



Gov. Blagojevich and Patrick Fitzgerald

CONSERVATIVE BATTLELINE ONLINE

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Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

[Why Did Fitzgerald Act?](#)

From the Battle Line

[Why Did Fitzgerald Act?](#)

by Donald Devine

[Jumping to Foreign Conclusions](#)

by Paul Weyrich

[Creating Economic Uncertainty](#)

by Robert Higgs

Media Pass in Review

[Must-see Reader Drama](#)

by Spencer Warren

[Newspaper Death Spiral](#)

by S.T. Karnick

[Hollywood Blacklist Hypocrisy](#)

by Brent Bozell

Government Maneuvers

[TARP Will Fail](#)

by Mark Hendrickson

[Consensus on Health](#)

by John Goodman

[Victory Over Islamism?](#)

by Daniel Pipes

Culture Wars

[Final Stage of Nannydom](#)

by Lisa Fabrizio

[Real Climate History](#)

by Dennis Avery

[Obama Climate Confusion](#)

by Alan Caruba

Political Front

[Obama's Old New Deal](#)

by Mark Rhoads

[Multicultural Louisiana](#)

by Jeff Crouere

[CPAC Plan for 2010 Win](#)

by Ronald Kessler

Reader Backfire

[Paul Weyrich, RIP](#)

by David Keene

[Obama Natural Born?](#)

by Joseph Morris

[Reader Comments](#)

Why Did Fitzgerald Act?

by Donald Devine

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich boorishly peddling Barack Obama's Senate seat was ugly enough. But why did U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald act so soon, before the case was fully developed? As former top Department of Justice official Victoria Toensing noted, "The governor's maneuvering to sell the Senate seat most likely had not yet crossed the line to become criminal."



Gov. Blagojevich and Patrick Fitzgerald

The Attorney's actions were very strange. Here you have an officer of the law - whose legal guidelines require that he not go beyond the specific public facts of the indictment - holding a colossal media conference telling the world Blagojevich was engaged "in a political corruption crime spree," that he "has taken us to a new low," that various of his actions were "appalling" (several times), and finally that his "conduct would make Lincoln roll over in his grave."

The guidelines specifically require that a "prosecutor shall refrain from making extrajudicial comments that pose a serious and imminent threat of heightening public condemnation of the accused." What could Mr. Fitzgerald have said to the TV that would have been more prejudicial than what he actually intoned into every living room in America? As Ms. Toensing rightly concludes, this is unethical conduct pure and simple and deserves public condemnation.

While he was effusive with prejudicial comments, the U.S. Attorney was evasive on the central question of why the wiretaps were set in the first place. He answered with technical statements about how difficult they were to be secured, avoiding the question, why? Weeks after, it is still not clear when and why wiretaps were set. They apparently started with a complaint from person who was perturbed that she could not secure a low-level state contract. Thereafter, the investigation meandered widely over an incredible five years until it finally landed with a bug in the governor's office. That this is a rather circuitous route perhaps explains why Fitzgerald did not give a direct answer. But it gets worse.

U.S. Attorneys are supposed to "exercise reasonable care" over the law enforcement officials used for the investigation, as Toensing also notes. Yet, at the same media event, FBI Special Agent Rob Grant volunteered a question to himself out loud, asking no one in particular whether Illinois was the "most corrupt state in the United States?", answering his own question that if it is not the worst "it's one hell of a competitor." He gratuitously added that even his seasoned agents were "thoroughly disgusted and revolted by what they heard" as they listened to the wiretaps. Even if Grant's agents are this sheltered, it is hard to argue his language was not prejudicial.

The U.S. Attorney has been there before, in the high-profile Scooter Libby case. To quote Toensing,

In his news conference in October 2005 announcing the indictment of Scooter Libby for obstruction of justice, he compared himself to an umpire who "gets sand thrown in his eyes." The umpire is "trying to figure what happened and somebody blocked" his view. With this statement, Mr. Fitzgerald made us all believe he could not find the person who leaked Valerie Plame's name as a CIA operative because of Mr. Libby. What we all now know is that Mr. Fitzgerald knew well before he ever started the investigation in January 2004 that Richard Armitage was the leaker and nothing Mr. Libby did or did not do threw sand in his eyes. In fact -- since there was no crime -- there was not even a game for the umpire to call.

But this is all lawyer stuff. Ms. Toensing is too much a professional attorney to draw practical conclusions. Why did Mr. Fitzgerald do this? His own explanation was twofold. He did not want to wait until the Senate replacement was already seated. Yet, as all now know, the Senate could have held up the nomination. His second explanation was, "I laid awake at night" worrying that the editors of the Chicago Tribune would be fired under pressure from Gov. Blagojevich before he could act. This seems even more unlikely since the U.S. Attorney was already working quietly with the newspaper. Was he just promoting himself? As an old bureaucratic insider, he undoubtedly knows that the first leaker earns the media's favor and is protected by that status. He could be understood to be investing in some insurance with the media at the conference by laying awake in their interest.



As any student of the bureaucracy could tell the legalists, this strategy is especially helpful to guarantee one's own job security. Once a federal prosecutor brings a case only the most foolhardy President or Attorney General would dismiss him. There is a long history of U.S. Attorneys doing so and successfully enhancing their job tenure, as Fitzgerald could not fail to know. A few clever ones have used the publicity to run for higher office! Another high office in Illinois might soon be vacant. If top U.S. officials even thought of appointing a replacement, as a new administration otherwise would be free to do, any prosecutor who wanted to keep his job could merely whisper "obstruction of justice" and be safe in his job forever. A President Obama, coming from Illinois, would

not even think of it.

Former U.S. prosecutor (and ex-quarterback at Ohio State), Daniel Westerbeck has a more intriguing suggestion – that Fitzgerald was actually protecting Mr. Obama. He notes that although the official Complaint did not mention any contact between the president-elect and the governor, his top strategist David Axelrod had earlier admitted constant interaction over the Senate replacement. They even had a candidate, Valerie Jarrett. As soon as Sen. Obama was elected, the country could have faced the possibility of a Constitutional crisis involving the president-elect. Westerbeck surmises that Attorney General Michael Mukasey informed the Obama team about the wiretaps. What we know is that Ms. Jarrett withdrew weeks before the news conference. His reasoning is that

after the election, as Patrick Fitzgerald and the Attorney General pondered this, their choice was stark: 1) do we follow the normal protocol and let the tapes roll and maybe reel in Obama staffers (or, God forbid, Obama himself) bargaining with Blago in the US Senate seat auction; or, 2) do we tip Obama in a briefing and abruptly terminate the investigation at the governor's level and thus preclude it from reaching Obama and his staff? I think they made a political and legal calculation in the nation's interest and chose the latter course. They saved Obama, or certainly his staff, from the taint of the criminal action and also prevented the sale of a US Senate seat by a corrupt Cook County Democrat politician by arresting Blago [early].

While such a decision would have its altruistic dimensions, Mr. Westerbeck also concludes there was a pragmatic one. "So Obama now owes the Justice Dept. and US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, in particular, a big one", even the Attorney General position if Eric Holder falters, which he well might given his role in the Marc Rich pardon. Certainly, there would be no removal of Mr. Fitzgerald for as long as he wants to stay.

No doubt such an easy and crass target as Blagojevich will be tried and undoubtedly convicted of something. There are enough scared politicians who will succumb to prosecutors' threats and make a case against him. But after acting so early, what case can Fitzgerald make? Should we not care as long as the foul-talking tough guy gets his due? Of course, it is good to go after public corruption but is talking tough a crime? It will be interesting to compare the governor's with tough-talking Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel's taped remarks when they are released. Marvelously, Fitzgerald had

anticipated, had already answered this question himself at his media conference. When a Chicago reporter asked when merely "talking-tough" had become a crime, he referred her to the conspiracy statutes.

The dirty little secret of the U.S. Federal justice system is that if you do not have the evidence to convict a person of a crime, convict him of conspiracy. Everyone conspires with others on non-criminal matters – common conspiracy simply means working in secret for a common goal - so once it is allowed it is shooting fish in a barrel to convict on "conspiracy" alone without an underlying crime. If U.S. prosecutors could convict a nice and attractive person like Martha Stewart on a conspiracy charge without her being charged with an underlying crime, surely they could get a slob like the Illinois governor on the same dodge, without having to meet the higher standards of proof for committing an actual crime.



How did it get to this? It was not until the 19th Century that conspiracy was even considered a crime other than as conspiracy against the state and it was not used generally until the great increase in difficult to prove white collar crimes with the rise of the welfare state in the 20th Century. Indeed, even today federal white collar crimes are considered crimes against the U.S. Government, the state. Even so, it was not until very modern times that one could be convicted of conspiracy without being charged with an underlying crime. Conspiracy especially became the charge of choice to convict for secretive drug crimes as distribution exploded in the wake of the hippie revolution of the nineteen sixties.

Today a prosecutor can jump from one trivial crime to another for five years or more and through plea agreements rather than trials (90% of convictions are pleas) coerce defendants into enticing higher-ups into recoded conversations and based on their tough-talk can convict media-appealing big shots of conspiracy when no actual crimes have taken place even after the fact. That even the President-elect could have been implicated for simple horse-trading under these standards should be sobering, although taking on media star President Obama this early is unthinkable. Either way, no one can touch prosecutor Fitzgerald, who now has as high potential and even firmer tenure than the president himself.

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**

Jumping To Foreign Conclusions

by Paul Weyrich

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On December 9 my good friend Ed Lozansky, President of the American University in Moscow, showcased a documentary at the National Press Club. The film purports to vindicate Russia in its recent war with Georgia. While quickly winning military battles with Georgia, Russia lost the propaganda war with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. His excellent English skills and Western public relations consultants portrayed Georgia as a helpless and blameless victim of unprovoked Russian aggression, with the Russians out to destroy Georgian democracy.



Paul M. Weyrich

The very Western media which bought Saakashvili's side of the story now is challenging the way in which he successfully rallied Western support for his regime. Recent reports from the Caucasus question Georgia's account of the origins of the war. Two veteran Western correspondents say they found that shelling of civilian areas in Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, began far earlier than Georgian authorities contended. A BBC documentary exposed the rampages of Georgian forces in South Ossetia's capital. A Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International report accused Georgian forces of deliberately targeting civilians and using cluster bombs in populated areas.

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) military monitors, comprised of veteran British military officers, told Western media outlets that Russian forces entered South Ossetia eight to ten hours after Georgian forces began shelling Tskhinvali. The allegation is that Georgian forces attacked Russian peacekeepers. At this point Saakashvili successfully exploited America's statements that Georgia's path toward consolidated democracy and NATO membership was guaranteed. Mixed messages from the United States, especially from Vice President Richard B. Cheney's office, contributed to the Georgian Government's sense that a successful war would receive US approval.

In view of the OSCE reports, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband called the Georgian Government "reckless" for its military actions. The European Union has formed a commission to investigate Saakashvili's behavior to determine if international laws were violated.

So now, as Lozansky wonders, has Russia truly been vindicated? He further asks if Saakashvili has been exposed as an aggressor and even a reckless gambler who for his political gain exploited the goodwill of his Western allies and tried to set them up for a confrontation with Russia. Lozansky wants to know if the US and EU will withdraw their support for Saakashvili, which might allow Georgian opposition forces to remove him from power. He asks how the West will view Russia now that its claim that it was responding to Georgian aggression conflicts with Georgia's earlier accounts. Will Russia be more respected as a responsible world power, Lozansky asks, or will it continue to be viewed with suspicion and fear as an aggressive and unpredictable power? That is the correct question.

In any war there probably is no 100%-0% situation. If this documentary is correct, and if Georgia is now on the defensive, won't there be a huge lesson for President-elect Barack H. Obama about jumping to conclusions in foreign policy?

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

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Editor**

Creating Economic Uncertainty

by Robert Higgs

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In an [article](#) published in 1997 titled “Regime Uncertainty: Why the Great Depression Lasted So Long and Why Prosperity Resumed After the War,” I advanced the idea of *regime uncertainty* in an attempt to advance our understanding of the Great Depression’s extraordinary duration and of the highly successful postwar transition to a genuinely prosperous market-oriented economy. The idea is more definite than the hoary but vague idea of “business confidence,” though related to it, and different also from the idea of regime uncertainty that some econometricians have used in their macroeconomic studies, though, again, not wholly unrelated.



Robert Higgs

In my conception, *regime uncertainty* pertains above all to a pervasive uncertainty about the property-rights regime — about what private owners can reliably expect the government to do in its actions that affect private owners’ ability to control the use of their property, to reap the income it yields, and to transfer it to others on voluntarily acceptable terms. Will the government simply take over private property? Will it leave titles in private hands, but strip the owners of real control and profitable use of their properties? These questions fall under the rubric of regime uncertainty.

Between 1935 and 1940, this matter attained prime importance. So many businessmen and investors lost confidence in their ability to forecast the future property-rights regime that few were willing to venture their money in long-term investments. They constantly sought clarification of the government’s designs, but President Roosevelt merely continued to rage against “economic royalists” and to blame a “strike of capital” for the economy’s ongoing troubles, including the depression of 1937-38, which played havoc with the general public’s confidence in the New Deal. Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau tried repeatedly to persuade the president to make a public statement that would reassure investors, and as the president continued to reject his entreaty, Morgenthau became so frustrated that in a 1937 cabinet meeting, he blurted out to his boss: “What business wants to know is: are we headed toward Socialism or are we going to continue on a capitalist basis?” (qtd. in Higgs, [Neither Liberty Nor Safety](#), p. 114). Astonishingly, Jim Farley and even Henry Wallace backed up Morgenthau’s insistence that the president spell out what sort of economic system the administration sought to foster.

In his question, Morgenthau encapsulated the wide ranging uncertainty Lammont du Pont expressed in the same year, when he said:

Uncertainty rules the tax situation, the labor situation, the monetary situation, and practically every legal condition under which industry must operate. Are taxes to go higher, lower or stay where they are? We don’t know. Is labor to be union or non-union? . . . Are we to have inflation or deflation, more government spending or less? . . . Are new restrictions to be placed on capital, new limits on profits? . . . It is impossible to even guess at the answers. (qtd. in Higgs, [Depression, War, and Cold War](#), p. 16)

I do not know that the regime uncertainty that an increasing number of commentators and others have perceived recently is comparable to that of the latter 1930s — by now there’s not much real capitalism left for the government to destroy, in any event. However, it is clear that the government’s frantic actions of the past several months have created a situation in which investors have little confidence about the character of future property rights in the United States. The takeovers of Fannie, Freddie, and AIG, the massive interventions into financial markets, the huge bailouts of banks and other financial institutions, mixed with letting Lehman Brothers go down and a bailout for the Big Three auto manufacturers — all these actions, and others, imply that a rational investor would do well to attach a huge risk premium to any money he puts into investments even for the intermediate term, not to mention the long term.

One of the clearest expressions of this outlook that I have seen so far was made recently by Lou Jiwei, the chairman and chief executive of the China Investment Corporation, who expressed a lack of confidence in Western financial institutions and said that his giant fund would make no new investments in them in the foreseeable future. As the [New York Times](#) reported:

“Right now we do not have the courage to invest in financial institutions because we do not know what problems they may have,” Mr. Lou said as part of a panel discussion on the second and final day of the Clinton Global Initiative conference [in Hong Kong]. . . . Mr. Lou said that the sheer pace of new initiatives and new rules issued by Western regulatory agencies was disconcerting and made it even harder for him to choose worthwhile investments. “If it is changing every week, how can you expect me to have confidence?” he asked.

How, indeed?

Robert Higgs is a senior analyst at the Independent Institute, where this first appeared.

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Editor**

Must-see Reader Drama

by Spencer Warren

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Some readers may have heard of this new movie based on reports of its impassioned sex scenes between the thirty-plus Kate Winslet and a teenager, played by David Kross. But no one should be put off by this element of the film, for *The Reader* is an absolutely outstanding drama about human nature, human weakness and the Holocaust. This is a true must-see motion picture for age-appropriate audiences.

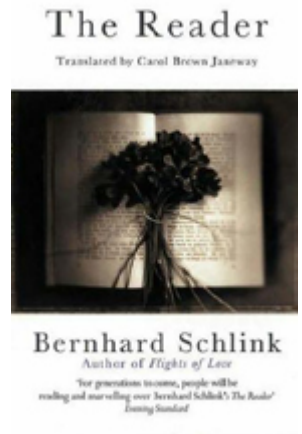
Based on the celebrated German novel by Bernhard Schlink, the story begins in Neustadt, West Germany in 1958, thirteen years after the end of the war. Michael (Kross), a sixteen-year-old middle class student, becomes involved in a steamy month-long love affair with a thirty-five-year old streetcar conductor, Hannah (Miss Winslet). Believe it or not, the way the affair begins and then unfolds (a good deal of nudity and passionate scenes in bed) is presented very credibly by the highly accomplished director, Stephen Daldry, and the adaptor of the novel for the screen, playwright David Hare. All this is integral to the story; it is not exploitative.

Following their love-making and, later, preceding it, Hannah likes to have Michael read to her from the literature he is studying in school, such as Homer's *Odyssey* and a Chekhov short story. We learn in fact that she cannot read herself. At the beginning they do not even know each other's name and even after they do, Hannah continues to call Michael, "Kid." They go on an idyllic bicycle holiday in the countryside, and declare their love for one another. In a country church, Hannah sits alone in a back pew and appears quite moved as she listens to the beautiful music of the service sung by the young choirboys.

Such an idyll, especially one as untypical as this, cannot last. But Michael can never get over his passion for Hannah. Eight years later, now a law student, observing a war crimes trial he is astonished to see Hannah one of the co-defendants in the dock. What should he do? Should he speak up for Hannah despite the awful crimes she is charged with? Emotionally shattered, not least because he has been able to see his beloved again when he thought he never would, Michael can barely participate in his law seminar, in which his professor asks the students to discuss the trial in terms of the question of law as the opposite of justice.

Readers should discover this wonderful movie's riches and subtleties on their own, so no more of the plot will be revealed here. Suffice to say that the film raises profound questions about human frailty and the Holocaust (which is heard in recollections but never seen in flashback), without allowing excuses. At one point during the chief judge's examination of her, Hannah asks him what he would have done had he been in her place; he has no answer. Unlike many of those involved, Hannah is a human being, she is not demonized, and we are asked to try to understand her, not excuse her. The film also presents us with the moral dilemma of the shattered Michael. In his silence, is he too blameworthy? In the end, the film very movingly dramatizes issues of closing and catharsis for several of the characters.

The acting in this film is just superb, led by the flaming talent of Kate Winslet, who ages from thirty-five to sixty-five. Sitting in the church listening to the service, or sitting in the defendants' dock in the courtroom, she requires no words to express her emotions. They are all there in her distraught face. She is completely real, with no glamorization, as this illiterate working-class woman (including her perfect German accent – Miss Winslet as always is a master of accents), who has no family and may never had anything in life other than her affair with the teenager half her age. Her physical movements and everything else about her are true to the character – she completely is Hannah, collecting fares in her prim uniform on the streetcar and in everything else she does. She certainly deserves to win her first Academy Award, after five losses, as best actress for this role. She also



deserves great credit for constantly seeking out challenging parts such as this, rather than just trying to be a "star."

Also fully true to life in realizing their characters are the aforementioned David Kross as the teenage Michael and the brilliant Ralph Fiennes as the adult Michael. Indeed, the entire cast could not be bettered.

The consistent high level of acting (though Miss Winslet and Fiennes are always on top form in their films) may in part be credited to the young director, Stephen Daldry, a British theatrical director who previously had only one major film to his credit, *The Hours* (2002). His film is unusual for its subtlety – he presents the story and allows the action and characterizations to unfold naturally, raising in an understated manner the issues for the audience to take away and ponder afterward. He films the characters in big shots that take in their surrounding time and place (mise-en-scene, as the French call it), using few close-ups and never lapsing into the tiresome in-your-face television manner of one head shot after another that tends to be standard nowadays. His direction has pace and economy, brilliantly enveloping us in the drama so that we are not conscious of anything else for the film's gripping two hours. Daldry directs like a filmmaker of vast experience, not the relative newcomer that he is.

The direction is aided by the burnished cinematography of Roger Deakins and Chris Menges, which is particularly effective in the setting of Hannah's modest apartment where she takes up with Michael. (Note their use of the light from her lamps.) They are also quite good creating the drab picture of Neustadt thirteen years after the end of the war. Another important contribution is the musical score by Nico Muhly. *The Reader* is rather heavily scored with a relatively high volume soundtrack for a serious drama. But Muhly also recognizes the dramatic effect of silence, of halting the music, as when Michael goes to visit the remains of a concentration camp. The music captures the evanescence of the love affair, as well as the delicacy and gentleness with which the film treats its profound moral questions facing both main characters. Thankfully, Muhly has composed music of orchestral substance (including his use of the oboe) to match the depth of the drama.

The moral questions with which *The Reader* leaves us, which may be unanswerable, are best expressed without words. They go beyond words. The filmmakers have had the wisdom, discipline and talent to reach beyond the script. It is as if they have created a great work of music to imprint these characters' dilemmas on our consciences. Go see this wonderful film as soon as you can.

Spencer Warren is ConservativeBattleline's media critic.

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Editor**

Newspaper Death Spiral

by S.T. Karnick

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The mainstream media are struggling to keep pace with the great civilizational transition from analog means of communication distribution to digital distribution. The big TV networks have been losing audiences for two full decades, and in the past couple of years their audiences have deteriorated to the point that their previous monetary advantage over cable/satellite channels has nearly entirely disappeared.



With the Federal Communications Commission's forcible transition to all-digital TV coming in February, the networks will receive a bit of a boost as their over-the-air signals will be better, but the march to digital TV over cable, satellite, and now the internet will undoubtedly continue and probably accelerate.

In the print media the situation is even more dire—from the perspective of the sclerotic, arrogant elites who currently run things. Newspapers and magazines are sustained by advertising dollars (as opposed to subscription revenues), and ad money has been rushing away from the print media to television, radio, and the Web. The latter has yet to see a great boost in ad money, but as website audience rating becomes more sophisticated in the next couple of years, the shift will become much more pronounced.

This is all to the good, as the mainstream media were long able to treat their positions as sinecures and their products as only minimally affected by audience preferences. With the huge costs associated with buying into the distribution of television, film, and influential print operations, the mainstream media had been increasingly able to operate pretty much as they pleased for some three decades since the early 1970s.

Thus as the left took over the mainstream media during the decades after World War II, their hegemony became increasingly evident and immutable over the ensuing half-century.

In recent years, however, radio and the web have been much more responsive to audience reaction, and that has meant in particular that a much wider variety of viewpoints has been conveyed to potential audiences. That, in turn, has led to increased audiences for those two media and less for the unresponsive mainstream outlets.

Thus the news has been increasingly bad for the media elites and good for the rest of us. Consider a few recent examples:

[Hard times for the New York Times are seen as likely to continue](#). Revenues were down in the first half of this year, and ad revenues fell by 11 percent, even including the increase in online ad money. Although circulation rose slightly, advertisers are going elsewhere, indicating that the *Times's* advertising has been overvalued (and hence overpriced) in recent years. With the recession now in full swing and showing no signs of imminent abatement, arrogant, overvalued institutions such as the Grey Lady will continue to take the brunt of the effect of advertising reductions.

[Editor & Publisher reports](#) that the *New York Times* has lost circulation in its all-important weekday editions in recent months, as did *all* of the top 25 daily newspapers in the nation (although the losses by *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal* were a minimal 0.01 percent).

Circulation of Sunday newspapers is declining even faster, [reports Digital Ink News](#).

Taken together, those two trends constitute a continuing disaster for most of the legacy media newspapers and further proof that technological change is resulting in much creative destruction as new, more audience-friendly outlets increasingly replace the old.

More such news:

The corporate owner of the *Rocky Mountain News*, the oldest newspaper in Colorado (which has been coproduced in recent years by the very mainstream *Denver Post*), [is trying to sell the paper](#) after enduring a loss of \$11 million on the newspaper's operations in the first nine months of this year.

Under pressure from revenue declines, [newspapers are slashing jobs](#), laying off large numbers of workers.

Even newspapers in one-paper towns are losing their grip: [the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle just laid off fifty-nine workers](#). This is only the latest among [a huge amount of such job cuts in cities across the nation](#).

Although the job losses will be painful for those whose positions are eliminated, the reductions in expenses are both necessary and urgent, though they are almost certainly arriving too late to save most of these publications in the long run, and definitely will not preserve them in their present form. In addition, the newspapers have been forced to reduce the number of bargains and promotions used to build circulation, which will further constrict their reach.

[One industry analyst aptly refers to all of this](#) as a "newspaper death spiral," noting that total industry advertising revenue was down 18 percent below the year before, even online revenue for the legacy media has been dropping in the past year, and the overall decline in newspaper ad revenue is accelerating:

Print advertising has been declining for ten straight quarters, but this marks only the second quarter that online advertising also went down. More concerning is that the overall rate of decline seems to be accelerating, a trend we [noted](#) in September. Here is the percentage change in total newspaper advertising for the past five quarters:

3Q07: -7.4%
4Q07: -10.3%
1Q08: -12.85%
2Q08: -15.11%
3Q08: -18.11%

The fourth quarter will probably be worse.

All of this news has led analysts to [suggest that the continuing travails of the industry indicate that the bankruptcy filing of Tribune Co. is a portent of the future](#) and to [ask whether anything can save the newspaper industry](#) as it currently exists, in particular local, paid-circulation print newspapers.

It seems increasingly unlikely that the industry will ultimately weather the changes without becoming much more responsive to its readers, and that is all to the good.

S.T. Karnick blogs at The American Culture, where this first appeared.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Hollywood Blacklist Hypocrisy

by Brent Bozell

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Hollywood can still mount a soapbox and recall the dark days when people lost their jobs in show business for daring to take an unpopular political position that was outside the mainstream. Whenever they're criticized, they proclaim "McCarthyism," accuse their critics of "blacklisting," and condemn the deplorable "intolerance."

Hollywood has yet to accept, perhaps even to understand, that it is the entertainment industry that excels at this slanderous behavior. After California voters narrowly approved Proposition 8, which amended the state constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman, it was revealed that Scott Eckern, the artistic director of the California Musical Theater in Sacramento, the state's largest nonprofit musical theater company, had donated \$1,000 to the Yes on 8 campaign.



Brent Bozell

Eckern's freedom of speech be damned: the man needed to be punished. Producer Marc Shaiman's musical "Hairspray" had played at the theater and he announced he would never allow anything he wrote to play there because of Eckern's donation. Shaiman's declaration triggered a blistering e-mail pressure campaign, forcing Eckern to resign.

Shaiman claimed to the Associated Press that he regretted that it came to Eckern losing his job and said: "It's a tragedy for everyone involved. You'll certainly see that no one called for him to resign."

Shaiman said he would never allow anything he wrote to play there, but he doesn't think that was creating pressure to dismiss Eckern? That confounds common sense. So great was the pressure that Eckern, a Mormon, also felt he had to donate a repentant \$1,000 to a gay-rights group. Meanwhile, the theater bizarrely claimed it would not "impinge on the rights of its employees to engage in political activities."

This wasn't the only blacklisting. Los Angeles Film Festival Director Richard Raddon, also a Mormon, was pressed into a resignation after his \$1,500 donation to the Yes on 8 campaign was disclosed. Film Independent, the festival's organizer, put out its own Orwellian statement that "Our organization does not police the personal, religious or political choices of any employee, member or filmmaker." But one Film Independent board member told the Los Angeles Times that the "progressives" also berated Raddon personally with phone calls and e-mails.

Gay activists are correct that they have every right to boycott theaters or businesses that offend them. But that's exactly the right that anti-communists claimed in the middle of the last century, and Hollywood has spent more than 50 years condemning this as an attack on hallowed free speech. The hypocrisy speaks for itself.

It wasn't enough for Marc Shaiman to get Eckern fired. Next, he made a star-studded satirical video (appearing on the comedy website Funny Or Die) mocking opponents of Prop 8, casting the comedian Jack Black as Jesus Christ, who trashed the Bible as hopelessly out of date. It is more of the anti-religious bigotry for which this industry, supposedly so devoted to "tolerance," has become famous.

The cartoonish Christians in Shaiman's video sing it's "time to drop some hate" with Prop 8. They proclaim that they lied about gays, "but it worked, so we don't care." So "Jesus" shows up to "correct" -- and to ridicule -- the idea that the Bible calls homosexuality an abomination: "but it says the same thing about this shrimp cocktail....Leviticus says shellfish is an abomination!"

This phony-baloney Jesus seems to be quoting directly from an Obama speech in 2006 that suggested Christian conservatives weren't reading their Leviticus. But neither Obama nor Shaiman will admit in the Bible there is also St. Peter's vision in the Acts of the Apostles, where he's told to abandon the idea of clean and unclean foods.

Shaiman also has his Bible-trashing Jesus sing that the Bible says "you can stone your wife, or sell your daughter into slavery." This is also a common pro-gay argument, as if Christians today are all recognized to be active in wife-stoning and daughter-enslaving. When the Christians say they ignore those verses, Jesus scolds, "it seems to me you pick and choose...Well, then, choose love instead of hate. Besides your nation was built on separation of church and state."

Only someone utterly ignorant would make a video where Jesus descends in a vision to humanity only to sound like a lawyer for the ACLU.

Hollywood loves to pose as the trendy defender of civil liberties, but clearly no one who wants to remain employed would ever dare to make a musical mockery of Shaiman and his blacklisting coalitions. No one has forgotten the ruined career of former "Grey's Anatomy" star Isaiah Washington for ingloriously using the gay six-letter F-word on a private set. From now on, no one in entertainment is going to feel safe making a donation as measly as \$100 to a conservative defense-of-marriage campaign.

L. Brent Bozell III is president of the Media Research Center

**E-mail the
Editor**

TARP Will Fail

by Mark Hendrickson

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

Washington's \$700 billion bailout plan is making a lot of people unhappy. The Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), as the implementation of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 has come to be known, seems to be morphing unpredictably.

Originally, TARP was supposed to help stabilize financial institutions by buying from them what are euphemistically termed "impaired assets"-that is, gobs of unmarketable, even worthless, financial junk. This plan was abandoned within days. Shortly after TARP was unveiled in September, \$250 billion of capital was "injected" into banks, sometimes by purchasing shares of stock, other times via loans. On Nov. 12, Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson, who was placed in charge of TARP, announced that the focus of the program was shifting to an attempt to facilitate consumer loans. What Paulson will do tomorrow is anybody's guess.



Meanwhile, as Paulson and associates tinker with TARP, the stock market has sunk to new lows and the economy continues to deteriorate. In fairness, we can't say that we weren't warned that this might happen. President Bush plainly stated on television that things would get worse before turning around. Secretary Paulson told us that the \$700 billion rescue/bailout plan might not work.

Now the critics are calling for Paulson's head. Among other things, they say he's incompetent. This is both true and untrue. As top banana in a hugely successful investment bank, Paulson showed himself to be highly competent. He is NOT an incompetent person or financier. That said, he has proven incompetent to find a way to use \$700 billion to stabilize the American economy. Well, surprise, surprise. Yes, Paulson is "incompetent" in this regard, but vilifying Paulson for not being able to save the economy makes no more sense than condemning him because he can't flap his arms and fly. Nobody-from the eminently wise Paul Volcker to Nobel Prize-winning economists to the world's greatest genius-could fix this economy, even if they were given ten times the money placed at Paulson's disposal.

Last week, I asked my Economics 101 class why they thought Paulson was having such a hard time pulling us out of our economic tailspin. A hand went up and a young man said something like, "Because he doesn't have enough knowledge to know how everything should fit together." Bingo! That's it in a nutshell.

Any economy, but especially one as large as ours, involves millions of people, billions of daily decisions, and countless individual assets, contracts, obligations, abilities to pay, etc. What is the "right" price for each asset? Which contracts and obligations take precedence? What is everything worth, and what companies are most worth saving? Answer: Nobody knows, and nobody can know. This is the fatal flaw in socialism. Socialism doesn't work-it CAN'T work-for the fundamental reason that only a market pricing mechanism can bring supply into balance with demand and rationally coordinate the economic activities of millions of persons.

To use an analogy, the difference between central planning and a market-based economy is comparable to the difference between the Frankenstein monster and Fred Astaire. Nobody planned or built Fred Astaire-his grace, coordination, and fluid motions came naturally. That's the way a market economy works, with prices continually adjusting so as to coordinate the actions of millions of people. By contrast, when Dr. Frankenstein tried to artificially construct a man, assembling the different parts and patching them together, he produced something hideous. It resembled a man (two arms, two legs) but the creature's movements were slow, clumsy, pathetic, and ultimately

destructive. Such is the nature of a socialist economy, where necessary adjustments are slow, supply and demand are uncoordinated, production is herky-jerky, and economic progress is pathetic.

Socialists don't understand that you can't MAKE economic activity be coordinated; you have to LET it coordinate itself through market prices. This is Socialism 101, and it is why Paulson and any eventual successors will not be able to put the fallen Humpty Dumpty of the American economy back together with top-down planning. Only markets developing themselves from the ground up can accomplish this.

TARP is doomed to fail. There is a silver lining in this wretched political experiment, however: As Americans see TARP degenerate into a spectacle of corporate lobbyists trying to grab what they can from the government piñata, resistance to future bailouts will grow. And as they see that government planning solves nothing, producing nothing but political inequities, maybe, just maybe, they'll be willing to support market-based solutions.

Dr. Mark W. Hendrickson is a faculty member, economist, and contributing scholar with The Center for Vision & Values at Grove City College.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Consensus on Health

by John Goodman

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009



John Goodman

Big business has a plan. The health insurance companies have a plan. Tom Daschle has a plan. Max Baucus has a plan. Teddy Kennedy is about to have a plan. And the chattering class is exuberant over the idea that a consensus is emerging on health reform. With respect to the twin problems of cost and quality, just about everyone seems to hold these positions:

Consensus Point No. 1:	I AM NOT AT FAULT.
Consensus Point No. 2:	Somebody else is at fault; and, not to put too hard an edge on it and you may have to read between the lines to see this, but a reasonable inference is that DOCTORS ARE AT FAULT.
Consensus Point No. 3:	Again, not to put too hard an edge on it and you may have to read between the lines even more diligently, but once you do you will surely conclude that we must FORCE DOCTORS TO CHANGE THE WAY THEY PRACTICE MEDICINE.

Seeing all this agreement makes me so giddy I want to immediately go rewatch "Twelve Angry Men" for the umpteenth time.

Consider by way of analogy my treating the NCPA employees to Caesar salad for lunch. Why Caesar salad? Because I find that people can think more clearly about salad than they can about health care.

Now because the salad is free to the employees, I can't let them order whatever they feel like ordering. The moral hazard problem would be too great. And because of the problem of bilateral bargaining with asymmetric information, I can't let prices be agreed to willy nilly. So I make a list for the chef of ingredients and prices I'm willing to pay. For example, so many sprigs of Romaine lettuce at x cents a pop, so many croutons at y cents, so many raw eggs at z cents. Then there's the task of stirring the dressing, the task of sprinkling the Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, the task of tossing, etc. - each with its own respective price.

Yet when we all sit down to eat, the salad is not very good. For one thing, the lettuce is wilted. (I forgot to specify nonwilted lettuce.) The croutons are stale. (I forgot to specify fresh ones.) The dressing isn't consistent. (I skimped on the fee for stirring.) There are no anchovies. (I left them off the list.) And the quality of the ingredients is inconsistent. (Every price I selected was, of course, the wrong price.)

Lessons From Our Lunch.

Question: What is dumber than asking a chef to prepare a salad by pre-determined, individually-priced tasks?

Answer: Holding conferences, giving speeches and writing papers deploring the fact that the chef's preparation was uncoordinated, not cost-effective, not of high quality and not adhering to best practices.

Question: Is there anything dumber than complaining about the chef?

Answer: Yes. Thinking we can make things better by improving on the list of tasks and the list of prices.

Question: Once we are in this silly predicament, is there a way out?

Answer: Yes.

(a) Liberate the chef. Let him propose ways of repricing and repackaging his services and accept every offer, consistent with higher quality and lower cost.

(b) Liberate the diners. Let them manage their individual shares of the cost and be free to enter into any contract they choose to negotiate with the chef.

With any luck, eventually we will get a real market.

John Goodman is president of the National Center for Policy Analysis

**E-mail the
Editor**

Final Stage of Nannydom

by Lisa Fabrizio

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

From the trans fat Nazis in the Northeast to those on duty keeping school bake-sales safe for humanity out West; from banning plastic shopping bags--which were foisted on us by greenies to begin with--to fines for "[light pollution](#)," one can't help but think that our once-free country is in the final stages of nannydom and well on its way toward total government control of our lives.



Lisa Fabrizio

Many folks calmly accepted the banishment of smokers and nodded in submissive agreement that our public schools should control the sexual, moral and nutritional upbringing of our children, and most seem to think that the plethora of laws regulating an ever-growing list of our daily activities are relatively unobtrusive. After all, they mostly apply to public places and have no bearing on our actual home lives, right?

Well now, we have the fireplace police out in force in California's Bay Area, sniffing out illicit smoke. Under a law passed in July, on so-called Spare the Air days this winter, it will be illegal for 1.4 million residents to burn wood in the fireplaces on their own private property. And they will enforce it with all the gusto that liberal busybodies can muster. According to the [San Francisco Chronicle](#), "The fireplace police say they are determined to keep law and order in the living room."

Color me confused, but does the liberal mantra that the government is to stay out of their bedrooms not apply to the rest of the house? Nevertheless, no matter what room you use to try and hide out from government intrusion, you'd best be sure to do it with the lights off, unless the bulbs therein meet with the approval of you-know-who.

What can be the reason for denying citizens the warmth of a winter fire that would save them lots of money during these hard times? Says a district spokeswoman: "This is a major health threat. The weather conditions are such that smoke is trapped closer to the ground and anyone with respiratory problems will have a hard time breathing." So once again, the tyranny of the minority shall rule the land in the form of a few unfortunates who have breathing woes.

So, anyone who is against the ban and would suggest that those poor souls merely stay indoors during high pollutant periods must be an insensitive lout, yes? But what about the ghastly pollutants that occur in the summer time? What does our nanny [recommend](#) then? "People who are especially sensitive to pollution are advised to limit their time outdoors, particularly in the afternoon hours."

The bureaucrats in charge of enforcement of this heinous dictate also helpfully provide a toll-free number (1-877-4NO-BURN) so you can snitch on your inconsiderate and Earth-hating neighbors. This little trick was a favorite of fascists and Communists for decades, so no one should be surprised that dropping a dime on your fellow Americans is considered by liberals to be a civic-minded duty. Indeed, pediatricians around the country are already inducing children to [inform](#) on their parents' habits; nothing like giving the little tykes a lesson in citizenship.

Now, some in California might choose to employ their little gray cells and ask why officials--bowing to extreme environmentalist groups--refuse to allow routine maintenance of heavily wooded areas to prevent huge and devastating forest fires which throw more "pollution" into the air than fireplaces ever could, but then they might risk being sent to "[smoke education class](#)."

So far I've never been to one of these re-education camps but I would imagine the teaching goes something like this: many of the practices of humans dating back thousands of years have now been found to be harmful; like burning wood for warmth and cooking, parental control of child-rearing, and the right to eat whatever one darn well pleases. Conversely, many of the practices banned by

human beings for thousands of years have now been found to be beneficial to society; like abortion, gay marriage and pornography on demand.

And it's not going to get better any time soon. Our recent elections have led to a perfect storm for big government control freaks: our nation's capitol in the hands of liberal Democrats. But some of our time-honored, constitutionally-guaranteed rights may still remain: it's unclear if it's legal to burn the American flag on Spare the Air nights, so use caution.

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

**E-mail the
Editor**

Real Climate History

by Dennis Avery

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A North China cave stalagmite just produced an amazingly precise record of China's rainfall over the past 1800 years, proving that variations in the sun's activity—through weaker monsoons and poor rice crops—helped bring down three historic Chinese dynasties (the Tang, Yuan, and Ming dynasties).

In contrast, the sun sent abundant rainfall for the Song Dynasty, producing rich rice harvests, social stability, and population growth through the 10th-13th centuries—a period known to the world as the Medieval Warming. The Chinese recorded the Song abundance in both historic documents and cave-wall paintings.



Dennis T. Avery

Paleoclimatologists used uranium-thorium dating of the layered deposits in the stalagmite, linking them to the rainfall records within a remarkable 2.5 years—thus permitting the rainfall-dynastic analysis. Lawrence Edwards of the University of Minnesota was a lead author of the study, published in the journal *Science* November 7, 2008.

The China study found that the cave stalagmite rainfall record followed solar variability even more closely than it followed the northern hemisphere's temperatures. A strong correlation was also found between the weak monsoons of the Late Tang Period in China and a Swiss record of Alpine glaciers advancing during the cold temperatures of the 9th century. The European glacier advance was followed by Alpine glacial retreat from the late 9th to 14th centuries, correlating with the Medieval Warming and the Song Dynasty's prosperity.

Half a world away, the decline of the Roman Empire is reflected in the layers of a stalagmite from Soreq Cave near Jerusalem. The stalagmite, analyzed with an Ion Mass Spectrometer at the University of Wisconsin, shows the Eastern Mediterranean becoming drier as Roman and Byzantine power waned from 200 AD to 700 AD. The stalagmite record shows especially sharp drops in precipitation about 100 and 400 AD.

Hunger, produced by the extended droughts of the late Roman Warming may have driven the barbarian tribes from Eastern Europe and the Near East to the gates of Rome seeking food. But Rome itself may then have had grain shortages, since the Roman "granary" in North Africa also tends to get less rainfall as the warm periods wane and the tropical rain belts move back to the south. Without steady supplies of grain, the Roman hold on its Mediterranean Empire was probably doomed.

The stalagmite cores "look sort of like tree rings in the cross-section," says co-author Ian Orland, "Only instead of looking at the ring widths, we're looking at the geochemical composition of each ring." Oxygen isotopes in the calcium layers and organic matter flushed into the cave by surface rain—and trapped in the mineral layers—contain the climate information.

This is a relatively recent way of looking at world history. Scientists have only known about the moderate, solar-driven 1,500-year climate cycle since 1984. Evidence found in ice cores, seabed sediments, ancient tree rings and fossil pollen as well as in cave stalagmites from every continent show it has produced seven previous global warmings since the last Ice Age ended 12,000 years ago. Maureen Raymo of Boston University found the cycle extending more than one million years in the microfossils of the North Atlantic seabed south of Iceland. (*Nature*: 392, 1998)

Researchers are still working to link the physical evidence of warming/cooling shifts to the events of world history while the rest of us watch the unfolding story with awe and anticipation.

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**E-mail the
Editor**

Obama Climate Confusion

by Alan Caruba

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When I heard President-elect Obama speak casually of “bankrupting” the coal industry because of its role as a source of greenhouse gas emissions, I knew that he could become a serious threat to the economy of the nation.

Given that the economy has been seriously threatened by the financial crisis, Obama has acted quickly to surround himself with people tasked to restore trust and confidence to our banking system. The ad hoc approach of the current Secretary of the Treasury will hopefully yield to a more reasoned effort, but it is clearly one in which the government will inject huge amounts of money into the system to give it, in Obama’s words, “a jolt.”



Alan Caruba

Obama enters the Oval Office as perhaps the President who is most committed to the murderous objectives of the environmental movement that took root and have expanded since the 1960s. It is instructive that its impetus was “Silent Spring” by Rachel Carson, a screed against DDT and all chemicals that protect and enhance the lives of human beings, crops and property. The “facts” put forth in her book have long since been exposed as lies and the result of those lies has been the needless death of millions from diseases such as malaria. Here in the United States, cases of West Nile Fever would be greatly reduced were DDT permitted to control the mosquito population.

In a comparable fashion, every “fact” put forth by Al Gore’s “An Inconvenient Fact” has been demonstrated to be false.

Here are Obama’s words: “Few challenges facing America and the world are more urgent than combating climate change. The science is beyond dispute and the facts are clear. Sea levels are rising. Coastlines are shrinking. We’ve seen record drought, spreading famine, and storms that are growing stronger with each passing hurricane seasons. Climate change and our dependence on foreign oil, if left unaddressed, will continue to weaken our economy and threaten our national security.”

Every single word of this statement is false in whole or in part.

To begin with, there is no problem with regard to climate change, a term adopted by environmentalists as the public becomes more and more aware that there was and is not dramatic global warming. Indeed, the world is now into a cycle of global cooling that has been in effect since around 1998. A number of solar scientists are predicting we are in for at least fifty years of global cooling and its effects will be far more destructive to modern societies than any fictitious warming.

Nothing, absolutely nothing should be done to deal with a non-existent global warming. The Earth is 4.5 billion years old and climate changes have occurred throughout all that time. Humans have been around for about 200,000 years and the Industrial Revolution began just over two hundred years ago. In the process, the ordinary lives of humans have been extended and enhanced in ways that were unimaginable even in my youth.

Briefly, the sea levels during the twentieth century rose worldwide by less than eight inches, nor are the coastlines “shrinking.” Obama is engaging in scare mongering by saying that there has been record drought. There were far worse U.S. droughts in the early part of the last century. Even the intentionally flawed UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns against attributing droughts or floods to “global warming.” The natural cycles of hurricanes are well known and attributing more of them to “global warming” is utterly false.

The worst and most dangerous aspect of Obama's objectives is the imposition of limits on greenhouse gas emissions in the name of ending a "global warming" that is not happening. Cutting 80-90% of U.S. carbon emissions would result in the closing of a comparable amount of U.S. industries. It would so weaken the U.S. economy that it would render it a Third World nation. The European Union nations that agreed to such reductions via the Kyoto Protocol are seeking to alter or end these commitments.

Imposing "cap-and-trade" of emissions or a "carbon tax" will eviscerate the U.S. economy. The notion that the EPA should regulate carbon dioxide is absurd and the justification, if this goes into effect, will be the lies promulgated by the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change. As Sarah Liddy Bourne, vice president for policy and strategic development of The Heartland Institute, points out, the IPCC "include staffers of such activist groups as Greenpeace, Environmental Defense, and Environment Canada." Not exactly the most neutral people on this critical topic.

Obama's promise of 2.5 million new jobs based on "sustainable" energy such as solar and wind turbine use, the increase of ethanol production, and other mandates is utterly baseless as these steps ignore the fact that the nation and its economy is totally dependent on the use of oil, natural gas, coal, hydroelectric and nuclear for its energy requirements. Neither the solar or wind industries would exist without significant government subsidies and support.

Requiring Detroit to produce hybrid automobiles that no one wants to buy and which are far more expensive than gasoline-powered models will kill its auto industry. The batteries required add an average of \$8,000 to the cost of these vehicles that get barely 45 miles per charge and must be recharged overnight, running up the owner's electricity bill.

As the Viscount Monckton of Brenchly, a noted British scientist, has pointed out, the rise in the real cost of "biofuels" such as ethanol has already led to food riots in poor countries and the consequence of such a policy would be mass starvation. He has deemed global warming and environmentally-based energy mandates as "purposeless and cruel."

"To let politicians insert data into official scientific documents; to alter those documents so as to contradict scientific findings; to manipulate decimal points so as to engender false headlines by exaggerating tenfold—those are moral issues," says Lord Monckton.

He went on to rebuke statements like Obama's, saying "To claim scientific unanimity where none exists; to assert that catastrophe is likely when nearly all scientists do not; to exalt computer models over real-world observations; to misstate the conclusions of scientific papers or that meaning of observed data; to overstate the likely future course of climatic phenomena by several orders of magnitude—these are moral issues."

They are also critical economic issues.

We are on the brink of a term of office by President-elect Obama and by the U.S. Congress that puts everyone at extreme risk and which, if these false assertions are enacted as the law of the land, will utterly destroy the economy, leaving everyone vulnerable to energy and food losses on a scale few can imagine.

Alan Caruba writes a daily blog at <http://factsnotfantasy.blogspot.com>. Every week, he posts a column on the website of The National Anxiety Center, www.anxietycenter.com.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Obama's Old New Deal

by Mark Rhoads

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

I was summoned by an email recently to watch a You Tube clip of "Your weekly radio address by the President-Elect." "My" weekly address? I thought it was Barack Obama's address. I was not speaking, he was. Well sir, there he was sitting behind a polished desk with that silly sign that says "Office of the President-elect" as if the Constitution provided for such an "office" for a guy who gets elected to a job and is waiting to start.

It is times like this that I think of the late great Chicago columnist Mike Royko who died in 1997. Suppose that Mike's fictional pal Slat Grobnik asked for radio or TV time to address all citizens of Cook County from behind a sign that said, "Office of the Trustee-Elect of the Metropolitan Sanitary District of Greater Chicago." Some people might laugh. But Slat would take himself seriously and that is what President-elect Barack Obama does. He takes himself seriously too even as he churns out a cacophony of frivolous and non-serious proposals.



Don't get me wrong. I am grateful that several of Mr. Obama's appointments for cabinet posts are not from the extreme left wing of the Democratic Party and a few are good national defense and national security choices. Others are "centrist" only in the context of a well left-of-center political party which still places them decidedly on the left of the larger American spectrum. But in terms of policy generalities that Obama has hinted at so far, what I see coming is a superficial Potemkin Administration which could be defined as government by CliffsNotes.

Someone reads the CliffsNotes version of *Team of Rivals* by Doris Kearns Goodwin and then briefs Obama so he thinks he too can be a statesman by appointing rivals to the cabinet. If they had read the actual book they would know that Lincoln's "team" of rivals was not always helpful to him. Some other Obama staffer scans a CliffsNotes version of a history of Franklin Roosevelt's first year in office about 75 years ago and Obama decides that public make-work jobs are a neat idea. Again, if they had read actual books on the early New Deal, the Obama staff would realize that most of the pump priming of 1933-1937 had very little impact on restoring private-sector jobs and that it was not really until the spending of World War II that higher levels of productive economic activity and manufacturing jobs returned.

So with such deep briefings in mind on Dec. 6, President-Elect Obama comes out four square for New Deal-type make-work jobs, but like Bill Clinton he calls them "investments" to sugar-coat ideas that failed three decades before Obama was born. So, Obama wants to "create" 2.5 million jobs apparently in the public sector for such chores as repairing and painting crumbling old school buildings. Now I am for repairing old school rooms heat them and make them look better since it will make some students feel better about their drab surroundings. But does anyone imagine that the federal government has a magic wand to actually improve reading and math skills of students who are trapped in old education factories with teachers who cannot teach? What exactly did President-elect Obama do during his eight years in the Illinois State Senate and his four years representing Illinois as a US Senator to attack the persistently massive drop out rates of Illinois minority students when they reach 16?

Someone needs to tap President-elect Obama on the shoulder and give him five bucks so he can go out and buy a clue. He has more Clinton-era ideas like bringing broadband Internet capacity to schools as if that will impact basic Reading and math skills. He wants to wire up all the doctor's offices in America so that it will be even easier to share medical information as if that were a real problem that is not outweighed by the dangers of the theft of personal medical data or unaffected by the fact that doctors are rich enough to wire up their own office records if there is a demand for that.

President-elect Obama wants to do something dramatic such as FDR's New Deal or Ike's Interstate Highway system. We have known for 30 years that America's infrastructure of roads and bridges urgently needs repair. But how will that problem be solved by make-work jobs when the skills required are mostly found among highly skilled engineers and iron workers in trade unions that will not be wild about the idea of competition from unskilled public works employees?

Mr. Obama's training in life has left him ill-suited and yes, unprepared, to offer leadership to a country that has been so long based on a free-market driven economy. So far, he has nothing new to offer except for nostalgic travels back in time to the failed policies of previous Democratic administrations. So far, this is not only change that is hard to believe in but it is not really change at all from ancient Democratic schemes of our fathers.

Mark Rhoads is a former Illinois pol still in recovery who blogs at Illinois Review.typepad.com.

**E-mail the
Editor**

Multicultural Louisiana

by Jeff Crouere

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For the first time since 1891, a Republican will represent the 2nd Congressional District in Louisiana. For the first time in the history of this nation, a Vietnamese American will serve in the United States Congress. For the first time in many years, Louisiana is making national news for the right reasons.

These historic milestones were accomplished by Joseph Cao, a refugee of South Vietnam, who was elected as the new Republican Congressman for the New Orleans area. In the December 6 special election, Cao won a stunning victory over nine term incumbent U.S. Representative Bill Jefferson (D-New Orleans) 50-47%.



Jeff Crouere

Cao is a former Jesuit seminarian and missionary who studied physics and later taught ethics in college. He is an attorney and community activist in New Orleans East who has worked hard rebuilding that community after it was devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Joseph Cao did what scores of other candidates could not do, he defeated Bill Jefferson. Finally, the voters of the second congressional district decided that they deserved better representation. Bill Jefferson is facing a 16-count indictment on serious charges including bribery, racketeering, obstruction of justice and money laundering. Unlike Jefferson, Joseph Cao will be able to join congressional committees and he will not be a pariah on Capitol Hill. Cao will not be distracted by an upcoming trial and possible conviction and he will be able to focus his full attention on serving his constituents.

What is even more incredible about Cao's victory is that African Americans comprise approximately 64% of the staunchly Democratic district, whereas Republicans only account for 11% of the voting population. An even smaller minority in the district is the Asian population which registers at an anemic 2.7% of the total.

The result showed the arrogance of Bill Jefferson. He admitted on Election Night that he had never met Joseph Cao, but Jefferson is to blame for that situation for he refused every invitation to debate his opponent. It was Jefferson who constantly declined debate offers, not wanting to face the tough questions or suffer the embarrassment of having to explain his indictments. He never once gave an explanation for why he stashed \$90,000 cash in his freezer.

What is even worse, Jefferson blamed his loss on his constituents, claiming that they were confused about the election. In fact, the Congressman is to blame for the confusion for he was unable to raise money to advertise his candidacy. Donors did not want to be associated with a congressman known for his multiple count indictment and "cold hard cash."

The victory strikes a major blow against the reputation of Louisiana as a corrupt state. In recent years, our corrupt Governor was sent to federal prison, voters rejected an indicted Agriculture Commissioner, a New Orleans councilman and a Jefferson Parish state senator who were caught in criminal behavior were removed from office. So, it is clear that Louisiana is cleaning up its act and weeding out the multiple bad political actors who have wrecked havoc on the state.

The rest of the nation should take notice that this is not the same old Louisiana; this is the new and improved version. This is a proud day for the State of Louisiana for not only was a corrupt politician defeated, but Louisiana has now done what has been done in no other state in the nation; elect a Vietnamese American to Congress.

There are approximately 1.5 million Vietnamese living in America today and Louisiana has a relatively small population compared to Texas and California . Nonetheless, a refugee from Vietnam will now represent the people of New Orleans and Jefferson Parish in the U.S. Congress.

Louisiana is now the only state in the nation to have an Indian American as Governor, Bobby Jindal, and a Vietnamese American as a Congressman. Interestingly, both of these ethnic minority elected officials are members of the Republican Party.

The victories of Jindal and Cao should show the way for Republicans on a national level. It is not necessary to compromise on principles, but it is necessary to reach out to a diverse constituency to seek the best candidates who will carry the Republican banner.

Jeff Crouere is the Host of "Ringside Politics," which airs at 7:30 p.m. Fri. and 10:00 p.m. Sun. on WLAE-TV 32, a PBS station, and 7 till 11 a.m. weekdays on WGSO 990 AM in New Orleans and the Northshore. He is the Political Analyst for WGNO-TV ABC26 and the Political Editor for NewOrleans.com

**E-mail the
Editor**

CPAC Plan for 2010 Win

by Ronald Kessler

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

Dave Keene, chairman of The American Conservative Union, says that conservatives are galvanized and ready to fight after the Nov. 4 elections.

Keene tells Newsmax that nowhere is this take-charge attitude going to present itself more than at the next Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) meeting — which is already reporting a 40 percent increase in registrations over last year.

Moreover, Gov. Sarah Palin plans to speak at the meeting, which is slated for Feb. 26 through Feb. 28 at the Omni Shoreham in Washington.

The crown jewel of the conservative movement, CPAC brings together conservative leaders, grass-roots activists, and college conservatives to exchange ideas and strategies and whip up enthusiasm. It will be widely covered by the press.

Keene, whose American Conservative Union sponsors the event, tells Newsmax that setbacks to Republicans have always brought together conservatives, resulting in higher attendance at CPAC.

"We had about 7,000 people at CPAC last year," Keene says. "This year's registration, particularly among college students or young professionals just out of college, is running better than 40 percent ahead of last year, which doesn't surprise us. That's because CPAC sends an important signal to the rest of the political community and to the media that conservatives are energized and ready to fight."

After a loss, "Conservatives are not prone to lie down but to reorganize, get ready for the next contest, and go forward. In the past, some of our most successful CPACs have been after we lost an election," Keene says.

He cites Ronald Reagan's speech at the 1975 CPAC, when the future president said, "I don't know about you, but I am impatient with those Republicans who after the last election rushed into print saying, 'We must broaden the base of our party' — when what they meant was to fuzz up and blur even more the differences between ourselves and our opponents."

Rather than a third party, Reagan called for a "new and revitalized second party, raising a banner of no pale pastels, but bold colors which make it unmistakably clear where we stand on all of the issues troubling the people."

Keene says that that revitalization led to Reagan's win: "That resulted in his challenge to the incumbent president in 1976 and ultimately his election in 1980," adding, "That CPAC, as you'll recall, came after one of the biggest disasters because of Watergate and President Nixon's unpopularity that Republicans had ever faced."

Keene says conservatives react to defeat that way because "they feel strongly about the principles that brought them into politics in the first place." He says he doesn't know anyone on the conservative side "who got into it for a job or got into politics because it was the way to make their way in life."



Rather, Keene says, "They got into it and got involved in politics, usually at a relatively young age, not just because of the excitement, not just because of the opportunities, not just because they wanted to come to Washington or to some state capital, but because they had come to the conclusion that the conservative principles of limited government, low taxation and individual freedom were things that were important — important to them, important to the country, and important to the future."

People who believe in those principles "are not going to give up because they've lost the battle," Keene observes. "They know that you can lose today and win tomorrow. And they know also that if you lie down and don't do your part, then you're not going to have the kind of country in the future that we want."

Keene says Palin was going to speak at CPAC last year for the first time, but because of a special legislative session in Alaska, she had to cancel at the last minute.

When Palin canceled, "She told us that she'd be there this year, and as soon as the election was over, she had her office call to confirm that she will in fact be with us in 2009," Keene says.

At this, the 36th annual CPAC conference, Keene notes, "We're going to focus more on younger conservatives and on the importance of communications through new technologies that perhaps the liberals have gotten the jump on conservatives with in the last few years."

The 2009 conference will also focus on "principled young conservatives in Congress and in state governments much more than we have in the past, because one of the functions of CPAC is to introduce the conservative community — the conservative family if you will — to new people who will provide leadership in the future," Keene adds.

Besides Palin, Mitt Romney, Rep. John Shadegg, R-Ariz., and Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind., among others, have agreed to speak at CPAC. Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana likely will also appear.

When the first CPAC was held in 1973, only 123 people attended.

"Over the years," Keene says, "it's grown and gotten more and more important, not just as a way for conservatives to get together on an annual basis and sort of share what works and what doesn't work, not just as a way for conservatives to meet some of these new people that are going to carry the conservative banner into the future, but also as a way in which conservatives can show the rest of the political community that they're there, that they're tireless, and that they're ready to go to work."

Ronald Kessler is chief Washington correspondent of Newsmax.com, where this first appeared. View his previous reports and get his dispatches sent to you free via e-mail. To register for CPAC go to <http://www.cpac.org/registration.html>.

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Editor**

Paul Weyrich, RIP

by David Keene

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

Paul Weyrich was conservative long, long before it was cool. He campaigned as a volunteer for Barry Goldwater in his native Wisconsin and won local fame as a radio broadcaster and activist there before coming to Washington to work as press secretary to then Senator Gordon Allot of Colorado.

While working for the Colorado Senator, Paul met Joe Coors and more than either could have guessed began with that meeting. Coors was a conservative with money who wanted to make a difference and Paul was filled with ideas as to how he could help.

Coors' biographer wrote years later that Coors had written a letter to his Senator in 1970 saying he "wanted to do something" and to do it by spending "money of the conservative movement." The letter landed on Paul's desk and the results included the Heritage Foundation, the Free Congress Foundation and much else.

Paul was a pioneer, a visionary and a tough enforcer of conservative principle. He had little time for moderates or those who simply gave lip service to the values he held dear. His goal was to recruit conservatives, train them both ideologically and in campaign techniques and send them off to do battle with the liberals who dominated Washington in those days.

He could be ornery, but he accomplished more than almost anyone of his generation. His was a conservatism born and shaped in the battles of the early days of the movement. He planted the conservative flag in Washington, worked with whoever he had to work with to pass conservative legislation and brought ideas to the table and discipline to the war to turn those ideas into action.

It was Paul who recruited Jerry Falwell to help put together the "Moral Majority" which was so instrumental in moving uninvolved and former Democratic leaning church going voters into the conservative and Republican folds.

The health problems Paul confronted in the last few years would have stopped most men, but not him. He spoke, wrote, cajoled and threatened slackers right up to his death. He will be missed and he will be hard to replace.

David Keene is chairman of the American Conservative Union. He speaks for all of us at ACU and for conservatives everywhere. Paul Weyrich has appeared in every issue of ConservativeBattleline On Line from right after its inception, for which we were honored and about which he expressed pleasure. May he rest in peace with the Savior he forthrightly acknowledged and served so well. DD



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Editor**

Obama Natural Born?

by Joseph Morris

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

I have been asked to comment on a recent on-line article whose thesis is that the reason that Barack Obama is filling his administration with a Clinton, sundry Clintonites, and other Democratic Party establishment retreads is as a form of "circling the wagons" because he is afraid that the natural-born-citizenship issue will blow up.

I think that Mr. Obama is afraid, but not of the prospect that he might be found constitutionally ineligible for the Presidency. He is the son of a mother who was a United States citizen at the time of his birth; I am aware of no evidence that, at any time after he attained his majority he renounced his American citizenship; so even if all of the various allegations regarding his Kenyan nativity or the falsification of his Hawaiian birth certificate or his adoption by an Indonesian father were true, nothing in that would trump the known facts that establish that he is a natural-born citizen.

Rather, he is out of his depth when it comes to the matters that a President of the United States must handle. Responsibility for war and peace, for prosperity or destitution, are matters far beyond any pay-grade he has ever held. His meteoric political career has been a marvelous fluke; he is utterly unprepared for high office; the questions now on his plate are not questions that have seriously commanded his attention before.

So he is afraid.

But there is a difference between being ill-informed and ill-prepared, which he is, and being stupid, which decidedly he is not. He knows his limits, and from that knowledge he gains power to protect himself. In addition, he seems to be well read in political history, when many others are not. Accordingly, he is following what seems to some to be a novel, but which is in fact a time-honored, path of sharing responsibility with the Brahmins within his own party. If there is failure, he has two lines of defense: (a) No one can accuse him of failing to appoint the "best and brightest" and the most experienced hands that his party has to offer. (b) He can fire them. If there is success, it will be his alone.

From the point of view of someone suddenly thrust into high office in times that are dangerous for the office-holder, his performance thus far has been nearly flawless.

Joseph Morris is senior partner at Morris and DeLaRossa in Chicago



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Reader Comments

Issue 123 - January 7, 2009

Editor: Regarding "Comeback in 2010" by Paul Weyrich, it is very sad to learn that this great conservative is gone. It may be his last column. Gordon Smith [*Editor replies: Actually, as readers can see, he left us additional columns, one in this issue and one will appear in the next. Yes, he was great.*]

Editor: "Merry Newspeak Freedom" to you, also. It is a great piece. It will be interesting to see if President Bush acts this week on the so-called Freedom of Choice Act issue. Hope you have a blessed Christmas and wonderful New Year. Rich Byman

Editor: Thanks so much for your article "Merry Newspeak Freedom" on the Freedom of Choice Act, freedom for all but opponents of abortion. BL

Editor: Regarding your "Who Plays Herbert Hoover?" criticisms of the rash of government bailouts, costing unprecedented trillions of dollars are now everywhere. The most frequent cries include "When are they gonna bail ME out?" and "What about free markets & individual responsibility"? Behind it all, what is lost is the hidden fact that government carries a guilty conscience in this disgrace. It knows that under its pressure, financial institutions were forced to make risky loans to minorities, illegal aliens and the poor generally and that this was CENTRALLY responsible for the international chaos that's been created-- as well as the willingness of SEC to look the other way on speculative stock market efforts. As always, government efforts have favored the rich & the poor ASKING THE MIDDLE CLASS TO PAY. Don't ever believe that a small minority, given privileges not available to the rest of us, cannot exert a vice-like grip on its milieu. Witness the fact that a police department, given the exclusive sanction of a monopoly on a final resort to violence, THO THEY REPRESENT ONLY A HANDFUL OF THE POPULATION, can dominate an entire civilization. Hitler's military was hardly the majority in Germany but their monopoly on use of violence allowed them to dominate. Similarly when a small group of people are allowed "violence" by being enabled by the govt. to eschew the laws of responsibility in obtaining loans or making financial trades, they can create a wildfire in the economy that consumes all around it in domino fashion. Make no mistake the government, in conjunction w/ Fannie Mae & Freddie Mac, & SEC laxity, KNOWS who started this wildfire of the destruction of our economy AND THEY KNOW...THEY CAN'T TURN THEIR BACKS AND LEAVE THE VICTIMS IN THE FINANACIAL COMMUNITY, BEHIND. They know this is truly unique, so they hide behind the argument that "we need to violate free market principles in order to save it" Al, Lemon Grove

Editor: The "3 Godfathers" movie review by Spencer Warren was excellent. As is said many times, "they don't make movies like that anymore." It would be great if there were a way to purchase these type of movies through the Conservative Battleline Online. God bless your work, Maurice Blumberg

Editor: I enjoy Daniel Pipes' columns. However when he made a comment in "Are Harems Next": "One wonders when Mormons will also wake to this gambit," I was shocked. Before again implying that Mormons could learn from Muslims how to evade Western laws against polygamy, he should get the facts on the Mormon position on polygamy right so he doesn't mislead people who trust in his words. The Church is very clear about the question and explains its opposition very well on its website lds.org. Mormons are fighting this same battle with Mr. Pipes and are Brothers in arms. This is what brought me to read his article. Thank him for his consideration and keep up the good fight. Gary Sorrells, Lindon, Utah *[Mr. Pipes replies: I am sorry. The wording came out wrong, as I explained in an update at [Westerners Welcome Harems](#)]*

Editor: Regarding Daniel Pipes' column "Are Harems Next," it is the Reformed Latter Day Saints that would love polygamy to be commonplace again. God Save America from this, for it's gone to the Dogs. Stand beside her, and save her, With the Light of Truth from Above! I used to say God Help America, but I think that it's now way beyond help. We need God to save America from its own destruction. Robert Littlejohn

Editor: Regarding Paul Weyrich's "Fix Foreign Aid," one thing we could learn from the old USSR is restricting foreign aid to situations in which we get something in return: bases, diplomatic support, etc... H. Novack, Providence RI

Editor: Regarding "Conservative Counter Attack", what do conservatives talk about on the radio? They talk about liberals. It is the same on television and the internet. Most of the conversation at Republican gatherings is about Democrats. We trade stories about liberals the same way kids used to trade baseball cards. While we have been talking about the liberals the liberals have been talking to the voters. The result is that conservatism is being pushed out of America, not just in politics, but in every corner of society. The Democrats chose the most liberal candidate in their primary, the Republicans chose the most liberal candidate in their primary, and the voters chose the most liberal candidate for President. I won't say that Americans are becoming more liberal, but they sure are voting that way. The thing is that Obama didn't portray himself as a liberal, at least not to the mainstream voters. I would describe his campaign image as a tax-cutting, progressive populist, but much more important was that he was inspirational. Obama offered hope, he offered change, and the people believed him. Our friends in talk radio exaggerate when they speak of Obama "the messiah," but only exaggerate a little bit. I've heard the way people speak of Obama and what they expect of him, they see in him the fulfillment of hope and the promise of change, they see him as the answer to their prayers. For many voters it was not a matter of liberal versus conservative, it was a matter of hope versus hopelessness. There is an old saying, "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything." I think that many of the voters found hope in Obama because they can't find hope anywhere else, that they stood up for Obama because they don't consider anything else worth standing up for. I think many voters consider their world so dark that they will jump for any chance of change. I think many of the voters are demoralized. I guess I could be wrong; time will tell if Obama really is the candidate he claimed to be. But what if I am right and the Obama win resulted from a demoralized electorate that was grasping at straws, reaching out to grab onto a dream? Why is America demoralized? Why are they so desperate for "change?" It is because the liberals made them that way. What have voters learned from progressives? They have learned that America is not a great, or even good; it is an evil nation that dominates and impoverishes other nations. They have learned that there is no honor in being a soldier, sailor, airmen, or marine; those who join the military are uneducated people who have made a poor life decision and in their service they are actively involved in oppression and murder. They have learned that there is no distinction in being an American citizen, and efforts towards limiting immigration or promoting American culture

are racist and xenophobic. They have learned that abortion and fragmented families are acceptable. Religion is a threat to liberty, and religious people are unintelligent, hypocritical bigots, whose beliefs must never play a role in the politics of this nation. Americans have learned that self reliance is for suckers, and that high taxes are good, as long as they receive the benefits and someone else is paying the taxes. What Americans have learned is that there is no hope. If you can have no pride in God, family, and country, from what is there to draw hope? It is for this reason the people have put their faith in a charismatic figure who promised them "hope" and "change." He won them over with rhetoric. What can conservatives do to reverse the liberal direction of America? I once knew a very religious man, who in his retirement speech remarked that through his actions and his demeanor he hoped that people would see Christ in him. There are different types of conservatives but we all have much in common, the only way we can instill our conservative pride into others is to "witness" conservatism. The way that we witness conservatism is by engaging people and by being ourselves. You see, a conservative identifies with their values. To a conservative an attack against America is a personal attack against them; the same applies to an attack against family values, or against fiscal responsibility, or defense, or against any of the values which have made America great. By the things we say and do we must let people see the conservative values which are within us, so that they may share in them. Our nation, our culture, our conservative values, these are the inheritance of all Americans if they can be persuaded to claim them. Travis Christensen

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