big role in a decade of improving statistics in areas ranging from drops in crime to drops in the teen birth rate and the divorce rate. (The old welfare system encouraged divorce by making it in many cases more lucrative to be a single mom.)

Yet her husband Bill not only vetoed welfare reform twice, but did so in accord with Hillary's fierce advice against reform. (He signed it at the third opportunity only to take the issue off the table in his 1996 re-election campaign.)

This is also the woman who has spent an entire career supporting legal positions (and judges) that are contrary to the deeply held views of most white workers. Strong support for racial preferences? Check. Support for partial birth abortion? Check. Judges who rule against basic Christmas displays in the public square? Check. Letting the government take working class homes in order to use the land for big corporate developments? Yes again.

Her Whitewater-related shenanigans left taxpayers on the hook for tens of millions of dollars, while old folks expecting retirement housing were left high and dry. Her treatment of White House career employees was notoriously nasty. Her profiteering in the cattle-futures market, and her money-grubbing in cases too numerous to mention, gave evidence of a sense of public entitlement completely at odds with the values and the daily concerns of laborers. And her opposition even to the middle-class-heavy Bush tax cuts of 2001, if it had carried the day, would have cost most workers well over \$10,000 in the seven years since.

Yet now Hillary Clinton is depending on white, working-class voters to power her attempted primary-season comeback. They ought to remember that she and her husband Bill once fancied themselves such racial conciliators that Bill welcomed the sobriquet of being "the first black president." Yet in this campaign season we have seen just how quickly the Clintons have fanned racial animus in an attempt to cause a white backlash against Barack Obama.

Lesson: The Clintons are for the Clintons, and only for the Clintons. They will abandon any voter group the moment such abandonment can gain them an advantage. The Hillary Clinton who is suddenly the champion of white laborers today can just as easily be saying "screw 'em" again tomorrow.

Their votes for her are votes against their own interests and values.

Quin Hillyer is an associate editor for the Washington Examiner and a senior editor of The American Spectator.

**E-mail the
Editor**

A Picture To Vote?

by Paul Weyrich

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Is the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) ever on the right side of any issue? On one issue out of a bundle such as a national ID we might find ourselves in agreement. As for most, forget it.

For example, the United States Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of an Indiana statute which requires a picture ID in order to vote. If voters can't afford to obtain a picture ID the State of Indiana will provide it for them. And if voters do not have a picture ID with them on election day they can cast a provisional ballot and then show up with a picture ID within ten days.



Paul M. Weyrich

It was a 6-3 decision. Justice John Paul Stevens wrote for the majority. I cannot recall the last time I was in agreement with a controversial decision of his. Even one of the dissenters, Justice Stephen G. Breyer, said he did not object to the principle but believed the Indiana law was too strict. He indicated he would have preferred the law in effect in Georgia.

As soon as the decision was announced the ACLU was whining big time. If I didn't know better I would have thought real people would be deprived of the right to vote. I have yet to hear a cogent argument against having a picture ID in order to cast a vote. Numerous States now have some sort of law requiring same. I predict that many more will enact such laws.

In Washington State there was a very close gubernatorial election. The winner won by about 1,000 votes. One left-wing group took it upon itself to make up at least 1,500 names, evidently pulled from the telephone book, from obituaries or merely manufactured. Presumably they voted these people. Had a picture ID been required they most likely could not have gotten by with their scheme. The election unsuccessfully was challenged in court.

I note that more and more picture IDs are required to get into buildings, to cash checks, to make applications of all sorts. If picture IDs can be required for those activities, how much more so should they be mandated for our most precious right, the right to vote.

Some in Congress now want to enact a law overturning the Indiana decision. I doubt that will fly even with the present Congress. It would be a tough sell back home to tell constituents that requiring a picture ID was just too disruptive. Further, sound Federalism says let's leave it to the States.

There are those in the ACLU who are trying to suggest that requiring a picture ID is analogous to the Germans or the Soviets requiring an internal passport. Hardly. We do not compel people to vote. No one has the right to stop someone on the street demanding to see that person's papers.

The objections to picture IDs for voting are vastly overblown and sensational. They are rooted in neither in fact nor common sense.

Three cheers for Justice Stevens.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

Dangerously Gun Free

by Don B. Kates

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A crazed gunman slaughtered 32 people at Virginia Tech despite it being a "gun free zone." The shooting at Northern Illinois University is the latest in a series of at least five other massacres in such "gun free zones."

Some criminologists wonder if such zones actually attract mass killers who know that their victims will be disarmed. Some states are now considering allowing college students and professors who have gun carry permits (CCWs) to have their guns on campus. Proponents cite the success of the 40 states who issue CCWs to all reputable, trained applicants. Analyzing 25 years' national data, economist John Lott found that states with such laws experienced less violent crime. (But as criminals turned to nonviolent crimes, rates of those increased.)



Most of Lott's critics are ideologically opposed, vehemently feeling that guns are the problem, not the answer. But when non-ideological critics examined Lott's work using econometric methods they preferred to Lott's, this just confirmed the finding that widespread gun-carrying by responsible, law-abiding adults greatly reduces violent crime. Some reexaminations concluded that Lott actually had underestimated this effect. Lott's book "The Bias Against Guns" was endorsed by two Nobel Prize winners.

But even if arming victims stops ordinary criminals, will it deter mass killers--people who often end up killing themselves rather than shooting it out with police? For the answer, look to the history of Israel. Early terrorists targeted schools, feeling that killing children would terrorize the Jews into fleeing Israel. Moreover, it seemed a low-risk strategy: Small children can't shoot back.

Israel responded by arming teachers in schools and on field trips. In many cases, armed teachers killed terrorists or held them off until security forces arrived. Even today's suicide terrorists, though willing to die, have learned to avoid schools lest they be shot down before they can kill the children. They have learned to kill in markets instead, and in other public places where strangers are freely allowed entrance.

Typical is a May 31, 2002 report from the Israeli news service Arutz Sheva: "At about 8:30 AM, [the terrorist] fire[d,] and threw a grenade, at the kindergarten before [shooting up]...the town. He opened fire at several residents and homes before David Elbaz, owner of the local mini-market, gave chase and killed him with gunshots.... Security sweeps revealed several explosive devices that he had intended to detonate during the thwarted attack."

But he did not try to enter the kindergarten, which would have meant shooting it out with teachers before he could kill the children. (A few days earlier, a suicide terrorist was killed by a teacher before he could harm anyone.)

American CCW-issuance has stopped mass killers here as well. Some weeks ago, a crazed gunman, having killed two people at a mission school, broke into a crowded church. But before his shots struck anyone, he was shot down by a CCW-licensed woman who had volunteered to protect the church. Similarly, over the last decade:

- A gunman who killed two at a Mississippi high school was prevented from killing more, by a principal who retrieved a handgun from his car;

- An ex-student who killed three at Appalachian Law School was disarmed by two students who retrieved guns from their cars; and
- A teacher was killed and three children wounded at an Edinboro, Penn. junior high school dance, before the owner of the auditorium arrived with a shotgun and arrested the shooter.

Guns in the hands of law-abiding, responsible adults have never been a problem. Studies as far back as the nineteenth century consistently demonstrate that murderers are extreme aberrants, with life histories of violence, crime, psychopathology, and/or substance abuse. Only 15% of Americans have ever been arrested, but almost 100% of murderers come from that group.

Our laws already forbid such people guns--but such people don't obey laws. Unfortunately, the only people affected by "gun free zone" policies are the law-abiding and responsible. They are thereby left to be helpless targets for those who disobey those policies.

Don B. Kates is a criminologist and constitutional lawyer who is a Research Fellow with the Independent Institute in Oakland, California.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Reader Comments

Issue 108 - May 28, 2008

Editor: I've just seen the new issue of Conservative Battleline Online and read your editorial about Pope Benedict, "Internationalist Pope." In my humble opinion: brilliant, penetrating, detailed, well-argued--and with a couple of well-dealt and well-deserved blows. What else could one ask for? Simply perfect! Sincerely, Domenico Cammarata

**CONSERVATIVE
BATTLELINE
ONLINE**

Editor: I've enjoyed yet another issue of your "Conservative Battle Line On line." In regard to your editorial "Internationalist Pope," however, I will say I was a bit taken aback by the Pope's visit and the comments that he made over the course of his visit. First of all, he does have the right to express his opinions about politics or political matters, whenever he wants. He is only infallible when he is speaking on matters of faith and doctrine. His opinion that we should welcome all immigrants into the U.S., without reservation or hesitation, is a political statement and is fair game for anyone, Catholic or not, to disagree and comment upon. As a citizen of the United States, I have a duty to abide by the laws of the U.S., not the political whims of the Pope or the promulgations of the "world community". Endorsing and welcoming lawbreakers into my country is not an option. We are being invaded en masse by hordes of unscreened, unlawful, and sometimes criminal, persons. These people are a burden on our social security system, our internal defenses and our nation's stability. We are already seeing an increase in instability, thanks to the influx of vicious Hispanic gangs, drug trafficking, etc. The Pope can comment all day long about how we should continue to absorb the masses of the world but I've yet to hear him make a statement on how we continue to exist as a sovereign nation under the present invasion. He should know that no nation can survive under such an assault. The Pope is yet another Globalist, driven by a desire to deconstruct the sovereignty of the U.S. Even though I am a Catholic, I can't endorse such nefarious undertakings. Thanks for ConservativeBattleline. I enjoy it every time it shows up in my mailbox. Respectfully, Tim Close, New Orleans, LA

Editor: In first reading "Internationalist Pope," I was afraid you were dissing the Pope. It is a very deep column. He IS "awesome." Diana B

Editor: Your editorial "Internationalist Pope" said: "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." YES! Someone else on this planet "gets it". Give the author a raise; please. Mufi

Editor: Regarding "Earth Day Riots" by Alan Caruba, for the first time a politician, Senator Kay Hutchison, has nailed-down the stupidity of using food grains and other food crops for biofuels. With the vast resources of known oil available to us, the clean cheap nuclear power and natural gas, and the vast resources of coal, to use food crops for the production of biofuels is a great SIN. The very

fact that we can grow enough food to feed a starving world and then divert that food to biofuels allowing people to starve has to be evil. However, even though Senator Hutchison recognizes the problem she still would continue the attempt to create biofuels. Am I missing something here? There is a finite amount of arable land--just what food crop should we stop raising to produce a non-food crop, like grasses. It's either that or to destroy forests. The fix seems to be so very, very simple to me. Grow grain and other food crops to feed people, and use the more than ample cheaper and cleaner fuels sources such as oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear for power. Sir, Where am I going wrong???? TSGT Uvin A. Clough Jr., USAF, RET.

Editor: Regarding "Climate Myths" by Paul Driessen, all of the solar system is warming due to extra radiation produced by the sun that cosmologists believe is part of a long-term cycle of approximately 1500-3000 years. Mars is warming (polar ice caps really melting), Venus is hotter than ever, Mercury is warming, Saturn's southern hemisphere is warming, Jupiter is warming (has developed a second red-spot storm maybe from warming), and even Pluto, now a planetoid, in the farther reaches of the solar system is warming. Ergo, the earth is also warming. I believe we should conserve (prices are going to do that for us), live frugally (although the "green" celebrities like Leonardo DiCaprio go green by buying expensive hybrids and not giving up their private jet flights), and keep as much woodlands and natural spaces as possible--but not to the exclusion of protecting ourselves through homeland exploration and development of energy. Severe energy restrictions will cripple the U.S. economy and as the U.S. goes, so goes the world. Thoughtless programs and legislation could trigger a depression that makes the 1930s look like a walk in the park. Renny Hartmann

Editor: Very good article by John Goodman "Hilary Health, Again." I don't believe that Hillary can fix health care or anything else for that matter. She wants to fix NAFTA and what has she done, nothing. Talk Talk Talk, that's all it is. Get real Hillary. Pat Anderson

Editor: Regarding Brian Wesbury and Robert Stein's "Save Dollar—Raise Interest Rates," if you truly want to have a stable dollar, get rid of the Federal Reserve System and return to the gold and silver system as dictated by the Constitution. Arthur Summers

Editor: At the core of the controversy covered in Daniel Pipes' article "Obama's Muslim Childhood?" is what is the truth?? One cannot be a practicing Muslim and not be a Muslim. To be listed as Muslim in school means he was raised and taught the Muslim faith. Listening to his minister, I can't say that I hear the gospel in any messages I've heard replayed. And so I question what he believes when he says he is a Christian. Patricia S. Ivie

Editor: I do appreciate Daniel Pipes' article "Obama's Muslim Childhood?" But, I would like to know who does not tell the full truth about themselves when they are running for a government office? Deceit is very common in politics, businesses and personal lives! A very young child has very little to say about the direction of their young life, when parents are determine to raise their children. And, of course that is the American way of family life, freedom to choose within the law of justice. I think your articles should cover the missteps of all public and private officials, and government officials, especially! What missteps has McCain done in his life and Hillary in her life and everyone connected

to them. Also, the missteps of our future choice of U.S. Vice Presidents! Once again, thank you for your article. Sincerely, Leo B. Jackson

Editor: If Daniel Pipes' article "Obama's Muslim Childhood?" is correct, this guy is a good liar. Keep on exposing him. Please. J. Boyd

Editor: I understand the sensationalism that comes with essays such as Daniel Pipes' article "Obama's Muslim Childhood?" but I have yet to hear anyone explain what the big deal would be if, in fact, a presidential candidate was a Muslim. Obviously we know that being a Muslim does not equal being a terrorist just as we know that being a Christian does not mean that one stands with the views of Fred Phelps. I find that articles such as these tend to cheapen an organization such as yours through the failure to explain the initial question it assumes in the first place: why are Muslims unfit for public office? I am honestly curious why this topic of where Sen. Obama attended school when he was a child is constantly raised. It seems like there is much to talk about with all of the remaining presidential candidates. Their childhoods seem largely irrelevant to me. In the future, I'm hoping that a respectable organization such as yours will explore issues of substance rather than topics that are seen to many as pure knee-jerk sensationalism. Again, it only cheapens the intellectual value of the conservative stance. Sincerely, Noah Armstrong

[Editor responds: Actually, Mr. Pipes stated the following in his article: "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.]

Editor: Regarding Daniel Pipes' article "Obama's Muslim Childhood?" let me open by saying that I am Wiccan (Pagan), and an ordained minister as such. As far as religion goes, and what I have been hearing about Obama, he needs to be totally honest about his religious past. Sure, he may have gone to a mosque with his father as a child (as children, didn't we all go to church (whatever it may be) with our parents?). So what? I would like to think that religious affiliation is a non-issue with respect to the office of the President, but I am afraid if Obama becomes President, Islam, and religious intolerance, may take over this Grand Country of ours. I plan to vote for John McCain for president. Let us hope he chooses a proper running mate. I am afraid that if Obama gets the nomination, Hillary could get the nod for VP, and vice versa. Either way, that would be disastrous for America. Rev. M. Scott Hilton

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Editor**