

INDIANAPOLIS

Review

Fall 2018

ANDREA NEAL
'Making Sense
of Pence' p. 11



When Government Goes Bad

**Four rules of thumb to make public
policy less prone to disaster.**

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."



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A FUTURE THAT WORKS

Our mission is to marshal the best thought on governmental, economic and educational issues at the state and municipal levels. We seek to accomplish this in ways that:

- Exalt the truths of the Declaration of Independence, especially as they apply to the interrelated freedoms of religion, property and speech.
- Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns.
- Recognize that equality of opportunity is sacrificed in pursuit of equality of results.

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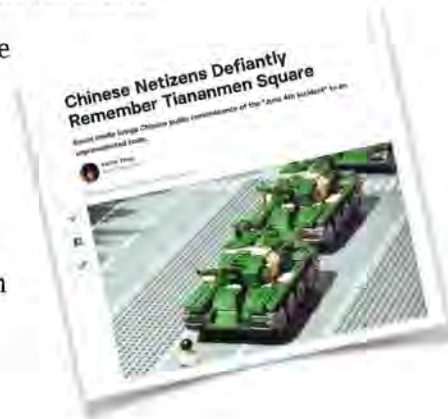
The Cover Art: Government Gone Bad

To celebrate Children's Day some years ago, the Chinese portal site *NetEase.com* released a slideshow of nostalgic toy cars. "Do you remember these sweet toys in your awesome childhood?" the editors asked.

Readers didn't expect the seemingly lighthearted slideshow to include a Lego recreation of the "Tank Man" blocking the People's Liberation Army near Tiananmen, an iconic image from the 1989 protests in Beijing and subsequent crackdown that resulted in the deaths of hundreds.

"You are a brave editor," someone commented.

"A great way to let our children remember our history," another commenter said. "He was not run over by the tank that day. His name is Wang Weilin. No one knows what happened to him. They 'evaporated' him." — *Kevin Tang, Buzzfeed, June 3, 2013*



The Thursday Lunch

A Civil Exchange on a Hate Law

(Aug. 13) — The defacement of Jewish temple property in Carmel with Nazi symbols seems to have created a tipping point in favor of enacting a hate crimes law in Indiana. Business leaders, editorial pages and politicians up to and including the governor are urging swift action in the next session of the General Assembly.

So I'm not going to call for defeat of the legislation, as I did several months ago. It would be a futile gesture at this stage.

But I do think it's worth throwing out a cautionary note about a negative effect of such a law.

I notice that in the extensive coverage of the issue, scant attention is given to precisely how serious a problem hate crimes might be — how many there are, if they are increasing or diminishing, whether laws against them do or do not act as a deterrent.

Since such laws have been around since the 1980s and there are now versions from the federal government and in 45 states, there should be an extensive record to examine, so this is not an insignificant omission.

Part of the reason for the scant statistical evidence, I'm sure, is the nature of such crimes — how challenging it is to identify and keep track of them, for one thing, and how difficult it is to make the case in court, for another.

But I suspect a deeper cause might be the fact that even the strongest supporters of such legislation realize that the fundamental arguments in favor of it are political, not legal.

Just consider the language of proponents. They do not say, "We need to ratchet up the punishment for bigoted slimeballs so our communities are safer" or "We must deter hate" or "We should teach the intolerant the error of their ways." Any of those would be jurisprudentially sound.

Instead, we hear, "We must send the message that Indiana is a tolerant state that values diversity and inclusion."

That is making a statement, affirming a principal, staking out the moral high ground, and those are political objectives.

I don't mean to make light of the importance of politics. Our political sensibilities enable us to avoid the extremes and find the common ground. It is the essence of group dynamics, aligning ourselves with like-minded people and negotiating with other like-minded groups without descending into tribal gridlock.

How much of that baggage can we demand the law carry?

The law is, or at least is supposed to be, about the individual. This nation was founded on the proposition that each one of us has exactly the same rights, not just as citizens of the United States but as human beings alive on the planet. A violation of any individual's rights is a threat to everybody's rights.

Equality under the law. Each law is a bright line dividing what we may and may not do. Every violation of the law requires the same punishment of the transgressors. All victims deserve the same respect and concern for their well-being.

What might we lose if we keep allowing the mission of the law to be co-opted by our group identities and loyalties? How much more of our worth will we define by the groups we belong to? How weak will we allow our foundation of individual rights to become?

The fracturing of America, its descent into warring tribes, has been extensively described and lamented, so perhaps it will be said that we have gone so far in that direction that punishing sins against the group is a logical and necessary remedy.

And I suppose that is a valid argument. But it's not one I can make myself feel happy about. — *lm*

“No law can stop evil, but we should be clear that our state stands with the victims and their voices will not be silenced. For that reason it is my intent that we get something done this next legislative session so Indiana can be one of 46 states with hate crimes legislation—and not one of five states without it.”

Gov. Eric Holcomb

Mr. Morris:

Thanks for your column questioning the wisdom of enacting a hate crime law in our state.

I'm going to have to go back and read what the governor had to say about this law when he recently advocated it. But I thought the idea behind the law was that in a crime where the victim was chosen based on race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, there are many more victims than the one at which the crime was directed.

That there are many people who are threatened or at least legitimately feel threatened by such a hate crime, and are thereby victims of the crime. And because there are more victims, the punishment should be greater.

Is this thinking flawed? It kind of makes sense to me. So I wondered what you thought about this rationale, because your column did not seem to address it.

— *Jim Martin, Jeffersonville*

Mr. Martin:

Yes, I did consider that rationale, and it gave me pause (as does the fact that what is proposed is not a new set of laws, but merely enhanced punishment for already existing offenses).

What keeps it from dissuading me, however, is the knowledge that this is not 1920s Alabama or 1950s Mississippi, when what we call hate crimes were accompanied by either the imprimatur of the law or lawmen's tacit approval. People who committed the crimes were usually pretty powerful in their own right and knew they could get away with it because the authorities would look the other way. There was indeed an intimidation factor, as powerless people had their sense of powerlessness reinforced.

But consider what happens today. People who commit hate crimes are not powerful; rather they tend to be pitiful, ignorant loners whose marginalization is only deepened every time they act. They are vilified by people across the political spectrum (as they should be) while the entire community rallies in support of the victims. If the crimes' perpetrators have in mind creating a sense of isolation and vulnerability, they are failing miserably. They are being increasingly pushed to the fringes, and as far as I can tell the process has had not much to do with frequent enforcement of hate-crimes laws, though they exist in 45 states and at the federal level. It is the march of history.

That's what I mean by letting politics take care of political problems and saving the law for legal problems. It's a matter of group dynamics and

how we learn over time to accommodate each other in more and more civil ways.

Consider, by way of contrast, the plight of people forced to live in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods of our cities. I suppose Chicago is the best example right now, but I see a growing problem in Indianapolis where my sister lives, and even staid old Fort Wayne is not immune. Every crime in those neighborhoods indeed has multiple victims, because every crime adds to the fear of residents who already feel vulnerable when they leave their homes, and adds to their isolation and feelings of vulnerability, their sense of being abandoned by the police and forgotten by the larger community. If I were seriously considering hate-crimes legislation, I would put those criminals and victims at the top of my list.

Don't misunderstand. I don't mean to make light of the victims of hate crimes, and I realize my position is not without its flaws. But I think the law should be very precious to us. Carefully considering the rules we live by and uniformly and fairly enforcing them remain our best way to maintain our fragile hold on civilization. Anything that weakens the law or our faith in it should be viewed with skepticism. Asking the law to shoulder a burden that is more symbolism than substance seems dangerous. — *lm*

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When Government Goes Bad

“It is not so difficult, alas, to understand why so many human lives have been destroyed by mobilized violence between ethnic groups, religious sects or linguistic communities. But it is harder to grasp why so many well-intended schemes to improve the human condition have gone so tragically awry.”

— James C. Scott, *“Seeing Like a State”*
Yale University Press

Eric Schansberg, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast.

(July 14) — As a student and teacher of political economy and public policy, I am frequently asked to explain the behavior of government agents.

Whether the actors are local, in Indianapolis or in Washington; whether the policy realm is economic or social; whether the focus is foreign or domestic — citizens are routinely frustrated by



policy and politics. The list is nearly endless: cronyism and TIF districts at the local level; frustration with “conservatives” at the state level; profligate spending and inept foreign policy at the national level.

How and why do these things happen? We start with an observation from Public Choice economics: Voters allow it. Average citizens are “rationally ignorant and apathetic,” knowing little and taking little action — and rationally so, since their individual efforts can rarely move the political needle.

But why do government agents choose harmful policies so often? The two basic answers are ignorance about consequences and greed in their efforts to help interest groups that will help them. Either they’re rubes who don’t see the larger but more subtle consequences of their actions or they’re demagogues who know the consequences but understand how their political bread is buttered.

Insights About Politics and Public Policy From Scott’s ‘Seeing Like a State’

The project of James Scott, the Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Anthropology at Yale University, started with trying to understand government attempts to make society “legible” — to classify and organize the population and simplify taxation and protection against internal and external threats. He began to see legibility as a key problem for governance. The issue:

“The pre-modern state was, in many crucial respects, particularly blind; it knew precious little about its subjects, their wealth, their landholdings and yields, their location, their very identity. It lacked anything like a detailed ‘map’ of its terrain and its people . . . As a result, its interventions were often crude and self-defeating.” (p. 2)

How did the State make society more legible? Scott notes that a wide range of processes — from the creation of permanent last names and population registers to the standardization of

weights, measures, language and legal terms — were all useful as efforts to increase legibility.

This knowledge is necessary for “effective” governance, whether benign or corrupt. If corrupt, political agents cannot maximize their own goals without such knowledge. If benign but lacking knowledge, government can only achieve success through blind luck — or more often, find failure even with the best of intentions.

How the State Can Lead to Profound Evil

But Scott’s work evolved as he considered brutal outcomes in the history of governance. In his words: “It is not so difficult, alas, to understand why so many human lives have been destroyed by mobilized violence between ethnic groups, religious sects or linguistic communities. But it is harder to grasp why so many well-intended schemes to improve the human condition have gone so tragically awry.” (p. 4) He hoped “to provide a convincing account of the logic behind the failure of some of the great utopian social engineering schemes of the twentieth century.” (p. 4)

Scott argues that “a pernicious combination” of four conditions is required. (pp. 4-5, 88-89) First is his original topic of study: “the administrative ordering of nature and society” as detailed above. “By themselves, they are the unremarkable tools of modern statecraft; they are as vital to the maintenance of our welfare and freedom as they are to the designs of a would-be modern despot...”

Second is “a high-modernist ideology” — strong confidence about progress through science and technology, growing dominion over nature and human nature, and the rational design of governance to promote an effective society.

Third is an authoritarian state that is willing to use the weight of its monopoly on legitimate force

to bring their designs to life. Combining the first two with the third is when governance can easily become lethal.

As a fourth condition, Scott notes that a weakened civil society (family, religion, and civil organizations) is helpful for the state that wishes to implement its plans. Taken as a set, “the legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high-modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the leveled social terrain on which to build...”

Observations and Clarifications on ‘Modernist’ Faith

Scott develops the idea of “modernism” in chapter 3 and discusses it throughout the book. He notes that faith in “high-modernist ideology” started in the West, following its remarkable successes in science, production, and technological advance. But this emphasis on science should not be confused with Science or ideal scientific practice. The ideology is more blind faith and optimism about “progress” than a careful understanding of how science and government work in practice.

Second, the emergence of this ideology aligns with the Progressive Era in the United States — with its faith in progress, science, and elites aggressively governing society. The means to those ends ranged widely — from regulation of business to America’s leading role in the eugenics movement.¹

Third, this ideology can be captured by self-interests. Businesses want to restrict competition and pursue “state action to realize their plans... There [is], to put it mildly, an elective affinity between high modernism and the interests of many state officials.” (p. 5) Progressive regulatory

¹ Indiana was the first state to implement a eugenics law in 1907. (See: “Hoosier Eugenics: When It’s Bad to Be First,” *The Indiana Policy Review*, Winter 2007: pp. 24-27.) For a broader look at Progressivism, social policy, and economic policy, see: Thomas Leonard’s *Illiberal Reformers* (2016) and my review of it, “Exposing the Paradoxes of Progressivism,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 19 # 2, Fall 2016: pp. 357-371.

efforts were often captured by industry in ways that bolstered market power and profits.²

Fourth, high-modernism is “no respecter of traditional political boundaries; it could be found across the political spectrum from left to right.” The key: the desire to “use state power to bring about huge, utopian changes in people’s work habits, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview.” (p. 5) In our sloppy contemporary political rhetoric, it is common to refer to “liberals” as those who prefer more government activism. Of course, most self-styled conservatives (and certainly most Republicans) prefer their types of optimistic activism as well.

Fifth, Scott avers that this utopian vision is not dangerous in and of itself. “Where it animated plans in liberal parliamentary societies and where the planners therefore had to negotiate with organized citizens, it could spur reform.” (p. 6) But Scott is certainly concerned with any form of State-based idolatry — whether economic or social, whether driven by nationalism or moral concerns.

An Illiberal Irony

Liberals are also said to value choice and freedom — and to focus on individuals (particularly the vulnerable) and to defend the rights of individuals (at least those who have been marginalized). But government activism, by construction, is necessarily illiberal in fundamental ways.

One of the ironies of historical and contemporary Progressivism is its low view of the people they seek to govern. Of course, in contrast, the elites are capable — and far more capable than those they want to help. “What is perhaps most striking about high-modernist schemes, despite

their quite genuine egalitarian and often socialist impulses, is how little confidence they repose in the skills, intelligence, and experience of ordinary people.” (p. 345)

The calculus behind efforts to govern are “necessarily abstract, ignoring citizens as individuals.” (p. 346) One can govern based on an individual or some “average” individual, but this is inherently reductionistic and flawed. More likely, policymakers aim at abstract groups of individuals. A “planned social order is necessarily schematic; it always ignores essential features of any real, functioning social order.” (p. 6) “The lack of context and particularity is not an oversight; it is the necessary first premise of any large-scale planning exercise.” (p. 346) Moreover, as population size and diversity increase, such aggregations are increasingly ineffective and illiberal.

In contrast, economists and policymakers should strive to understand what models and statistics say — and don’t say. They are always — merely — proxies for the state of the world they purport to describe and measure. Taking them too seriously, too literally, too far, will likely lead to various errors — or even, evils.³

Implications for Policy

Scott warns that his arguments should not be misunderstood as a defense of all voluntary efforts or an argument against all government activity. He wants to “plead innocent to two charges” — “uncritically admiring of the local, the traditional, and the customary” and “an anarchist case.” (p. 7) Likewise, “I am emphatically not making a blanket case against either bureaucratic planning or high-modernist ideology.” (p. 6) One might disagree with Scott on the extent of the ethical

² See: Gabriel Kolko’s *The Triumph of Conservatism* (1963) and “A Centennial Anniversary for the Bull Moose ‘Progressives’,” *The Indiana Policy Review*, Fall 2012: pp. 19–22.

³ Scott notes that “the discipline of economics achieves its formidable resolving power by transforming what might otherwise be considered qualitative matters into quantitative issues with a single metric and, as it were, a bottom line: profit or loss. Providing one understands the heroic assumptions required to achieve this precision and the questions that it cannot answer, the single metric is an invaluable tool. Problems arise only when it becomes hegemonic.” (p. 346)

arguments for government's use of force as a means to various ends. But anyone can appreciate his closing points about pragmatic "rules of thumb" for better policy prescriptions — or at the least, to "make development planning less prone to disaster." In his words (p. 345):

1. "Take small steps. In an experimental approach to social change, presume that we cannot know the consequences of our interventions in advance. Given this postulate of ignorance, prefer wherever possible to take a small step, stand back, observe, and then plan the next small move . . .

2. "Favor reversibility. Prefer interventions that can easily be undone if they turn out to be mistakes.

3. "Plan on surprises. Choose plans that allow the largest accommodation to the unforeseen...

4. "Plan on human inventiveness. Always plan under the assumption that those who become involved in the project later will have or will develop the experience and insight to improve on the design."

Knowledge and humility, foresight and flexibility, modest proposals and sunset clauses: Outside of those who pursue power for its own sake or see Statism as a desirable end, who could disagree with Scott's concerns about the State, utopian impulses, and government's proclivity for dangerous policy blunders? ♦

A Seminar: The Administrative State and the Collapse of Federalism

Speakers at the annual seminar Dec. 8 are Andrea Neal, an adjunct scholar of the foundation, and Erin Tuttle, co-founder of Hoosiers Against Common Core. They ask a common question: Is it too late or can the American people reclaim a constitutional structure that guarantees self-government and individual rights? They will be joined by former U.S. Rep. Marlin Stutzman in outlining the rise of the administrative state during the Progressive Era, identifying the ways it has infringed on states' rights.

We gather at 5:30 p.m. at Zianos on Dupont, Fort Wayne. You can register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/government-upside-down-tickets-46580635936>



BIOGRAPHIES

ANDREA NEAL is the author of "Pence: The Path to Power" and "Road Trip: A Pocket History of Indiana." Neal teaches history at St. Richard's Episcopal School in Indianapolis and recently served on the state Board of Education. As a career journalist, Neal edited the opinion page of the *Indianapolis Star* and

covered the Supreme Court of the United States for *United Press International*.

ERIN TUTTLE, a longtime friend of the foundation, is co-author of "Deconstructing the Administrative State." Tuttle helped organize the successful resistance to the "common core" curriculum in Indiana public schools and nationally. She writes from Indianapolis.

MARLIN STUTZMAN, a fourth-generation farmer, business owner and former U.S. Congressman from Howe, is the managing partner at Osmium Holdings. He and his wife Christy maintain their family farm, Schönbrook Farm & Inn, in Howe where they raise Wagyu beef, thoroughbred horses and Brittany Spaniels.

Making Sense of Pence

All 50 of my interviews were on the record. I wanted to write a book that would be fact-based and historically reliable, so I committed to using named sources only.

Andrea Neal is an adjunct scholar with the foundation and a former member of the state Board of Education. Her book, "Pence – The Path to Power" is available online from Indiana University Press or at a bookstore near you.



(Aug. 8) — Making sense of Mike Pence. That was the task I faced over the past year in writing "Pence – The Path to Power," the first comprehensive biography of the Hoosier vice president.

He is a man of both predictability and paradox.

Since first running for Congress in 1988, he has never wavered in his public policy views favoring limited government, free markets and social conservatism.

He is predictably loyal to family and friends and pleasant to new acquaintances. (When a former student of mine came across him at the Maxinkuckee Golf Club, he cheerily volunteered to pose for pictures.)

He is a predictable yes-man for President Donald Trump, often because he agrees with the policies at stake (tax cuts, deregulation), sometimes because he sees his role as devoted subordinate to the commander-in-chief (tariffs, trade policy).

And yet, to most of us observing him at arm's length, Pence appears steeped in self-contradiction. He is a self-described "Christian, conservative, Republican, in that order" who has allied himself with a president known for narcissism, incivility and vulgarity.

My first step in making sense of Pence was to learn all I could about his childhood in Columbus and his earliest years in politics in the meandering Sixth District. I read hundreds of newspaper clippings from the Columbus Republic, the Muncie Star Press, the Franklin Daily Journal, and the Indianapolis Star, among other newspapers.

I contacted Pence's friends and political advisers, who in almost every case were happy to meet with me to describe their relationships with the Vice President. These included high school buddy Jeff Brown, college classmates Jay Steger and Dan Murphy, political allies Bill Stephan and Jeff Cardwell, and former top aides Bill Smith and Jim Atterholt. To a person, they described Pence as a funny and congenial man who had never met a stranger and was open to other people and differing political views.

In order to develop a well-rounded picture, I reached out to his political adversaries, too, folks like Melina Fox, who lost to Pence in the 2002 and 2004 congressional elections; John Gregg, the Democratic candidate for governor in 2012 and 2016; and Kevin Warren, a civil rights activist who spearheaded a campaign called "Pence Must Go."

Gregg, never reluctant to attack Pence on the issues, initially was loath to grant an interview because he considers Pence a friend. "I don't want to be part of a hatchet job or a puff piece," he told me. "Neither do I," I assured him.

All 50 of my interviews were on the record. I wanted to write a book that would be fact-based and historically reliable, so I committed to using named sources only. This was standard operating procedure during my 20-plus years with United Press International and the Indianapolis Star, a practice too readily abandoned by media looking for a scoop in today's cutthroat reporting environment.

What emerged from my research was a more complicated portrait than the caricatured extremist depicted by pundits and late-night talk show hosts. Pence's life story does not support

simplistic conclusions that he is mere ambition in a suit or a thinly disguised theocrat seeking to impose a religious world order on the country.

His years heading the Indiana Policy Review Foundation are instructive. In the early 1990s, Pence helped build the state-based think tank into a formidable player in Indiana policy discussions and took pains to call out what he considered crony capitalism on both sides of the aisle. During his tenure there, the foundation advocated for congressional term limits and an end to collective bargaining, prevailing wage laws and corporate welfare.

A defining moment came in 1993 when Pence on behalf of the foundation sued the Indiana General Assembly and all 150 members challenging the practice of logrolling, merging of multiple pieces of legislation into one in order to get more votes. Although he alienated fellow Republicans, Pence did not waver on the principle at stake, a principle plainly stated in the state constitution.

While scripture does indeed influence Pence's perspective on social issues such as abortion, his political philosophy has evolved over decades. Notably, Pence was a Kennedy Democrat when he enrolled at Hanover College in Madison, Indiana, in 1977. Four years later he was just beginning his conversion to free-market Republican ideals, thanks in part to the mentorship of history professor G. M. Curtis whose course on American Constitutional and Legal History forced Pence to grapple for the first time with separation of powers, federalism and states' rights.

When it comes to the role of government, Pence is a strict constructionist, like the judicial nominees he has recommended to the President. Pence believes the Constitution should be



On a summer golf outing in Indiana, Pence cheerily paused for a casual snapshot with David (far right) and Christian Amstutz, who introduced themselves to the Vice President on the course.

understood based on literal and narrow reading of its language without regard to changing times or evolving social mores.

This can lead to the paradoxes that make him such a puzzling figure in American politics. As just one example, while he opposes the Supreme Court's 1973 decision legalizing abortion, he would not pursue federal legislation to outlaw abortion outright.

He would advocate that the matter be decided at the state legislative level because of his understanding (and arguably the Framers' understanding) of federalism, the distribution of power between the nation and the states.

My job as a biographer was not to contest Pence's politics but to present the facts and allow readers to reach their own conclusions about his character and policy preferences. As for his success as vice president, I'll leave that analysis to future historians who will have, as Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story." ♦

Once More, Into the Slag Heap of Affirmative Action

Strong arguments for and against preferential programs, all relying on foundational ethical concepts, exist — hence the difficulty in resolving the matter.

Richard McGowan, Ph.D. an adjunct scholar of the foundation, has taught philosophy and ethics cores for more than 40 years, most recently at Butler University.



(July 13) — Several recent stories in the news have directed people's attention, once again, to affirmative action, the program established to take action on behalf of those who have been disenfranchised by government design or cultural neglect. That groups of people — kinds of people — have been excluded from the bounty of society and treated unjustly is a sad fact of America's history. Affirmative action programs provide positive steps so the bounty of society is open to all.

Many affirmative action programs can easily pass anyone's muster, namely, those that are remedial and based in charity. Head Start programs come to mind. The programs are designed so that young people can acquire the education and skill that provides them the opportunity to enjoy society's bounty. Little or no moral debate exists surrounding those programs; the only question is whether they are effective or not. Of course, if the programs are indeed based upon notions of charity, then all the less fortunate or downtrodden should be treated charitably.

Other affirmative action programs treat people differently based upon unalterable characteristics and those programs, preferential in nature, are hotly disputed and litigiously presented: Harvard University is currently involved in a lawsuit

regarding its admissions policy inasmuch as the school may treat Asian-American and African-American applicants for admission differently.

The arguments for and against preferential forms of affirmative action programs are well known, but a quick review may be helpful, especially since the four major conceptual, ethical considerations, that is, rights, justice, utility, and care, show why the issue remains contentious. Arguments for preferential programs include the reasoning that they protect individual rights that otherwise would not be respected; display compensatory justice to those who have suffered injustice, thereby restoring to the victim of injustice what was lost; produce the greatest good by reducing social tension and widening the candidate pool; and they exhibit care, the requirement to protect the vulnerable and dependent while strengthening the bonds of community.

On the other hand, preferential programs violate the right to equal treatment and consideration; fail to meet the customary principle of capitalist justice, wherein burden and contribution to society equals or roughly equals benefit and reward; lead to inefficiency if unalterable traits unrelated to a position's performance replace merit, for the best candidates are not chosen; and enable a disenfranchised candidate to do less than his or best work, an uncaring response to the person.

Strong arguments for and against preferential programs, all relying on foundational ethical concepts, exist — hence the difficulty in resolving the matter.

Regardless, preferential programs depend for their legitimacy upon some notion of collective responsibility. As William McGurn wrote in the June 26th Wall Street Journal, "Whites have traditionally been the losers of affirmative action. Proponents sometimes justify this as the price for the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. Whatever the merits of this argument, the Asian-American experience is hard to squeeze into the box of racial privilege." McGurn is certainly correct about the

Asian-Americans experience but implicit in his remarks are the notions of collective responsibility and of white privilege.

However, 'white privilege' is a kind of a priori construct. What does the evidence say about white privilege? Anyone who has read J. J. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* has an answer. Are all whites of the same kind? It does not appear so.

The European immigrant experience, the one my brothers, sisters and I lived, is hard to squeeze into the box of racial privilege, too.

My Mom was born in Germany and came over on the boat, like so many thousands of European immigrants between 1920 and 1965. On my father's side, our family is second generation American. My family has not been here long enough to have produced slavery or received its benefits, created Jim Crow and other obnoxious laws that excluded people from the franchise and society's bounty, or historically burdened any group of people.

In fact, like so many other European immigrants, we grew up poor. My brother, Dr. McGowan, the chemistry professor, said, "We grew up poor. We had meat for dinner only once a week." At least he could eat seafood to get his protein, like all my brothers and sisters, because my older brother and I caught it.

Our experience suggests, minimally, that the argument for preferential programs based in compensatory justice, justice that restores to a person what was lost through injustice, needs revisiting. Not all whites, not even all white males, grew up in privileged circumstances. Many European immigrants and their children from 1920 to 1965 grew up far from the lap of luxury. Many of those immigrants taught that hard work and an education were the keys to overcome

Affirmative action, in its preferential form, relies on the idea that the punishment or burden of slavery, Jim Crow and adverse racism of past generations can be revisited upon the sons (and daughters).

hurdles and achieve the immigrant parents' dream: that the next generation does better than they did.

How much responsibility for slavery and Jim Crow do those who lived without undeserved benefits

and produced no injustice bear? Philosophers have explored that question over the last 60 years.

The exploration originated in the civil rights movement: how much should an individual white person be held accountable for the harm done by other whites to blacks? The renowned legal philosopher, Joel Feinberg, recognized that "The larger and more diverse the group of alleged fault-sharers, the less likely it is that they all share or share to anything like the same degree—the fault in question." (682) He noted that accountability, "falling on the group as a whole, will distribute burdens quite unavoidably on faultless members." (687) Collective responsibility violates the rights of the faultless members and appears unjust to faultless members.

Feinberg set out to analyze the problem, seeking guidelines for distributing responsibility more exactly. Over the years, others investigated the problem of distributing responsibility in an organizational or group setting.

In 1982, the business ethics textbook that revolutionized the teaching of business ethics, namely, Manuel Velasquez's *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases*, could offer a model for distributing, or certainly assessing, moral responsibility in the context of an organization or larger group. Further, the textbook could offer the model without a footnote as the model's elements were widely acknowledged as reasonable and public. Finally, in 1991, T.M. Jones offered analysis of ethical decision-making in organizations co-opting the Velasquez model

without citing Velasquez's textbook. The model had become accepted as common knowledge.

The elements for assigning individual moral responsibility in an organization or group of people involve four factors. Magnitude of harm refers to the quantity of harm that will be produced. The greater the quantity of harm — and adverse, racial discrimination is a harm — the greater the individual's responsibility is to prevent the harm and to refuse in producing the harm. The certitude of harm must also be assessed, in that the greater the likelihood of harm, the greater the agent's responsibility to avoid activities that would produce the harm. The first two factors involve the act itself. The next two factors focus on the agent.

A moral agent can be held accountable only for what is freely and knowingly done; coercion interferes with freedom. The demand that coercion be taken into account is especially important in an organizational setting, where superiors can apply pressure to subordinates to perform certain actions. The #MeToo movement captures the essence of coercion. People in power have coerced others to perform actions they otherwise would not have done.

Finally, the amount of cooperation in or connection to the harmful action must be appraised. In general, the less a person contributes to or is connected to an act, the less responsibility the individual bears. An interesting and as yet unresolved issue in this area is the amount of blame that should be assigned to a superior or a subordinate. The subordinate is often immediately close to the action so has a strong connection. On the other hand, the subordinate often would not have done the act without the superior's directives. The subordinate

“The larger and more diverse the group of alleged fault-sharers, the less likely it is that they all share — or share to anything like the same degree — the fault in question.”

is not as well positioned to foresee ramifications of an act so it may be said that the superior made the greater contribution to the act.

Recognizing the situation of the subordinate and the last two considerations, the courts have started shifting the legal

apparatus toward a focus on those who have power.

Of course, European immigrants appear well positioned — they had no power — to be absolved of responsibility for the historical reality of slavery, Jim Crow, and other freedom-limiting policies, yet preferential programs lump all whites together as though all bear individual responsibility for the sins of racism. Should 'the sins of the fathers' be visited upon their children? Listening to many of the arguments regarding the current immigration situation on America's southern border, the answer is a strong though not quite unified 'No.'

Nonetheless, affirmative action, in its preferential form, relies on the idea that the punishment or burden of slavery, Jim Crow, and adverse racism of past generations can be revisited upon the sons (and daughters).

All the problems consequent from preferential programs would vanish or be diminished if each individual case were looked at upon its merits. If affirmative action is about helping those who faced hardship and started with less, there appears to be no good reason why another brother, Dr. McGowan, the business professor, should be treated any differently than any other individual, regardless of race.

Yes, he is a white male, but he is immigrant stock and bears no responsibility for America's sordid racist past. He gained no benefits. He was taught that education and hard work were the keys to success, to overcoming hardship. Why

burden him and thousands like him?

One answer is that the structure of society, as envisioned by proponents of preferential programs, treats kinds of people — blacks, whites, Asian-Americans and so on — as individuals, not kinds as demarcated by unalterable characteristics. No individual is denied opportunity to share in the bounty of society nor denied equal treatment; individual rights are respected. It is a good vision of an endpoint. The vision is hopeful and forward-looking regarding the future society.

With preferential programs in place, that vision of the future ignores the fact that immigrants and their children are a kind, too. So the vision confounds: the rights of immigrant whites and their children can be ignored, as preferential programs are currently executed.

Is that the kind of future proponents of preferential forms of affirmative action want? One where a group of people is not treated equally? That sounds like America's past.

Some have argued that the rights of a few, for instance, certain kinds of immigrants, can be ignored because the gain for others and for society is so great. That line of utilitarian reasoning leads

My preference is for society to do the hard work of treating each and every individual with dignity and respect.

exactly to our past: enslave the few for the gain of the greater numbers.

I'd like to think that is not going to be our future. My preference is for society to do the hard work of treating

each and every individual with dignity and respect. Examine each case on its individual merit. The son of a black heart surgeon in Washington, D.C., has lived a privileged life far beyond my brothers and sisters.

Then preferential programs, if they are restricted and weak, i.e., little or no gap exists between the disenfranchised person and the white person, may be acceptable. ♦

Resources

Joel Feinberg, "Collective Responsibility," *J. of Philosophy* 65.21: 674-688.

Thomas M. Jones, "Ethical Decision-Making by Individuals IN Organizations: An Issue-Contingent Model," *Academy of Management Review* 16.2 (Apr. 1991): 366-395

William McGurn, "The Democrats' Racial Fault Line," *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2018

Manuel G. Velasquez, *Business Ethics: Concepts and Cases* 7e (Prentice Hall 2011)

"IN THE PRESENCE of (ethnic) diversity, we hunker down. We act like turtles. The effect of diversity is worse than had been imagined. And it's not just that we don't trust people who are not like us. In diverse communities, we don't trust people who do look like us." said Harvard professor Robert D. Putnam. In a column headlined "Harvard Study Paints Bleak Picture of Ethnic Diversity," John Lloyd of the *Financial Times* summarized the results of Putnam's study, the largest ever of "civic engagement," a survey of 26,200 people in 40 American communities: When adjusted for class, income and other factors, the data showed that the more people of different races lived in the same community, the greater the loss of trust. "They don't trust the local mayor, they don't trust the local paper, they don't trust other people and they don't trust institutions," said Putnam.

— Steve Sailer posting online Jan.15, 2007, for the *American Conservative*

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"Inventing Freedom: How the English-Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World." By Daniel Hannan (HarperCollins Publishers, Epub Edition, December, 2013, 6574 Locations).

The Anglosphere

(June 6) — The public's fascination with the wedding last Spring of Britain's Prince Harry to the American Meghan Markle would not surprise Daniel Hannan. Rather, he would see it as support for the central theme of his book, "Inventing Freedom."

As nations around the world devolve into ethno-nationalism, Daniel Hannan hypothesizes that English-speaking countries have a role in acting together as a geo-political unit. He maintains that the Anglosphere alone has consistently applied the ideals of Western Civilization: the rule of law and personal liberty to assemble, to dispose of one's assets and to decide what to purchase, where to work, and whom to employ. Furthermore, in English-speaking countries, taxes are levied and laws made by elected representatives answerable to all residents.

Readers of "Investing Freedom" may believe that ethnic memory is nothing more than a mental construction rather than an accurate reflection of present and past reality. Nevertheless, many arguments presented in "Inventing Freedom" are compelling and worth considering.

The Anglosphere, according to the author, includes five core countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, long before the

Declaration of Independence, Britons on both sides of the Atlantic had taken pride in the idea that theirs was a creedal rather than an ethnic identity. As such, Mr. Hannan presents the case of extending the Anglosphere core to include other English-speaking nations: certainly Ireland and perhaps Singapore, Hong Kong, Bermuda, the Falklands, and South Africa. If India were included, the Anglosphere would constitute two-thirds of the world's population (Loc. 235).

The author, educated and presently residing in England, has been a member of the European Parliament representing South East England for the Conservative Party since 1999. This experience along with having been born and raised in Peru of British parents undoubtedly contributes to Mr. Hannan's vision of how English-speaking nations differ from the rest of the world. For example, the Continental legal model, in Europe, Latin America, and elsewhere, is deductive, written down from first principles, and then applied to a particular case. Common law as practiced in the Anglosphere, on the other hand, does the reverse. It builds up, case by case, with each decision serving as the starting point for the next dispute. Common law is empirical rather than conceptual (Loc. 1193).

On June 15, 1215, in a field near Windsor, an event of truly planetary significance took place. It was not a royal wedding but rather a contractual formulation of the idea that rulers are subject to the law. The king put his seal on a document that, from that day to this, has been seen as the foundational charter of Anglosphere liberty: Magna Carta (Loc. 1680). Three of its thirty-seven articles remain in force: the freedom of church, the ancient liberties of towns and boroughs, and the basis of due process. The third is most important because it refers to the "law of the land" indicating that the supreme power in the land did not reside in king or state, but rather in a set of fixed principles having prior standing over government.

The jury system in common law, while flawed, is a pillar of Anglosphere liberty. It emphasizes

private ownership and free contract. It is based on the notion that anything not expressly prohibited is legal. Because common law arises from a people rather than kings or rulers, it requires a popular tribunal to determine it.

Parliament began then as, and in some sense remains, a supreme court. The Anglo-Saxon kingdoms developed and consolidated from the meetings of “wise men” (witan) that later evolved into parliamentary assemblies.

“Inventing Freedom” traces an historical path from Anglo-Saxon kingdoms through the Norman Conquest, the Magna Carta, the Stuarts and the Glorious Revolution in order to show that the American Revolution was essentially a “Cousins’ War.” Mr. Hannan’s documents the writings of contemporaries of the “Cousins’ War” who understood the war between Americans and Britons as a settlement by force of what was essentially a domestic Tory-Whig dispute (Loc. 3143).

America, at the time of the Revolution, was not characterized by a national identity differing from that of England. According to Mr. Hannan, three internal colonial cultural differences dominated: New England Congregationalists, radical tidewater planters, and the inland Ulster-Protestant settlers. American Tories emphasized their loyalty to British institutions, above all the Crown-in-Parliament; American Whigs, by contrast were loyal to British values upon which the legitimacy of those institutions rested and which they believed the King George III was violating (Loc. 3185).

“Patriot” was a name that Whigs, on both sides of the Atlantic, used to identify themselves as having a unique political inheritance: common law, the Magna Carta, and the English Bill of Rights. Mr. Hannan stresses the importance of Whig history with roots in pre-Norman constitutional liberty. Whig historians discern two enduring factions within all English-speaking peoples: those committed to the values

“Democracy in Anglosphere practice differs in its approach to the rule of law, property rights and personal freedom. Continental democracy, for example, elevates majority rule over individual liberty.”

underpinning their common law tradition and those hankering after the more statist models favored in the rest of the world. Hannan uses the shorthand “Whig” for conservative patriots of the Anglosphere model and “Tory” for those who want to bring their political system into line with more autocratic foreign models (Loc. 290).

Democracy, as defined by some, is not a fundamental principle of Anglosphere exceptionalism. Democracy in Anglosphere practice differs in its approach to the rule of law, property rights and personal freedom. Continental democracy, for example, elevates majority rule over individual liberty.

This approach to democracy is consistent with the collectivist philosophy of Hegel, Herder and Rousseau. Collectivists believe in a “general will” of the people rather than the private rights of citizens. In the Continental model, rights are handed down by government rather than inherited. This leaves enforcement of these rights in the hands of a few. In the Anglosphere, the defense of freedom and civil rights are everyone’s business and, consequently, dictatorships and revolutions are few (Loc. 4958).

Puritan Whigs emphasized a distinction between the public and private spheres, between state and church, between Caesar’s realm and God’s. In relating prosperity in the Anglosphere with the Protestant stress on the virtues of industry and thrift, Mr. Hannan extends Anglosphere exceptionalism beyond its roots in pre-Norman times.

However, he does note that free enterprise underlying English speakers' prosperity was not exclusively an Anglo-Protestant invention. It could be found as well in the city-states of northern Italy, in the Netherlands, and was actually formulated into a libertarian school of thought at the University of Salamanca in Spain.

Protestantism, however, in the Anglosphere was seen as a guarantor of free speech, free conscience, and free parliaments. These were not the prejudices of a Whig elite, but deep and popular convictions, regularly refreshed by news of persecutions in Europe, nourished by fear of the Spanish Inquisition, and invigorated by the stories of French Huguenots, Flemish Protestants and other refugees who settled throughout the Anglosphere (Loc. 558). The essential difference lay in the freedom of the individual to make limited, case-by-case bargains with his fellows, rather than having to accept relationships defined by blood, ritual or precedent (Loc. 4663).

Mr. Hannan argues that over time in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, North America, and later, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, Protestantism began to be understood primarily in political rather than theological terms. The distinction was not between Catholic and Protestant individuals, but between Catholic and Protestant states.

The chapter, "From Empire to Anglosphere," details the abuses of British colonialism, but points out that everyone on the planet is descended from the exploiters and the exploited.

The self-dissolving quality of the British Empire is seen here as a process whereby the political rights and values disseminated by the Empire actually promoted local autonomy and self-reliance (Loc. 3196). According to Mr. Hannan, because slavery violated the principles of

"English-speaking countries have demonstrated a willingness and ability to cooperate and defend at great cost the elevation of the individual over state. A continued willingness to bear these cost requires a relationship between military advisers, an understanding of common threats, and the interchange of officers and cadets at technical colleges."

English-speaking peoples, the Anglosphere was unique in its dedication to its elimination (Loc. 4293).

The core Anglosphere states are all now multiracial, and, with the exception of South Africa, major ethnic tensions remain relatively undisturbed. Ireland, Mr. Hannan maintains, no longer has anything to prove in terms of being a modern independent republic and has rejoined the Anglosphere (Loc. 3959). Immigrants to Australia and Canada have adopted the values of the Anglosphere. The most important geopolitical question currently is whether India is primarily an Anglosphere democracy or an Asian superpower (Loc. 4326).

Academics, policy makers and history buffs can appreciate the interesting handle the author applies to a millennium of British and world history. Supporting documents are well cited. Daniel Hannan displays a rare ability to combine historical breadth with a depth of comparative political analysis. The reader, however, is left with several reservations.

Hannan acknowledges that the roots of common law are in theology- the notion that every individual must answer for himself in the doctrine of personal responsibility. However, he makes no

attempt to relate common law with the concept of “natural law.” Natural law suggests that right reason informs individuals as to what is right. Natural law, hardwired into individuals, is beyond the state and beyond revealed religion. As such, natural law is open to all nations, not merely to those in the Anglosphere.

The strongest case that Mr. Hannan makes for an “Anglosphere” is in his narration of global conflicts in the past century. English-speaking countries have demonstrated a willingness and ability to cooperate and defend at great cost the elevation of the individual over state. A continued willingness to bear these cost requires a relationship between military advisers, an understanding of common threats, and the interchange of officers and cadets at technical colleges.

However, Mr. Hannan makes no attempt to analyze the present ability of the English-speaking countries to mobilize support for his position. The last chapter, “Anglosphere Twilight?” is an

admission that he too is uncertain about the future of English-speaking nations.

The primary goal of “Inventing Freedom” is to challenge the U.S. and other countries to carefully consider what alliances are in their best national interest. Aside from this, the most significant contribution of this book is to increase understanding of a government derived from the people rather than one imposed from above. As tax levels have reached saturation point in federal nations, power has shifted steadily from the peripheral authorities to central regulators (Loc. 543). The deep state and international jurisdiction breaks the link between representative legislators and law (Loc. 5376).

“Inventing Freedom” was written prior to Brexit and therefore does not explore the geopolitical ramifications of Britain’s exit from the European Union. It is, however, a powerful reminder of what is lost when individual liberties, local control, and common law are forfeited in favor of a global centralized bureaucratic elite. ♦

Leo Morris

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Legal Immigration Is Anathema

(Aug. 27) — Indiana Democratic Sen. Joe Donnelly is a brave politician who went against his party to support President Donald Trump's demands for billions of dollars to build a border wall. So says one of his campaign ads.

No, no, no, insist attack ads aimed against him. Donnelly supported amnesty for millions of illegal immigrants and has waffled on the wall.

Well, goodness. You suppose illegal immigration might be an important issue in Indiana?

Indeed, it is, and in all 49 of the other states, including ones the farthest away from an international border. In fact, of all the issues that propelled Trump to the presidency, illegal immigration is the one that resonated most with the disaffected voters who flocked to him.

They heard and responded to the simple message no other presidential candidate was sending to them: "I hear you."

All the politicians and pundits — just about everybody but Trump — completely missed the depth of anger in the country over the issue, anger that had been building to a simmering rage over decades of deliberate inaction by politicians of both parties, including presidents and presidential candidates.

The perfect example of political incompetence came with the grand bargain reached during the Reagan presidency. There would be amnesty for the few million illegals already here, and an

ironclad guarantee of border security that would prevent the problem from growing.

Of course, the amnesty happened and the security didn't, so now we have (estimates vary) something like 11 or 12 million illegals to deal with, and all the politicians have to offer is the same old amnesty versus security song-and-dance they've always tried to placate us with.

And they keep telling us the same despicable lie over and over: The system is broken.

The truth is that "the system" has never been broken. There are explicit rules against entering this country improperly and sufficient penalties for those who break the rules. The only thing that has been broken is the political will to honor the rules and enforce the penalties.

The lie has fueled the rage. If politicians ignore their own rules and make up new ones as they go along, telling people who complain about it that they themselves are the problem and must cease their racist, xenophobic ways, nobody should be surprised if those people get a little testy. If our cultural elite keep preaching about our "nation of immigrants" and suppose nobody will notice they're conflating illegal immigration and legal immigration, they deserve nothing but scorn.

But the lie continues. It's clear nobody wants to tackle the issue seriously. Republicans won't do anything that would seem like forgiveness for those who broke the law to get here, and Democrats won't do anything that seriously impedes the flow of people crossing our border.

The experts say (what would we do without experts?) that this impasse is the result of the coming midterm election and both parties' need to keep their bases happy. But most of us realize it's the same old impasse, and that it will just keep going on.

Until it doesn't. As someone once remarked (surely a genius), things will keep going on the way they've been going until they no longer can.

Voters motivated by anger will keep putting some politicians in office and yanking others out until enough of them realize that they're being jerked around by the entire political class, which

has created a monumental problem that's insoluble because nobody wants to solve it.

What happens then is anybody's guess, but I'd put my money on an "Atlas Shrugged" moment, though I suspect it won't happen in quite the way Ayn Rand envisioned it.

In the meantime, our legal immigration system — yes, there is such a thing, though that's one issue the politicians really, really don't want to talk about — is something of an incoherent mess.

The problem-avoiders on the right like to say that if we don't have an enforced border, we don't really have a country.

That's only true as far as it goes. If we don't have a rational method of integrating newcomers and their baggage into our existing culture, we might have a country, but it's one we can't even define, let alone enrich and defend.

Confessions of an Anti-Straw Man

(Aug. 20) — As a good conservative, I naturally start each day vowing to do everything I can to help destroy the planet.

I have never, ever recycled a single thing, since recycling is of course a Communist plot designed to divert our attention so our neglected landfills can be captured. I proudly display my "Nuke the whales!" bumper sticker.

I bag up my leaves and other yard waste and transport it out and burn it in the county to do my part for air pollution. I hate to tell you the things I do to foul up the waterways.

Environmental destruction is the conservatives' best weapon. Only when we have reduced the Earth to a stinking pile of barely inhabitable rubble can we successfully claim our rightful heritage and forever vanquish all the tree-hugging, flower-sniffing simpletons trying to hold back progress.

But I have a dilemma.

I just cannot use a straw, no matter how hard I try. It feels so unnatural sucking liquid up through a narrow cylinder instead of letting my lips gently

caress the rim of a glass or cup the way God intended.

I think it's probably a guy thing. In fact, I'm so sure of it that I think the straw test should be used to assess the validity of all transgenderism claims. Never mind the traditional tests of masculinity, such as having a strong attachment to the Three Stooges, and forget the usual signs of femininity, like putting so many stinking, useless pillows on the stinking bed. Someone who hardly ever uses a straw is a man and someone who almost always does is a woman, never mind all that silly "biological sex at birth" stuff.

And now the environmental justice warriors have declared the humble plastic straw the latest existential threat to the planet. Cities across the country are banning them, assessing hefty fines and even jail time for violators. The Allen County Department of Environmental Management has gotten into the act with a public service ad showing people using straws getting smacked in the face with fish. (Straws can end up in the rivers and seas, you know, and the fish don't like it.)

Encountering blatant propaganda like this, proper conservatives must respond with solidarity, not only dutifully scorning the message but also behaving contrariwise en masse.

I have always been happy to do my part. Told that Chick-fil-A is run by a bunch of religious fanatics, I dutifully have lunch there, though a chicken sandwich is not my idea of culinary delight. I shop at Hobby Lobby just to irritate those who say it should be boycotted, though, God knows, I don't have a single hobby. I even drink Yuengling just to show up those who want the company destroyed for supporting President Trump, despite the fact that I really don't care for beer at all.

But I might have reached my limit. I don't know if I can bring myself to suck liquid a little bit at a time through a narrow tube instead of taking big gulps, even for solidarity's sake. It may just be, dare I say it, the last straw.

The whole thing is just so silly. Only about 1 percent of the plastic that reaches the oceans is

from the United States, and only a tiny fraction of that 1 percent comes from straws. No matter how many straws end up in the landfill, they are exquisitely inconsequential. Why change my habits drastically to protest such a demonstrably trivial threat?

But the triviality is the very point, I'm sure my spiritual advisers would say. If we can get all worked up and bothered by plastic straws, we can be tormented over anything, and it will never end. This is the camel's nose inside the tent.

I just can't make myself care. Even if I could get over the unnatural feeling of using a straw, what if some of my comrades from the Army days were to see me? That camel can just stand there with its nose inside the tent, waiting for that straw that breaks its back.

Yes, I do realize – this is so hard to confess – that by refusing to use straws, I will be doing my part, however small, to save the planet.

But that's my cross to bear.

Ernie Pyle and the History of War

(Aug. 6) — Reading up on my journalistic hero Ernie Pyle, I came across this startling paragraph near the end of a mostly laudatory article about him in *American Heritage* magazine:

"Ernie Pyle had some off days in his wartime columns. Sometimes he laid on the Hoosier folksiness a bit too heavily. Sometimes the GI's came off just a little too good to be true, not only rugged and brave but also unfailingly good-humored in adversity and kind to children and dogs. Moreover, he, like other World War II reporters, has been criticized for giving an incomplete picture of the war — for leaving out the incompetent generals, the strategic blunders, the looting and atrocities. Though Pyle didn't always depict a smoothly running war machine, there is some truth in such criticism. Indeed, he wasn't above partaking of a bottle of looted cognac himself, and he, like other correspondents, did suppress some distressing stories, such as the Patton slapping incident."

That's startling because what we mostly know about Pyle, the closest thing to a universally revered journalist this nation has ever produced, is the remarkable stuff he put into his columns, not the things he left out.

We've been told for 50 years now that one of the reasons the American people turned against Vietnam was that it was the first "television war." It was the first time in history that we experienced the horrors of war every day in our living rooms in all its gory reality.

That is nowhere near the truth. Pyle's World War II dispatches also thrust the gritty reality of war into American homes, describing in minute detail the day-to-day misery and terror of the average soldier and, many times, the sense of futility and hopelessness the unrelenting carnage produced. Near the war's end, he was appearing in 400 dailies.

Not only did his graphic reporting not turn the country against the war, some critics argue that it was one of the unifying forces keeping Americans focused on a common enemy and a shared purpose. The soldiers in the field considered him one of their own, and people on the home front read his columns like disturbing but friendly letters from a beloved relative. He became something of a hero, and when a Japanese bullet claimed him in 1945, the nation truly mourned.

Consider, by contrast, the unrelentingly bloody and violent scenes sent to us from Vietnam. War correspondents there did cover the kind of negatives Pyle overlooked, in excruciating detail — the incompetent generals, the self-serving politicians, the greed and brutality of some soldiers, the innocent civilians torn apart by friendly fire.

And if Pyle focused on the nobility of the American war effort and slighted some of its baser components, Vietnam-era journalists wallowed in the evil, and it seldom occurred to them to acknowledge that we might have entered Southeast Asia with good intentions and that some people still considered patriotism more than

the last refuge of scoundrels. Little wonder, when one of the most powerful symbols of the war became a screaming, naked little girl trying to run away from her napalm burns, that many Americans could see their own soldiers as the enemy.

It's tempting to attribute the difference in coverage to a failure of journalism, or at least a difference in how it is defined.

But it's a little more complicated than that.

Pyle was a product of his times. The nation was unified in purpose, so Americans followed a journalist who helped them define and appreciate their sense of mission. In Vietnam we were divided, and we followed the journalism that underscored our sense of discontent.

August is pretty much "revere Ernie Pyle" month in Indiana. Thanks to a resolution by Ind. Sens. Todd Young and Joe Donnelly, the U.S. Senate declared Aug. 3 as National Ernie Pyle Day. A special day of celebration was designated for Aug. 9 in the tiny southwest Indiana town of Dana where he was raised. Indiana University, where he almost got a journalism degree, is honoring him with special ceremonies.

I think it's worth considering that in Vietnam, such a remarkable wartime record would not have been possible. And today, when we have separated ourselves into unforgiving tribes that follow only the chroniclers of our own prejudices, he would likely even be the object of scorn and ridicule.

He's still the reporter I admire the most and one of the best our profession has ever produced, so I don't mean to knock him off his pedestal.

But he was no saint, journalistic or otherwise. He simply understood who his audience was and knew how to speak to it. And when Walter Cronkite looked into the TV camera and blandly told us that Vietnam was lost, he was not, as some have claimed, bringing about the loss of a war we could have won. He was, however, demonstrating that he exactly understood his audience and knew exactly how to speak to it.

We may not, as has been said of leaders, get the journalists we deserve. But we do get the ones we can accept.

Which came first? I wonder. Are we divided because journalism has become a divisive enterprise? Or has journalism become a divisive enterprise because it reflects the society it sprang from?

I ask not because I know the answer, but because it is an eternal question. And one of the most striking symbols of eternity, I recall, is that of a snake eating its own tail.

Somehow, I find that symbol grotesquely appropriate.

An Ode to Wide Places in the Road

(July 30) — All I want to do today is tell you where I was born, but be patient. It will take a while.

The following is mostly accurate, based on a real occurrence. While some parts of the conversation quoted might have taken place largely in my head, there is a greater truth involved, and I have been faithful to the essential spirit of the exchange. I believe that meets what passes for ethical standards in today's journalism.

The story begins when I realize I need a certified copy of my birth certificate when I renew my driver's license in September, so that I might upgrade to the federally mandated Real ID version.

The need for this license saddens me beyond words. Real ID is not exactly that dreaded national identification card good conservatives have been fighting against for years, but it is on the slippery slope toward one. The next step, I fear, will be guards at the borders demanding to see our papers when we want to cross state lines.

But, alas, the Real ID will be required to board airplanes and "enter certain federal facilities," like nuclear plants. I have long given up on my childhood dream of touring a real nuclear plant, but I do want to continue flying to Texas to visit my brother.

So I grit my teeth and try to order the birth certificate online. I give up after two days because the people who run the vital records service keep demanding my signature, and for the life of me I can't figure out how to "sign" my name on a computer screen. (I eventually did discover that what they wanted me to do was print out my request form, sign that and put it in the mail. But my computer would print only the sample form with blurred-out examples of the blanks filled in. It couldn't seem to handle the real form.)

I choose another option offered by the vital records firm and dial its 1-800 number. I am connected with a woman on the Kentucky desk, and after getting some preliminary information, like my name, address and phone number, she gets to the nitty gritty.

"Father's name."

"Rader. R-a-d-e-r."

A pause.

"Spell that again."

"R-a-d-e-r."

Longer pause.

"Spell again."

"R-a-d-e-r."

It finally sinks in. "R-a-d-e-r Morris," she says. It occurs to me that I have not reached a little old lady who's been toiling away in a Kentucky clerk's office for the last 100 years. I have reached a smart young lady employed by the nationwide vital records service, briskly attacking her keyboard in a hive somewhere in a large coastal city.

"Mother's maiden name," she says.

This will not go well.

"Maiden name," she explains patiently to the dimwitted hayseed, "is the last name of your mother before she was married."

"Jimmie Campbell," I say.

"No, your mother."

"Jimmie."

"That's your mother's name?"

"Yes, Jimmie, with an ie instead of a y. J-i-m-m-i-e. Her middle name is Jean. Jimmie Jean. It's an Appalachian thing."

"We don't do middle names."

"Well, we don't, either, except for my mother. My father didn't have a middle name, so he didn't believe in them. I don't have a middle name, nor do my brother or sister. My father probably didn't like it that our mother had a middle name, but she came that way, so what could he do?"

She sighs.

"Jimmie, with an ie, Campbell?"

"Yes."

I dread what's coming next.

"Place of birth. The city in Kentucky."

"Dunraven."

The pauses are lengthening to the point where a novelist might call them "dramatic."

"I don't find that in the computer," she finally says.

"Well, it's not really a city, not even a town. It's a post office."

"You were born in a post office?"

"No, no, no. I was born in a wide place in the road in rural Kentucky. Dunraven was the nearest post office."

She allows as to how that never in her career as a clerk had she ever seen, nor anywhere in her future life did she ever expect to see, the "place of birth" space on a birth certificate filled in with "wide place in the road."

I am about to agree with her when she asks if I had ever seen my birth certificate and remember what city might be listed there. Yes, I say, but no.

"What city might be on it?" she asks, taxing the mental abilities of a poor country boy.

"You might try Hazard. That's the county seat."

"That's in the system," she exclaims happily. We'll go with that." She does not add, "Thank God," but I'd bet anything she is thinking it.

All questions answered, finally, I give her my debit card number, and she tells me the document

will be reaching me in a few days by U.S. Mail, and I am left to ponder one of life's great mysteries.

If the vital records people so insistently needed my signature to order the birth certificate online, why do they so casually let me order it on the phone with no mention of a signature? Possibly for the same unfathomable reason Indiana officials require us to show photo IDs in order to vote in person, but seem to have no anti-fraud measures at all in place for those of us who want absentee ballots mailed to us.

Anyway, my curiosity piqued by the clerk's failure, I decide to Google Dunraven, Ky.

"Dunraven is an unincorporated area located in Perry County, Kentucky, United States," says its Wikipedia entry. "Its post office is closed."

Well, that explains it. I now know apparently everything there is to know about my place of birth, so from now on I will give the correct answer when asked.

I was born in Wide Place in the Road, Ky.

If you're a big city journalist who wishes to go there in order to "report on the real America" for your viewers or readers, here's what you do.

First, go to Flyover Country. Starting out at Hicktown, Mich., go due south to Podunk, Ind., then head east to Middle of Nowhere, Ohio, and take the second right. If you reach Amerpit of the Universe, Ky., you've gone too far. You can't miss it.

But if you should somehow end up in Bush League, simply go to the post office and ask for directions.

Just make sure your papers are in order.

A Writer's Discipline

(*July 23*) — In 1657 the mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote a letter in which he included the following apology (translated from the French): "I have made this longer than usual because I have not had time to make it shorter."

I suspect that the Indiana Policy Review's Craig Ladwig has that quote framed and hanging on a wall somewhere. When he recruited me to write these pieces, he said one of the cruelest things I have ever heard: "As a guideline, make them about 600 words each."

This is my 44th column, and I don't think I've hit anywhere near 600 words yet. Most of them drift upward to 800 words and more, and I consider it a good job when one gets close to 700.

It's not because I have so many wise things to say that I just have to cram them all in. It's because I often lack the time and sometimes, I fear, the talent to pare down my words to the essentials.

And thus make them more memorable, if not more profound.

I was forced to contemplate this personal shortcoming on reading a compelling article called "21 Words" by fantasy author Terry R. Lacy. In it, he recounted an exercise he was given in grad school to imagine he had exactly 21 words — not 20, not 22, but 21 exactly — to convince the listener that he had an idea worth considering.

He relates the exercise to talk about writing a good book blurb, that hook that makes readers want to buy this one tome rather than the tens of thousands of other titles published each year. If the blurb isn't compelling enough quickly enough, readers will move on to the next blurb and the sale will be lost.

It's a variation of the "elevator pitch" in which you imagine you have just that short elevator ride to grab the listeners' attention, make them understand your concept and buy into it. It's a skill useful for everything from selling insurance to delivering a pickup line in a crowded bar.

Conciseness should be second nature to me, since I spent a career in pre-digital journalism, where space was severely limited and words therefore precious. Charles Dickens' novels were epic because he wrote them as serials, originally being committed to 20 parts of 32 pages each. Ernest Hemingway was pithy because he learned his craft writing for newspapers.

But reminders are helpful, and we can all benefit from exercising our skills. Writers should try the 21-word drill the next time they're in an interminable argument over something political or otherwise stupid, and get the other combatants to agree to the same thing. Why is global warming real (or inconsequential)? 21 words exactly. How should we handle illegal immigration? 21 words. Describe Donald Trump's greatness or despicableness. 21 words.

They also should occasionally read a short story collection, study the efforts of poets who had to say it all in a 14-line sonnet, and try to appreciate the elegant simplicity of a haiku's 17 syllables.

I would recommend against tweeting a lot as practice. With its enforced limits (first 140 characters, then bumped to 280), you'd think that Twitter would have made us all pithy, profound philosophers. It has turned us instead into a nation of nasty, preening snots. Brevity, as Shakespeare noted, might be the soul of wit, but it is no guarantor.

My writing program, by the way, has a nifty little word counter, which will allow me this one time to reach 600 words, not one word more nor one word less.

Which I have just done.

Purple Now Marks Your Property Line

(July 9) — As a curmudgeon of long standing, I come from the “get off my lawn” school of private property. It's direct, it's simple, it provides no chance of misunderstanding.

And just in case I'm not on hand to shout people off the premises, there is a nifty little sign that gets the job done: No trespassing. Seeing such a notice, even the most dimwitted of interlopers is sure to get the message that this is a place to tread lightly, if at all.

My brother lives in Texas, so his sentiments are even more forcefully expressed. There is a fence all around his property, with motion-detecting cameras and a gate with a keypad.

Anyone bypassing all that will see a small notice placed discreetly by his door: Nothing in here worth dying for.

Such straightforwardness is apparently too harsh for legislators ever in search of greater subtlety and finer gradations of nuance. Again hitting on the perfect solution for a problem that did not exist, Hoosier lawmakers have followed the example of several other states, including Texas, by enacting a Purple Paint Law.

As of July 1, Hoosiers may “mark their property and prevent trespassing” by applying purple paint lines on trees and fence posts. Lord, that's almost friendly, isn't it? It's like announcing that your property is being guarded by Barney the dinosaur.

For the life of me, I can't figure out why they did this. As nearly as I can tell from researching the issue, the purple stripes will eliminate the expense of replacing damaged or stolen “No trespassing signs” and prevent damage to innocent trees being viciously assaulted with 10-penny nails.

Wow. Millions and millions of dead trees and scores of desperate families forced into sign-replacement bankruptcy. Yeah, I missed those news stories, too.

If you feel like rushing out to stock up on purple paint, please remember that this is government work, so you can't just go slapping the stuff everywhere haphazardly and indiscriminately. There are rules. Very precise rules

The law says that any purple mark must be “a vertical line of at least 8 inches in length.” For trees, “the bottom of the mark needs to be at least 3 feet but not more than 5 feet from the ground. Marked trees may not be more than 100 feet from the nearest other marked tree.”

Purple marks can also be on any fence post as long as the mark covers at least the top 2 inches of the post. For fence posts, “the bottom of the mark needs to be at least 3 feet but not more than 5 feet and 6 inches from the ground. A marked post

cannot be more than 36 feet from the nearest other marked post.”

Aaaarg!

I imagine some crafty would-be trespasser (one of the 1 in 10,000 who even know what all that purple even means) getting out the tape measure: “Hey, Merle, this purple tree is 102 feet from the other one. Go get them huntin’ dogs out of the truck.”

Or maybe he’ll turn me in to the Purple Paint Police. For every violation, I will face a series of escalating fines, and if I hit a certain number, the state will just come in and confiscate my property since I am clearly not competent to protect it.

Oh, wait. That’s not really funny, is it?

These days, our property rights are not likely to be violated by deer-hunting Merle or mushroom-gathering Sally or lawn-tromping Billy or even the wandering-gypsy Snopes family deciding to camp out in the living room while we’re on vacation. It will most likely be — get out the tinfoil hats — by conspiring representatives of some government unit in Indiana.

They will wake up some morning and decide they can get more tax money from someone else owning our home or place of business, so they will declare it blighted and condemn it. Just ask the residents of a low-income neighborhood in Charlestown, where the mayor is trying to fine homeowners into bankruptcy to make way for an upscale subdivision.

Or some police department or prosecutor’s office will discover it is low on funds and conjures up a few civil forfeiture cases. That’s where your property can be seized and sold if you are “suspected of” a crime you are never charged with. Just ask all the parents whose cars were grabbed because their children were pulled over with drugs found in the vehicles.

Yes, yes, I hear you. The General Assembly is always “reforming” these bouts of confiscatory zeal, and there are cases before both the Indiana and U.S. Supreme Courts that might lead to a curbing of some of the worst abuses.

I’d like to say that brings some small comfort. But I still might recommend we stock up on paint and put purple stripes on our foreheads whenever we go out in public. Just make sure they’re at least 3 inches long with the ends no more than 2 inches from the ears.

Can’t be too careful.

Sen. Kenley’s Pyrrhic Victory

(July 2) — From news accounts, former state Sen. Luke Kenley sounds like a crazy old coot yelling at the kids to stay off his Internet.

“I’m going to celebrate today,” Kenley is quoted as saying. “I’m probably the only one that is. I’m sure all the millennials who shop online are not going to be celebrating.”

Last year, Kenley won his 15-year battle to force online retailers — most all of them, not just the ones with a physical presence in the state — to charge tax on sales to Indiana consumers. The U.S. Supreme Court, in a case from South Dakota, which has a tax-them-all law similar to Indiana’s, just ruled that such Internet sales taxes are perfectly legitimate.

That means all 50 states can start collecting untold billions owed them, and all those snott-nosed shopping scofflaws will have to start shelling out to government slush funds just like their doddering old grandparents who still shamle off to the corner drug store to fill their prescriptions.

And the shopping status quo ante will be restored and all will be right with the world. Phew!

Now, Kenley, being a paper clip-counting sort of fiscal conservative, was one of my favorite state legislators, so I hate to break this to him but millennials are not the only shoppers who have been abandoning brick-and-mortar establishments for the Internet. We geezers on the brink of decrepitude have also discovered the joys of shopping without getting up from the couch.

I don’t presume to know why millennials abandon physical spaces — who knows why these

crazy kids today do anything? Maybe they're just enthralled with the shiny new toys of the digital age. Maybe our worst fears are true, and they were born lazy.

But I know why the duffers do – the older we get, the bigger hassle it is to traipse all over town looking for a few things that are just a mouse click away. And – trust me on this – we have at least as many reasons as the young'uns to watch our pennies.

I also don't understand what "it all means" in a macro, Big Picture way. The Indiana Policy Review, which kindly distributes my rantings to Indiana newspapers, has plenty of fine economic minds at its beck and call. I will leave it to one of them to get into the weeds and explain for the rest of us the policy implications and constitutional ramifications of Internet sales taxes.

But as a lifelong consumer, there are some things I understand on a common-sense level.

I get it that not requiring online retailers to charge the tax puts brick-and-mortar establishments required to collect them at a competitive disadvantage. I get it that forcing Internet companies to collect will put the small ones, not equipped to deal with the convoluted tax codes of multiple jurisdictions, at a competitive disadvantage. I therefore get it that no matter which way it goes, it will be unfair to somebody and there will be lots of winners and losers.

And I get it that none of this means much at all in the long run, because I also understand that there is such a thing as an inexorable force. I should – one of them is destroying the calling to which I have devoted my life.

I am not so narrow-minded as to mean merely newspapers. I refer to the much larger enterprise of which newspapers are but a small part.

While my colleagues were bemoaning the death of print, they failed to grasp – still do, in fact – that the whole mass communication model was on the verge of collapse.

Journalism as we understand it today has always gotten a free ride on the back of mass-market advertising. It was the model that made

economic sense in the aftermath of the industrial revolution, getting mass-produced goods into the minds and then the homes of the mass of people. The "most important news" served to the biggest audience possible followed along.

That model doesn't work in the digital age. Marketers today don't seek the biggest audience, but the right audience, goods and services targeted very specifically to the people most likely to want them. Amazon now knows more about my tastes and preferences than I ever did.

"The news" is fragmenting in the same way. People scan the web sites that conform to their political prejudices and follow only the events their "friends" on Facebook do. They howl along with the mobs who denounce the Twitter Outrage of the Hour. The national conversation, if indeed there ever was one, is coming apart.

If you stop and think about it, the same inexorable force, or at least a part of it, that is changing journalism is also transforming retailing.

If our youngest and oldest shoppers are moving in the same direction, that is not just a trend. It is – and please forgive the now trite use of a scientific term in a non-scientific context – a paradigm shift.

People with brick-and-mortar spaces to fill might find inducements to get us off our couches and into those spaces. It will not be to look at variations of the same stuff all the other spaces have on display.

And who charges whom what tax won't be the slightest factor. That will just be something for paper clip-counting legislators to shake their fists at. After the paper clips are delivered to their front door.

Democrats Are Weak on Gay Marriage Specifics

(June 25) — With the candidates all set and the pieces all in place for the fall general election, it appears that gay marriage is the only issue people seem to think is worth talking about in

Indiana. So, wanting to do my civic duty and be an informed voter, perhaps it is something I need to understand better.

Obviously, I must start with the Republican Party's running feud about the matter, since that is the news peg to which all the deep thinkers out there have tied their brilliant analyses.

I get the impression that the GOP state convention was one big, happy party except for this one embarrassing intrusion, like a drunken distant cousin at the family reunion.

And it might be that the dispute is so tawdry that I want to be careful about being associated with Republicans' preferred definition of marriage. They apparently want their platform to heap scorn on anybody not recognizable as being in a "traditional" marriage, leave them begging for crumbs of acceptance while the rest of us bask in the glow of wedded bliss.

I mean, as someone with conservative instincts, I certainly applaud preserving and nurturing the values that have sustained us. But I don't hate anybody, and I would never want to discourage people who want to adopt those values.

What I really need to do is study the language of the competing platform planks to make a useful distinction. The media are most helpful in this endeavor, as they almost always are when there is any hint of disagreement among Republicans or conservatives. They carefully spell out the exact language for me.

Discarded ("inclusive") plank: "We support traditional families with a mother and father, blended families, grandparents, guardians, single parents and all loving adults who successfully raise and nurture children to reach their full potential every day."

Adopted ("not inclusive") plank: "We believe that strong families, based on marriage between a man and a woman, are the foundation of society. We also recognize that some families are much more diverse and we support the blended families, grandparents, guardians and loving adults who

successfully raise and nurture children to reach their full potential every day."

I confess to reading the proposals over and over, trying to figure out exactly what everyone is so exercised about.

Yes, one of them expresses a belief that marriages "between a man and a woman are the foundation of society." Have I been misreading history all this time? Am I delusional in thinking same-sex marriages make up less than 1 percent of the total?

But both of them express support for "loving adults" who "raise and nurture children" to help them "reach their full potential every day." On the way to emphasizing what is truly important – the well-being of children – both of them sound pretty inclusive. What am I missing?

Perhaps the problem is that the GOP language suffers in comparison to the Democratic Party's platform stand on same-sex marriage.

On this, the media seem to let me down. They dutifully report that Democrats praise themselves for being on "the right side of history" and declare that "Our party is not of the belief that it can dictate who can raise a family" There's a shock. But there is not a single suggestion about what Democrats propose as an alternative definition.

I am tempted to dismiss this as another example of the media's liberal bias. Anything hinting at a crack in GOP unity gets never-ending coverage. Anything that might make Democrats look anything less than perfect gets ignored.

So, I go to the source, the Democratic platform as spelled out on the party's state Web site. The platform's 22 pages cover everything from a minimum wage and universal preschool to a hate crimes law and redistricting reform, and there is a ton of "we're all in this together" boilerplate. There is a commitment to civil rights and equality, a commitment to fight discrimination against anybody for any reason, a declaration that "every Hoosier deserves to be treated with basic human decency and "allowed to pursue the American dream."

But there is not a single thing about marriage. Not one word.

Come on, you progressive warriors. You denounce Republicans for sticking with a traditional definition, but won't say what definition you'd replace it with? Have some guts. Take a stand.

What I seem to be left with is a Republican view on marriage that might be flawed and open to debate but at least tries to acknowledge modern sensibilities and a Democratic Party that merely assumes I will be satisfied with its reactionary posturing.

Seems like I've been here before.

The Gambling Dilemma

(June 18) — Several months ago, on the occasion of state legislators yet again mulling the rescue of casinos from the doldrums, I wrote of my mixed feelings about state-sanctioned gambling.

Since occasionally I have enjoyed indulging in games of chance, I can't claim any moral high ground. The challenge of beating the odds to reap unearned rewards is a temptation to which most of us have succumbed.

But gambling is a weakness that can become a sickness. As someone who wants to live in a decent, rational society, I am bothered by the idea of the state exploiting our human frailties to fill its coffers. Now that Indiana officials seem on the verge of plunging us into the once-forbidden territory of sports gambling, it occurs to me that further reflection on my internal conflict might be helpful.

I am happily a creature of the right, but not a doctrinaire one that any faction would claim as a purist. I am partly libertarian and partly conservative, in proportions that vary with ambient circumstances. Sometimes that mixture results in a debate with myself that would trigger a sigh of dismay in any competent therapist.

And gambling is one of the issues that kick the debate into high gear.

When I hear that the state might legalize sports gambling, the libertarian in me reacts with, "Well, so what?" What's the point of trying to forbid something so many people are doing anyway?

That is, in fact, one of the main arguments being considered by legislators. "We're taking something that people are doing illegally today and we are capitalizing on it by making it legal and regulating it," Sen. Ron Alting, R-Lafayette, told the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette. "We are getting it out of back rooms and bookies and making it open and transparent." Estimates say those back rooms and bookies already generate hundreds of billions of dollars nationwide.

Superficially, that sounds like an abdication of responsibility. Just let people do whatever they want and call it lawful.

But it makes sense from a legal standpoint. If the law gets too far ahead of what people are willing to obey, they won't obey, and that's no way to create a law-abiding society.

Prohibition failed in large part because millions of people who had been perfectly ordinary citizens became lawbreakers overnight. And if the speed limit on a stretch of highway is 55 mph, and everybody using it drives 70, perhaps the drivers know something the regulators don't. Call it crowd-sourcing the law.

And heaven knows it's hard to argue that we don't have enough laws. Even conservative observers like the Heritage Foundation have lamented the over-criminalization of America that makes every typical American vulnerable to being caught up in "a criminal investigation and prosecution . . . for something he did not even suspect was illegal."

And National Review approvingly quotes a civil liberties expert who has said the average American commits three felonies a day.

And, yet, and yet, and yet, warn my conservative instincts. It could be defended if all the state did was recognize our bad habits and tax them, as it does, for example, with cigarettes. The state profits from our vices rather than our virtues

and, faced with ever higher costs, some sinners will even tire of behaving stupidly.

The state seldom stops there, however. As it grows dependent on its sin taxes, it must find ways to encourage the sin. In times of declining revenue, the State Lottery does not increase its advertising budget because it wants Hoosiers to wisely invest their money. The General Assembly does not relax the rules for casinos to lure more gamblers from Kentucky and Ohio. It does it to keep Hoosier gamblers from going to Kentucky and Ohio.

That makes the state our exploiter rather than our protector, no better than the drug pusher who gives away free samples to create more addicts. Is preying on our weaknesses what we should tolerate from government? Surely there are vices we don't want government to profit from by encouraging — how would a government-sanctioned child prostitution operation grab you?

Before anybody points it out, yes, I can applaud the Supreme Court's decision that opened the way for states to consider legalizing sports gambling. By striking down a federal law banning the betting in most states, declaring it none of Washington's business, the court rightly affirmed the principles of federalism.

But no, that doesn't resolve the debates, neither my internal one nor the one society should be having. The pros and cons of an issue do not disappear just because it has been moved from the federal to the state level.

Just to confuse the issue for those who think they have already figured it out, it should be noted that state-approved gambling is not a new obsession for government in America. Most of our colonies used lotteries as their primary source of funds, and the Continental Congress even helped fund the revolution with one. After the war, states used them for public works projects ranging from schools to bridges and canals.

States started banning lotteries in the 1820s because . . . any guesses? Because those who ran the lotteries started absconding with the funds.

"Gamblers don't always care if the game is crooked if it's the only game in town," a Whittier Law School professor, I. Nelson Rose, told the *Washington Post*, "but they'd like somebody to win."

That's the danger of letting the state get too cozy with gambling. In the end, it may be that nobody wins.

A Botanical Horror Story

(*June 11*) — Don't trust the Internet. The information you find there might not be entirely accurate. — Mark Twain

Pity the poor folks of Monroe County. They're right in the path of the menacing mile-a-minute vine, another dangerous invasive species from that awful Asia.

It can grow up to six inches in a single day, so better not slow down if you're in its path or it might just crawl all over you.

It's a nuisance, says Ellen Jacquart, invasive-species education chair for the Indiana Native Plant and Wildlife Society, because its rapid growth can crowd out other plants. Using its barbs, the vine pushes up and over other plants, blocking the sun and robbing other species of nutrients. "Once it's in the area, you can't walk through it," she says.

The mile-a-minute vine is said to be similar to kudzu in that way, with one big exception. It's an annual, rather than a perennial, which means it does not have an extensive root system, making it easier to kill.

Well, that's a relief.

I know all about kudzu.

All my life I have known it as "the vine that ate the South." It was introduced to the United States in 1876 at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. It might have remained in relative obscurity, a novelty plant used for shade and livestock feed, except for an aggressive marketing campaign in the 1930s by the federal government as Congress declared war on erosion and chose kudzu as the primary weapon against it.

It has been estimated that almost 3 million acres of the “crop” were planted in the Southeast over the next decade. It has been spreading like the parasite it is ever since, some say by as much as 150,000 acres a year.

And somewhere along the way, the plant achieved almost mythic status. It provided such a perfect metaphor for any creeping menace you could think of, from poverty and the explosion of repressed sexuality to racism and illegal immigration. Thanks to writers as diverse as James Dickey and Alice Walker, kudzu has become synonymous with the dark, Gothic South that lives in the American imagination.

Not that I have needed the myth. I’ve watched the plant seemingly gobble up large parts of my native Eastern Kentucky, blanketing hills and hollows once a riot of diverse flora with the monstrous vines of a depressingly ugly shade of green. On my last visit home, I saw that our old home had been reduced to its foundation, replaced by clumps of kudzu. And Kentucky isn’t even the real South.

But, as I so often have, I went and spoiled a good story. I did some research that involved more than scanning the first few Google entries.

And discovered that the vine that ate the South might not have as big an appetite as I had chosen to believe. Naturalist Bill Finch, writing in *Smithsonian Magazine*, cites the latest careful sampling by the U.S. Forest Service (as of 2015) to the effect that kudzu occupies only about 227,000 acres. That’s about the size of a small county and about a sixth the size of Atlanta.

Furthermore, it’s spreading at the rate of only about 2,500 acres a year, and the Japanese kudzu bug is now infecting many of the vines, sucking out their vital juices.

So, where did the fantastic claims of its wild spread come from?

“Kudzu has appeared larger than life because it’s most aggressive when planted on road cuts and railroad embankments – habitats that became front and center in the age of the

automobile. As trees grew in the cleared lands near roadsides, kudzu rose with them. It appeared not to stop because there were no grazers to eat it back. But, in fact, it rarely penetrates deep into a forest; it climbs well only in sunny areas on the forest edge and suffers in shade.”

What am I to believe? The scary stories augmented by my sad memories? Or the “latest careful sampling” by the experts on the subject? It’s not that much of a dilemma. As I’ve often observed in the middle of an argument, anecdotes do not trump evidence.

And there is the bonus that the truth about kudzu can serve as a more useful metaphor in this age of Great Internet Scare Stories, all about things that seem menacing with a casual glance at the side of the road but much less so if you just walk a little way into the woods.

Make a note, would-be Gothic novelists of Monroe County.

Schools and Gastronomic Egalitarianism

(June 4) — There is no such thing as a free lunch.

Yeah, well, about that.

According to news reports, students in Fort Wayne Community Schools (FWCS) will receive both free lunches and free breakfasts starting next year.

Not just middle and elementary students, as it has been since 2014, but high school students as well. And not just economically deprived students — all students, regardless of the ability of their parents to pay.

“Free,” we all know, is a relative term. The students and their parents may not pay for the food, but somebody does. Such largesse is possible because under U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines, more than 40 percent of FWCS students qualify for government benefits of one kind or another. That means the tab will be picked up by tax dollars, which means all of us pay.

And as political observer P.J. O'Rourke has said about health care, if you think it's expensive now, wait till you see what it costs when it's free. A government that will give something to everybody when only 41 percent qualify isn't too worried about the bottom line.

Whatever estimate the government comes up with for the cost of this program, quadruple it and you won't even be close.

Of course, the facts that somebody has to pay and the bill will be high do not in themselves negate the intent of the "free lunch" warning. What that adage is meant to convey is that those who actually receive the benefit — the students in this case — will actually pay a hidden price.

There is no agreement over when the sentiment was first expressed or how the exact wording came about, but most sources agree that the saying originated with the practice of 19th century American taverns offering a free lunch to patrons who bought at least one drink. Someone who ate was more likely to order more drinks, which would cost more than the food would have. This was especially true if a crafty tavern owner served a lot of salty food like ham and cheese and, yes, even peanuts.

So, what hidden costs might our students be paying? What salty foods are they being slipped?

The goal of the government's gastronomic egalitarianism, we are told by those who support it, is the self-esteem of poor students. "Forcing kids to identify themselves as poor results in lasting shame and harm to fragile psyches," says

David Sandman, president and CEO of the New York State Health Foundation . . . "When all kids have access . . . the stigma and shaming disappear, and more students participate. . ."

A little secret, Mr. Sandman — students in school know a whole lot about each other, including those who are poor and those who are not.

Just imagine the message that is being sent. To the well-off student — you are getting something you are not really eligible for, so enjoy your superiority.

To the less-well-off — the privileged are once again getting something they don't deserve, and we're screwed again."

Instead of bringing the students lovingly into the "we're all in this together" circle, might we actually be reinforcing and even exacerbating their unhealthy group identities?

Not possible? Government programs hardly ever have unintended consequences, especially those that are the opposite of the ones envisioned?

Then let's salute our crafty federal tavern owner for the intended consequence: Another generation that sees government as an endless source of benefits that never have to be earned and no one has to pay for. Lunch isn't just free. It's our unlimited right.

But a small warning:

We might not get everything we pay for in this life. But everything we get we pay for, sooner or later, one way or another. ♦

Backgrounders

What's Happened to Americans?

Mark Franke, an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is formerly an associate vice chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne.



(Aug. 3) — I am a child of the 1950's; I freely and proudly admit that. My entire outlook on life was formed by my upbringing during that decade in the home, the church and the school.

One concept we learned about our nation was its potential for everyone to make himself better through hard work, education and moral living. The goal parents set for their children was simple: achieve a better standard of living than they did. It was called the American Dream, and it was what underlay American exceptionalism for many decades.

I doubt current high school students could tell you what this concept is. They probably have never heard the term "American Dream." It clearly is not a driving force for much of our population today.

As a case in point, the Millennial generation is the first on record to have lower average income than their predecessors, 20 percent less than the Baby Boomers at the same age.

Half of them are renting rather than owning homes and anywhere from a quarter to a half of twenty somethings still live with their parents (depending on what study you choose). Thirty percent of male Millennials have no job.

So what went wrong?

It's easy to blame the schools, and some of it rests there. Certainly the breakup of the nuclear family is a primary contributor. On the other extreme the so-called helicopter parents and their coddling ways haven't helped.

While it is a given that you can't find a solution until you accurately identify the cause of the

problem, there are some ideas that deserve attention.

Promise Indiana, an initiative begun in Wabash County and spreading throughout the state, is attempting to refocus career attention to a much earlier age cohort than the traditional high school group. The thinking is that kindergarten through third grade students are the most receptive to dreaming about their lives. I can attest to this as my seven year-old granddaughter already has several career goals in mind, all coming from things she's seen and read.

In DeKalb County, a rural county that employs 40 percent of its workforce in manufacturing, the Promise Indiana idea of starting in the formative years has taken off through a program centered in its community foundation. Using the vehicle of tax-advantaged Section 529 savings plans for post-secondary education, the foundation will seed the youngster's account with \$25 and then ask the child to get a matching sponsor. If successful, the foundation will add another \$75.

The goal is to get 70 percent of the K-3 group to sign up and about half them to secure matching sponsors. DeKalb may be a small county but the people there think big.

Will this help to turn around what is rapidly becoming a national malaise? Beats me. But DeKalb has a couple of ticks on the plus side of the ledger. First, the community leadership didn't begin by asking a governmental agency to fund this. They are going directly to individuals, schools, not-for-profits and employers to help with moral and financial support. They hope to raise \$900,000 in private funds to extend the program through high school.

Second, a lot of folks there appear willing to help push this program. That is a characteristic of DeKalb County, a county that I have neither lived in nor worked in but follow its activities closely as examples of grass roots enterprise. Contrast this approach to the crony capitalist, big project, taxpayer-funded overreach practiced by several Indiana cities which I won't name here.

Clearly DeKalb is playing the long game by concentrating first at the youngest ages. These children are still impressionable and solving a generational problem will take at least a generation to solve. You have to start somewhere.

But this 1950's throwback wishes the folks in DeKalb could have worked the term "American Dream" into their title. But that's just the curmudgeon in me showing through.

Alexander Hamilton and the Dream

(July 20) — I am conflicted. I love history. One of my historical heroes is Alexander Hamilton. I wrote what was the equivalent of my senior thesis as an undergraduate major in economics on Hamilton's plan to put the new nation on a sound financial footing. Needless to say, I have looked up to Alexander Hamilton my entire adult life.

But I hate musicals. Especially musicals that purport to be on historical topics but turn it all to the dark side by convoluting history to meet the demands of current political correctness. Let alone the fact that I think this kind of music is the stuff of nightmarish thought control that won't leave your mind when you are lying awake at 2 a.m. cursing the day you ever set foot in a theatre.

Where am I going with this? My wife of 46 years decided to buy two tickets to the musical *Hamilton* when it came to Chicago. Fortunately, since she is my wife of 46 years, she had no delusions about my going with her so she asked a close friend instead. I may be out \$400 but I avoided spending the night subject to the tender mercies of the Cook County Sheriff's department after theatre management dialed 911 to report me for public disruption and general moperly.

My wife liked the musical so much that now she is reading Ron Chernow's biography of the great man — not because I recommended it, not because he is near the top of the Founding Father pantheon, but because the diabolical author of the play said he based the musical on it.

As I am led to understand, the musical "celebrates" Hamilton's status as an immigrant who made good against daunting odds and helped

make the country great. Liberals have to love that storyline, and they are not wrong in doing so.

What needs to be emphasized, however, is that Hamilton did this by working hard, getting an education, taking advantage of opportunities that arose and having the good fortune of living in a new nation that awarded effort. He did this in spite of his immigrant status, unstable home life, growing up in poverty and lack of social status.

This could not have happened in any other nation back then. Today, the reality is not much improved given the few nations with high economic freedom scores.

Alexander Hamilton, more than any other of our Founding Fathers, epitomizes the concept we used to call the American Dream. He saw opportunity, and through his own indefatigable drive and God-given abilities put himself into a position to benefit from it. That gives conservatives something to love about this success story.

Perhaps this is where serious Americans who hold dear what our nation is and what it stands for can come together on the immigration debate. We can and must recover the bully pulpit from the extremists on both sides of the issue. It is our duty to take us back to the ideal of the American Dream that Alexander Hamilton and millions of others made real in their lives, such as my ancestors who settled as German immigrant farmers in Allen County in the 1830's and 1840's. I, we all, owe this to our children and grandchildren.

But back to musicals. A friend from church, when giving the father of the bride speech at his daughter's wedding reception, said he likes music and he likes movies, but they don't belong together. I feel the same way about the theatre — enough with the singing, already.

I also feel it incumbent to protect the reputation of one of my heroes. I'm so anal about this that one of my favorite local pubs is called the Hamilton Public House. To my chagrin, I learned it's not named for the iconic first Secretary of the Treasury but for the park in Fort Wayne where the city's professional baseball team, the Kekiongas,

played as part to the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, predecessor to today's National League.

According to local baseball wags, the Kekiongas claim to have played the first professional baseball game in America. But that is a story for another day.

The Customer Is Always Right, but Which One?

(July 11) — I took a class on business policy during my undergraduate days, back when Richard Nixon was still in his first term. My professor emphasized this key to business success: Serve the public.

The point was that your business must always think about your customers' needs and wants, and to use that as your starting point in making product or service decisions. He was right, of course, but things aren't quite so simple any more.

Hardly a week goes by without some consumer boycott being announced, typically by a politically motivated group. Walmart, the largest retailer in the universe, has been hit with demands from the left to stop selling guns and from the right to stop selling "Impeach Trump" t-shirts through its on-line marketplace.

Can all these customers be right at the same time? If so, do you end up selling nothing? Three articles in a recent Wall Street Journal illustrate what American businesses are facing in our increasingly polarized society.

A front-page article focused on Walmart's attempt to be more open and public in its political stance while making it vividly clear that this leaves a giant Gordian Knot to be cut by management. The company knows that its marketing strength is with low- to mid-income customers outside urban areas rooted deep in Red State country.

Walmart's board room debate is no doubt focused on how much the retailer can give in to politically motivated activists without losing significant support among its customer base. Both courage and wisdom are needed.

At the other extreme — and I mean really extreme — is a small feminist bookstore called In Other Words in Portland, definitely Blue State territory. A customer was welcome provided she (I assume not many he's were patrons) abided by seven guidelines including one acknowledging the evil of cishetero patriarchy, whatever that means.

Even in ultra-liberal Portland, one can see the potential train wreck in this business model. Sure enough, In Other Words is now closed due to lack of business. The owners do not believe the fault lies with themselves, as Cassius counsels fellow-conspirator Brutus in "The Tragedy of Julius Caesar," but according to their public pronouncements prefer to blame the Shakespearean "stars" of patriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism.

The third article was a book review of "Barrel-Aged Stout and Selling Out" by Josh Noel, an account of the rise of Goose Island Brewery in Chicago. Goose Island began small and developed a following in the Chicago area but soon outgrew its production capacity. To raise the capital they needed, its owners sold first a minority share and then the rest of its stock to the Evil Empire itself, Anheuser-Busch.

Craft beer purists took umbrage, something that is rapidly becoming our national pastime. The beer didn't change, just the marketing power brought by its new corporate parent. No matter.

Now, I like craft beers as much as the next person but, being one of the great unwashed, I don't really care who owns stock in the brewery. No doubt Goose Island lost some of its long-time customers and even suffered a backlash of "shock, anger and betrayal" emotions from its employees when it announced the sale.

At least this story ends with good news. Goose Island's sales continue to grow rewarding management for making a difficult but correct decision.

These three articles were all on different pages and only thematically related after-the-fact. Taken together, they may lead one down the rabbit hole of never-ending reactionary policy changes. Each

decision in reaction to short-lived publicity may just bring on more of the same with an end result of losing focus on what made you successful in the first place.

If I may add a corollary to my old professor's adage it would be this: Serve the public, but know which subset of the public you can realistically and profitably serve in the long run.

The Student Debt Crisis

(June 20) — The Wall Street Journal recently ran a front-page article about a dentist in Utah who was in debt over his graduate school student loans to the extent of \$1,060,945. Yes, \$1,060,945, and he is just one of 101 who owe more than a million dollars.

This man had attended the school of dentistry at the University of Southern California, a private institution among the priciest of U.S. universities. One year of dental studies at USC costs \$137,000 including living expenses. Tuition alone is \$91,000.

Our dentist twice took advantage of government programs to consolidate his outstanding loans and to capitalize unpaid interest. This resulted in his original \$601,506 in loans becoming \$882,300. Since going into what he described as a corporate dental practice, he earns \$225,000 in salary but only pays \$1,590 per month on his debt. This doesn't even cover the monthly accrued interest, so his balance keeps increasing. Hence the million plus still owed.

Granted, this man is an outlier. The national average of outstanding debt for a graduate is about \$40,000, not an unreasonable amount when discounted against the higher earning potential over a 40-year career, that is for many but not all college degrees. But this average is for bachelor's degrees and doesn't take into account the significantly higher loan balances for graduate and professional students like our dentist. And it completely ignores loans taken by students who never graduate.

(In the interest of full disclosure, I spent several years of my career in higher education

administration working in student financial aid. I have lived this issue for years and am familiar with the arguments on all sides.)

The total student loan debt is nearly \$1,500,000,000. That's one and a half trillion dollars, second only to mortgages and more than double owed on credit cards. Most of this debt is held by the U. S. government, thanks to a 2010 law pushed by the Obama administration to drive private lenders out of the market. This left the government, in other words the taxpayer, responsible for the full risk of default as well as the provider of the capital necessary to fund the loans.

Fortunately the government regularly runs a huge budget surplus it can tap, right? No, the government must borrow the funds in the bond market to cover much of the one hundred billion dollars in new loans made each year. Since the Obama administration drove the commercial lenders out of the market, the federal government has increased its direct student loan portfolio by three-quarters of a trillion dollars. This is all done off-budget so it tends not get much attention when the annual federal budget deficit is reported.

Government accounting, by which I mean non-standard accounting practices, claims that student loans will turn a \$37-billion profit over the next 10 years. After using standard discounting methodology, which takes into account the time value of money and risk of loss, this turns into a net loss of \$170 billion according to a recent Forbes article.

Another piece of misinformation about the student loan program is the publicly reported default rate. The published rate is 11.5 percent, enough to force any commercial lender into receivership. But the base in this calculation includes only students who went into first time repayment three years ago and have not made a payment for at least 270 days during past three years. It does not include defaults after three years when in fact most occur.

Now, the student loan program surely helps students get access to college when otherwise they

couldn't afford it. It also allows middle class students to trade up, to choose a more expensive private college instead of the state university or community college. Access and choice are matters of faith to the financial aid profession and these professionals certainly see themselves as doing good even as most realize the dangers of excessive borrowing. Remember, I was one of them early in my career.

There is an understandable argument for higher education as important for economic productivity and therefore should be considered at least a quasi-public good. What is less understandable is the stridency of higher education lobbyists when they argue that unlimited access to government student loans does not affect the price colleges charge their students. Public good or not, something has to restrain pricing if the market is handicapped in doing so.

How about the law of supply and demand? This fundamental law of economics instructs us that if billions of dollars of artificial purchasing power are injected into a market, the price will inevitably rise. To the point colleges have raised their tuition by 3.2 percent-4.4 percent over the rate of general inflation in each of the last three decades, as reported by the College Board which collects this data annually.

To simplify the math on this, just assume each of the last 30 years colleges raised their tuition charges by 3.8 percent (the midpoint of the above range) each year over the rate of general inflation. This means that college tuition is three times higher today than 30 years ago . . . after accounting for inflation. This is the statistical equivalent of paying \$7 per gallon for gasoline today. And nobody is patting Big Oil on the back for moderating prices at the pump.

Take away subsidized borrowing and see what happens to tuition rates. Colleges will either need to cut costs, something they are genetically incapable of seriously doing, or accept lower enrollments. We will have a lot fewer colleges left after the market fallout, to be sure.

So back to the original question of assigning blame. Are the students at fault for taking advantage of what looks to them like free money? A fundamental principle of economics is that people act rationally in their own interest, though not necessarily intelligently when viewed by others. And nearly one-third of these former students have acted rationally to take advantage of government loan forgiveness. Thank you, U. S. taxpayers.

Can you really blame the colleges for raising tuition as high as the market will bear? Again, aren't they simply acting in their own best interest, if only in the short term? I played the Cassandra on my college president's cabinet whenever tuition increases were discussed, arguing that we were rapidly pricing ourselves beyond the reach of the middle class. We shifted the blame to the state legislature for not giving us as much money as we asked for, so I'm sure we all slept well at night.

It does not take a trained economist to realize that there are two major industries in our nation that do not have sustainable financial models—health care and higher education. Each believes it offers a superior good, one that can successfully overcharge its customers. But each also has a pricing model that is highly driven by negotiated pricing, called net tuition discount in higher education. Consumer Reports gave this as nearly 50 percent for the 2016 freshman class at private colleges. This means that, on average, a college freshman could expect to pay half of the published tuition rate. But we all know what averages mean. In health care the power of Medicare and large insurance groups can reduce charges to dimes on the dollar for its members while other under-insureds pay full price. Likewise in higher education. Some students in that average pay nothing while a few unfortunate others pay sticker price. These must rely heavily on student loans to pay the bursar's bill.

Do colleges bear any responsibility for this impending crisis? Most would probably say no. According to the WSJ article cited at the

beginning of this essay, a USC official was quoted as saying, “These are choices. We’re not coercing. You know exactly what you are getting into.” Fair enough. Our society is riddled with victimhood and lack of personal responsibility and I don’t propose to append this case to an already interminable list.

Would these defenders of colleges, however, take the same attitude about tobacco companies and absolve them of the health-related problems originating with smoking? How about gun-makers and the mentally ill mass murderers who use guns?

I’m not trivializing by any means the horrible suffering caused families by people who smoke or decide to kill everyone in sight. I’ve already mentioned oil companies which have been accused of everything from price-gouging to benefiting from “unearned profits,” to quote another economically illiterate president. Nor am I raising unjustifiable tuition levels to the level of mass murder or cancer.

But think about how many start college and don’t finish, usually because they don’t belong there in the first place due to inadequate preparation or lack of motivation. They leave no more employable than when they began but with loans to be repaid.

Like most public policy issues, no silver bullet is obvious. Many, perhaps too many, proposals have been put forth to address the symptoms but I’ve not seen any that get to the fundamental root of the problem. No doubt this is due to the number of sacred cows that might get slaughtered if everything were to be put on the table. I also don’t doubt that those truly responsible for the impending crisis will do their utmost to focus the light elsewhere.

I leave the readers with the following philosophical questions to ponder:

How many young people can truly benefit from traditional four-year college attendance?

Sociologist Charles Murray suggests about 40 percent maximum.

To what extent does government stimulation of demand through student loan programs distort the market for post-secondary degrees? Who ultimately pays the cost for this market manipulation? Think not only of our dentist with his million-dollar debt but also the many unemployed owing tens of thousands in loan balances.

If the government already knows it will lose about 30 percent of the balances in income-driven repayment plans, is this really the best use of federal education subsidy funding aimed at helping students afford college? Since about 40 percent of student loans go to graduate and professional students, are we as taxpayers subsidizing them at the expense of low-income students in two- and four-year programs? Many student financial aid professionals argue that these funds would be spent more wisely increasing Pell Grants for the lowest income students.

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes? When government, federal and state, represents the greatest power in the marketplace, who will call it to account for bad outcomes? When Barack Obama was Blamer-in-Chief, he targeted the for-profit schools and tried to drive them out of business. This deflection of scrutiny has apparently worked, at least for a while, until the public and private colleges finally realize they are next on the block.

If student loan debt in fact becomes recognized as a financial crisis, can we trust the government to honestly assess its own role? Remember the mortgage crisis? Did Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae take the hit, or just commercial banks? If anyone can remember a time when Congress admitted responsibility for the law of unintended consequences after it passed a law with disastrous results, please let me know forthwith.

Getting Rid of the Business Personal Property Tax

Mitch Harper of Fort Wayne is a former member of the Indiana House of Representatives and the Common Council there. He is currently the Chairman of the Third Congressional District Republican Committee of Indiana and a member of the Indiana Republican State Committee. A version of this essay was first published in 2016.



(July 24) — A few years ago, my city council considered a personal property tax abatement for a specific business. There was a lengthy discussion of the particulars of that request — quite lengthy.

After the other council members had spoken, I raised my hand. I noted we had used up a lot of time talking about a specific business personal property tax abatement of a single business.

I said that the view from 18,000 feet might be instructive. Rather than discuss the minutia of a particular abatement on an investment in productive equipment, Indiana would do better to eliminate the business personal property tax altogether.

It is a tax on productivity. It is a tax on growth. It is a remaining disincentive to Indiana's attractiveness as a place to locate new manufacturing industry or invest in new information technology. It has outlived its history.

And it is a relic among almost all other states.

If it were not, the council would not be debating the offering of business personal property abatement. If it were not, there would not be a carve-out in enterprise zones.

After my remarks, an economic-development director in another part of the state took issue with my argument. I met him for lunch; he is someone I respect. But here is what he told me: If you take away the imposition of the tax it is one less economic-development tool to offer.

That is, you have to have certain taxes to be able to take them off the table. I asked him whether that made any sense when other states

didn't have the tax in the first place. He conceded my point.

The merits of taxes are, in part, measured in terms of "frictional costs." That is, how much are the compliance and preparation costs relative to the tax collected. The business personal property tax, with its continued record keeping, preparation and filing, is a tax with a high frictional cost. That is particularly true for firms with mobile assets. It is even more true for those who have applied for abatement and need to file compliance documents.

I quipped in an editorial interview eight years ago that tax abatement is "God's way of telling you taxes are too high" — too high for certain activity or it wouldn't be offered. Business personal property taxation discourages jobs. It discourages investment in new equipment. It taxes capital equipment that adds value to manufactured goods. We want value-added jobs, manufacturing jobs, those that help the Hoosier State compete with neighboring states and the rest of the world.

There has been much talk of "lost revenue." But this is not on existing revenue. And much of the talk — most of the talk — has come from people who have been interested in maximizing revenue from taxes. The money is not lost. It is just that it remains in the hands of businesses and people who will decide for themselves how to spend it, or save it, or invest it. Decisions that result in spending creating greater economic activity.

The tax has been on a historical path to elimination for over 65 years now — actually, longer than that. Change in personal property taxation was desired for decades before public officials, finally, enacted each step that shrank the reach of taxation of personal property.

At one time, it applied to personal property — a homeowner's furniture, appliances, even bicycles. The assessor could come onto your property and inside your home to count the Frigidaire, the Roper or even the Schwinn.

But the Legislature eliminated that. Then the Legislature converted the personal property tax on automobiles (an extension of taxing buggies the century before) and substituted the auto excise tax.

It took several decades for the next steps to be enacted. It was one that resulted in the elimination of the business inventory tax, a tax which had hindered this state, “the Crossroads of America,” as a shipping and distribution hub and had negated the geographic advantages of being within a day’s drive of half the U.S. population.

So, Indiana’s history on this general issue is this: 1) personal property taxation of individuals ended; 2) personal property taxation of automobiles ended; and 3) business personal property taxation on inventory ended.

The trend is as clear as it is welcome, and the Indiana Legislature now has taken an interim step to exempt business personal property, by allowing a geographic area to give itself a competitive advantage for business investment in growth — real growth — by phasing out the tax.

Those communities in Indiana that take advantage of the option to phase out the business personal property tax will be assisting in productivity growth for workers. That is, it will help in creating a more attractive place for the higher paying jobs in value added manufacturing and processing.

South Bend’s ‘Worst City’ Status Explained

John F. Gaski, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is an associate professor at the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of “Frugal Cool: How to Get Rich — Without Making Very Much Money” (Corby Books, 2009).



“I have long suspected that the terrible public governance in South Bend is attributable to the non-competitive politics here.”

“South Bend is one of the most dangerous cities in the United States. There were 1,012 violent crimes in South Bend for every 100,000 residents in 2016, more than double both the state and national violent crime rates of 405 incidents and 386 incidents per 100,000 people, respectively. As is often the case in high-crime areas, property values in South Bend are depressed.” — Matt Cashore explaining South Bend’s 40th place in USA TODAY’s “50 Worst Cities,” June 13, 2018

(July 6) — I have long suspected that the terrible public governance in South Bend is attributable to the non-competitive politics here. We have what is essentially a one-party city, completely dominated by Democrats. Monopoly does breed complacency and low-quality output, even political monopoly apparently.

The underlying problem: The South Bend locals (“Benders,” they are called) keep electing mediocre public servants as long as they share the voters’ Democrat affiliation. So the poor quality of government in South Bend must be ultimately attributable to the poor judgment of the local citizenry (along with any non-citizens who vote illegally, which is very possible here).

Why else would they continue to violate Einstein’s definition of insanity, i.e., doing the same thing but expecting a different result?

Curiously, virtually all failing American cities have two things in common: Democrat public officials and Democrat voters. A partisan sentiment? No, I am both a long-time registered Democrat and long-time registered Republican — intermittently, of course.

Perhaps more relevant, I am originally from Gary (the 18th “worst” city on the USA TODAY list), so I have background in experiencing and recognizing bad government. Good luck to both of my cities. They will need it.

Booster Alert: Indianapolis Business Journal

Fred McCarthy, an adjunct scholar of the foundation and editor of the blog *indytaxdollars*, represented various taxpayer and business organizations before the Indiana General Assembly for 40 years, being awarded a Sagamore of the Wabash by two governors along the way.



(June 26) — There are four separate stories in the current issue of the Indianapolis Business Journal (IBJ) with some relation to the city's use of tax dollars. We'll cover them by headline in the order they appeared:

"IndyGo Rethinks Electric Bus Buy" — We've been told in years of media hype about the planning that has gone into transit generally and the Red Line specifically. Now, quite suddenly, a lengthy story tells us that other cities that have used the same type of electric buses have reverted to diesel because of unsatisfactory results with the electric ones. How did all that study, research and planning happen to miss that information?

But even now IndyGo is going to plunge ahead and purchase them while at the same time buying more standard diesels as replacements. Previously, the question was raised as to the eventual possibility of handling these electric behemoths on streets not sufficiently prepared. No official response.

The penultimate paragraph gives further cause for wonder. Here's the wording: "... one possibility is that they could be put into service on other routes and other IndyGo buses could serve the Red Line."

Really? Just for starters, what will it cost to buy new or retro-fitted standard diesel buses to be accessible from either side, from raised platforms in mid-street as well as curb level, for space to include bicycles inside the vehicle and for electronic control of stop lights for blocks ahead? All proclaimed as advantages for the Red Line.

"City-County Council Rejects Mile Square Tax Proposal" — This was a proposal for a new tax

district in the Mile Square. It did have the advantage of having given those property owners a vote up or down on the deal — admittedly a novel approach in this city. In response to opposition to the idea, we got this kind of specific information: Out of a projected annual revenue of \$3 million, \$585 thousand would go to "enriching user experience." Eliminating panhandlers, perhaps?

"City to Pay \$1.5M to Review Downtown Real Estate Needs" — We're only going to question one sentence in this item, "The city will use money available from its Consolidated Redevelopment Allocation Fund to pay . . ." What is the source of these dollars? Is this a budgetary item approved by the city's legislative body? Or is this what we are now calling the TIF slush fund being handed out by the Redevelopment Commission?

"City Officials Must Address Perceptions about Downtown" — An editorial demanding action from city officials, primarily in response to the tax rejection item above, has a clincher for its last paragraph: "Maybe the Mile Square taxing district wasn't the right answer to address the problems. But we're eager to find out what is. City officials: Let us know soon what you have in mind."

In summary, we're pretty sure about only one thing. If any of the problems mentioned are to be handled, new and increased taxation will be involved. And we're equally sure that the paper, editorially and through its "news" columns, will be unquestioning and supportive.

Once again, there will be no review of, nor recommendation to reduce other expenditures to finance these additional dreams (nightmares).

Reckoning with Race

Eric Schansberg, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast.



(June 19) — For all of the discussion about race, it is rarely informed by novel ideas, knowledge about historical research or careful

analysis. I recently read three books that have much to offer those who are trying to understand race in America — past, present and future.

“Slavery by Another Name” — In his 2008 book, Douglas Blackmon describes “trade” between governments and industry, farms and coal mines — from the end of the Civil War until World War II in the Deep South. Local officials would arrest poorer people (usually African-Americans) for minor offenses or on trumped-up charges. Unable to pay the fines, their prison sentences would be extended considerably. The government would then sell the prisoners to local industry for the duration of the sentence — a practice called “peonage.” In particular, Blackmon focuses on the largely fruitless efforts of the federal government to end peonage in Alabama in the first decade of the 20th century.

They were “slaves in all but name” — a reality for 100,000-200,000 men. Why is this not well-known? It pales in comparison to pre-Civil War slavery. The victims were often illiterate and isolated. And it violates a key American myth that we use “to explain our past and to embroider our present. . . . [we] recoil from the implication that emancipated black Americans could not exercise freedom, and [often] remained under the cruel thumb of white America, despite the explicit guarantees of the Constitution . . . and the moral resolve of the Civil War.”

Blackmon also details the role of Darwinism and race. He contrasts the science of the day with earlier Christian efforts to promote “the essential humanity” and dignity of slaves. The new science encouraged people to form “crude explanations for why blacks should be returned to a ‘mild form of slavery.’” Science eventually became an ally to

“This is the story of how ‘liberal’ whites — men and women who thought themselves enlightened and benevolent — struggle to realize this multiracial society in the formative decades of the United States.”

racial equality, but such practices were not eliminated until World War II. “It was a strange irony that after 74 years of hollow emancipation, the final delivery of African Americans from overt slavery and from the quiet complicity of the federal government in their servitude was precipitated only in response to the horrors perpetrated by an enemy country against its own

despised minorities.”

“Bind Us Apart” — In his 2016 book, Nicholas Guyatt details the strategies for dealing with Native Americans and the end of formal American slavery. The most common approaches were some form of keeping “them” away from “us”: segregation near us but not alongside us; colonization in our territory but away from us; and repatriation in a country far away from us.

All of these were ideas promoted by people who were relatively liberal. Guyatt argues that they were aiming at a true and earnest version of “separate but equal” — even if we would find their methods troubling today. He argues that most people understood the tension in the American experiment — between the lofty rhetoric of equality and the realities of slavery and post-slavery struggles. But only a few took action: “This is the story of how ‘liberal’ whites — men and women who thought themselves enlightened and benevolent — struggle to realize this multiracial society in the formative decades of the United States.”

“Reckoning with Race” — In his 2017 book, Gene Dattel argues that the key for blacks is the “entrance of most black Americans into the economic mainstream.” To promote this entrance, he forcefully advocates cultural assimilation versus separation.

One of Dattel's goals is to dispel an important myth: racism was not a South-only problem; it was a national scourge. He details Northern racism before and after the Civil War. He describes the North's struggle with integration, inner city violence and rioting. And he notes the irony that all civil rights museums are in the South.

Dattel looks at our times and is rightly concerned about increased crime, the decline of the African-American family and the woeful implications of these trends. The far-larger issues are connected to class — which then overlaps

disproportionately with race. To note, if you don't deal with the family structure and stability problems of the poor and lower-middle class, and the subsequent problems with K-12 education, it is difficult to imagine improvement.

Dattel is also troubled by what he sees as a tendency in the African-American community and among its leaders to mostly avoid "individual and group self-examination." At the end of the day, personal responsibility — by leaders and citizens — and assimilation into the economic mainstream through education hold out the best long-term hope for economic progress and social harmony. 

The Franke Bookshelf

The Age of Eisenhower

I'm nostalgic; I freely admit that. After all I am a conservative and we are supposed to be nostalgic, right?

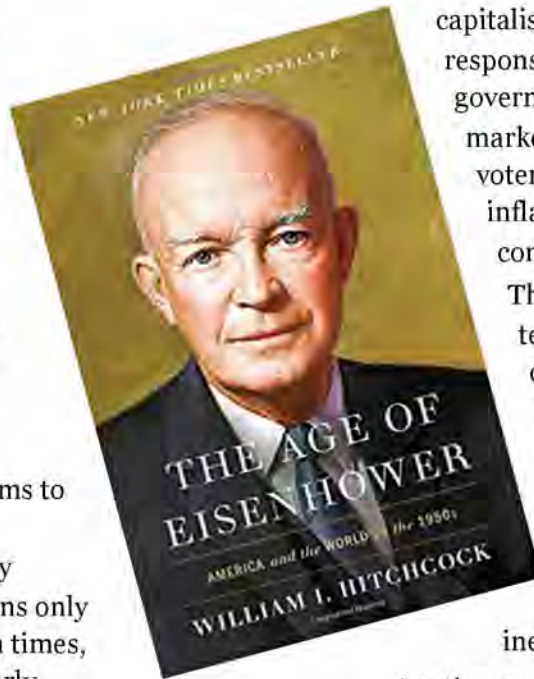
My nostalgia always seems to get stuck in the 1950's, the decade of my childhood. My memory of those days retains only the good things and the fun times, so my nostalgia gene is clearly dominant.

So it was with great anticipation that I read *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s* by William I. Hitchcock (Simon & Schuster, 2018). I was not disappointed, although somewhat surprised by several historical accounts of events that didn't quite line up with my memory.

Hitchcock follows Ike's military career and presidential administration in a chronological order, sort of. The organizational principle is as much thematic as chronological but without losing a sense of the advance of time. Hitchcock takes a mostly even-handed approach and concludes that Ike was a quietly great man who left the nation and the world much better off for his being president.

The book begins with Ike's reluctant decision to run for president. He finally threw his hat in the ring to confront Robert Taft's isolationist wing of the Republican party and to oppose Harry Truman's lack of military preparedness and the Democrat party's domestic policies which he saw as creeping socialism leading to what he viewed as a stealth dictatorship.

His pre-nomination speeches stressed what he termed the "American system" based on



capitalism tempered by personal responsibility and good corporate governance. The message was clearly free market conservative and resonated with voters tired of war, labor strife, inflation, big government and the communist peril, as Hitchcock notes.

This was a time of big events that tended to hide significant underlying changes in American life. For instance the Eisenhower age was one of impressive economic growth. Hitchcock recounts this with only a brief detour to insert the obligatory progressive complaint about income inequality today.

Another positive change was in religious observance. Hitchcock points out that church membership increased during the Eisenhower years from 49% to 69% of the U.S. population. It was also during his administration that Congress added the phrase "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" to our currency as the national motto.

Ike frequently referred to God and religious observance in his speeches. He cast the Cold War in terms of godliness vs. an anti-God system of tyranny. He called on Americans to pray more and read the Bible more. "You can't explain free government in any other term than religious," he told the Episcopal Church News during his first campaign, and rightly pointed to the Founding Fathers' reliance on the Creator "in order to make their revolutionary experiment make sense."

Now to the big events. Several chapters deal with Cold War issues such as the Suez crisis, the space race, Castro's revolution in Cuba, and Ike's dealings with Nikita Khrushchev. The author praises Ike for standing up to Khrushchev's frequent attempts at bullying. The Eisenhower approach was, and I'm paraphrasing here, to put his chips on the table and not back down. This same philosophy was used successfully by Ronald Reagan during his term, and the Cold War ended

just as Ike believed it should and would. (See the Six Days in Moscow review below.)

The Gary Powers U-2 incident can be classified ambivalently as Ike's biggest mistake and his finest hour. Here's what I mean by that. Ike had stopped U-2 flights due to their risk of discovery, especially in the months leading up to his planned summit meeting with Khrushchev. Eventually his staff wore him down and he approved one more flight. This was a big mistake as Powers was shot down and failed to demolish the aircraft as trained. After getting his publicity advantage in the court of world opinion, Khrushchev quietly suggest that Eisenhower blame someone on his staff for an unauthorized flight approval. Ike refused and publicly took responsibility. This showed character and integrity over against political expediency. In my book this counts as A Good Thing, and I think Hitchcock agrees.

Two chapters deal with desegregation. Hitchcock acknowledges that Ike believed all are equal under the law and recognizes that Ike also believed firmly in the rule of law. The so-called Jim Crow laws had been on the books for 80 years so Ike resisted bold administrative moves to abrogate them, preferring court decisions that he could then enforce. There was also the federal vs. state issue. Eisenhower deftly used his go-slow conservatism in bringing about change, an approach Hitchcock regrets but begrudgingly compliments.

I don't want to be too hard on Hitchcock because he makes an honest attempt to be even-handed. It is not easy to avoid the tarpit of anachronistically judging past actions by later standards. Hitchcock does a reasonable job of it even if he can't help getting in his digs at times.

The most obvious example of a dig has to do with Ike's approval of the CIA's clandestine operations. It seems to Hitchcock that we were always on the side of the devils instead of the angels. He admitted, however, that no matter what we did about Cuba, Castro was headed for a ruthless communist dictatorship. And at least

Hitchcock never referred to communist insurgents as simple agrarian reformers.

One other irritating aspect to Hitchcock's style is his regular use of derogatory adjectives when describing conservative politicians such as Indiana senators Homer Capehart and William Jenner. He rarely finds any character faults with liberals and negative descriptors, if used, are typically enclosed in quotation marks. Maybe I am over-sensitive to this but it does get annoying.

It was interesting to learn about Ike's relationship with Richard Nixon. He never really liked Nixon but eventually accepted him as the heir apparent. He wanted to remove Nixon from the 1956 ticket in order to put him in the cabinet for more practical experience, but Nixon was offended by what he considered a slight and refused the transfer. The lack of warmth between them showed in the 1960 election and certainly contributed to Nixon's loss to John Kennedy.

Speaking of Kennedy, one campaign issue was the highly publicized "missile gap," a gap that did not exist unless one saw the U.S. firmly on top. But our advantage was known only to a few with access to the top-secret U-2 flights. The Soviet early space lead with the launching of Sputnik added fuel to the fire. Kennedy saw a good campaign issue and grabbed it, regardless of its truth.

So where does Eisenhower end up on the academic ranking of presidents? He was belittled by condescending intellectuals in the first decade or so after he left office, but that is not uncommon for recent presidents especially conservative ones. By 2017 that had changed. A poll of more than 100 historians ranked him fifth, behind only Washington, Lincoln and the two Roosevelts. He was given high marks for his handling of international affairs during the Cold War, his management of an economy that grew by 60% during his eight years in office, and his moral authority during a time when people wanted to live safe, normal lives.

The touchstone of the Eisenhower years must be this: He left office as the most admired man in

the world. He held that distinction almost every year during the 1950's. Maybe that's why all my memories of that decade are pleasant. It was a good time, made good by a sitting president who nearly everyone trusted to keep us safe.

I Like Ike!

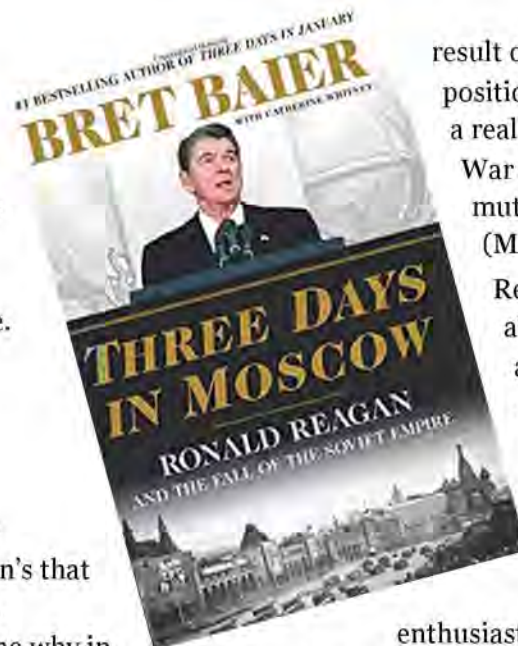
Three Days in Moscow

If it was the Eisenhower administration that defined my childhood, it was Ronald Reagan's that did the same for my adulthood. Journalist Bret Baier reminds me why in *Three Days in Moscow: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (William Morrow, 2018).

Known popularly, even by his detractors, as the Great Communicator, Reagan is best remembered for speech lines like "ash heap of history" about communism, the Soviet Union as "the Evil Empire," and "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" in front of the Brandenburg gate. All came to pass.

Baier mentions those as well as several other speeches by giving us a behind-the-scenes glimpse of how speeches were developed in the Reagan White House. Hint: It was Reagan himself who authored many of the memorable lines and contributed personally to each speech in form and substance. Often this was he and his talented speech writers against the State Department, the National Security Council and the political establishment who all thought he was too provocative. Reagan proved right in the end, of course.

The book's title comes from his final meeting with Gorbachev in 1988 as he addressed an audience of students at the University of Moscow. The fact he was allowed to speak to a group like this at all attests to his on-going engagement with Gorbachev over several summit meetings and frequent letters. Most importantly, it was the



result of his having negotiated from a position of strength while still showing a real determination to end the Cold War and the insane nuclear policy of mutually assured destruction (MAD).

Reagan used this speech to talk about what the human spirit can achieve if freed from repressive government. He never directly criticized the Soviet regime but instead found common ground with these young people on what the world should be like. They responded

enthusiastically, clearly seeing in Reagan the moral leader of the world.

Baier spends many chapters, too many perhaps, going over Reagan's background in anti-communistic thought and his radical shaking up of the governmental arms control establishment upon election. (See Jay Winik's *On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War* [Simon & Schuster, 1996] for a full account of his approach to arms control agreements with the USSR.)

Reagan's irrepressible optimism founded in his absolute conviction that freedom is the only norm for mankind is credited with his ability to rebound from negotiating setbacks and constant media criticism and to restart the process. He was right and all the gainsayers were wrong, or did I already mention that? It bears repeating.

One interesting anecdote concerns his personal relationship with House Speaker Tip O'Neill. Reagan immediately recognized their mutual Irish heritage as a point of commonality and used it to work with O'Neill to get legislation passed. Although it appeared to the public that the two were implacable adversaries, quite the opposite was true. O'Neill would tell Reagan that before 6:00 it was politics and afterwards it was friendship. At one particularly contentious point Reagan phoned O'Neill in the afternoon telling

him to gavel the House into adjournment and to come over the residence (the private part of the White House on the second floor) for cocktails because the White House clock said 6:00. It is telling that O'Neill sat crying by Reagan's hospital bed after the 1981 assassination attempt.

The book is well written as one would expect from a journalist and worth the read for Reagan fans and especially for those who still stubbornly refuse to acknowledge his essential role in winning the Cold War.

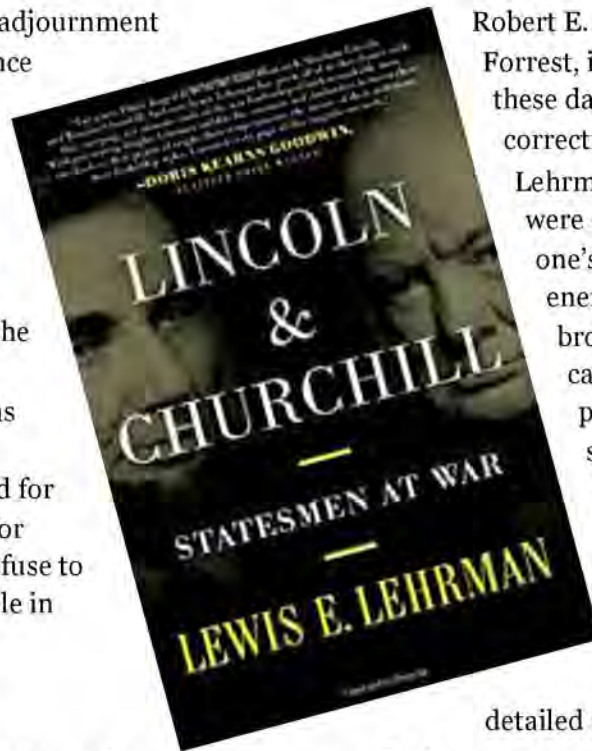
Lincoln and Churchill

Comparative biographies seem to be becoming more popular these days. *Lincoln and Churchill: Statesmen at War* (Stackpole Books, 2018) by Lewis Lehrman is a recent entry that focuses on how these two men managed their governments during wartime crises.

Lehrman gives each an A for substance but downgrades Churchill to at best a C on style. At least that's the impression I got.

Churchill was born to one of the most privileged houses in England; his grandfather was Duke of Marlborough in descent from Queen Anne's greatest general John Churchill. He was actually born at Blenheim Palace, the most impressive non-royal residence in Great Britain. He grew up with both military and political genes that he came by honestly.

Lincoln, on the other hand, is well known for his log cabin beginnings and early life struggles to become a successful lawyer, with politics and military experience as sidelights at best. Yet he is also known for his political brilliance in leading the nation through the Civil War. Shelby Foote, author of one the most extensive histories of that war, described Lincoln as one of only two geniuses to come out of that war. (No, the other was not



Robert E. Lee but Nathan Bedford Forrest, if I dare mention his name is these days of uber political correctness.)

Lehrman points out that both men were adept at the adage of keeping one's friends close and one's enemies even closer. Each brought political rivals into his cabinet and either made them productive team members or shunted them into irrelevancy but under the master's watchful eye. (See Doris Kearns Goodwin's excellent *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* for a

detailed study.)

Each was an outstanding communicator, with Churchill's memorable turns of phrase and stirring declarations of patriotism and Lincoln's homespun analogies and simple appeals to our better natures. These leaders knew how to rally the citizenry while diffusing criticism.

Another aspect of their wartime leadership where they were equally effective but used different approaches was their relationship to their generals. Lincoln prodded, encouraged and sometimes jabbed his plodding generals but never belittled them or gave more than the most strategic of orders. Churchill, on the other hand, was quite the micro-manager bully. Most of his generals and admirals hated working for him, with several joyfully receiving notices that they were fired. Yet each got the job done in his own way once he found the right mix of military commanders.

One side note that saddened me to read was Franklin Roosevelt's indefensible treatment of Churchill as the war moved into its latter stages. Roosevelt decided that Britain was irrelevant for the post-war peace and buddied up to Stalin. Apparently FDR was offended by Churchill's continual references to the "Empire" while he was

determined to end imperialism and colonialism; of course he helped do that by getting in bed with Stalin who was busy creating a much more oppressive empire himself.

If you are interested in military strategy at the national level or simply like to read about political management styles, this book is recommended.

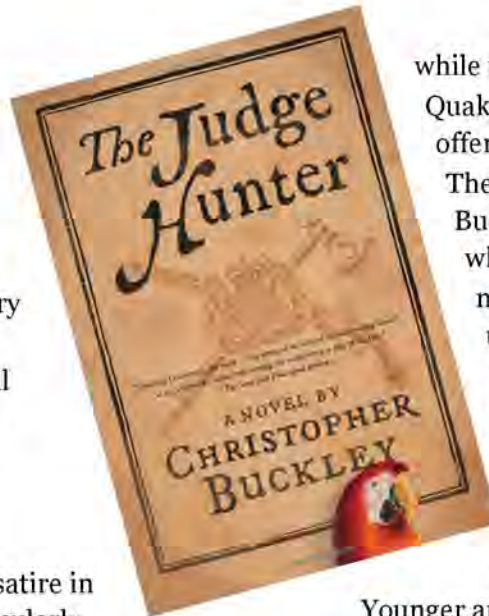
The Judge Hunter

I do like political humor and satire in moderate doses. One that I particularly enjoyed back in 1993 was a first attempt by Christopher Buckley (yes, of that Buckley family) titled *The White House Mess* (Knopf, 1986). It poked fun at a Bill Clinton-like president succeeding a senile Ronald Reagan. The mess in question was the Navy-run dining hall in the White House that the unfortunate aide lost his privileges to in a demotion. It was cleverly funny.

But Buckley seemed to go off the rails. His successive books got more and more ham-fisted in their satire. It was like Buckley wasn't getting invited to enough cocktail parties by the East Coast elites so he decided to write for them and their political sensibilities. Way too many inside jokes for a Midwesterner like me to understand or think funny. Was I being too hard on Mr. Buckley? His endorsement of Barack Obama for president in 2008 proved that I wasn't.

So it was with trepidation that I decided to give his latest a try. *The Judge Hunter* (Simon & Schuster, 2018) takes place in Puritan New England and soon to be conquered New Amsterdam. The plot focuses on the worthless brother-in-law of Samuel Pepys who gets sent to New England to run to ground two generals who were part of the group of regicides who executed Charles I.

Balthasar de St. Michel, our feckless protagonist, blunders his way through various Puritan settlements, offending nearly everyone,



while falling in love with a young Quaker woman sentenced to death for offensives against Puritan morality. The Puritans take many hits from Buckley, and it does get old after a while, but he keeps the plot moving, that plot being Balty's unknowing and unwilling participation in the Duke of York's plan to capture New Amsterdam.

We get introduced to the Earl of Sandwich, Peter

Stuyvesant, John Winthrop the Younger and various colonials all known for Indian killing. Interspersed throughout the book are quotes from Pepys's diaries, focusing on his marriage infidelities and political foibles.

This is not a ringing endorsement for the book but it was worth the handful hours I spent with it.

The Hour of Peril

Often I miss a book when it comes out but find it later to my benefit. One such is *The Hour of Peril: The Secret Plot to Assassinate Lincoln before the Civil War* by Daniel Stashower (Minotaur Books, 2013).

The book's focus is on Abraham Lincoln's pre-inaugural train trip from Springfield to Washington and the rumors of plots to assassinate him when he passed through Baltimore, which was turbulent with pro-Confederacy sentiments. Stashower provides a convincing case the multiple plots were extant even if they were not likely to succeed.

This was a time before Secret Service protection for the president-elect so Lincoln traveled with his own party of Illinois advisors and no armed guard other than two military officers. It is a story about Allen Pinkerton's insertion of himself into the confidence of several of these advisors by providing undercover intelligence about the goings-on in Baltimore.

That story is interesting in itself and worth the read, but what I found most fascinating was several parallels between Lincoln's election and

that of Donald Trump. Both were extremely unpopular with a large minority of population and subjected to inflammatory rhetoric about his illegitimacy to hold office and routine distortions of his views.

Just like 2016, there was an attempt to manipulate the vote of the Electoral College as a last-ditch attempt to void the election; fortunately both efforts died with barely a whimper. In Lincoln's case it was President of the Senate John Breckinridge, a losing candidate in the recent election, who assured that the counting of electoral votes was completed in an orderly manner.

A significant difference was in the post-election conduct of the losing candidates. Stephen Douglas publicly rallied the nation around Lincoln as civil war loomed, putting the good of the nation above personal considerations. Compare that to the shameful behavior of Hillary Clinton, who still is running around trying to blame somebody, anybody for her loss.

The most important difference, thank God, was that no credible assassination attempt was uncovered in 2016 at least so far as I know. Whether or not the Baltimore conspiracy would have been successful, its last-minute uncovering did cause Lincoln to alter the timing of his trip through Baltimore as a precautionary step. Have no doubt about this; he was quite vulnerable when he exited one train to travel several city blocks to board another. 1865 could have happened in 1861, leading to who knows what kind of terrible end result.

Machiavelli: A Biography

The adjective "Machiavellian" is certainly not used as a compliment. Characteristics such as

unscrupulous, cynical, deceptive and amoral all come to mind. But was the man really like that?

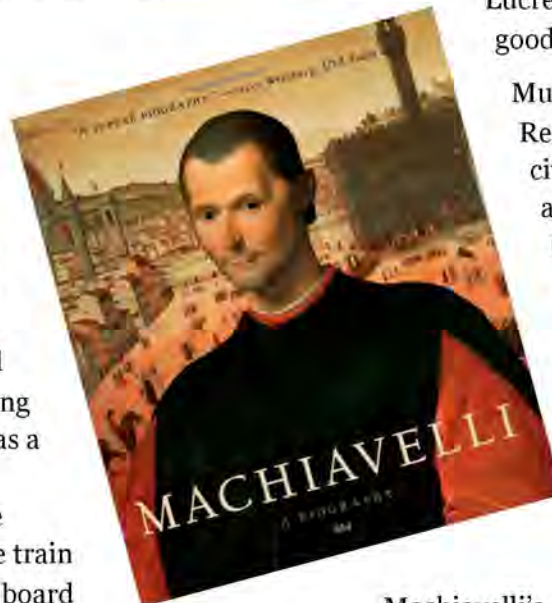
Miles J. Unger, in his *Machiavelli: A Biography* (Simon & Schuster, 2011) would answer "sort of."

Machiavelli's reputation comes almost exclusively from *The Prince*, his best known work. Written as advice to a couple of Medici princes, it was meant as a handbook on effective government from a purely practical point of view. No prince could possibly govern well unless he took the steps necessary to consolidate and protect his authority.

Unger would point us to the whole of Machiavelli's writing including his *Discourses* which balance the amorality of *The Prince* to some degree. Machiavelli's mistake with *The Prince* was to use as his paragon of effective ruler the incredibly evil Cesare Borgia, illegitimate son of an equally evil father Pope Alexander VI and brother to poisoner par excellence Lucretia Borgia. Still, Cesare had a good run of it until his father died.

Much of the book is a history of Renaissance Florence, a weak city-state trying to survive in an age of emerging nation-states. It had a knack for almost always choosing the wrong side in the many Italian wars between Papacy, large Italian city-states, France, the Holy Roman Empire and most anyone else who saw Italy as prime real estate to be had.

Machiavelli's political advice to his Florentine overlords proved equally faulty, mainly because he saw himself serving not a regime or prince but an idea of a republic that no longer existed, if it ever truly had. While known to history as a parade example of a realist, this was in fact a flight of idealistic fantasy that could not be reconciled with the facts on the ground.



If you are interested in this period of Italian history, the book is worth the read. Otherwise you will probably find it confusing and put it down.

Short Takes

With no engineering background other than having sired one, I am always fascinated to learn how construction projects were accomplished in the pre-internal combustion engine era. Two books enlightened me. Jack Kelly's **Heaven's Ditch: God, Gold and Murder on the Erie Canal** (St. Martin's Press, 2016) covers the engineering challenges in cutting through rock to build the locks needed to raise and lower barges to accommodate differing altitudes of the surrounding landscape. He sets this against a backdrop of religious fervor (the Second Great Awakening, Joseph's Smith's Mormonism, Millennialism and the predicted end of the world) and political upheaval (radical abolitionism, anti-Free Masonry, new political parties with the Van Buren's Democrats and the rise of the Whigs). Amazingly enough, the canal actually turned a tidy profit for decades and is still operational as a recreational boating venue. Would that the State of Indiana had such entrepreneurial luck.

The second is **Conquering Gotham: A Gilded Age Epic: The Construction of Penn**

Station and Its Tunnels (Viking, 2007) by Jill Jonnes. Faced with a competitive disadvantage because its passenger trains from the west could not cross the Hudson River, Pennsylvania Railroad executives under the resolute leadership of President Alexander Cassatt determined to tunnel under the river and unload passengers at an ornate new terminal building. Work took years to complete and the engineering staff had to figure out why the tunnels kept shifting vertically in the sand bed under the river. Tammany Hall didn't help until it received appropriate considerations, to put it mildly. Success was achieved to much acclaim and commercial advantage. The Gilded Age terminal is no more but the site, Madison Square Garden, still serves rail commuters under the arena

Dunmore's War: The Last Conflict of America's Colonial Era (Westholme, 2017) by Glenn F. Williams tells the story of a punitive expedition undertaken by colonial Virginia militia to enforce treaty boundaries with the Shawnee and related tribes. There is a lot of background information on how colonial militia systems worked and how campaigns were administered. This occurred even while the First Continental Congress was addressing colonial grievances against the crown, yet the Virginia legislature and royal governor, the eponymous Lord Dunmore, cooperated to win the campaign.

— Mark Franke



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

Scoring Your City Council

(Sept. 1) — There are of course many ways to identify politicians; we are treated to colorful and imaginative examples each election cycle. Few, however, help us determine whether we are being well represented. They are only characterizations making for pithy headlines.

The Indianapolis Star, for example, published a detailed analysis last week of the nuanced LGBT views of the candidates for U.S. Senate. “How Indiana Senate Candidates Joe Donnelly and Mike Braun Differ on Gay Marriage,” read the headline. It was an interesting journalism exercise but not much help in deciding how to vote. Both of them, it turns out, are in favor of pretty much everything. Same with Kevin Leininger’s piece in this weekend’s Fort Wayne News-Sentinel on the abortion factor in the mayoral race there.

Although a candidate’s views on same-sex marriage and such are important to a segment of the population, it is arguably a mere sliver. And on the other end of the spectrum are candidates who promise to legislate a counter morality even though the office sought is irrelevant for that purpose (a pro-life county surveyor).

Without doubting the sincerity of those activated by the moment, or what a particular stance may symbolizing in a larger philosophical

sense, it is sure to prove ephemeral as a council is overcome by more mundane but immediate events (municipal bankruptcy, uncontrolled crime, economic catastrophe, etc.).

If you want an actual predictive measure of good or bad government, score your council vote-by-vote on whether it chooses to reduce the size of government, particularly in its power over the individual. For like it or not, the individual versus the state is a dividing line that stretches back a thousand years, the determinant in the waxing and waning of societies large and small.

Know that the term “individual” is used in its catholic sense. It includes one’s self, property, religious convictions, points of view, livelihood, spoken or written word, etc.

Arbitrary? Hardly, many men have shed their blood that we (at conception, regardless of ethnic origin, gender identification, sexual preference or economic status) enjoy a state and national constitution that clearly places the individual above the state.

Please know that most other governments, friendly and not, consider the individual inferior to the ruler or, even in the best cases, inferior to a vague and shifting democratically determined “greater good.”

To make our sorting rationale clear, here is an extreme comparison: During World War II officers of the United States forces swore an oath of allegiance to the wording of a constitution; officers of the German Wehrmacht swore an oath to a government title, a tyrannical one as it turned out.

Today, most governments work hard to obscure that basic difference, all claiming to exist “for the people.” But a former member of this foundation, an attorney, found something quite else when he was assigned by an investment group to analyze the constitutions of South and Central America. Although the various phrasings invariably promised specific freedoms, they just as invariably included a clause that read something like, “or as his excellency/officialdom may determine.”

A useful study in this regard is the Soviet Union under Perestroika in the 1980s. The government, yielding to populist pressure, began to allow private shops in Moscow. Good enough, but there was a hitch: The property could be confiscated on what amounted to administrative whim. Few cared to invest on such a condition and Perestroika was a flop rather than the hoped-for humanizing of Communist rule.

In Indiana today, a government agent closing a pizza shop or denying a building permit because of a real or perceived danger, esthetic offense or even social bias is not exactly the same thing — but it is not not the same thing either. In any case, in our opinion, it often hits too close for comfort.

The point is that the freedom of the individual in relation to the state, king, tyrant, governor or well-meaning zoning board is one of those absolutes of history. It cannot be fudged with pretty language or clothed as an altruistic vision. And as such, it makes an excellent marker on the political road on which we are headed.

Take your pick: You are either free or it's *as his excellency determines*.

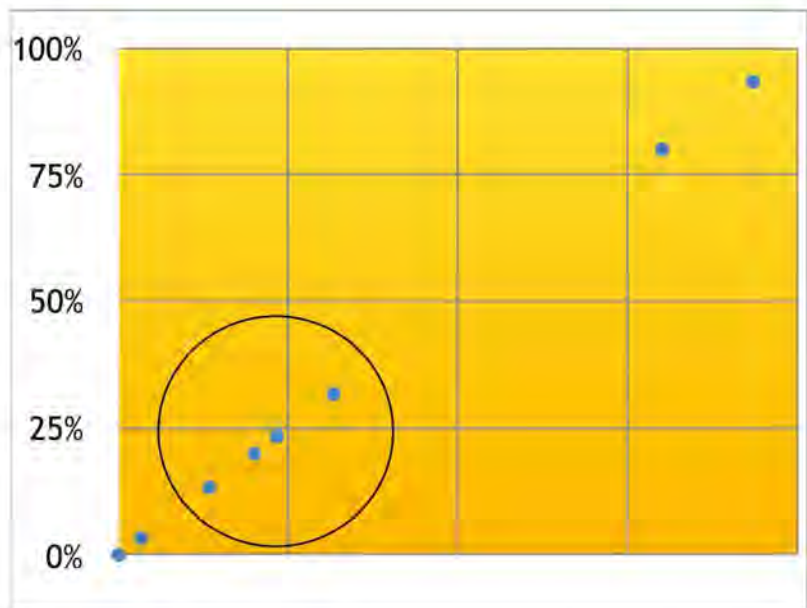
Statue-Toppling: A Skill for our Times

"It is your responsibility to do something, whether you think it's your responsibility or not."

— A protester shouting into his megaphone as students this week toppled the "Silent Sam" statue at the University of North Carolina

(Aug. 22) — In an iconic film of my youth, "The Graduate," Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman) is given a single word of advice from a parental friend — "plastics."

Today, I'm the one giving career advice, a difficult thing for a journalist, my profession being what it is. Lately, though, I've found myself



A SIMPLE CHART scores the nine members of a typical city council on the percentage of their votes (30) that actually decreased the size of a government. In this case, two of the councilmen are Democrats (the lowest percentages). But note the circled grouping nearby. It is made up of five GOP councilmen (two tied at the low end). Their percentages ranged from only 13 percent to a middling-to-low 32 percent.

suggesting with some confidence, "statue-toppling."

You would think statue-toppling to be an unworthy career. It is too easy, you say, a matter of rounding up liberal-arts majors, handing out some sledge hammers, painting a few signs and heaving ho. You would be wrong.

First, there are legal considerations to be mastered, bail bonds to post, photographers to notify, etc. Please know that although prosecution has been lightened by Obama judicial appointments, trespassing and destroying private property are still technically illegal.

Also, there are the mechanical challenges involved in any demolition, and statues are really heavy things. You must learn to identify leverage points, attach the proper roping, place explosives, all of which will require professional training, perhaps OSHA certification.

All of that said, there is a practically unlimited number of statues in need of toppling. Indeed, given cultural and demographic changes, it is hard to think of any personage honored in statuary who

could withstand a rigorous application of one or another set of today's standards.

Martin Luther King? People are getting “woke” to the fact that Dr. King had a fondness for traditional American values and even an admiration for the founding documents. His celebrated “I Have a Dream” speech was “a dream deeply rooted in the American dream” and linked to “the magnificent words of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence.” Disturbing, to say the least.

Abraham Lincoln? It is enough to say that he married Mary Todd, the daughter of a slave-owning family from Kentucky. And was it a coincidence that his Emancipation Proclamation freed only slaves in the Confederate states, not those of his white-supremacy friends in the North? Umm, not likely.

In my Indiana town, we have the pluperfect example. It is in the person of Gen. Anthony Wayne, who at the Battle of Fallen Timbers assaulted the Indian confederacy, or the “savages” as they were then demeaned. “Mad” Anthony’s victory is credited with opening the West to white expansion. His statue still stands at the center of town. Amazing.

So many statues, one supposes, so little time.

Yes, this Press *Is* the ‘Enemy’

(Aug. 13) — The president didn’t actually say that American journalism was the enemy of the people, but he should have.

What he said was that “fake news,” not a free press, is the enemy. Nonetheless, 300 some newspapers signed onto a campaign to protest the president’s comments and declare the importance of their particular definition of press freedom. You can read this as a dissenting view.

“Trump’s references to us as the ‘enemy of the American People’ are no less dangerous (than the murders at a Maryland newspaper office) because they happen to be strategic,” wrote the editors of the Kansas City Star on the designated day. “That is what Nazis called Jews. It’s how Joseph Stalin’s critics were marked for execution.”

Many if not all of these journalists would be surprised to learn that there is more than the one school (their own) in the development of American journalism. Predominate, sadly, is a recent amalgam commonly known as “advocacy” journalism. Its philosophy, pace the Star’s admonitions, is the antithesis of what the Founders enshrined in the Constitution. As such, it indeed can be viewed as fake news and a lower-case enemy.

Hyperbole? Let’s unpack the history.

Official News — According to the historian and journalism professor Marvin Olasky, there were two great macrostories in the development of journalism here. The first, the “Official Story,” was built on the belief that power knows best, and that editors should print whatever the king or governor demands. The American colonists rebelled against this in their Committees of Correspondence, one of which organized the Boston Tea Party.

In Europe, published news was only what state authorities and their allies in established churches wanted people to know (think Facebook and Twitter).

Corruption News — The second, which is associated with the Protestant Reformation, is known as the “Corruption Story.” To quote Dr. Olasky again: “Rather than serving as public relations for the state, this story emphasized the universality of human failings and the tendency for individuals in positions of power to abuse their authority and then attempt to cover up wrongdoing.”

Olasky argues that those journalists and pamphleteers since Martin Luther who embraced the Corruption Story invented much of what we associate favorably with the craft: A sense of purpose, a willingness to oppose arrogant rulers and a stress on accuracy and specific detail.

Fake News — All American journalists, including those more interested in advocating than informing, claim the Corruption Story as their own. Few acknowledge that it has been replaced in America by a third macrostory called

the “Oppression Story,” one that likes to think of itself as an improvement on the Corruption Story but is more truly based on the Official Story. This type of news is creditably “fake.”

This philosophy began with William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and the Yellow Press, the influence of which strongly guides journalism today (think New York Times).

Its advocates — the former journalist Benito Mussolini was one — focused on what people should know to make the world a better place, albeit what an elite and semi-official group defines as a better place. Also, because the ends are seen as admirable, the means are negotiable, i.e., in the contrived use of anonymous sources, imaginary quotations and only the most convenient facts.

Most of all, Oppression journalists believe that man is naturally good but is enslaved by oppressive social systems. To quote Olasky:

“In the Oppression Story problems arise not from personal corruption but from external influences, and the role of journalists is to put a spotlight on those influences. The hope is that if man’s environment is changed, man himself changes, and poverty, war, and so on, are no more.”

If you believe that, then you are well represented by today’s media. It follows, however, that if you believe that then the U.S. Constitution, common law, individual rights, individual responsibility and Western Civilization don’t make much sense.

And if that is true, and whether or not you would frame the contrast as harshly, Mussolini and not Luther is closer to your preferred model — the one, unavoidably, being the enemy of the other.

Resources

1. Robert Salsberg. “Newspaper Calls for War of Words Against Trump Media Attacks.” *The Associated Press*, Aug. 10, 2017.

2. Marvin Olasky. *Central Ideas in the Development of American Journalism: A Narrative History*. Routledge Press, 1991.

Hate Crimes of the Mind

(Aug. 7) — The two founding intellectual models for this foundation happen to be “persons of color,” as it is now phrased, Dr. Thomas Sowell and Dinesh D’Souza. The latter we have brought to Indiana many times for seminars, talks and research projects. The former we would have happily done so had we been able to afford his fee.

What is important there are the words “happen to be.” That’s because the melanin count of neither Dr. Sowell nor Mr. D’Souza, as Dr. Martin Luther King once dreamed, was used to judge the content of his character. Nor in fact were either of their backgrounds, one from an American ghetto and the other from the Third World.

So we watched with concern as a tableau vivant unfolded around a former member of the foundation, a politician accused by an adversary of . . . well, of being white, of being politically incorrect, of daring to address the danger to our freedoms of identity politics, of saying some years ago in the largest of contexts that in America today there is no palpable racism.

As this was being written, the legislative black caucus, with the tacit blessing of the Indiana GOP leadership, always nervous about these matters, is organizing an inquisition into the matter.

If the politician had anticipated the toxic environment that now is state politics, he might have said it differently. He might have said racism is not dead, but it is on life support — kept alive by politicians, race hustlers and people who get a sense of superiority by denouncing others as racists.

Those, of course, are the words of Dr. Sowell, more seasoned than our friend, having been under attack by the same race hustlers for all 60 years of a distinguished academic life.

Or our friend might have said that although his activist critics seem publicly inconsolable about the fact that racism continues, they seem privately terrified that it has abated.

That was D'Souza in his book, "The End of Racism."

The particular hustle that is my profession, journalism, will do its part to ensure the spread of misunderstanding of the issues in question so as to achieve the worst possible outcome. That is so even though newspapers specifically were given extraordinary privileges by the Founders in return for protecting us from such bullying.

Instead of using those privileges to objectively guide the public discussion, reporters and editors will deliver the tired directive of the corporate newsroom, to wit:

Any person of color or anyone presuming to represent persons of color (unaffiliated, to be sure, with anything resembling conservative or even patriotic thought) must be treated as the aggrieved or as the agent of the aggrieved and must be given abjectly favorable consideration.

It is as the late Tom Wolf wrote in his classic 1970 essay, "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers," set at the Office of Economic Opportunity in San Francisco, the model for all of our failed race-centered policy.

So we read the editorials urging both sides to treat each other with "respect" and to sit down and work this out together as "equals." We are unimpressed. For as free citizens we are not required to respect or accept those who put us in the soon-to-be-prosecutable category "racist" merely because we have the wrong skin color, age, income or cultural background. Our mission statement says as much.

In the end, our politician is likely to back away from all of this. He may take the advice of risk-adverse consultants and qualify what others think he might have thought. But if his situation were reported in any depth, the great number of Hoosiers, black and white, would be outraged by the injustice.

As it is, they are left more divided regarding those central principles encased in the Declaration of Independence, the ones that truly matter to Americans — *all* Americans.

Tammany Hall, Indiana

(July 26) — Few in Indiana know what it's like living under a political machine. We had better study up. One is coming to town in the form of a regional "development" group or similarly sugar-coated configuration claiming the greater good.

Crony capitalism, the nice way of saying favoritism and graft, is the least of it, although tripling the cost of the typical public-private project.

Sooner or later only the machine candidates win office. Next, the local judges transfer allegiance from their constitutional duties to the machine. Finally, we are left with no meaningful democratic representation, no checks or balances, only the hubris of the powerful.

Alarmist? Perhaps, but in Fort Wayne such a group calls the shots with a bipartisan majority of the city council regarding special taxing districts, rebates, etc. It has a \$200,000 "public relations" fund should any councilman think about defecting, and it has the support of both Republican candidates in an upcoming mayoral primary.

Its friends, even relatives, are secret partners in million-dollar downtown renovation deals. Councilmen are threatened with opposition in their party primary unless they toe the line. The publisher of the local newspaper phones politicians to personally give them the machine's marching orders.

None of this "develops" anything sustainable. Rather, it puts a cap on longterm job growth, especially the middle-class kind that comes with innovative, privately owned start-up businesses, those that support rooted families and real careers. For nobody without connections invests their own money in a place run by a bunch of insiders, however altruistically framed their motives.

There was mention of toeing the line. Where exactly is that line?

Kevin Brinegar, president of the state Chamber of Commerce, in this 5th year of a GOP supermajority, is the face of the new political machine. His Indiana Business for Responsive Government committee (IBRG) now conducts in-depth reviews of legislative thinking. This year it is demanding to know how legislators stand on a wider range of issues, only a few of which are directly related to commerce and several of which run counter to the conviction of a typical Indiana constituency.

Many of these issues predictably deal with strengthening the competitive position of corporatism (think shiny buildings with high fences, guard gates and political leverage). Others, though, seem to reflect the personal socio-political opinions of the Brinegar leadership team (think Carmel white-wine dinner party).

A letter from Brinegar earlier this month to legislators explains:

“As you may be aware, legislator voting records and scores — as reported in our annual Legislative Vote Analysis — have been the key data point for our IBRG committee’s evaluation of incumbents for endorsement. Now, your views on important public policy issues will also be factored into the decision-making process.”

And the decision-making process is meant to make government bigger and more intrusive. For example, Brinegar is asking your legislator whether he or she favors:

- Expanding civil-rights protections to include individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Expanding the current pre-K early childhood education grant program.
- Disbanding township government.
- Increasing the tax on cigarettes.
- Allowing the state school superintendent to be appointed rather than elected.

- Expanding the state sales tax to include business services.
- Allowing tolling on interstate highway projects.
- Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

No legislator dare refuse Brinegar’s plumbing of their philosophical, moral and even religious positions. His annual reports on proper voting and proper thinking will determine who gets funding for the next primary and who does not.

It is as Boss Tweed said it should be.

The Limitations of a Dan Coats

“I have never worked with a more honorable man than Dan Coats. He oozes integrity out of every pore. He is motivated by a sense of patriotism and duty to the security and the safety of this nation. I would tell anyone to heed his advice and his counsel.” — Gov. Eric Holcomb

(July 22) — Could it be possible that the president knows something strategically important about Russia that hasn’t occurred to someone like Dan Coats, however much integrity is oozing from his pores?

Could it be that in the strange world of global diplomacy it makes sense at this time to overlook an oligarchic Putin’s trespasses? Or that, given the current array of threats to our national security, democratic but softly socialist France, Germany and England with their debilitating Muslim immigration policies have ceased to be dependable allies?

Some of us who have followed the Coats political career for three decades (he worked briefly as an insurance attorney) have reason to trust the president, any president, in this matter.

Our friend Tom Huston is a former associate counsel to the president of the United States who served as an officer in the United States Army assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency. Presciently, he had this to say when Coats was first nominated as director of National Intelligence:

“Senator Coats certainly has the competency to preside over the massive intelligence bureaucracy if the objective of his tenure were simply to maintain an even-keeled equanimity among the tribes which constitute the intelligence community. On the other hand, he offers no hope to skeptics of the intelligence community who believe it is bloated, incompetent and institutionally biased against the Trump agenda.”

For Dan Coats is in the habit of believing what people whom he considers important tell him. For instance:

- They told him that gun control would reduce crime. He was the only sitting Republican senator to vote for the Brady gun-control bill,
- They told him the national debt ceiling was not an absolute. He voted to raise it 13 times.
- They told him the water-vapor fumes he saw from his seat flying back and forth to Washington were pollution. He voted in favor in favor of Clean Air Act amendments that crippled coal-energy plants in Indiana.
- They told him farmers needed more money. He voted against limiting subsidies to millionaire farmers.
- They told him a balanced budget wasn't important. He voted against a measure that would have balanced the budget within five years without raising taxes.
- They told him that colleges needed more money. He voted in favor of maintaining federal subsidies for student loans.
- And, of course, they told him that career politicians were important. He voted against cutting congressional pay by 15 percent and limiting senatorial terms.

That all might be good for someone fashioning a career as a lobbyist, but it is not so good in a world of historically complex, often anti-intellectual, obtuse and always shifting strategies

of force and counter force. Lawyers, you see, are at a disadvantage in a world that observes no law.

John Keegan, the esteemed military historian, wrote a book on the point.¹ He said that the only thing we know for certain about spies is that they spy on other spies. His conclusion:

“Knowledge, the conventional wisdom has it, is power; but knowledge cannot destroy or deflect or damage or even defy an offensive initiative by an enemy unless the possession of knowledge is also allied to objective force. Knowledge of what the enemy can do and of what he intends is never enough to ensure security, unless there is also the power and the will to resist and preferably to forestall him.”

Dan Coats is sitting atop plenty of knowledge about what we should do about this or that. Some of it may be correct, others of it might be wrong and still others of it should be ignored or is irrelevant. The intelligence community is constantly going back and forth about such things.

What is needed, though, is the judgment and will to do something about it — and that responsibility, properly and constitutionally, lies in the Oval Office.

The Flaccidity of an Eric Holcomb

(July 13) — The Indiana Republican Party is moribund, done in by the hubris of a supermajority and its flaccid governor, Eric Holcomb.

That was clear at the state convention this spring in Evansville. Until recently, nobody read the platform texts approved at these gatherings. They were little more than boilerplate on family, patriotism, free markets and such — all words, no action.

You are warned, though, to read the ones they're writing these days. The crony capitalists and cosmopolitan conservatives are in charge, and they mean what they say with a “Next Level” agenda of policies that would make for polite

¹ John Keegan. *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda*. 2003.

conversation at a typical Democrat dinner party (without mention of a right to life, of course).

Paragraphs were added calling for an expansion of Regional Cities and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, all blueprints for the political machinery overwhelming the democratic process in our mid-sized cities. Indiana Republicans now stand four-square for fully funded pre-kindergarten education and state-run job training. They are ambivalent about the endless growth in state government and the taxes inevitably required to sustain it. And don't ask about free markets and speech or the natural right of property.

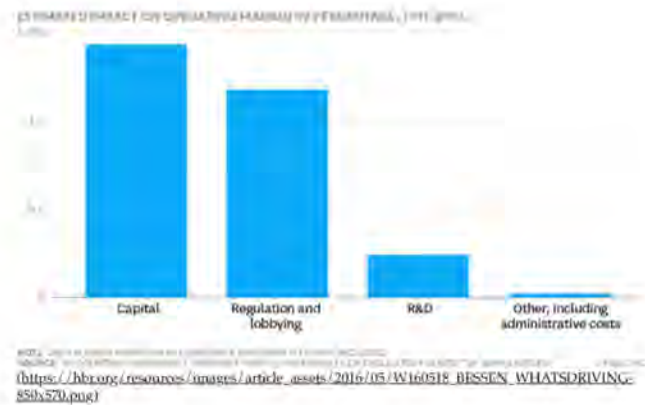
All of this was adopted, please know, without discussion, passed on a voice vote.

The Machiavellians in Evansville had dragged a red herring across the convention floor, that is, a mock effort to remove the traditional definition of marriage. Delegates were required to vote for either the 2018 platform with the old marriage language or the 2018 platform without it, but with government pre-school, regional political machines and the job-training fraud.

"The sides lined up on the floor," one disillusioned delegate tells us. "The 'conservative' pro-marriage group had a selected speaker; the 'progressive' group had their speaker. The emcee then announced that we would vote on the 2018 platform either with the 2016 marriage sentence or the 2018 platform without marriage. It was binary."

All was quite Holcombesque, a well-played pantomime with the mimics now in control of the GOP going through the motions of leadership to the applause of a sycophant caucus.

Still, as the "ayes" were being counted, our man noticed a good number of delegates with faces that said this would be their last convention.



We're all 'Woke' Now

"In the Carboniferous Epoch we were promised abundance for all,

By robbing selected Peter to pay for collective Paul;

But, though we had plenty of money, there was nothing to buy,

And the Gods of the Copybook Headings said:
"If you don't work you die."

— Rudyard Kipling, "The Gods of the Copybook Headings"

(July 4) — In our efforts to string together a continuous run of leisure, success and happiness, life gets in the way. A conservative might say we get "mugged by reality." A liberal gets "woke," although that may be less a revelation than it is a call for socio-political rectification.

The point is that events, facts, people, can hit us in ways that change our self-plotted trajectory. In my case, in my profession, this often takes the form of charts and tables. Three such "wokes" came across my desk this holiday weekend, each applicable to Indiana's well-being. The first chart should give pause to the thought that subsidized, rebated and

bonded downtown “development” is necessary regardless of expense. Economic growth, it turns out, is more than bright, shiny new buildings and manicured river greenways. It is even more than expending or dedicating tax dollars.²

It is the type of financing that matters. The question should be what drives an organization’s profits. Those communities that have chosen a system keeping government out of the way and allowing private capital to be freely raised on the strength of ideas, products, services and market demand, have chosen wisely. Only a productive society can thrive.

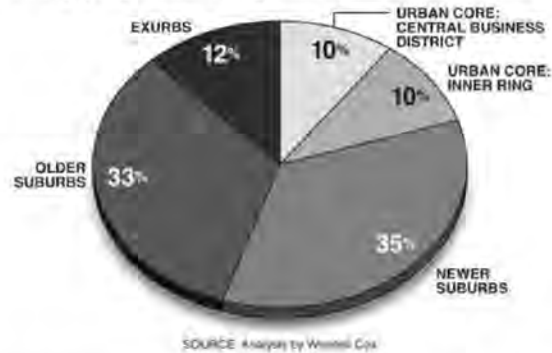
Conversely, it should be self-evidently foolish for a city to pin its hopes on widely-held corporations that depend for their profits on the quick and the clever to manipulate government (regulation and lobbying). For as the lady said, sooner or later you run out of other people’s money. Your city will be left in the hands of an unaccountable group of insiders, “crony capitalists” being only the nicest way to describe them.

As it stands now, Indiana’s regional quasi-official economic “development” agencies, popular though they may be at the Statehouse, are the beginnings of what will become political machines usurping local democratic authority. We have been warned.

A second chart shows that investors and businesses avoid central cities where unconstrained regulation and taxation invite inside dealing, encouraging the government rather than the market to designate winners and losers.

Dr. Sam Staley, an urban affairs analyst and scholar of the foundation, predicted this more than two decades ago in a Fort Wayne seminar. He advised Indiana community leaders to leave downtown to market forces and focus

Average job growth in 53 major metropolitan areas, 2010–15



instead on collaborative efforts to fight crime and reform public education.

He said cities were spreading out, like it or not, and there wouldn’t be any more New Yorks or Chicagos. Renovated downtowns might attract wealthy singles and DINKs (Dual Income, No Kids) but they will be offset by a trapped, nonworking underclass. The successful city, Staley said, will be built on a tax base of boring, traditional, middle-class families regardless of ethnicity.

Indiana mayors, Republican and Democrat, ignored that advice, dumping the

HOW MANY DEMOCRATS ARE ...	ACTUAL SHARE	ESTIMATED BY REPUBLICANS	DIFFERENCE
Agnostics or atheists	9%	36%	+27
Black	24	46	+22
LGB	6	38	+32
Union members	11	44	+33

HOW MANY REPUBLICANS ARE ...	ACTUAL SHARE	ESTIMATED BY DEMOCRATS	DIFFERENCE
65 or older	21%	44%	+23
Evangelicals	34	44	+10
Southerners	36	44	+8
Earning \$250K or more a year	2	44	+42

Asher and Sood confirmed the 44 percent across Republican categories estimated by Democrats.

SOURCE: ASHER AND SOOD

treasure of a generation into an endless series of downtown renovation projects. That was done even though 70 percent of millennials already live outside core-city counties.

Joel Kotkin and Wendell Cox, writing in *City Journal*, now say that if the flight of moderate,

² Dan Mitchell. “A Very Depressing Chart on Creeping Cronyism in the American Economy.”

middle-income homeowners continues, urban centers will be at best “sandboxes for a progressive political class,” hugely expensive ones.³

And there is the fragmentation of mass media from established privately owned local newspapers to corporate franchises and most recently to a cacophony of Internet voices. It has left us in a Tower of Babel. Nobody knows who or what to believe. We have no honest brokers of the public discussion.

The above table demonstrates the effect of that, showing the large spreads between what Americans believe about members of the other political party and what is fact. Projecting that out, our views on public policy and issues are mere guesses, not to mention how we see absolute natural rights such as private property and free speech.⁴

Given that, you are afraid to survey the citizenry on the really important question: What makes the United States great, what makes our system so desirable compared with others? What makes us different than the historical default that is South America, the major nations of Europe, most of Asia and India (but not all, promisingly). Now, most sadly, even Great Britain is suspect.

The Gravity of Politics

“It is the highest impertinence and presumption . . . in kings and ministers, to pretend to watch over the economy of private people, and to restrain their expense. . . . They are themselves always, and without any exception, the greatest spendthrifts in the society.” — Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations

(June 21) — A friend, an architect, is both creative and practical in ways that the rest of us can only envy. He must balance angle and weight, light and dark, using a range of materials and

joinery to design either the beautiful or the functional — or both when everything comes together just right. This is not to mention the joy, protection and convenience of those who take up residence in his buildings

Yet, even this talent is constrained by an absolute. “Gravity always wins,” he likes to say.

Watching my city council at work I am struck by the absence of any such absolute. Political visions there are weightless, tethered only by the narrative of moment: a meaningless resolution sympathizing with immigrant children on a distant border, a tax increase to fix roads that misappropriated funding already should have fixed, a garbage contract allowing vendors to manipulate the city code for monopoly gain, an economic-development policy that discourages the industrious, and so forth.

All the gimcrackery, regardless of harm to the community, works out well for the individual council member who has become expert at posing for a constituency. He gets reelected, he grows influential, he retires with accolades.

Yet and yet, there was an absolute there nonetheless; an absolute that, once denied, has consequences as sure as an apple falling from a tree. For as Isaac Newton explained the absolute of gravity for architects, Adam Smith explained the absolute of economics for rulers.

Another friend, a business owner, faithfully observed the principles of the venerable Smith during his brief stint in office. If firefighters, say, asked for parental leave, a pay raise, better health insurance or more vacation time, he would express his sympathy.

“I want to give you all of that,” he would say, “but first you have to tell me what you will be doing this year that makes you more valuable than last year, and why if everyone is underpaid there are seven qualified applicants for every opening.”

³ Joel Kotkin, Wendell Cox. “Playgrounds for Elites: The Increasingly Left-Wing Politics of Leading U.S. Cities Clashes with the Aspirations of Middle-class Residents.”

⁴ Perry Bacon Jr. “Democrats Are Wrong About Republicans. Republicans Are Wrong About Democrats.”

The outrage was always immediate. The firefighters, policemen, garbage collectors or whoever would bring their wives and children to his front yard to protest.

Our friend, to no avail, would defend his decision as neither personal nor political. Rather, it was in respect for an absolute that he has no other choice but to observe in the operation of his city just as in the operation of his own business.

Yet and yet and yet, expansive collective-bargaining contracts are signed, Potemkin “quality of life” downtowns are subsidized, zoning is restricted, commuters are forced into mass

transit, sanctuaries are declared, lavish pensions are funded, political careers are made.

But as with the projects of the architect who ignores gravity, those of the politician who ignores economics will collapse, not perhaps until he is free of them, out from under the civic accountability, retired to one of the coasts.

Collapse, though, they will — on the children and grandchildren of his friends and neighbors and those left behind in San Bernardino, in Stockton, in Vallejo, in Flint, in Detroit, in Harrisburg, in Fort Wayne, in Terre Haute or wherever. Economics always wins. — *tcl*



"The Battle of Cowpens," painted by William Ranney in 1845, shows an unnamed patriot (far left) saving the life of Col. William Washington.

INDIANAPOLICY

Review

A journal of classical liberal inquiry observing its 30th year