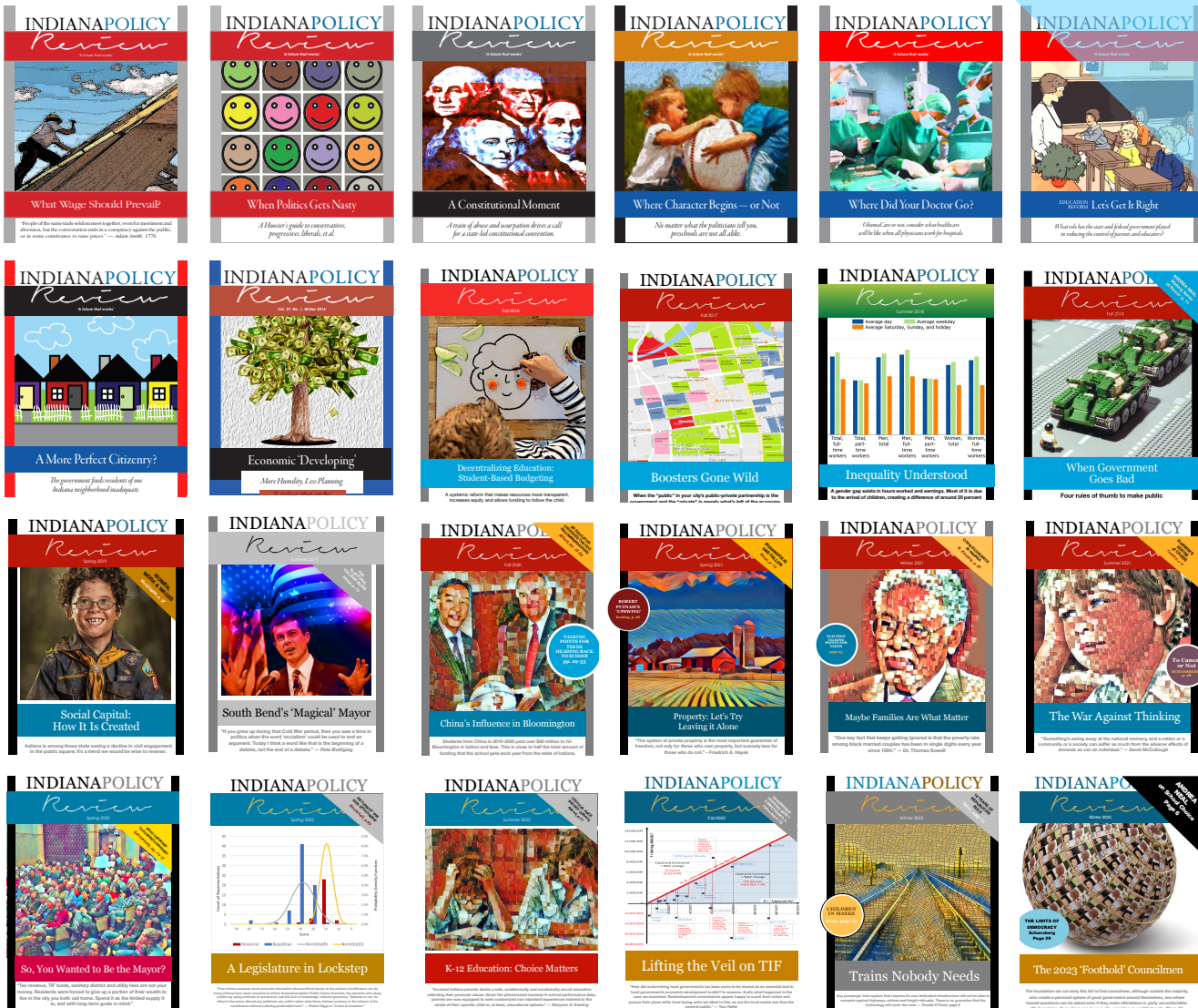


INDIANAPOLIS

KEATING
Social Security
Page 34

Review

Spring 2023



What We Know So Far

Every three decades or so the editors of a publication should sit back and take stock. In our case, it was to inventory what our scholars and members have taught us over these many years (page 7).

“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.”



Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 2023

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.

The foundation encourages research and discussion on the widest range of Indiana public policy issues. Although the philosophical and economic prejudices inherent in its mission might prompt disagreement, the foundation strives to avoid political or social bias in its work. Those who believe they detect such bias are asked to provide details of a factual nature so that errors may be corrected.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles S. Quilhot

Byron S. Lamm

T. Craig Ladwig

The Indiana Policy Review Foundation is a nonprofit Indiana corporation, established in January of 1989 and recognized under Section 501(c)3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Its officers and staff can be reached at: PO Box 5166, Fort Wayne, IN, 46895; director@inpolicy.org or under the “contact us” tab at www.inpolicy.org. The foundation is free of outside control by any individual, organization or group. It exists solely to conduct and distribute research on Indiana issues. Nothing written here is to be construed as reflecting the views of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation itself or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before the legislature or to further any political campaign.

Wednesday Whist

A Pattern of Boondoggling

Veronique de Rugy, an economist for the Mercatus Center, famously said that if you miss your budget estimates 20 percent of the time you are an incompetent but if you miss them 80 percent of the time you are a liar. What would be said about the cost of a project in my city that in two years nearly doubled before they set the first brick?

Some would say that the mayor is planning to run for reelection.

When the project, a typical, officially greased, public-private partnership (hereafter to be referred to as “the pit”) was budgeted in 2020 someone forgot that it was sitting on ground that the government had deemed contaminated. Could that have been why independent, more savvy investors had shied away?

Whatever, that and inflation and sewer problems had stalled construction and left an ugly excavation, a pond after the winter rains where a ribbon-cutting ceremony was supposed to be.

No problem. Last week, the members of our city’s redevelopment commission, whose phone numbers are in the mayor’s black book, approved \$1.6 million in Tax Increment Financing funds to help cover an embarrassing shortfall (the pit was supposed to cost \$67 million two years ago but now is estimated at \$111 million). That’s a sizable miscalculation, not close enough for horseshoes or hand grenades.

But it didn’t rate a headline in the next day’s newspaper. If it were a private business, of course, the owner would have had to cut spending drastically, sell at a loss or close up shop. When it is a so-called public-private operation, you call the redevelopment commission and get a new check cut. The explanation? They will have to build it to know how much it costs.

There is obvious absurdity in a system that allows a developer to win public financing by telling a city council that a project will need this much, or perhaps twice that much, but he really can’t say for sure.

Perhaps, though, it hasn’t been obvious enough.

The size of the pit’s overrun resulted in a more detailed financial sheet coming forward than is the custom. The numbers are terrifying, and they don’t even reflect overpayment by the city in its lease agreement. If we are reading the agreement correctly, that is \$40 million over 20 years for the garage, paying \$200 per parking spot per month while subleasing that same parking to the owners of apartment leases and city employees for only \$60 a spot.

Keep in mind that the politicians involved claim to be attracting “private” money for civic good, not merely borrowing from the future and leveraging taxpayer dollars to aggrandize themselves.

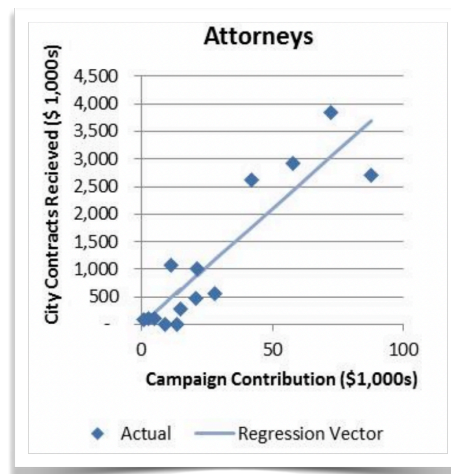
To summarize, pay-to-play isn’t just suspected in my city, it is ensconced. This journal detailed the connection between political donors and city contracts and found that in certain industries and professions it was nearly automatic. When a councilman fought to put a stop to this cronyism he was overruled by the state attorney general, a Republican no less.

Heck, we learned recently that our Republican city council is building a government financed and operated grocery store on a politically determined and crime-plagued site. They tell us it will be “profitable” as well as “equitable.”

It is no surprise, then, that a huge overrun in a civic project does not draw analysis from the local media. Nor does it generate serious council discussion, nor is it likely to rise to an issue in any election.

No, we trust that hometown officialdom and an elite group of overseers are looking out for us.

We are fools. — *tcl*

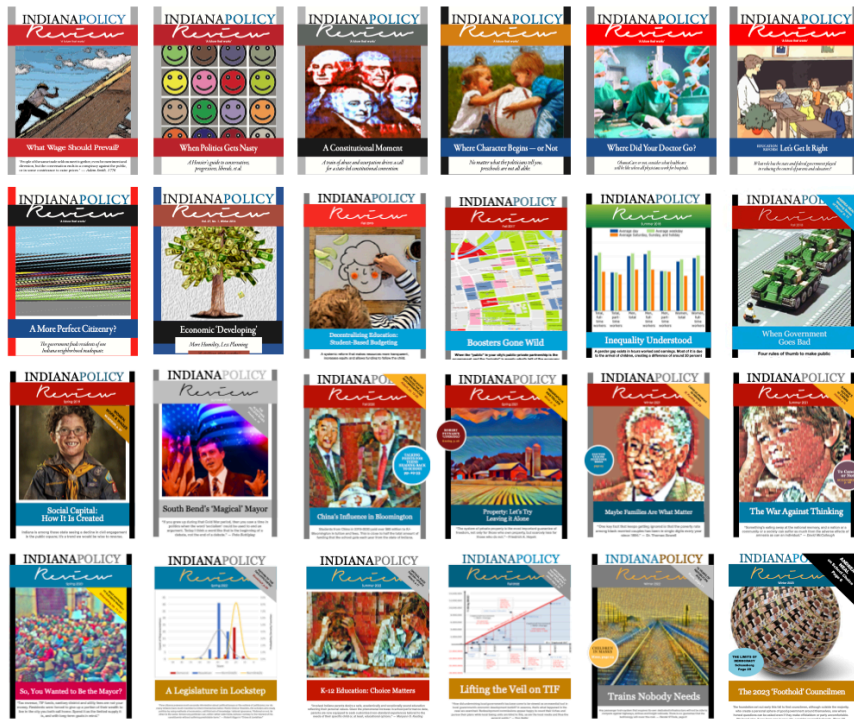


Regression analysis of attorney contributions in typical Indiana mayoral election.

Wednesday Whist	3
A Pattern of Boondoggling	3
What We Know So Far	7
1990 – Teacher Unions.....	8
1991 – ‘Salvageable’ Schools.....	8
1994 – Custer and the Little Bighorn	9
1995 – Multi-Issue Legislation	9
1998 – Micro-Schools	10
2001 –The Collective Bargaining Act.....	11
2002 – Indy’s United Hub	12
2003 – Diversity Lawyers	12
2003 – The Education ‘Menu’	13
2006 – The Inscrutable Statehouse.....	14
2007 – Student-Based Budgeting.....	14
2008 – Corporate Philanthropy	15
2010 – Municipal Budgets	16
2010 – The New Indiana City	18
2010 – Press Release Economics.....	18
2011 – The Lost Chamber of Commerce.....	19
2012 – A Legislator’s Reading List.....	20
2011 – Daylight Saving Time	21
2013 – Tax Increment Financing	22
2015 – The Lesson of Zug.....	23
2016 – The Role of Government	24
2016 – Parental Choice.....	24
2018 – Last of the Cartoonist	25
2019 – Corn and Oranges	25
2020 – The Indy 500.....	26
2020 – China at Bloomington	27
2020 – Critical Race Theory	28
2022 – Bread and Circuses.....	29
2022 – Wokeness Begone	31
2023 – The Uber-Local Election	32
Maryann O. Keating.....	34
Our Lost Trust in Social Security	34
Eric Schansberg.....	36
We All Stereotype	36

Dick McGowan	38
‘Go Red’ for Heart Health (Women and Men).....	38
IU and ‘the Magna Charta Universitatum’.....	38
The Poster Children for Capitalism	40
John Locke Wishes You a Happy New Year.....	41
Leo Morris.....	43
No Right Turn on Red – Maybe	43
Deference, Sir, Is no Crime	44
Reversing ‘1984’.....	45
Sniffing Out the State Smell	46
Good Advice from Mitch Daniels	47
The ‘Packsaddle Librarians’	48
Maybe Spending Has Something to Do With It.....	49
Let the Hoosier Mystique Alone.....	50
My Guide to the Legislature.....	51
Bless the Storm’s First Responders.....	52
Regardless, Merry Christmas	54
The Bulls in the China Shop	55
Watch Out, They’re Rethinking School.....	56
Politics and the Mongolian Sheep	57
Mark Franke.....	59
The Essentiality of the Constitution.....	59
Redeveloping our Socratic Skills.....	60
A DAR Induction.....	61
Future of the Two-Party System Is in Question.....	62
‘Natural Rights’ Founded on a ‘Natural Law’.....	63
The Travails of Local Government	65
Due Process for the Indiana National Guard.....	66
Is This the Government We Deserve?	67
There Still Can Be Hope	68
My New Year’s Resolution.....	69
A Contemporary Christmas Carol.....	71
Prudence: Now More Than Ever	72
What Does ‘Conservative’ Mean?	73
The Bookshelf	75
The Peacemaker	75
Uncommon Wrath	76

The Russian Who Saved the World	77
The Outstater	80
Goodbye, Dilbert	80
Clothes Make the Man — Sad to Say.....	80
A Brief Monograph on Facial Hair.....	82
‘ . . . Jus from How Dey Talking’	83
‘We the People’ Pays Well	84
Stopping and Frisking Saves Lives.....	85
Yes, You Live in Corruption	86
It’s a Dunder-Mifflin World	87
The Congressional Trapeze	88
The Power of Individuals	88
We Have Questions	89
Money and Malleability.....	90
Knock, Knock	90
New Boss Just Like the Old Boss.....	91
Civil Rights Rethought.....	91
Ouch, the Bigot Card Is Played.....	92
Trash In, Trash Out	93



Neal that proposed in detail reforms that just this year are being taken up under the general issue headings of parental choice and student-based budgeting. Maryann O. Keating kept us aware of the larger economic picture on a range of issues. John Gaski pegged the idiocy of Daylight Saving Time. Ron Reinking showed us how to put together a small private school. Sam Staley debunked the promises of urban zoning. Tyler Watts mapped out the boundaries of an Article 5 constitutional convention. Scholars at the Liberty Fund gave us their

recommendations for a reading list for Indiana state legislators (apparently unread). Richard McGowan tracked for us the cultural shifts of our odd times. Richard Moss reminded us of our shared Biblical origins and our departure therefrom. There also is prescient work on the dangers in public-private economic development schemes. Bill Styring in the 1990s issued the first warnings, later to be dubbed “press release economics” by our adjunct Tad DeHaven. Jason Arp, Fred McCarthy, Berry Keating, Ryan Cummins, Sam Staley and Tom Heller have picked up where Styring left off.

And much more.

Not included but a reason for the journal’s very existence is work by our two worn-down newsmen, Leo Morris and myself, on the decline of traditional journalism and the resulting constriction of the public discussion. Nor do we include the work of our intrepid book reviewer, Mark Franke, who has extended the thoughts of so many of our academics with his reviews and essays on the pertinent literature.

Please know that the selections are the favorites of this editor and do not necessarily represent what the scholars might consider their most important work. Readers, however, are

What We Know So Far

Here is a survey of past foundation essays proposing policies that — had they been enacted — would have ensured the liberty and thereby the prosperity of Indiana citizens.

Every three decades or so the editors of a publication should sit back and take stock. In our case, it was to inventory what our scholars and members have taught us over these many years.

Most generally we have learned to fear a Statehouse, regardless of claims of democratic representation, that thinks it can do whatever it wants while individual Indiana citizens must ask permission for ever expanding minutia.

We looked for essays that illustrated this concern and looked for proposed policies that — had they been enacted — would have ensured the liberty and thereby the prosperity of Indiana citizens. We are spotlighting 30 of them.

Of note are essays on education, some dating back as far as 1990, by Charlie Rice, Dinesh D’Souza, Lisa Snell, Charles Freeland and Andrea

encouraged to look up a particular author's oeuvre by using their last name as the keyword for a search at www.inpolicy.org. Also, where digitalized, we provide a link to the full article or journal in portable document format.

In all, we profile 30 adjunct scholars and their contributions. As we do so, we remember three founding donors greatly responsible for not only commissioning much of this work but guiding the creation and growth of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation itself: A. Russell Quilhot and Jane S. Lamm who passed away in 2022 and Rex A. Lamm in 2005. May God bless their wonderful families. — *tcl*

1990 — Teacher Unions

“Aristocracy is society’s default position. For those who stand at America’s commanding heights, social and income mobility is precisely what must be opposed, and a broken educational system wonderfully serves the purpose.” — F.H. Buckley



Rice

With that quotation, Charlie Rice, a Notre Dame law professor, got us thinking about better ways to organize Indiana public schools. Indeed, he received the foundation's first commission in the form of a legal brief arguing that Indiana's public-sector collective bargaining, specifically teacher unions, was unconstitutional.

That was fitting, for Charlie, a champion Golden Gloves boxer, was known as a “Philadelphia Fighter,” a style that requires the combatant to be able to take a punch.

“The conversation must dispense with the romance that normally informs discussions of public education and begin to address the realities,” he warned us more than three decades ago. “Only then can our state hope to arrive at the time when its political leadership can say that had the courage to truly and sensibly ‘change the system.’”

Punches have been thrown, and legislative victory hasn't come as surely as Dr. Rice had

hoped. Indeed, it hasn't come at all. But over the years he was joined in a vibrant, wide-ranging discussion on our pages that may yet bear legislative fruit.

Charles E. Rice. “Collective Bargaining: Are All the Cards on the Table?” The Indiana Policy Review, winter 1990. This work is not digitalized but is held in the foundation’s archive of physical journals.

1991 — ‘Salvageable’ Schools

Before Dinesh D'Souza became a national media personality and a popular movie producer, he was a frequent contributor to the foundation. Indeed, he suggested our motto, “A Future that Works,” and our journalistic method, i.e., using academics as correspondents to broaden the discussion and stay ahead of political events. D'Souza arranged meetings for our officers with other think tanks that were instrumental in getting us off the ground.



D'Souza

His 1995 address to the membership here was the first this editor had heard of “political correctness” and hints of the coming “woke” religion. Also early on, D'Souza spent a week in Indiana studying the Fort Wayne Community Schools Corporation, a public school system which was unique in the degree of its competition with strong Lutheran and Catholic private schools.

D'Souza dubbed it “the last salvageable school system” because of the quality of its instruction and a string of outstanding administrators. Competition with the private schools had worked wonders. His report for the foundation detailed the district's outstanding history and its strengths and where it was in danger of going off track. The report was delivered to the new superintendent, who, it was said, threw it in the nearest trash can.

Today, the school system is undistinguished even among failing urban districts and serves only a captive, low-expectations population, those with

the means having fled to the surrounding districts.

Dinesh D’Souza. “The Last Salvageable School District.” *The Indiana Policy Review*, fall 1991. This work is not digitized but held in the foundation’s archive of physical journals.

1994 — Custer and the Little Bighorn

It is doubtful that Norman Van Cott, a respected Ball State University economist, would have put this account of an Indian battle in his vita, but it is a favorite ours.



Van Cott

Van Cott was on vacation, sitting on the beach reading Evan Connell’s account of Gen. George Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn. On reading a certain passage, Van Cott jumped up, as he tells it, and ran to his computer in the beach condominium. He had discovered the real reason that Custer was defeated and he would reveal it in an essay written with his friend, Jim McClure.

In the *Journal of Economic Education*, the two professors noted that a primary source of military intelligence for the U.S. Army in 1876 was the count of Native Americans on reservations.¹ Logically, the more Native Americans on the reservations should have meant fewer out on warpaths.

“But who counted the Indians?” the professors wanted to know.

The answer, according to a respected historian of the battle, Evan Connell, was government agents — agents paid by the number of Native Americans they counted, a systemic error that would cost General Custer and his men their scalps:

Connell reports that reservation agents’ salaries varied directly with reservation populations. This provided an incentive for the agents to overstate the count. In Connell’s words, “. . . an agent foolish enough to report a decrease

in population was taking a bite out of his own paycheck.”

The agents reported 37,391 Native Americans on reservations before the battle but a count afterward could find only 11,660. It is reasonable to believe, therefore, that Custer thought he was running to ground a relatively small party of warriors when in fact he was about to be surrounded by what may have been three times as many.

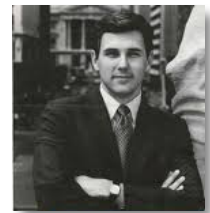
Believe what you wish, it is this view that George Armstrong Custer was not done in by the white man’s arrogance or even incompetent or jealous senior officers.

He was defeated by a self-serving clerks. Yes, he was killed by frontier bureaucrats.

*T. Norman Van Cott, Ph.D., and James McClure, Ph.D. “Public Choice at the Little Bighorn.” *The Journal of Economic Education*, spring 1994.*

1995 — Multi-Issue Legislation

The contribution to the journal for which its former president Mike Pence is best known may not have had the most lasting impact.



Pence

Even today, the foundation gets requests for “Confessions of a Negative Campaigner,” Pence’s 1991 mea culpa for two losing congressional campaigns. The essay began with a passage from 1 Timothy, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.” The essay was widely reprinted at the time and favorably received. Some say it propelled Pence to a national political career.

But a 1995 legal brief that Pence wrote with our Charles Rice, although dismissed by the Indiana Supreme Court, revealed the depth of corruption at the Statehouse and set a new moral tone.

An earlier measure amended sections of the Indiana Code to bring it into necessary accord with the Americans with Disabilities Act. That was the inarguable part. The law also conveniently included provisions defining the salary of members of the Indiana General Assembly. These changes in the definition of "salary" increased the amount that the state is required to contribute to the legislators' pension fund.

Pretty tricky, huh? But Justice Brent Dickson's dissent was biting and the Legislature has not tried to pass a similarly corrupt and self-serving measure since:

"The majority's decision today erects an enormous, if not a prohibitive, obstacle to citizens seeking access to the courts upon claims that the General Assembly has exceeded the limits of its constitutional powers. Abandoning to the legislature essentially free reign to act without heeding constitutional requirements surely defeats rather than follows Indiana's Distribution of Powers Clause. As this Court opined in 1912, 'Whether legislative action is void for want of power in that body, or because the constitutional forms or conditions have not been followed or have been violated, may become a judicial question, and upon the courts the ineluctable duty to determine it falls.' By refusing to allow the plaintiffs access to the courts for resolution of their claims of constitutional violation, the majority appears to relinquish to the legislative branch a portion of this Court's judicial responsibility."

Michael R. Pence and the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, Appellants and Cross-Appellees, vs. The State of Indiana, the Indiana General Assembly, the Auditor of the state of Indiana, the Treasurer of the State of Indiana, the Public Employees Retirement Fund and the members of the 106th and 107th Indiana General Assemblies, Appellees and Cross-Appellants. No. 49S00-9406-CV-579, Supreme Court of Indiana, June 20, 1995. Rehearing Denied Sept. 22, 1995.

1998 — Micro-Schools

Ron Reinking, a certified public accountant known for "the shot," the last-second winning basket in a legendary Concordia High School championship game in Fort Wayne, put his heart and soul into developing a blueprint for an affordable independent school.



Reinking

His model, which could be operated for \$1,413 per student per year (1998 dollars), included a detailed operational plan, complete with organization and personnel charts, insurance, curriculum outline, description of the physical plant, including the latest in computer gear and Internet applications, spread sheets and month-by-month budgeting.

Utilizing volunteer teacher aides, donated classroom space and equipment grants, Reinking's model school of 50 students would pay its headmaster 115 percent of the average public-school salary allocation, including pensions (see worksheet above). Moreover, it had an annual operating budget of a bit more than \$70,500, government spending in Indiana is seven times that.

From his prospectus: "If ever there was a sure bet, this is it. With the exception of school administrators, there is universal acceptance that the delivery systems for providing educational services to our children are badly broken. There is also an awakening that there is no reasonable prospect that meaningful reform and improvement can be initiated within the existing framework of school systems. Whenever parents are given choices, we see an exodus from failing schools, particularly in the inner cities. Our model may be flawed and in need of adjustment along the way. However, it provides a solid structure. We have been careful to set the bar of our new

school at a reasonable height. We are not dealing with experimental concepts. Good people, good settings, a morally healthy environment, the best of high-tech equipment at the lowest cost possible — these are the ingredients of success for a school.”

That no small school system in Indiana at the time, including then struggling Lutheran and Catholic schools, ever picked this up is to our state’s shame.

Ron Reinking, CPA. “Are Government Schools Still Necessary?” The Indiana Policy Review, winter 2003. This work is not digitalized but is kept in the foundation’s archive of physical journals.

2001 – The Collective Bargaining Act

It was decades ago that Charlie Freeland, an accomplished businessman and attorney, sat down for coffee in a Noblesville restaurant with a powerful legislative committee chairman, a Republican. Freeland was there to discuss his year-long study commissioned by the foundation explaining how the Statehouse could make teachers’ lives better and their classrooms more effective places to learn.

Freeland’s study recommended that the Legislature review and discuss the outdated and constricting State Collective Bargaining Act. The committee chairman read the executive summary and then pushed the study back across the table. “I couldn’t get this out of committee,” he said.

So much for GOP leadership.

Freeland’s study bore the subtitle, “Education Without the Romance,” signaling that it was based on the work of Nobel Laureate James Buchanan and his school of Public Choice economics. It was bold and promising. Again, unread by the legislative leadership, it still is both.

Weighted-Student Formula

Several years later, on two occasions, the foundation gathered leading Republican legislators in luncheon seminars at the Statehouse to hear our adjunct Lisa Snell explain a related

plan to systemically reform Indiana education. (See Snell, 2007.)

Snell considered Indiana particularly well suited for the plan because of its relatively balanced district funding. The reform was called the Weighted Student Formula back then. Now it is known as the Student Based Budgeting and it is drawing the praise of teachers, parents and administrators throughout the country.

Again, nobody was willing to put an Indiana Republican name on any measure that would set the necessary reforms in motion, namely repeal of the Collective Bargaining Act. The foundation even distributed sample legislation to get them started. And whenever GOP political aspirants came around to discuss the issues, we always asked them if they would sponsor the reform measures. Nothing.

Fast forward to 2019: A crowd of utterly fed-up teachers, 16,000 of them, filled the Statehouse grounds and overflowed into the surrounding streets. Gov. Eric Holcomb, always politically astute, was in Florida for a Republican Governors Association conference. House Speaker Brian Bosma chose the day to announce he would not seek reelection.

Good enough, the teachers will be back; don’t bet on the Republicans. For it will soon be clear to the electorate and the remaining career politicians that the options to reforming Indiana public education have gravely narrowed. Nobody — teachers, legislators or parents — is going to be happy with the “solutions” to be introduced in coming years in the name of “Red for Ed.”

They will be politically generated, timid in scope, superficial and compromised into ineffectiveness. Look for slight percentage increases in the money thrown into the administrative maw.

If all this means that Republicans’ hopes of holding on to legislative power are to be buried, so be it. The tombstone can read: “We Couldn’t Get It Out of Committee.”

Charles M. Freeland, MBA, JD. “The Teacher Unions: Cutting Out Paper Dolls.” The Indiana Policy Review, winter 2001. Freeland’s article is

not digitized but is kept in the foundation's archive of physical journals.

Lisa Snell. *The Indiana Policy Review*, pp. 4-10, fall 2007. <https://inpolicy.org/wp-content/themes/IPR10/journals/fall2007.pdf>

2002 — Indy's United Hub

Bill Styring was not only a keen analytical mind but an effective practitioner of what we call high journalism. He warned our readers early on that the Indianapolis team that negotiated municipal investment in the United Airlines Hub was being outwitted by the airline's negotiators.



Styring

Ignoring Mayor Hudnut's promises and the lauding front-page headlines, Styring, who knew how to read a contract, noted that there was no effective guarantee that any jobs would be created whatsoever in exchange for the city's largess. Indeed, when the airline pulled out several years later and left with \$525 million in taxpayer dollars the city had no recourse. United's lawyers had to point out to the administration the contract wording saying quite clearly that the "jobs" they had been guaranteed included fry cooks as far away as Muncie.

It was Styring, while an executive with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, who coined the term "eco-devo" to describe the crony capitalism that has spread to economic-development programs throughout the state. He taught us the difference between private and public investment. "You keep saying you are in favor of public-private partnerships," he told one politician. "But when you say 'private' you seem to mean the economy, and when you say 'public' you seem to mean the government. How do you plan to combine the two?"

And here is Styring responding to a reporter's question about the Legislature's decision to defy reality and unilaterally freeze the state's Medicaid payments:

"I am not an expert on the ins and outs of Medicaid," Styring said, "but I am something of an expert on medical price inflation, now once again approaching double digits. It would take me 30 seconds to teach our cat that running Medicaid on a flat line is damn near impossible."

Finally, it was Styring who asked the still-provocative questions of why Indiana new-school construction costs 20 percent more than in surrounding states and what the staff of teacher unions do to get paid so much more than teachers.

Bill Styring's work is not digitized but is kept in the foundation's archive of physical journals.

2003 — Diversity Lawyers

The foundation asked Robert Heidt, a professor at the Indiana University Law School, to review the school's admission policies in the wake of a U.S.



Heidt

Supreme Court ruling that made illegal similar policies at nearby Michigan University. His essay, which was featured on the Indianapolis Star editorial pages, caused a firestorm. The law school does not have quotas, was the response from Bloomington in so many words, and even if it did (wink, wink) it would be OK.

Heidt brought receipts, however, and made it clear that quotas were the school's de facto policy. He had to concede, however, that although the policy was likely illegal nothing much could be done about it. Here is his summary for us:

"Minority enrollment at IU-Bloomington has stayed steady at about 16 percent year in and year out for each of the last seven years and steady at 21 to 23 percent for the four years before while the number of minority applicants has varied widely year to year. But whether any private plaintiff can overcome the expense and difficulty of proving that we employ quotas is something else again.

"With no possibility of a referendum against racial preferences like those that prevailed in California and Washington, Indiana's policy is

only likely to change if the state legislature or an enlightened administrator outside the law school insists that it change.

“Some may hear that the court only allowed law school preferences for the next 25 years. That is wrong. The court merely speculated that in 25 years it might revisit this issue. Twenty-five years from now, indeed 100 years from now, the court will still uphold preferences as long as a fact-finder concludes they are needed for what Justice Thomas, in dissent, called that ‘faddish slogan of the cognoscenti; diversity.

“Although his view is now doomed never to prevail, Justice Thomas’ dissent cut to the jugular of the issue:

“Nowhere in any of the filings in this court is any evidence that the purported beneficiaries of this race discrimination prove themselves by performing at (or even near) the same level as those students who receive no preferences (citations to sources showing beneficiaries underperform in the classroom).’

“The silence in this case is deafening to those of us who view higher education’s purpose as imparting knowledge or skills to students rather than a communal, rubber-stamp credentialing process. The law school is not looking for those students who despite a lower LSAT score or under-graduate grade point average will succeed in the study of law. The law school seeks only a facade — it is sufficient that the class looks right; even if it does not perform right.”

Robert Heidt, J.D. “At Issue: Indiana University School of Law at Bloomington.” The Indiana Policy Review, p. 28, summer-fall 2003. This work is not digitized but held in the foundation’s archive of physical journals.

2003 — The Education ‘Menu’

Eric Schansberg, professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast, has contributed



Schansberg

so many brilliant essays on so many critical topics that to choose one is throwing a dart at a very large and colorful board. His book, “Turn Neither to the Right nor to the Left,” which was excerpted in this journal, is our choice. Schansberg, a Biblical scholar as well as a nationally known economist, warned the Christian Right that much of what they believe is Bible-based public policy in fact is not. In addition, the book contains some logic experiments that shook up the self-satisfied and morally assured. One of particular note was his mock proposal borrowed from the economist James Gwartney to operate restaurants as we do public schools.

“Imagine that government decides to operate all restaurants. Further, your geography determines your restaurant; you will eat at the government (‘public’) restaurant in your neighborhood. (To make the analogy more accurate, also assume home cooking — like home schooling, is costly.) What would the incentives be for the person who manages the restaurant?

“Why does the fact that the clientele is captive make a difference?

“Of course, the economic incentives are not at all favorable. Consumers are likely to receive low quality food. In addition, costs (taxes and government spending) are likely to be artificially high and to increase further. But since customers still pay a ‘price’ of zero for the service (government education is ‘free’), people are less likely to notice the relationship — the subsequent tax increases are much more subtle than price increases in the private sector would be.

“In addition, you will be forced to eat the type of food your particular restaurant serves. If it’s Mexican food and you don’t like burritos — too bad. The point is not that Mexican food is ‘right or wrong’ but that by definition, the menu will offend or disappoint someone.

“The same is true in the menu of issues provided by government schools — whether to use corporal punishment, when to teach sex education, whether to use phonics, focusing on academics or building self-esteem, etc.

“If you decide to eat at a private restaurant to

get better quality or because your tastes and preferences differ from what your government school provides, you will have to pay taxes for the government restaurant as well as the prices at the private restaurant.

“Clearly, your ability to do this would be a function of your income level. As such, restaurant and educational choice are restricted, especially for the poor.”

D. Eric Schansberg, Ph.D. Turn Neither to the Right nor to the Left. Alertness Publishing, 2003.

2006 — The Inscrutable Statehouse

Cecil Bohanon, a professor of economics at Ball State University, introduced us to the marvelous economic principle of “rational ignorance,” the observation that citizens will refrain from acquiring knowledge when the supposed cost of educating oneself on an issue exceeds the expected potential benefit that the knowledge would provide.



Bohanon

Using that and other tricks of the economist’s trade, Bohanon has been the most consistent predictor of general assemblies. His standing prediction? General assemblies are no longer predictable.

A student rather than a critic, Bohanon does not blame the legislators or their political parties. Indiana government, he notes, has generally and with bipartisan recklessness fallen into the trap of many democracies — it tries to do too much for too many.

As a result, to use the simplistic keynote of a stump speech, it’s too big and spends too much. Bohanon, however, was more profound than that. He narrowed the focus to just this: The problem with bigness is not necessarily spending, it is accountability.

“One side seems to think that there is an endless untapped supply of citizen sacrifice to monitor an ever-expanding state,” he explains.

“The other side recognizes the importance of citizen oversight in a free society but recognizes its supply is limited.”

There is no doubt which side is winning; Indiana government has grown so complex there are not enough reporters or even informed activists to stay with its twists and turns. There’s simply too much going on. We are at the mercy of last-minute deals, spin doctors and fast-talking lobbyists — all unpredictable.

Bohanon warns that if we want the Statehouse to be reportable again — that is, accountable again — we must stop piling more and more obligations on both government and on us. It is as Thomas Jefferson said so long ago: The government that governs least is the government that governs best.

“The irony is that the more as a society we demand and expect from government, the less we get,” adds Bohanon. “Only by conserving legislative attention and citizen oversight can things get better.”

The chaos of recent sessions should be reason enough for the Statehouse leadership to give Bohanon’s idea a try. As for the rest of us, there’s not much to lose.

Cecil Bohanon, Ph.D. “The Inscrutable Statehouse.” The Indiana Policy Review, July 11, 2009. <https://inpolicy.org/2009/07/the-inscrutable-statehouse/>

Bohanon. “Making Sense of the Legislature.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 3-8, fall 2006. This work is not digitized but held in the foundation’s archive of physical journals.

2007 — Student-Based Budgeting

One of the ideas that has kept popping up on our pages over the years was a systemic education reform that, if political self-interest could be put aside, is remarkable in its results and simple in its execution. “Weighted-Student Funding” or



Snell

“Student-Based Budgeting,” which is becoming all

the rage now, allows taxpayer support to be channelled through individual buildings, teachers, patrons and, most importantly, students.

No longer would funds be turned over to district administrative offices, bureaucracies too often driven by incentives other than classroom learning. In Indianapolis, for instance, a two-to-one imbalance in funding for Crispus Attucks (\$5,630 per student) and Broad Ripple (\$11,581) existed for years. It was obscured by district budgeting models that grouped funds into categories such as building maintenance or school staff.

With the help of Lisa Snell, director of education for the Reason Foundation, we assembled the essential elements of this reform for an upcoming journal. It includes a digital reading list of the most up-to-date research on Student-Based Budgeting and related topics. If Indiana legislators would give it a close look, we argued that they would see an opportunity for Indiana to establish itself as the national model for effective public education.

“The growth of student-based budgeting in school districts and a few states mirrors a national trend toward more decentralized school funding where the money follows the child,” Snell wrote. “In the United States, we are in a transition period, moving from funding institutions to funding students. K-12 education funding is moving closer to the funding model for higher education, where the money follows students to the public, private or nonprofit school of their choice. We are moving away from a K-12 system funded by local resources and driven by residential assignment to a system where funding is driven by parental choice and student enrollment.”

Lisa Snell. “A Better Way: The Weighted Student Formula.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 6-12, winter 2007. <https://inpolicy.org/wp-content/themes/IPR10/journals/winter2007.pdf>

2008 — Corporate Philanthropy

Jim McClure and Philip R.P. Coelho, professors of economics at Ball State

University, took time as corporate philanthropy was just becoming the rage to explain the difference between a corporation and an individual. Taking things without permission is theft, they noted, and what is done with the proceeds doesn’t change that. Why, then, they asked, are corporate managers who give away a firm’s resources for “socially beneficial” causes not arrested? An excerpt:

“Any discussion must begin with an understanding of these four points:

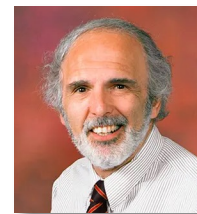
1. Incorporations chartered by governments are legal figments that allow their owners to engage in enterprises as if the firms were people.
2. Firms are extensions of people who pool resources to pursue economic opportunities and profits beyond the reach of an individual. The fiduciary duties of managers are to husband resources because they belong to the owners (stockholders).
3. Firms were incorporated for the express pursuit of enhancing their owners’ economic well-being; it is incoherent to argue that corporations have social responsibilities beyond those specified in prospectuses and charters.
4. Firms are figments; the people who invested their funds in firms did so under the expectation of financial rewards.

“Returning to our question, the doctrine of corporate social responsibility fosters extra-legal expropriations of stockholders’ wealth; if stockholders wanted to simply give their money away, they would not have bought stock.

“The only coherent view of corporate social responsibility is Milton Friedman’s: ‘There is one and only one social responsibility of business — to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the



McClure



Coelho

rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition, without deception or fraud.’

“Yet, a different view of corporate social responsibility predominates today. Activists argue that managers should weigh their fiduciary duties to owners against the ‘needs’ of an amorphous and ill-defined gaggle of ‘stakeholders.’ This nonsense is given an air of legitimacy by academics.

“Stakeholder ethics and theory permeate and predominate in academe because academic rewards and success accrue to those who attract funds. So if one advocates corporate social responsibility, then asking corporations for resources to pursue educational or professional goals is an easy next step.

“Academic approval covers the doctrine of corporate social responsibility. Successive generations of academics and managers collaborate in its maintenance because there is a reinforcing cycle of self-interest. Stakeholder theory facilitates the personal status and ambitions of management and the fundraising opportunities of the academicians. Academic approbation thereby allows managers to venture into areas far beyond their ken.

“The best billiard players make their shots as if they were experts on geometry and physics, but no one expects them to be experts in these fields. Conversely, Ph.D.s are not expected to be experts at billiards.

“Albert Einstein wrote on the economic superiority of socialism over capitalism. History, however, has made this position comic. And like the billiard player, Bill Gates behaved at Microsoft as if he understood free-market economics. His recent “creative capitalism” speech, though, emphasized the broader “responsibilities” of business enterprises and displayed an ignorance that would misallocate and misappropriate resources.

“No matter how honorable the intentions of Einstein or Gates, they fell to hubris in defining corporate social responsibility.”

Jim McClure, Ph.D., and Philip R.P. Coelho, Ph.D. “The Crime of Corporate Social

Responsibility.” The Indiana Policy Review, July 28, 2008. <https://inpolicy.org/2008/07/the-crime-of-corporate-social-responsibility/>

2010 — Municipal Budgets

If there were a Ryan Cummins in every Indiana city we would be the envy of the nation. It might be enough to say of Cummins, the co-owner of a longtime family business, that during his first term on the Terre Haute Common Council he was outvoted 1-8



Cummins

hundreds of times and won reelection handily despite protests by firefighters and police on his front yard. But there is more. Cummins was elected chairman of the Appropriations Committee (his fellow councilmen were going to spend all the money anyway) and combined his years of business experience with a thorough knowledge of municipal fiscal policy. The result was a one-man consulting firm on how to run a city.

The picture that comes to mind is Cummins, once an artillery officer in the U.S. Marine Corps, standing straight as the lone vote against what had become an automatic and irrational compensation hike for the city’s public-sector collective bargaining units. The council audience of police and firefighters and their families, some with babies in arms, shout and wave signs of protest, demanding an explanation of his “no” vote. Cummins responds that he would love nothing more than to give them all a raise, more vacation time or whatever they want. However, he has a duty to taxpayers to ask the same question of city employees as he does of his own employees: If I give you a raise how will it make us more efficient, what will you do next year better than what you are doing this year? The audience erupts in shouts of outrage.

The foundation has put this remarkable man to work on dozens of soundly thought-out articles and presentations on best practices and strategies

for municipal reform. Here is one of his earlier pieces:

“Revenue reduction” are words striking fear into the hearts of municipal bureaucrats and politicians across Indiana. And the immediate and fervent response has been to leave no stone unturned in the search for more money for government to spend.

“But it’s time — long past time actually — to recognize that the right and better course of action is for taxpayers to keep a great deal more of their money (i.e., their property). It goes to the heart of the fiduciary duty of elected officials.

“Local government entities raising taxes directly, adding taxes known as fees, imposing taxes on currently tax-exempt organizations, seeking more funds from state and federal taxpayers and even pinning hopes on expensive marketing plans and slogans — all losing propositions.

“There is a better way for local government, citizens, business and community organizations to deal with property-tax caps and other reasons for reduced revenue. We can begin by recognizing two basic, non-partisan facts:

“First, all revenues received by local government are paid under severe penalty. Taxes are not paid voluntarily, motivated by civic pride or a sense of community. Nor are they the incidental “price of civil society,” as some like to say. In fact, if you don’t pay your taxes you can be fined, your property can be seized and ultimately you can be taken by force. This is not some anti-government diatribe; it is simply tax law

“Second, the lion’s share of tax revenues is spent on compensation. Tinkering around the edges will hardly make a dent in a city’s revenue shortfall. It is only by confronting personnel costs in local government that a solution can be crafted.

“That will require limiting local government to its proper functions: the protection of life, liberty and property from force or fraud. Cities don’t need to be reconstructing antiquated downtowns, building sports facilities, operating businesses or numerous other functions they now attempt. Those costs (capital, operation and labor) would be saved and the money (that’s property again)

could remain with citizens to be used as they see fit.

“This all leaves ardent community boosters aghast. I always ask, though, whether they feel so strongly about their pet idea for a sports stadium or whatever that they would be willing to send a neighbor who disagrees to jail. It is a vitally important question to be applied to every municipal issue.

“And there is something else: The vigorous support of free-market solutions for the wants and needs of citizens. Look around any Hoosier city and you’ll find that nearly every government function also is provided by the market. It is a winning political and policy solution to apply the tremendous options available in a free market to our municipal problems.

“Finally, there must be an assumption of personal responsibility on the part of the citizenry. Sadly, in our country and surprisingly even here in Indiana more and more folks automatically look to government to provide for them. And most politicians are happy to oblige. When they do, though, everyone loses.

“If someone wants to play golf, get a ride to the store, build a building for their business, watch a sports event or attend the local symphony, it is not a denial of their rights to expect and demand they pay for it themselves. It is a fundamental American notion that each of us, individually and voluntarily, must be responsible for our families, our neighbors and ourselves.

“How else can it work?”

“Success in what some of us are calling ‘the New Indiana City’ depends on a dynamic embrace of these principles of limited government, free markets and personal responsibility. They produce the only solutions that benefit everyone. And that is true regardless of economic situation or political philosophy.”

Maj. Ryan Cummins. “The New Indiana City.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 4-7, winter 2010. <https://inpolicy.org/wp-content/themes/IPR10/journals/winter2010.pdf>

2010 — The New Indiana City

Sam Staley, now director of the DeVoe L. Moore Center at the College of Social Sciences & Public Policy of Florida State University, was first commissioned by us to represent the foundation on a statewide panel discussing annexation. The panel was made up of sitting mayors (except for Staley) and was timed to coincide with an attempt to change Indiana law to make annexation easier.



Staley

One after another the self-serving mayors praised a recently published book wherein the primary argument was a table that showed that a city's per-capita income increased post annexation. It was left to Staley to point out that, far from proving the wisdom of annexation, the table showed that cities were annexation higher per-capita areas for a more lucrative tax bases — stealing, if you will.

Some years later, Staley edited a special edition of the journal, “The New Indiana Cities Project,” that sought to define the best policy options for the coming decade. Here is an excerpt of his contribution, an analysis that stands today and is yet to be addressed by our Legislature:

“In its sweeping examination of state fiscal policy, ‘Rich States, Poor States,’ the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) recently highlighted this success, ranking the economic performance of Texas first among the 50 states. In contrast, Indiana ranked 47th, just above Illinois, Ohio and Michigan.

“Nevertheless, Indiana has hope. The same report that ranked the Hoosier state's economic performance in the cellar also forecasts better times ahead. Indiana's economic outlook, according to ALEC, ranks it 17th in the nation, citing its relatively low minimum wage, low average workers' compensation costs, and tort liability system as advantages. State and local lawmakers have also helped keep the lid on debt as a share of personal income.

“These advantages won't be enough for Indiana to stay ahead in the 21st century but they will give it a leg up on states that insist on raising spending (and debt) and micromanaging the workplace.

“Elected officials will still need to find ways to control spending, reduce tax burdens and free up the labor market to ensure the state economy can adapt to changing times quickly and efficiently.

“This will require adopting some of the best practices from across the nation to provide the services Hoosiers want while keeping spending and tax burdens as low as possible.”

Sam Staley, Ph.D., “The Lone Star Example.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 2-5, winter 2010. <https://inpolicy.org/wp-content/themes/IPR10/journals/winter2010.pdf>

2010 — Press Release Economics

The former deputy director of Mitch Daniels' vaunted Office of Management and Budget and now with the Mercatus Institute, Tad DeHaven coined for us the debasement, “press-release economics.” It was his apt description for the government-juiced, build-it-and-they-will-come projects that swept across Indiana cities at the millennium. Here is an excerpt from his first essay on the issue:



DeHaven

The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) uses subsidies in an attempt to lure businesses and jobs to the state, or to keep them here. The IEDC might not admit it, but most businesses already know where they are going to locate before they contact the agency.

Businesses consider a myriad of factors including demographics, transportation logistics and workforce capabilities when choosing where to set up shop. Although the tax and regulatory climate is an important consideration, IEDC handouts are just that — handouts.

Because a governor will get credit for creating jobs, businesses know they can extract taxpayer money from the state for these subsidies. After a company reaches an agreement with the IEDC, the administration issues a press release. For the high-profile deals, it arranges a choreographed ribbon-cutting ceremony at the company's facilities. The company helps fulfill its end of the bargain by telling the press that the administration's support sealed the deal.

Witnessing this charade from inside the administration of Gov. Mitch Daniels led me to coin the phrase, "press-release economics."

Not everyone in the administration, however, bought into the IEDC scheme. My former agency, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), was tasked with monitoring the performance of state agencies, including the IEDC. And as we knew to be the case with many of the state programs, the IEDC's claims were known to be inflated. It is implausible that the rest of the administration, including the IEDC itself, didn't know about the fuzzy math.

The administration's political chicanery, however, has now come back to bite it. A recent WTHR Eyewitness News investigation into IEDC shined a light on the job-creation claims. When reporters tried to visit some of the companies celebrated in IEDC press releases, they found empty fields, vacant lots and deserted factories. According to the investigation, "as many as 40 percent of statewide jobs listed as so-called economic successes have not happened – and most of them never will."

The governor told reporters that the IEDC's numbers were audited. Independently? That would be news to me. When I was a deputy director at OMB, the governor's chief advisers ignored internal suggestions that the state pursue the creation of an independent auditing agency along the lines of the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The position of the IEDC director is that no taxpayer money is being lost because his agency audits the companies to make sure they fulfill the terms of their agreement with the state. The director, however, has so far refused

to release any details to the public that would support this contention.

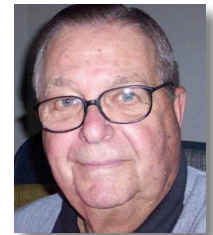
In summary, Indiana doesn't need a politicized economic-development bureaucracy to create a welcoming environment for businesses. One alternative would be to eliminate the state's corporate income tax, which has a relatively high 8.5 percent rate. The revenue loss could be offset at least in part by shuttering the IEDC and eliminating targeted tax breaks.

The governor, of course, might have to forgo some press releases. The long-term benefits to the state, though, should be worth the political sacrifice.

Tad DeHaven. "The Governor's Press-Release Economics." The Indiana Policy Review, March 25, 2010. <https://inpolicy.org/2010/03/the-governors-press-release-economics/>

2011 — The Lost Chamber of Commerce

Fred McCarthy, a stalwart of the early Chamber of Commerce in Indiana, was the one to explain to us where and how the Chamber went off its rails.



McCarthy

There is a New Yorker cartoon, we wrote at the time, a businessman at a meeting is pointing to a chart that matches the garish pattern on his suit. That is the state of business representation in Indiana today, a representation tailored to fit specific clients with specific tastes.

The director of your local chamber of commerce is likely to represent free markets no better than a billboard lawyer represents the principles of the U.S. Constitution — that is, only narrowly and incidentally.

We asked an expert on the topic, a long-time member of this foundation, Fred McCarthy, to explain why that is so — or, more important, whether it must remain so.

McCarthy's life's work has been representing business interests, including building leadership

and relationships for Indiana chambers of commerce both large and small.

He offered encouragement in that Indiana has a historic model that would restore the state to commercial leadership, i.e., the legislative committees of hometown chambers which until recently were a standard for the nation.

These committees were tea parties that meant business, McCarthy remembered. They were made up of knowledgeable and principled local businessmen meeting on Saturday mornings so that the local legislator could attend and account for himself.

First, though, McCarthy had bad news. Indiana, even in the midst of a historic economic downturn, has no serious interest at the Statehouse or city hall defining the long-range, ideal vision of Indiana commerce.

Yes, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce would contend that point, but we found McCarthy's argument compelling, especially in regard to the weakening of the smaller chambers. There, what passes for business representation is more likely to be only the furtherance of certain private-public partnerships (crony capitalism might be too strong a term, but it's the way to think about it).

Consider what business representation meant even as recently as the 1970s. Here is McCarthy:

“In many ways, running a chamber was less difficult than it is now. Most business people then opposed government intervention in the economy or in business operations, and many refused to accept subsidies or handouts. Dealing with the government was generally consistent across the business spectrum, with representative organizations opposed to unreasonable spending programs and the interjection of government into day-to-day business decisions.”

Those sentiments no longer drive local chambers. The one in your hometown is likely to have accepted government as its senior partner and is pouring its energies into one public-private partnership scheme after another.

At best, many Indiana chambers aspire only to being the middlemen, smoothing the government licensing, subsidizing and regulating processes. You may remember that in the name of efficiency the Indianapolis chamber put its reputation and influence behind the consolidation of union and bureaucratic power.

This would represent an identity crisis if anyone were paying attention to how wealth is actually created or how investment is attracted. For reasons that our cover story details, chamber leaders — incredulously to our mind — no longer see their *raison d'être* as the promotion of commerce. McCarthy once more:

“Too many of these groups, in the ill-conceived idea that it is their responsibility to form coalitions for community activity, have become a sort of community club in which all sectors of the community have a voice in policy-making for the chamber.”

That leaves us without a voice to defend or restore the principles that would return the Indiana economy to greatness.

We have only a Barney Frank amalgam of corporate and banking interests guided by his absurd comment that “capitalism works better from every perspective when the economic decision-makers are forced to share power with those who will be affected by those decisions.”

How different Indiana's situation would be if legislators every Saturday morning had to face the members of McCarthy's gimlet-eyed hometown committees, whatever the pattern of their suits.

Fred McCarthy, “Reawakening the Chamber.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 2-11, summer-fall, 2011. This work is not digitized but held in the foundation's archive of physical journals.

2012 — A Legislator's Reading List

Hans Eicholz and David Hart of the Liberty Fund compile our reading list for state legislators and others wrestling with the issues of 2012. We encourage the serious reader to visit the Fund's Online Library of Liberty (OLL) at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>. There he will find a treasure

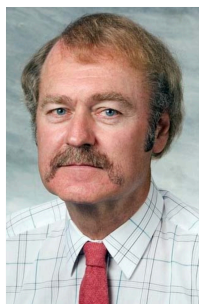
of related links and references. The OLL, a virtual university, is where electronic versions of classic books are stored by the Fund. These texts go back some 4,000 years and cover the disciplines of economics, history, law, literature, philosophy, political theory, religion, war and peace. They are in a variety of formats — facsimile PDFs so scholars can view the original text, hTML for ease of searching and attractive layout, and text-based PDF eBooks for personal use. The OLL also contains bibliographic information about the books as well as other “metadata” about the authors and editors.

Our selection begins with an unbroken paragraph from Jefferson’s “Notes on the State of Virginia” where he anticipates James Madison and critiques Virginia’s revolutionary constitution, warning that it has concentrated too much power in one branch. Jefferson gives us a useful definition of tyranny and the need for checks and balances. The selection goes on to include Benjamin Constant’s essay on the “Liberty of Ancients Compared to that of moderns” followed by Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense.” Finally, there is Bastiat’s “On the State” and “On the Broken Window Fallacy or the Seen and the Unseen.” This last is particularly good at explaining unintended consequences — perhaps the core conceptual difficulty in the current legislative mindset.

Hans Eicholz and David Hart, eds. “A Reading List for Legislators.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 10-31, winter 2012.

2011 — Daylight Saving Time

John Gaski, associate professor of marketing at Notre Dame, has been our correspondent at large for more than a decade now — and a fiercely bipartisan one. His insists that his tag line read, “a longtime registered Democrat, and occasional registered



Gaski

Republican — intermittently, never simultaneously.”

In any case, Gaski has covered ObamaCare, the Trump phenomena, the minimum was, the Ukraine and everything between. His greatest impact, however, may have been his gimlet-eyed review of Daylight Saving Time and Gov. Mitch Daniels’ fumbling of the issue.

You may remember that Daniels began his campaign for government with a condescending promise to teach Hoosiers how to tell time, in so many words. He should have called Gaski first. The professor took the governor to school on the issue, arguing in *The Indiana Policy Review* that the topic needed careful study. Here he is continuing that argument nationally in *Psychology Today*:

“Perhaps you had already heard of Indiana’s tumultuous time zone history — on top of the Daylight Saving Time (DST) controversy. Yes, double trouble and what natives call ‘double fast time,’ which leaves us nearly two hours deviant from natural, wholesome solar time.

“When the Indiana state government approved DST in 2005, it was inconceivable to anyone competent in these temporal matters that the state could also opt for Eastern instead of Central time. But so opt most of the state did — under pressure from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce which erroneously concluded that the Eastern Time Zone would be better for business. (Yes, I can empirically support ‘erroneously,’ and have done so in print.) The state government even intervened against the Central Time Zone petitions that some counties had submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the ultimate authority about local or state time zone assignment, even though the state of Indiana was bound by law to support such petitions.

“The worst news: Due to our ‘double fast time,’ Indiana schoolchildren have to travel to school in pitch darkness for much of the year. Starting the school day in darkness is bad enough, but waiting for the bus and walking to the bus in the middle of the night, in effect, is very dangerous for our state’s children. There has been a rash of tragic

fatalities, injuries, abductions, and rapes involving Indiana children since our leading state politicians, with an assist from the U.S. Department of Transportation, imposed the monstrosity of Eastern DST on the state.

“The scandal: Hard evidence of the mortal danger of excessive a.m. darkness has been around for decades, and was in the public record (compiled by the) when the unholy alliance of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, state government, and federal government collaborated to inflict the scourge of morning danger on our state’s children. (There is no corresponding afternoon danger if on Central time because the school buses would still run long before dusk.) Which descriptor captures this travesty best: reckless endangerment or negligent manslaughter?”

“An unfortunate derivative implication: I have great respect for Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels, and surely agree with him on most issues other than time zone. I could even abide limited DST. However, when the outside world finds out about the governor’s mega-policy blunder of Eastern DST, I am afraid it will torpedo his higher office aspiration. Consider: A policy that causes brain damage (DST) and kills children (misapplied Eastern time) is a public policy fiasco and calamity of the first magnitude, which may rank somewhere between the Smoot-Hawley Tariff and Soviet collectivization of agriculture in terms of lunacy. When the national public realizes that such baggage attaches to a presidential candidate, Mr. Daniels, that candidacy will crash and burn.

“Too bad. President Daniels would have been a good one. He never should have listened to the lightweights at the Chamber of Commerce — but he did want their campaign money.

“The psychological aspect of the time zone issue finally is: What kind of cynical mentality on the part of federal bureaucrats and Indiana state government officials would lead them to recklessly or even knowingly endanger children just for a political end? Or maybe it just didn’t occur to them that forcing children to go to school in the dark could lead to trouble. Sure. Or maybe I

over-estimate some of them, after all — one especially.”

John Gaski, Ph.D. “Does anybody Know What Time It Is?” Psychology Today, May 17, 2011.

2013 – Tax Increment Financing

Tom Heller, an emigre from the West Coast now settled in Columbus, Indiana, is a Wharton-trained economist and was the principal and founder of Regional Analytic Sciences in Seattle. He has held a wide range of positions dealing with state-level public policy and most recently has made himself an expert on Tax Increment Financing (TIF).



Heller

He concludes that although there is no doubt that TIF moves money around the question is to where, from whence and at what cost. TIF, he says, whatever its tactical benefits for this deal or that, should be at best secondary in any economic-development strategy.

Here is his summary of his latest work on the issue:

“How did undermining local government’s tax base come to be viewed as an essential tool in local government’s economic development toolkit? In essence, that’s what happened in the case we examined.

“Redevelopment commissions appear happy to count their riches and pursue their plans while local taxing units are blind to this, as are the local media and thus the general public.

“The takeaway from this examination boils down to:

- TIF is all about revenue capture
- TIF eroded local taxing units’ tax base • TIF captured revenue from pre-TIF

development

- TIF hasn’t restored eroded tax base to local taxing units

“And almost nobody knew this was happening.

“Once upon a time, far away in another state, one co-chair of a governor-appointed blue-ribbon commission candidly remarked to the other: ‘I’ve looked into TIF and concluded we don’t need it.’

Tom Heller. “*Lifting the Veil on TIF.*” *The Indiana Policy Review*, pp. 6-22, fall 2022. <https://www.pageturnpro.com/Indiana-Policy-Review-Foundation/105932-Fall-2022/sdefault.html>

2015 — The Lesson of Zug

Barry Keating, professor emeritus at the Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame, is our guide to what works and what doesn’t work in the world of business incentives. He was the first to alert us that long-distance telephone charges (indeed, telephones as we knew them) would be obsolete.

He mischievously suggested that some politician should promise “free long distance” and thereby take credit for the fast-moving advances in communication technology.

Here he casts a gimlet eye on the ubiquitous tax abatement and introduces us to the Inarguable, almost mythical, example of Zug, Switzerland:

“If tax abatements are ineffective, why do we still use them? The answer clearly lies in examining the winners and losers to tax abatement. City officials are desperate to attract, or appear to attract, business activity of almost any nature. They perceive abatements as a means of competing with other towns and thus are a necessary cost. City and development officials, as well, like to believe or make others believe that they possess unique leadership ability and special insight in awarding benefits to certain industries.

“The problem, of course, is that in granting exceptions to paying property taxes, they make citizens and existing businesses poorer yet. Abatements actually shift the tax burden to local



Keating

households and firms. Tax abatements starve municipal budgets that depend upon property-tax receipts to provide critical public services such as street maintenance, and police and fire protection. In addition, they erode the parks, libraries and community centers that form the “social cement” of a town.

“Property taxes are generally thought to be regressive, i.e., those with little income pay a larger percentage of that income in property taxes than do wealthier citizens. Thus, abatements shift the tax burden to the least wealthy. In Philadelphia, which is regarded to have the most generous tax-abatement program in the country, the Pew Trust reports that 36 percent of residents indicate that they would “definitely/probably leave” in the next five to 10 years.

“A public-school official expressed surprise at the amount of unpaid property taxes in Indiana as compared with districts in other states with which he was associated. This writer is unaware of studies researching this issue, but noncompliance is a reasonable hypothesis to consider when so many exceptions have been made in releasing some from property taxes.

Is there an alternative to this race to the bottom?

“Sixty years ago, Zug, one of 26 cantons in Switzerland, was one of the poorest areas in the country. But Zug lowered both its corporate and personal taxes; it lowered them until its taxes were about 50 percent below the Swiss average. The canton also made building permits easy to get. What happened? Businesses moved to Zug; corporate headquarters were moved to Zug. The number of firms doing business in Zug skyrocketed; jobs rose 20 percent in just six years.

“Perhaps Indiana cities should at least consider that the answer to their ills might be less government (a lot less) rather than more of what has caused so much pain in the past.”

Barry P. Keating, Ph.D. “*The Folly of Tax Abatements.*” *The Indiana Policy Review*, Dec. 7, 2015. <https://inpolicy.org/2015/12/keating-tax-abatements/>

Rival in Consumption?
(Does one person's use of the item mean there is less available to others?)

		Yes	No
Excludable? (Can you prevent people from accessing the item if they do not pay for it?)	Yes	<p>PRIVATE GOODS</p> <p>Most things that we buy are in this category and are provided by the market. The government should not produce these items (example: ice-cream cones).</p>	<p>NATURAL MONOPOLIES</p> <p>Some things make sense to allow one company to produce because economies of scale allow them to do it cheaper. For the privilege of having monopoly power, the government regulates them to prevent overcharging customers (example: electric utilities).</p>
	No	<p>COMMON RESOURCES</p> <p>The "tragedy of the commons" occurs when common resources are overused because they are rival, but non-excludable. The government can help by establishing private-property rights and converting these to private goods or regulating access (example: wildlife).</p>	<p>PUBLIC GOODS</p> <p>These are the only things the government should consider producing because of the "free rider" problem. The government may not need to produce these things if the market can find a way to pay for them (example: tornado siren).</p>

2016 – The Role of Government

John Kessler, an economics instructor at Purdue University-Fort Wayne, specializes in explaining how the world works. Indeed, he does it so well that as a political neophyte walking door-to-door, Kessler came close enough to defeating the Senate President Pro-Tem that some say he retired rather than face him again.

The foundation asked John Kessler to design a chart that would help the membership determine whether a public expenditure before their city council was economically sound.

No, that's not exactly true. Our impetus came from a couple of decades of frustration listening to self-proclaimed fiscal conservatives slipping and sliding on this vote or that, telling us it all was too complicated to explain, that we didn't understand how modern government worked.

Well, the chart above, which functions as a decision tree, dispenses with such folderol. That is true even though it concedes for our Democrat friends that some things give social benefits to everyone when people consume more of them and therefore could be subsidized.

This, of course, is what politicians claim for every proposal they raise. But economists make distinctions, dividing those proposals into at least four groups of less or more economic justification.

Education will serve as an example: The more educated people are, the better off we all are. If we apply it to the chart, though, we can see that this in itself does not make education a "public good" in the eyes of an economist. That is because it is "excludable" and because it is possibly "rival" in consumption (see definitions in the chart).

"The rule of thumb is that if the government is going to subsidize something, it should always subsidize the consumer and never the producer," Kessler advises.

None of this means that there are not reasons to vote for measures outside our chart's parameters. It just means that those reasons may be uneconomical and involve personal ambition, cronyism and crass expediency – not the motivations we like to see in our public policy.

John Kessler. "The Role of Government." *The Indiana Policy Review*, pp. 4-6, winter 2016. <http://inpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/winter2016.pdf>

2016 – Parental Choice

There is no one who has contributed more to The Indiana Policy Review than its columnist for the last decade Andrea Neal, whose resume includes covering the Supreme Court of the United States for United Press International and serving as editorial page editor of the (old) Indianapolis Star. She is a brilliant journalist, one of the last.



Neal

Neal, during the state's bicentennial in 2016, wrote a history column for the foundation that she turned into a successful book, "Road Trip: a Pocket History of Indiana." A second successful book, "Pence: the Path to Power," included a chapter touching on former Vice President Mike Pence's years at the foundation.

Most recently, Neal, a secondary school teacher and former member of the state Board of Education, put together the best thoughts on

education reform for presentation to this session's Legislature, including a strong recommendation for parental choice:

“Indiana finds itself with a historic opportunity to go full throttle free market. “There has never been a better moment for education freedom,” the Heritage Foundation said in its most recent educational ranking of the states. Progressive pedagogy coming out of the ed schools – and the unions – has finally been exposed, thanks to the Covid pandemic. The Zoom lessons revealed just how bad our public schools are: the weak lesson plans, woke lesson plans, bad teaching, grade inflation and overemphasis on social justice, identity and sexuality.

“A free market doesn't mean these things will go away. And, yes, these things are ubiquitous in the elite private schools as well. One example comes from Project Veritas, which, in early December, exposed a queer sex education program given to 14- to 18-year-olds at Frances Parker School in Chicago. It does mean that parents who like progressive schools can choose them; and parents who value traditional education – based on classical values – can choose that.

“True choice as envisioned by Milton Friedman allows a family to use public educational dollars as they see fit – few strings attached. Friedman suggested that a reasonable string would be ‘a minimum required level of education.’ This would allow poor families to escape failing public schools and frustrated middle-class families to flee schools that focus on progressive values. It would ensure home-schooling families have the resources they need and aren't penalized for their choices and wealthy families can continue to do what they've always done.

“This may be the one reform that can save our educational system. It may be the rising tide that lifts all boats.”

Andrea Neal. “A Call to Action: Educational Freedom for Hoosier Families.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 10-14, winter 2023. <https://www.pageturnpro.com/Indiana-Policy-Review-Foundation/107153-Winter-2023/sdefault.html>

2018 – Last of the Cartoonist



Let us say that in a sane journalistic world Gary Varvel would be recognized by every editor in the country as the premier example of that great tradition, the editorial cartoonist. However, he insists on being unabashedly conservative. The Indianapolis Star, on its descent to irrelevance, pushed him into early retirement.

No matter, Varvel has built his own national network of subscribers and added to it his well-written and insightful commentary on the events of the day – a one-man editorial page. The foundation is proud to be able to distribute his work weekly but we refuse to pick a favorite Varvel cartoon (we find a new one every day). You are encouraged to check out his blog at garyvarvel.com/ and pick one for yourself.

Gary Varvel. The Gary Varvel Newsletter. <https://garyvarvel.com/store/newsletter>

2019 – Corn and Oranges

Maryann O. Keating has made a specialty in dozens of essays for the foundation of explaining complex economic principles in clear and inviting language. One of our favorites is a comparison of trade rules for Indiana corn and California oranges:



Keating

“What if Indiana imposes tariff duties on oranges imported from California? The price of oranges in Indiana increases and the quantity consumed decreases. California orange producers and their employees suffer a loss in income, but high-cost producers of Indiana oranges, undoubtedly grown in greenhouses, benefit.

“A trade war ensues when California retaliates by imposing a tariff on corn coming from Indiana. Californians pay higher prices for corn and meat derived from corn-consuming animals. Indiana corn producers and their employees suffer a loss in income, but California producers of corn or corn substitutes benefit.

“In a trade war, consumers, in both regions, inevitably experience overall declines in their standard of living, even though certain less-efficient industries benefit. This encourages other less competitive producers to lobby for additional tariffs. Professional economists strictly concerned with increasing or maintaining living standards for a particular region invariably argue against tariffs.

“How should California respond if the governor or the Indiana General Assembly unilaterally initiates tariffs on imports from California? Are there other options to an out and out tariff war?”

California, assumed to be a sovereign state issuing its own currency, might consider currency manipulation. In current financial markets, if one California sacramento generally trades for one Indiana hoosier, the California central bank could debase its currency, declaring that it would only trade one hoosier for two sacramentos.

“Why would California do something that at first glance seems counter intuitive? Well, consider that after the currency devaluation any holder of Californian currency in effect now has to pay twice as many sacramentos to buy a bushel of Indiana corn and holders of Indianan hoosiers are able to purchase California oranges at half-price. California’s imports drop and its exports rise.

“Admittedly, certain groups in both regions stand to gain from currency manipulation. However, as with tariff wars, economists warn of harm ultimately affecting both regions. Distortions in investment, debt repayments and currency swaps by corrupt officials anticipating currency changes are just a few of the harmful effects of currency manipulation.

“Free trade and relative exchange-rate stability leads to higher levels of economic well-being.

Since World World II, due to free trade agreements, we have witnessed increases in standards of living around the world and at least a billion people being raised from poverty.

“The economics disadvantages of trade and currency wars are not academic but real. Why then are countries initiating trade wars and manipulating currencies? The only non-political answer is that groups of corporations and workers in sovereign nations believe that existing international trade agreements and practices abroad are biased in terms of their own and their country’s overall standard of living.”

Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D. “California Oranges, Indiana Corn.” The Indiana Policy Review, Aug. 14, 2019. <https://inpolicy.org/2019/08/keating-indiana-corn-california-oranges/>

2020 — The Indy 500

In addition to writing the foundation’s mission statement and erecting its legal scaffolding, Steve Williams, an Indianapolis lawyer and CPA, is a loyal fan of the Indy 500. He has watched, however, as the rules have steadily ratcheted away from preserving the race’s great role as a test ground of drivers and cars and toward becoming a mere spectacle.



Williams

Most recently, he cautioned Roger Penske, the new owner of the raceway, not to fiddle with the starting routine:

“While other sports provide seedings and other advantages to favored participants (e.g. NFL playoffs, NCAA tournament), the Indianapolis 500 has demanded equality of opportunity, not crony capitalism. With few exceptions since 1911, the 33 fastest qualifiers start the race in the order of their qualifying times, no starting positions having been guaranteed to drivers, teams or sponsors despite their pedigree or connections.

“This month, Roger Penske will finalize his purchase of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the IndyCar Series. Penske’s acquisition of the Speedway has been praised universally. He is seen as someone who can bring more resources to the sport while upholding the traditions that fans hold dear.

“Nevertheless, Penske has promised to ‘break some glass’ in an effort to move the sport forward. Alarming, in 2019 as a car owner, Penske floated the idea of guaranteed starting places in the Indianapolis 500 for teams running the full IndyCar Series, so-called full-time teams. This is a form of Corporate Welfare that IndyCar fans should reject.

“A major reason that the Speedway draws a live audience of over 300,000 people is that they know they will see the 33 fastest open-wheel cars on earth. They expect this because it’s been this way since 1911.

“The idea of guaranteed spots flies in the face of this tradition of ultimate competition. 1986 champion Bobby Rahal has said that the most frightening thing he has ever done is qualify for the Indianapolis 500. In 1993, he failed to qualify. Other former winners also suffered this fate, among them three-time champion Johnny Rutherford and two-time winner Rodger Ward. In 1995, Penske’s drivers Emerson Fittipaldi (two-time Indy winner and two-time Formula One World Champion) and Al Unser, Jr. (two-time Indy winner) failed to qualify.

“In May of 2019 in the last minutes of qualifying, a 23-year-old American, Kyle Kaiser, bumped from the starting field the most heralded driver of his generation, two-time Formula One World Champion Fernando Alonso of Spain. Kaiser’s team, Juncos Racing, had a budget that would seem like a rounding error compared to Alonso’s team, McLaren Racing. This is precisely the type of competition that Indy fans deserve. Again, to deny them this with guaranteed spots threatens to lessen the Indy experience and diminish the audience both live and on television.”

Steve Williams, J.D., CPA. “Preserving the Indy 500.” The Indiana Policy Review, Jan. 2, 2020. <https://inpolicy.org/2020/01/williams-preserving-the-indy-500/>

2020 — China at Bloomington

Newsrooms used to have what we called a “bulldog” reporter, one who would not give up on a story or let an official explanation stand unchallenged.

Margaret Menge, a big-time reporter in small town Bloomington, is such a journalist, perhaps one of the last. Her work for us on such issues as election integrity, Afghan refugees and the national security risk posed by thousands of unvetted students from China enrolled in Indiana universities demonstrated those qualities. In fact, she had to sue Indiana University to get even basic information.

Reading her conclusion below, keep in mind that neither the university nor the Legislature nor the mainstream media has had a word to say since her report was published three years ago:

“The university calls its ties to China “deep, extensive and continually expanding.” But at some point, there may come a reckoning.

“In April of 2019, IU released a two-sentence statement that it was closing the Confucius Institute on the campus of IUPUI after several years of warnings from experts that Confucius Institutes are completely controlled by the Chinese government and are not really academic in nature but are foreign influence operations. Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin wrote at the time:

“America’s universities have been slow in coming to terms with the problems posed by Chinese influence. They are now finally beginning to work with the national security community to respond to China’s attempts to infiltrate the United States’ higher-education system and abuse



Menge

those relationships to advance Beijing's strategic agenda. But that pushback is just beginning.”

“Earlier this year, the FBI charged a Boston University student from China with espionage, saying she was posing as a student and was actually a lieutenant in China's People's Liberation Army (which she admitted to) who came to the United States and enrolled at BU expressly for the purpose of supplying the Communist Party with information taken from U.S. military websites. She fled to China to evade arrest.

“I became interested in writing about students from China at IU early this year when the news of the Coronavirus was becoming more and more alarming. I didn't see any local reporters or anyone else asking whether Bloomington residents faced a heightened risk of catching the virus given that some students likely had returned to China over the Christmas break, and then returned to Bloomington the last week in December or the first week in January.

“After all, it was two tourists from China who brought what's now called Covid-19 to Italy, resulting in the deaths of more than 34,000 in that country, most of them elderly.

“But the risks to national security are even more profound. And no one here is talking about them. Not in public, at least, even with national leaders sounding the alarm about the risks to universities from China.

“Some IHE (Institutions of Higher Education) leaders are starting to acknowledge the threat of foreign espionage and have been working with federal law enforcement to address gaps in reporting and transparency,' the U.S. Department of Education General Counsel's office wrote in a letter to Congress on May 19, referring primarily to threats from China. ‘However, the evidence suggests massive investments of foreign money have bred dependency and distorted the decision-making, mission and values of too many universities.’

“In summary, let us return to our first question. Had a citizen of China prevented or tried to prevent an American journalist from

asking a question of an elected United States senator? On American soil? At an American university? With the university president sitting there?

“If IU's mission in bringing in so many students from China to campus is to expose them to Western ideas, including free speech, wouldn't things have gone differently in early March when that student from China tried to stop the journalist from asking a question about China that he didn't like?

“Wouldn't the president of the university, Michael McRobbie, have used this as a ‘teachable moment,’ as they call it in academia, standing up and explaining that in this country, we have a free press, and this means that no one gets to dictate to a journalist what question he can or cannot ask of a government official?

“As things are going, it seems the students from China in Bloomington may be exerting more influence on IU than IU is on them.

Margaret Menge. “Students from China Bring Big Money and Clout to Indiana University.” The Indiana Policy Review, July 1, 2020. <https://inpolicy.org/2020/07/white-paper-students-from-china-bring-big-money-and-clout-to-indiana-university/>

2020 — Critical Race Theory

They don't make public school superintendents like Jeff Abbott anymore. An attorney with a doctorate in education, he has headed up two Indiana school districts and taught graduate students at Purdue University-Fort Wayne. Even as public education was becoming more bureaucratic, Abbott used his law training and administrative experience to sort through the bureaucratic tangle to find the student and the classroom.

He was the perfect man to dissect Critical Race Theory and its divisive influence on Indiana



Abbott

schools, and did so well in advance of the ongoing damage and in time to have done something about it. His conclusion:

“There are numerous organizations and associations, other than those cited above, who support CRT. These organizations were self-selected by the author only because he had some knowledge of their likely support for or involvement in critical race theory activities. There are hundreds or more organizations, businesses, and associations that support elements of critical race theory. The author’s time limitations prevented a more comprehensive search.

“There are many consultants who have recently begun to offer diversity, equity, and inclusion training to corporations, schools, and government. Of course, this is a lucrative business for consultants as their client’s storm like sheep to the slaughterhouse of the training room. It may be well to note that diversity and inclusion training has been offered by consultants for over 50 years.

It is amazing how consultants are now able to feed at private and public money troughs because the word equality was replaced with the word equity. In addition to training, some consultants have expanded their services to include ‘equity audits.’

“A few of the hundreds or thousands of groups that offer training on diversity, equity and inclusion are: 1) Compliance Training Group; 2) Critical Diversity Solutions; 3) Linkage; 4) Hackman Consulting Group LLC; 5) Racial Equity Consultants; and 6) Joyce James Consulting. Joyce James Consulting is an example of how lucrative this training can be for consultants.

“Adam Cahn reported that Austin, Texas Taxpayers are paying \$10,000 per day for “advanced racial equity assistance“ to Joyce James Consulting. The training is for the city’s police officers. Cahn reports that the contract has a maximum of \$580,000 per year. Cahn also reports that Joyce James Consulting has contracts with other city departments. According to PJ Media, JJC currently has contracts with the city

for similar services worth more than \$3 million over the next three years.

“It’s an easy gig for you,’ left-leaning attorney Adam Loewy commented on Twitter. ‘Just say everything is racist in various ways and make \$10k per day.’ ‘Funny how we keep spending more and more on equity undoing [racism, CRT, etc.] but we keep growing racism exponentially,’ another replied.

“There are hundreds, or thousands of consultants available for DEI training. ‘Color of Change’ alone has a directory of hundreds of racial consultants. The Boston Foundation also has published a directory of racial equity consultants listing 141 different firms. It is comforting that so many consulting firms stand at the ready to assist America’s schools, government, and private sector entities in meeting their new found equity obligations. Their racial equity needs will be well taken of . . . at a rather large fee.”

Jeff Abbott. “Critical Race Theory.” The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 13-24, fall 2020.

2022 — Bread and Circuses

Jason Arp, a Fort Wayne councilman and designer of the independent web site IndianaScorecard.org, used experience from nine years as a trader in mortgaged-backed securities for Bank of America to show that various of his city’s economic-development projects made no fiscal sense and bordered on fraud.



Arp

That and his examination for us of the strong correlation between campaign donations and city contracts (see chart on next page) pushed his city in the right direction but rubbed the power structure wrong. Almost \$100,000 was spent in an unsuccessful attempt to stop his reelection, and that was for a district seat.

Nonetheless, he has written dozens of papers for the journal, all of them informative and many

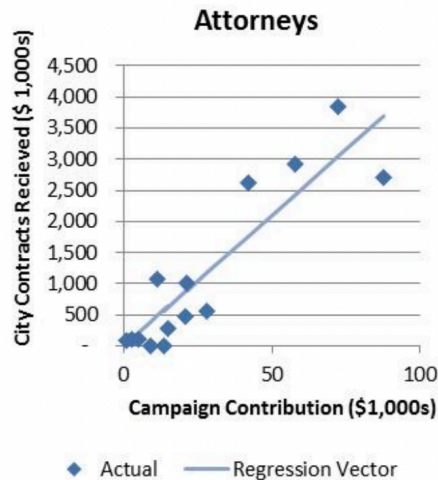
of them courageous for a sitting politicians. Together they constitute a bible of good municipal government. Most recently, he has taken on two popular political projects, both of which leverage tax dollars to no honest purpose. Here he relates the projects to the “bread and circuses” first identified by the poet Juvenal in ancient Rome, the practice of appeasing the masses with a combination of entertainment and free food:

“The cumulative impact of tax and entitlement legislation squashes any variation in net income for the bottom 60 percent of Americans. This destroys the financial incentive for working and doing well. The impact is even more severe when you factor in that the lowest quintile is dominated by single-adult households. When you adjust for this, the members of the fourth quintile (almost all holding jobs, by the way) actually bring home less income per capita than those in the fifth quintile (largely unemployed).

“Lightbulb moment: This is why firms can’t find workers and why the dining room at your local McDonald’s is so often closed.

“This realization was at about the same time that I attended the monthly meeting of the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission. The two pertinent items on the agenda were first a modification of the funding for the downtown municipal baseball park and second the initiation of a project to create a government-subsidized grocery store in an area deemed low-income using federal data.

“The ball park was subject to new regulations from Major League Baseball regarding additional locker-room facilities and lighting. The baseball park is often lauded as a success of local government and a good deal but its financing boils down to taxes funding 100 percent plus the ball club keeping the majority of the ticket sales and



Regression analysis of attorney contributions in typical Indiana mayoral election.

concessions. The Redevelopment Commission voted 3-2 to allocate more tax money from a TIF district to cover the club’s new costs (the circus part of the bread-and-circuses).

“The second vote was to take possession of donated property for the purpose of creating an ‘urban grocery.’ This would be an attempt to address the so-called “food desert” issue, the idea being that if a census track is deemed low-income and the residents are more than a mile away from a grocery then the residents are in a food dessert.

“My neighborhood, which is 3.5 miles from the nearest grocery would not qualify because the area is not low-income. But keep in mind there is a Kroger only 2 miles from the location of the proposed urban grocery, a joint venture between the city and an ostensibly not-for-profit group.

“The way this is supposed to work (the bread part of the bread-and-circuses) is that people in the designated area will be able to walk to this grocery and “purchase” food with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card, an electronic system that allows them to pay through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

“So here we are, nearly 2,000 years since Juvenal and in a society similar to Rome where more and more residents are simply declining to work. At the same time, we are seeing an astronomical rate of drug overdose and suicides among males age 18-45. Perhaps that is linked with the institutional destruction of the value of work, and then trying to gloss over all of this with subsidized entertainment in a stadium.”

Jason Arp. “The Bread-and-Circuses Return.” *The Indiana Policy Review*, Sept. 25, 2022. <https://inpolicy.org/2022/09/backgroundunder-the-bread-and-circus-returns/>

2022 — Wokeness Begone

Richard McGowan has taught philosophy and ethics cores for more than 40 years, most recently at Butler University. He has been a contributor who dared go where no one else would go, writing on the full range of “woke” ideology, including male-female relations and affirmative action. One could not wish for a brighter moral beacon.



McGowan

One of our favorites is one of his most recent, reprinted in full here because of its sensitive nature:

“Colleges and universities often appear to work on knowledge elimination. For instance, Critical Race Theory is usually taught with no mention of the ubiquitous presence of slavery through time and across cultures. Students would have a better grasp of history if they knew that Muslims had a thriving slave trade in Africa over 1,500 years ago or that indigenous populations in America practiced slavery. Were that sort of knowledge made more readily available to students, they would likely think in terms of the greater humanity and not in racially or ethnically charged pieces of humanity.

“Knowledge elimination of America’s indigenous populations is obvious, at least as their history is handled by Indiana University and its administration. As IU put the matter: ‘The First Nations Educational & Cultural Center and the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Multicultural Affairs are proud to support Native students in their pursuit of community and success at Indiana University. One way that campus partners can help promote a welcoming and informed community is by offering a land acknowledgement statement as part of an official welcome at the beginning of public meetings, presentations and gatherings.’ ‘The Cultural Center and Office of Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs

provided a model for recitation before events or classes:

“We wish to acknowledge and honor the Indigenous communities native to this region, and recognize that Indiana University Bloomington is built on Indigenous homelands and resources. We recognize the Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi and Shawnee people as past, present, and future caretakers of this land.’

“The land acknowledgement, as written, suggests that European settlers took land from pacifistic and peaceful indigenous populations; it does not address the state of affairs before European settlers ‘took over’ the land; nor does it address the U.S. government’s renegeing on contracts.

“An article in Scientific American stated ‘prominent scientists now deride depictions of pre-state people as peaceful.’ The article quoted Harvard’s renowned Steven Pinker: ‘Quantitative body counts — such as the proportion of prehistoric skeletons with ax marks and embedded arrowheads or the proportion of men in a contemporary foraging tribe who die at the hands of other men — suggest that pre-state societies were far more violent than our own.’

“The Canadian Government said in its article, ‘Warfare in PreColumbian North America’: ‘Despite the myth that Aboriginals lived in happy harmony before the arrival of Europeans, war was central to the way of life of many First Nation cultures. Indeed, war was a persistent reality in all regions though, as Tom Holm has argued, it waxed in intensity, frequency and decisiveness.’

“Nebraskastudies.org repeated the statement by Canadian government and Scientific American: ‘There were many Native American tribes living on the Great Plains, competing for scarce resources. Of course, the various tribes came into conflict with each other.’ The article discussed the ‘Conflicts Among the Tribes & Settlers,’ but the first two sentences declare that tribes fought each other long before settlers arrived.

In fact, warfare among indigenous populations has been well documented for decades. Douglas B. Bamforth in the British journal, *MAN*, observed in

1994 that 'archaeological data suggest that high casualty warfare was endemic in at least some parts of the Great Plains for hundreds of years prior to Western contact.'

"The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's 'Encyclopedia of the Great Plains' had this to say:

'Intertribal warfare was intense throughout the Great Plains during the 1700s and 1800s, and archaeological data indicate that warfare was present prior to this time. Human skeletons from as early as the Woodland Period (250 B.C. to A.D. 900) show occasional marks of violence, but conflict intensified during and after the thirteenth century . . . villages were often destroyed by fire and human skeletons show marks of violence, scalping and other mutilations.'

"Tribes didn't fight each other merely to fight. Scientific America noted that 'Some conflicts were waged for economic and political goals, such as gaining access to resources or territory, exacting tribute from another nation or controlling trade routes.'" Tribes fought for territory and control of the land. As thisisindiana.com said, "Many different Native American tribes have inhabited present-day Indiana over the span of thousands of years.'

"Oxford Reference's 'Native American Wars' notes that 'On the Western Plains, pre-Columbian warfare — before the introduction of horses and guns — pitted tribes against one another for control of territory and its resources, as well as for captives and honor. Indian forces marched on foot to attack rival tribes who sometimes resided in palisaded villages. Before the arrival of the horse and gun, battles could last days, and casualties could number in the hundreds.'

"Prior to the arrival of Columbus, Native Americans warred on one another — without the help or encouragement of 'outsiders' — and a big reason was for territory, property, land. For centuries, different tribes inhabited Indiana until they were driven out by other tribes or by choice. A thorough 'land acknowledgement' would recognize that taking land from others is a human problem, not just a European-settler problem.

And for many indigenous populations, the U.S. government's renegeing on contracts is the issue.

Richard McGowan, Ph.D. "Like It or Not, Savages Were Savage." The Indiana Policy Review, Aug. 31, 2022. <https://inpolicy.org/2022/08/mcgowan-savages-were-savage/>

2023 – The Uber-Local Election

A friend of the editor for 40 years, Dennis Ganahl was a publisher of small daily newspapers in Missouri before beginning a second career teaching journalism. Along the way, he became an expert at managing hyper-local election campaigns, everything from the presidency of the neighborhood association to state legislature. Ganahl's method hinges on the slogan, "Think globally but act locally."



Ganahl

Ganahl has lost only one of dozens of general and primary campaigns, putting an emphasis on shoe leather, yard signs and informed volunteers handing out fliers on election day. He has learned that local Democrats don't like to do any of that. They foolishly wait to be anointed by a fragmenting media. They place their signs where it is easiest — on right-of-ways where it is illegal and not in neighborhoods where the signs do some real good but require establishing personal relationships.

He most recently led a campaign that won a legislative primary against a Republican machine while being outspent 10:1. His candidate went on to win the general election last fall against labor interests, being outspent 3:1.

Ganahl, fittingly, is also an author of political satire, his latest about hillbillies, UFOs and Bigfoot entitled "Don't Shoot. We Come in Peace."

Putting on his serious hat, he has assembled for the foundation a 100-item checklist of what you need to know and do to win a local election. Right now he is working on a new cover project for the journal that will include a detailed Gannt

COVER ESSAY

chart of the tasks and timelines of a successful local campaign annotated with his personal experience. The idea is twofold: To provide candidates a blueprint of how to conduct a campaign but also to give donors an idea of what a local campaign should cost (per voter) and what a reasonable budget and organizational chart should look like. (Ganahl will cover all of this in a presentation at the foundation's annual Christmas seminar

Dec. 9 at the Charley Creek Inn of Wabash.)

The goal is that when a donor is asked to give a couple of thousand dollars to a mayoral campaign, he can ask, "For what exactly?" The answer should produce better candidates and better campaigns.

Dennis Ganahl, Ph.D. "How to Win a Local Election." The Indiana Policy Review, pp. 25-28, winter 2023.

Maryann O. Keating

Maryann O. Keating, Ph.D., a resident of South Bend and an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review Foundation, is co-author of "Microeconomics for Public Managers," Wiley/Blackwell. A version of this essay originally appeared in [adamsmithworks](#).



Our Lost Trust in Social Security

Those on the Right warn of the expansion and inefficiency of government. It is unsettling, however, to hear young adults dismiss any government assistance in protecting their personal retirement savings. Many young adults say they cannot count on future Social Security benefits.

A generation ago, crowds assembled around the country to hear President George Bush's proposals to keep Social Security solvent. His reforms were never implemented. Voters have learned to tune out budget hawks decrying the 118 percent debt-to-GDP ratio and the coming depletion of the Social Security trust fund.

Past changes and proposed changes to Social Security foster cynicism. Why? A more sincere discussion about the program is needed. The top priority should be to restore trust in Social Security and correct present program biases against labor force participation.

Cynicism is due to the fact that Social Security benefits are guaranteed to anyone contributing to the program for 10 years. Yet, twenty-somethings face several decades of labor force participation. Employer contributions aside, the personal Social Security payroll tax rate of 6.2 percent is capped at \$160,200 per person, with a high probability that government will increase the rate, eliminate the cap, or both. There is little expectation that paying higher premiums will increase future personal benefits or even maintain them.

In 1984, the Internal Revenue Service began to tax Social Security payments. Presently, on joint incomes between \$32,000 and \$44,000, 50

percent of SS benefits are taxed. For those couples who report higher incomes, up to 85 percent of benefits are subject to Federal taxation. Premiums for Medicare Part B also are adjusted for higher income retirees. The standard premium is \$164.90, but approximately 7 percent of individuals with modified adjusted gross income exceeding \$97,000 pay monthly Medicare premiums ranging up to \$553.30 per person. Nevertheless, despite taxed benefits and income adjusted Medicare premiums, present retirees tend to be less open to reforming the system; non-retirees, however, are legitimately concerned about policy changes chipping away promised benefits.

Social Security does continue to provide insurance against extreme financial distress for the elderly, the disabled and minor dependents of deceased participants. Youthful optimism about personal vulnerability contributes to discounting these benefits. Nevertheless, those holding physically demanding jobs realize the personal costs to them if the age for receiving full retirement is increased. Younger workers, even those in favor of subsidizing those in distress, are starting to realize that they alone must assume personal responsibility for funding their retirement.

Past and potential policy changes do not fully explain the loss of confidence in Social Security. Rather it is knowing that with a single vote or the stroke of a pen, government officials can change the rules and reduce any certainty about a participant's present and future financial well-being. Even those legitimately elected should be concerned about a loss of confidence in their administration. In Latin American and elsewhere, unrealistic transfer programs, cancellation of debts, disrespect of personal property, and loss of purchasing power create national instability and cynicism about a government's ability to rule.

A compulsory retirement contribution program, in addition to IRA plans, may be justified, but not one that is actuarially unsound, a drain on taxpayers, and arbitrarily distributes costs and benefits. The public realizes that what cannot continue will not continue. Will policymakers use pending Social Security insolvency as an opportunity for restoring

confidence in government? Will they have the courage to address generational concerns? Will needed reforms encourage rather than discourage labor force participation? Obviously, congressional deliberations in consultation with constituents, outraged or not, will ultimately determine the fate and shape of the program. However there is little harm in outlining three directions for Social Security reform capable of securing majorities.

First, if the goal of Social Security is to provide a floor income for retirees and dependents of deceased participants, it cannot be perceived as a welfare program or a means for redistributing income. Pensions must correspond to what beneficiaries have contributed, or, at least, offer some degree of certainty.

To offer certainty, suppose that basic monthly benefits for each participant were uniform and tied to the inflation-adjusted average living expenses for a single person residing in the US. Present average retirement and survivor monthly benefits are \$1735.35, or approximately 55 percent of a single person's average living expenses, \$3189.

Let's be generous and propose that each eligible participant were guaranteed 67 percent of single person's average annual income. Assuming that wages keep pace with prices, average life expectancy and years of labor force participation could be used to calculate a standard uniform payroll tax rate for employer and employee contributions. Given that every participant is guaranteed identical basic payments, contributions might actually be suspended after a participant reaches full retirement age.

Second, Americans often refer to a Social Security "lockbox". There are two interpretations to how this works. One naively believes that his or her personal contributions grow or remain intact in their name until retirement. Or, one is more realistic and believes correctly that excess contributions by all participants over and above distributions are held in a SS trust fund. Both the naïve and realistic views support the idea that contribution should never be allocated to finance other Federal expenditures. However, if Social Security is to operate as a stand-alone program, it can never count

on general taxpayer revenue to meet promised benefits once funds in the "lockbox" are exhausted.

A Social Security "lockbox" or trust fund, consisting primarily of U.S. Federal Debt, does exist but will be depleted in 2033 and promised payments to individuals reduced. Ideally, annual contributions, supplemented with a "lockbox" acting as a shock absorber, must be sufficient to avoid threatening taxpayers and the next generation with increased costs. This would require, given demographics and the state of the economy, that a standard payroll tax rate guaranteeing uniform benefits be reviewed every five years or so.

Finally, issues facing the U.S. mandated retirement program are not unique, and a study of similar programs is useful. For example, Swedish officials, at one point, agreed to no longer deceive voters; contributions became defined but benefits reduced in years when the general economy performs poorly. This insures that the program never runs a deficit. The Swedish government withholds payroll taxes collected on about 2.3 percent of wages, places them in individual pension accounts, and permits workers to place funds into five distinct investment options.

Australia's superannuation program is also government mandated but contributions are privately managed in a variety of investment funds. Australians closely follow their accounts and can reduce their income tax liability by topping up their "Super." This creates an incentive for those partially rather than fully disabled to seek appropriate employment.

US policymakers should consider directing some portion of mandatory Social Security contributions to personal accounts. Ownership, permitting one to accrue transferable assets, is an incentive to participate in the labor force, gain financial skills needed for well-being, and maintain trust in government. There is always a risk associated with personal assets but not necessarily more than for Treasuries held in the Social Security "lockbox." There is an even greater level of uncertainty knowing that officials can both increase your mandatory contributions and reduce your future personal benefits with the stroke of a pen. ♦

Eric Schansberg

Eric Schansberg, Ph.D., an adjunct scholar of the foundation, is professor of economics at Indiana University Southeast. This is reprinted with permission from the fall 2021 issue of the *Cato Journal*, all rights reserved.



We All Stereotype

This year is the 100th anniversary of the term “stereotype” in its modern sense. The term was coined in the late-19th century to describe printing plates and the setting of “type” to produce printed materials. Back in the day, paper and ink were pressed against a plate to produce sheets for newspaper, books, fliers, etc.

The word was derived from the Greek for “firm or solid” (stereos) and “impression” (typos). So, the term was certainly appropriate for printing. But it was eventually absorbed into broader use as any image that was reproduced to represent an original. Then, in his 1922 book, Walter Lippmann tweaked the term into what has become its contemporary definition: the “solid impression” made by a group characteristic to our estimation of an individual or an individual situation.

So, for example, based on your experiences or your sense of the data, you might assume that a movie with a certain actress will be good; a big man is intimidating; or a person with glasses is smart. You’re stereotyping the individual by the groups to which they belong — whether the stores where they shop, the political or religious labels they claim, or the car they drive.

As you’ve probably noticed, this is a form of discrimination — because we “pre-judge” (i.e., engage in “prejudice”) for or against individuals, based on their group affiliations. The concept is universal; we all engage in what labor economists call “statistical discrimination.” Why? We’re making important decisions with limited information. Why do we rely on limited information? Because it is costly to obtain. Since

we don’t have access to perfect, costless information, we use what we have easily available: what we know about the individual and stereotypes about the groups to which they belong.

The information we have about individuals may not be fully accurate, given miscommunication, our misperceptions, our limited history with them, etc. But the information about groups is clearly imperfect: It’s about a group of people with certain tendencies. The individual we’ve encountered in the group is likely to share the group’s characteristics, but it’s certainly not guaranteed. That said, the information is often better than nothing — and it’s inexpensive. This explains why all of us stereotype so often.

Let’s start with an innocuous example: You’ve been asked to obtain a 12-ounce can of green beans at the grocery and there are only two left on the shelf. Both are the same price. One has a dent; the other does not. Which do you choose — and why? Most people would choose the undented can because they’re worried about the can’s contents. Do you know that the dented can is a problem — or that the undented can is not a problem? No, but your sense of the probabilities is that the undented can is a safer way to get through dinner. So, you stereotype the cans and statistically discriminate in favor of the undented can.

Let’s think through two meatier applications. First, consider the power of “first impressions.” Why are they so important? Because we’re meeting people who have little information about us — and the first impression will necessarily carry a lot of weight, through direct knowledge of us and indirect information about the categories we represent.

Second, consider the job market. Prospective employees go through an application process. What are employers looking for? Your categories: job experience, education, references and so on. None of those are direct information about you; they’re signals about the sort of worker you’re likely to be.

Are you applying for a mid-level management position and you misspelled something in your

cover letter? Good luck to you. It doesn't mean you're a bad person or a lousy worker, but you're sending a signal that you don't care enough to proof-read carefully and you've put yourself in a rough category.

And then there's the interview. How did you dress? How was your handshake? Were you personable? Were you quick on your feet? With relatively limited information — much of it based on stereotypes — they'll decide whether to hire you or not.

You might be thinking “this isn't fair.” Perhaps, but it's reality — and how all of us make decisions.

If your last four occasions with x have been pleasant or unpleasant, won't this impact what you expect on the fifth occasion?

How do we avoid the pitfalls of this concept? Unlike the term stereotype which implies a “firm or solid impression,” we should hold our stereotypes as lightly as possible — and be open to new (low-cost) information as it becomes available. Acknowledge your stereotyping and look to get better information. — *(Dec. 25)*

Dick McGowan

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



'Go Red' for Heart Health (Women and Men)

I can thank my wife that I am vertical. Her father died of a heart attack before he reached age 50; she knew heart disease ran in her family. Her doctor asked that she undergo several tests to ensure her heart health. During one of those visits, her doctor said it would be a good thing were I to do some of the diagnostic scans that she had undertaken.

Two months later, on Valentine's Day no less, I had a triple bypass for arteries that were 90 percent, 75 percent, and 60 percent occluded. Had I not had a series of diagnostic tests, a heart attack was my fate.

I had little awareness of my precarious state. In fact, I'd bicycled over 3,000 miles by December, mostly on Indy's Monon Trail and the rural roads of Westfield.

My experience was typical. As a 2020 article noted, "Prehospital delay is common among first-timer ACS [acute coronary syndrome] patients from both sexes, and thus, increasing awareness about ACS among the public from all age groups is necessary."

That observation is consistent with an article from 2008. Jensen and Moser stated, after reviewing literature on heart disease, "Overall, knowledge of heart disease, identification of risk factors for coronary artery disease, signs and symptoms of acute myocardial infarction (AMI) was poor for both men and women. The perception that women are less knowledgeable than men about heart disease was not consistent in the literature reviewed. In fact, in some studies, women were more knowledgeable than men in the

identification of risk factors and less common symptoms of AMI."

I could have been part of an unfortunate group. According to a Harvard Medical School report, "Throughout life, heart attacks are twice as common in men than women." And heart attacks and other coronary diseases lead to mortality.

Indiana displays that pattern of mortality. According to IN.gov, males 35 years and older died at a rate of 448/100,000 people while females were at 273/100,000 people. Heart disease is the leading cause of death nationally and in Indiana for both sexes. National data show that men have a 1 in 4 chance of succumbing to heart disease and women have a 1 in 5 chance. Or, men are 20 percent more at risk of death from heart disease, would that men have that awareness.

Women are more likely to have the awareness of heart disease because of the American Heart Association. That organization sponsors a 'Go Red for Women Day' each year. Type "Go Red for Men" into the google search engine and sites for 'Go Red for Women' appear. This year, the 'Go Red for Women' day in Indianapolis is Feb. 17, for Fort Wayne it is May 12, and for Michiana March 3. It is good that women become more aware of heart disease; "Why? Because losing even one woman to cardiovascular disease is too many," as the "Go Red for Woman" website states. I agree.

I also agree that losing one man to cardiovascular disease is too many.

If the American Heart Association were serious about reducing or ending heart disease, it would simply say "Go Red for Heart Health" and not ignore the sex that is more likely to suffer heart disease and heart disease death.

It would be better for everyone were the campaign inclusive and not neglect the sex most at risk. — (Jan. 31)

IU and 'the Magna Charta Universitatum'

What's to become of American universities, including Indiana University? If we look across the pond, i.e., the

Atlantic, we can see a reaffirmation of traditional ideas on what a university should be. Those ideas are rooted in history.

The University of Bologna, the oldest university in the Western world, celebrated its 900th anniversary in 1988. To mark its continuous operation for so many centuries, regents from many European universities gathered at Bologna and produced the Magna Charta Universitatum, a two-page document stating the principles at the core of university governance.

The preamble to the Charta provided several justifications for its creation. The university leaders said that “the future of mankind depends largely on cultural, scientific and technical development,” which involves “centres of culture, knowledge and research as represented by true universities.” Further, the “universities’ task” is “spreading knowledge among younger generations.” Finally, “Universities must give future generations education and training that will teach them, and through them, others, to respect the great harmonies of their natural environment and of life itself.” The preamble also said that the educational leaders of ‘European Universities’ were “looking forward to far-reaching co-operation between all European nations.” It noted an “increasingly international society.”

When the Charta was created, 388 institutional signatories affirmed the document. The Charta was revised in 2020 and today there are 947 signatory institutions, including Indiana University. IU is one of only 22 signatories in the United States. By comparison, Ukraine has over 50 signatories and Kazakhstan over 65 signatories.

The principles underlying universities were identified. “The first principle was independence: research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests.” The second said “teaching and research should be inseparable, with students engaged in the search for knowledge and greater understanding.” The third principle identified

“the university as a site for free enquiry and debate, distinguished by its openness to dialogue and rejection of intolerance.” Therefore, universities must reject “Intolerance and always be open to dialogue.”

The mottos of American universities reflect the Charta’s principles, especially the third principle. Harvard’s motto is simply Veritas, or truth. Yale’s is Lux et Veritas, or “light and truth.” IU’s motto, Lux et Veritas, copied Yale’s motto.

Students who shout down speakers violate the third principle, as do administrators who react to disruptive students with indifference. Administrators also fail to follow the third principle when they disinvite speakers after the speakers have accepted an invitation to appear on campus. To IU’s credit, controversial speakers Tom Woods in 2010, Pastor Douglas Wilson in 2012 and Charles Murray in 2017 were not disinvited by the school’s administrators.

The second principle states what is expected from students. They should be “engaged in the search for knowledge and greater understanding.” As articles in *The Indiana Policy Review* have shown, universities are changing, hiding and distorting history. However, the very conception of the Magna Charta Universitatum provides ample evidence that knowledge of history matters — and not just history since 1619. Critical Race Theory ignores the millennia prior to 1619, a time when slavery was ubiquitous. As well, the history of indigenous populations has been truly and wholly ignored. The historical plaque on Michigan’s Copper Peak ski flying jump states that the land was occupied by “the Hopewell Indians . . . later the Woodlands Indians, followed by the Ojibway. They were driven out . . . by the strong Iroquois Nation.”

In other words, history shows that warfare among the indigenous populations existed well before 1492, whether universities choose to shed light on this truth or not. Instead, universities like IU not merely ignore, but distort that history. IU’s First Nations Educational & Cultural Center and the Office of the Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Multicultural Affairs promote a “land

acknowledgement” statement at the beginning of public meetings. The land acknowledgement exhibits no knowledge of the combative history indigenous groups displayed.

What about “students engaged in the search for knowledge”? Would well-documented but contrary ideas and data be accepted or, minimally, be examined? Or would data that call popular narratives into question be ignored, dismissed or hidden? The answer to those questions gets to the heart of the first principle: “teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests.”

As Indiana University’s mission suggests, the principle should apply not only to the classroom but throughout the campus, too. What is taught to students by having women’s studies but no men’s studies? Or women’s centers but no men’s centers? We suspect that students are taught that one sex is irrelevant.

The principles found in the Magna Charta Universitatum, if followed rigorously, would serve students well. When universities pick and choose which knowledge is transmitted, they are going against their edicts and dumbing down society.

They misplace trust and do a disservice to students. Maybe the motto should be *Lux et Nisi Aliquam Veritas*, “Light and Only Some Truth.”

— (Jan. 27) *With Tyler McGowan, a civil engineer, grew up in Indianapolis. He currently oversees the dismantling of Three Mile Island.*

The Poster Children for Capitalism

A person once wrote, “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: abolition of private property.” Besides strong socialists, who would agree with that statement?

Despite his statements about millionaires and billionaires, Bernie Sanders would not likely agree to the abolition of private property. He himself is a millionaire, with a net worth of approximately 2.5 million dollars. In his defense, he stated “I wrote a best-selling book. If you write a best-selling book, you can be a millionaire, too.”

A better defense would have been to address how he became a multi-millionaire over the course of his lifetime. He worked hard for the millions. He did not inherit his wealth nor was it given to him. He grew up in a lower middle-class family in New York City. His father, like my mother, was an immigrant; he had a sales job. His mother, like my mother, stayed home to take care of the children.

His father and mother imparted the immigrant’s notion that hard work will produce success. Sanders went from lower to upper middle class by dint of hard work, including as a preschool teacher, a carpenter and a psychiatric aide. He was elected mayor of Burlington, Vermont, in 1981 and pursued a career in politics thereafter.

Senator Sanders rose from a humble background to a presidential contender. And yes, he did write a best-seller in 2016. He now owns three houses, worth about \$1.5 million. He could be a poster child for capitalism and free markets, despite his public utterances. The abolition of private property would not sit well with Senator Sanders.

Would the abolition of private property sit well with Elizabeth Warren? Forbes puts her wealth at about \$12 million. She has two residences, one in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and one in Washington, D.C. The house in Cambridge is 3,726 square feet (the average single-family home is roughly 2,500 square feet) with two bedrooms and 3½ baths. When Senator Warren is working in the capital, she uses a two-bedroom, two-bath condo. Between the two residences, she has \$4 million in property.

She did not inherit her wealth or ‘strike it rich’ somehow. Forbes says Senator Warren “grew up poor in Oklahoma, as the youngest of four. Her father was a maintenance man, and her mother worked as a minimum-wage employee at Sears.” She dropped out of college to get married, went to Texas following her husband’s job, got a degree and relocated to New Jersey. She earned a law degree from Rutgers while taking care of their child.

She taught at several universities and she “served as a consultant, mediator, writer of amicus briefs or expert witness.” She also published books on bankruptcy law and the middle class throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Senator Warren’s history shows a hard-working, energetic, talented person. Like any successful person, some luck was involved but she made the most of whatever luck she had.

Her life as a deca-millionaire suggests that she opposes the abolition of private property, though she often speaks out against private property and the wealthy, much like Bernie Sanders. However, she too could be a poster child for private property and free markets.

As a matter of fact, Senators Sanders and Warren are not alone in enjoying the right to private property. The 20 wealthiest congress persons (with #20 at \$26.7 million and #1 at \$200.3 million) enjoy the right to private property, too. Of the top 20, ten are Democrats and ten are Republicans. Mike Braun is among that lot.

The man who wrote, “the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: abolition of private property,” spawned all sorts of socialist schemes. Looking at folks such as Senators Sanders and Warren, that man, Karl Marx, must be spinning in his grave.

On the other hand, Sanders and Warren are happy enjoying strong property rights. — (*Jan. 10*)

John Locke Wishes You a Happy New Year

Englishman John Locke wrote over 3,000 letters to luminaries in England, France, Netherlands and other European countries. His ideas appear in American documents and provide the foundation for our government. However, during his lifetime, his arguments and reasoning brought him under attack severe enough for him to exile himself to the Netherlands. Locke was an ardent Christian espousing love over power. Here might be his New Year’s wishes for 2023:

Most Esteemed Sir and Gentle Madam,

I write that the blessings of the Lord be upon your house and all who dwell there, that the message of the New Year be heard. it would please me to know of your good health and the solicitous rectitude that guides your heart and mind to all brethren, especially in these loud and disputatious times with uncivil words and anger commonplace.

Such is the nature of the season, that we follow “the Prince of Peace” and ask to be forgiven by those whom we have transgressed and forgive those who transgressed our selves. When Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence that we have rights to “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” he understood me incompletely. I reiterated that the law of Nature, “which is reason, teaches . . . that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.” My desire to be understood completely, especially regarding property, though put aside by Mr. Jefferson, need not be an occasion of ill will.

Though people may disagree with some of my ideas and misrepresent them, I would not persecute them, for “if anyone maintain that men ought to be compelled by fire and sword to profess certain doctrines” that “is altogether incredible” and opposed to Truth. As I dwell on the matter, I may say, further, “I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristically mark of the true church.” I counsel all of us to listen, think and discuss, abandoning malice and hate, and to keep the season of peace.

As well, ill will does not befit those who have heedlessly and negligently heaped calumny upon my ideas and arguments, ignoring or neglecting my sentiments regarding the necessity of charity. Some say I counseled unlimited possession of property since I wrote that once a person “has mixed his labor with what nature has provided,” that much has a person affixed as his property. “It will perhaps be objected to this that ‘if gathering acorns, or other fruits of the earth, etc. makes a right to them, then anyone may engross as much as he will.’ To which I answer: not so.” We are allowed property “at least where

there is enough and as good left in common for the others.”

“This measure did confine every man’s possession to a very moderate proportion,” though some will have more than others. In such a situation as a man may find himself, that he have greater abundance than his neighbor, I recommended charity. For “every one as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he as much as he can to preserve the rest of mankind.” Share “what God has given” you with others.

This new year, nay, in every season, “proceed from charity, love, and goodwill.”

Your most affectionate friend and humble servant,

John Locke

Leo Morris

Leo Morris, columnist for The Indiana Policy Review, is winner of the Hoosier Press Association's award for Best Editorial Writer. Morris, as opinion editor of the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel, was named a finalist in editorial writing by the Pulitzer Prize committee.



No Right Turn on Red — Maybe

(March 6) — As someone with libertarian instincts, I've always considered traffic regulations to be the quintessence of the law's potential.

The rules are uncomplicated and well-known. They do not judge why we take our trips or whence we came and where we are going. They exist solely to keep us as safe on the road as possible, especially to protect the innocent from the mistakes of the careless and the indifference of the arrogant.

We all give our implied consent to abide by the rules of the road when we accept a driver's license, so there's no question that all are bound by them. The officers on the front line have some discretion to exercise independent judgment — to give out a warning citation instead of a speeding ticket, for example — but not enough to invite widespread corruption.

Elegant, pragmatic, effective. If all our laws were designed around those principles, we'd have a much saner society.

But leave it to the “no government is enough government” members of the Bloomington City Council to take something pure and simple and complicate it beyond all recognition.

The regulation in question is a state law allowing vehicles to make a right turn against a red traffic signal “if the way is clear from oncoming traffic and there is no sign prohibiting it.” Left on red is also allowed from one one-way street to another, with the same provisos.

Note the “if the way is clear” admonition. If you turn on red and have an accident, you're very likely liable; you have not been relieved of the responsibility to drive safely.

Bloomington, however, chose to focus on the “if there is no sign prohibiting it” part. Because it has so many downtown streets swarming with pedestrians and bicyclists, largely from Indiana University, the City Council came up with a list of intersections where turning on red is illegal.

82 of them.

Yes, 82. Though the city has erected signs at all of them, there is apparently widespread confusion among drivers, which is creating bottlenecks at many intersections, some at which it is difficult to make a turn of any kind. The city is responding with more visible signs and a press release listing all the forbidden intersections.

Perhaps the press release will help motorists with the several hours it will take them to plan a trip through downtown Bloomington. Or perhaps they will just give up on going there at all, which might have been the goal in the first place. (When I am in a conspiracy mode, I'm convinced that is the whole point of roundabouts.)

Common sense should dictate that a rule with 82 exceptions is not really a rule. The city would be better off just announcing at all city limits that “turn on red” is not allowed in Bloomington. Perhaps right below the sign announcing that “anti-marijuana laws are not enforced in this city.”

It is not stressed enough these days, but the law must be arbitrary. That's the only way it works. We cannot expect officials to determine on a case by case basis whether, for example, some people are mature enough to drink at age 15 and some are not at age 30. So, a “reasonable” age is arrived at, and a line is drawn.

When the laws draw bold, clear lines between the forbidden and the permitted. It keeps society together. Those lines not only protect us from the worst in each other; they let us know day in and day out what is expected of us, and we must be assured that they apply to all of us all of the time equally.

Of all the nonsense churned out in the 1960s – and heaven knows there was a mountain of it – the absolute dumbest was the notion that “you can’t legislate morality.”

But that is precisely and specifically what the law does attempt to do. Morality is our struggle to do good by behaving properly and prevent harm by avoiding improper behavior. As many observers have noted – often to great excess – actions that are deemed good or bad change over time and throughout cultures. We struggle with defining them and living up to them.

The best we can do, as a society, is try to abide the rules of good and bad behavior we can agree on and put them down in black and white. Those are the laws that become our rules of the road in life.

And the more exceptions to the rule, the more the rule itself is open to debate. On or off the road.

Deference, Sir, Is no Crime

(Feb. 27) — I was not raised to say “sir” or “ma’am,” so those words have never been part of my regular vocabulary, except for three years in the Army when they were forced on enlisted personnel as the required way to address officers.

I say this without regret or pride. It’s simply a fact of my life and, perhaps, gives me some objectivity on the question of whether those forms of address are important to an ordered society and whether their disappearance should be lamented or celebrated.

That they are disappearing is not in dispute. They are the remnants of a more formal age when people left calling cards and gentlemen tipped their hats to ladies. This is very much an informal age in which few restaurants dare to have dress codes and men wear baseball caps backwards.

And that’s just fine with some people.

We should all be looking for “more modern ways to be polite and show respect to people of all ages and genders,” writes Anna Lee Beyer for the lifehacker.com website.

Devotees to “sir” and “ma’am,” she writes, “say they expect children to say it to show respect, or

maybe they say it to show respect (maybe someone in their family tree showed them manners and, by god, they listened). But I’m not sure at this point if we are talking about respect, or deference and obedience. Teaching children to be unquestionably submissive and obedient is obviously problematic.”

I think she is confusing “respect” (or, heaven forbid, deference and obedience) with “politeness.” It has been my observation that people growing up in a “sir” and “ma’am” culture have not been taught to meekly yield to perceived authority but, rather, to be civil, courteous and well-mannered in their social encounters until and unless experience dictates otherwise.

It’s the same culture that encourages people to say please and thank you, to make others feel comfortable instead of asking them too-personal questions, to not interrupt, to disagree while still being kind and to accept criticism with equanimity, to neither spread nor solicit gossip. In other words, to behave decently toward others.

Anybody think there’s too much of that going around today? You, sir? How about you, ma’am?

To be fair, the author does acknowledge the need for civility in our lives. She just thinks we can do it without teaching children “to continually sort themselves into groups that do or don’t deserve respect.”

We absolutely must use our words in a way that does not “make assumptions about or potentially offend the person we are talking to.” We should avoid the risk of “misgendering trans, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people.” Or offending “people who feel young but associate the word (sir or ma’am) with age.” Or use a term that can be offensive to older women. Or confuse children growing up in an atmosphere of mutual respect “by the special rules for some people based on their age, gender or geography.” Or expressing an “unsettling throwback to requiring people of color to say ‘sir’ or ‘ma’am’ to the white people they served.”

That seems like a whole lot of baggage to put on two simple words. Elevating people who don’t deserve it but expect it. Denigrating people who

will be further downtrodden by all our wanton displays of politeness.

What about the older, white male who happens to be the most decent person you've ever met? Or the youthful, transgender person of color who is a selfish, dishonest jerk? Would we be better off to live in a world in which, until we got to really know them, we said "sir" or "ma'am" to both of them or neither of them? I think there is more riding on that question than we want to admit.

Spanish-speaking people have a better handle on this sort of thing. They don't have just one second-person tense the way English speakers do. They have an informal way to address someone they know well or are more or less equal to and a formal tense for those they have just met or whose status is unknown to them. They gradually ease from one tense to the other as they go along.

Sort of levels the playing field.

In my Army days, I encountered the "sir" and "ma'am" culture at its worst, being forced to show absolute respect for people who may or may not have deserved it. I don't think it made me a better person, but I can't say it did me any great harm, either. It did allow me to navigate an environment in which everyone knew the rules and followed them.

Such certainty is not a bad foundation for civilized behavior. Bringing "sir" and "ma'am" back into play would not be the worst thing we ever did.

Reversing '1984'

(Feb. 20) — While we were all busy monitoring the General Assembly as it slogged through proposed legislation, the Indiana Supreme Court sneaked a pretty big development in on us.

After an apparently successful experiment in several jurisdictions, the justices have authorized judges throughout the state to allow cameras in courtrooms if they wish. Hoosier voyeurs, rejoice — our time has come.

I could offer a constitutional justification for the move. We are guaranteed the right to a public trial, and the meaning of "public" has changed in

the electronic age. We no longer have to be present in person if cameras can bring the action to our viewing screens.

Or I could fall back on the journalistic devotion to "the public's right to know," not just the conduct or outcome of a particular trial, but the workings of the justice system overall, in case they should ever be caught up in it themselves.

But I will just be honestly personal and say I prefer seeing things for myself instead of being told about it by observers of unknown reliability.

I want to be like one of the jurors and proclaim "I can do that" when the judge tells us to consider the evidence presented in court and only that evidence in reaching a verdict. I will not care about the prosecutor's passionate outburst or the defense attorney's flashy outfit or the defendant's transgressions in the second grade or the opinions delivered by my next-door neighbor, the quickly drafted expert on the evening news or the earnest editorial writer in the local newspaper.

I want to be an ordinary citizen, properly skeptical of the prosecutor's case, giving the defendant the benefit of the doubt but willing to be convinced of his guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt."

I guess that's the way I approach everything, skeptical but willing to be convinced. That's why firsthand knowledge is so much more valuable than secondhand accounts or, increasingly prevalent these days, thirdhand speculation about secondhand accounts.

And why permitting cameras in the courtroom represents a welcome addition to government's recent and reluctant commitment to greater transparency, giving citizens at least a small glimpse of how our public servants operate.

Body cams on police officers. Live broadcasts of city council and school board meetings. C-Span poking its lenses into any corner of Congress it is able to. State Web sites that publish the texts of proposed laws.

All that adds to the potential of an informed citizenry, but it does not go nearly far enough. We should want to see and hear much, much more about what our officials are up to.

So, I have a proposal. I think it modest, but in case you think it would be too intrusive, just consider for a moment how much the zone of privacy has shrunk for ordinary citizens.

While you are sitting on your couch, just cruising online, every site you visit is monitored, and what you purchase is tracked. Your “smart” appliances probably know more about you than you would care to divulge. As soon as you leave the house, your phone (and possibly your car as well) knows where you go and when you go there. Wherever you visit, you are likely to be followed by cameras, paid for with your tax dollars. You are in more databases than you dare to imagine.

We no longer have to dread the nightmarish surveillance state of “1984.” We are living it.

So why should not our public officials, who actually seek the spotlight and loss of privacy that involves, but also work to constantly erode our sense of autonomy, be subjected to even more scrutiny than ordinary citizens?

Therefore, my modest proposal, which we might call a reverse “1984.” All those who are elected to public office, from the lowliest township official to the president of the United States, must wear body cameras for the duration of their tenures.

We can allow them some private moments – in the bathroom, for example, or in the bedroom, especially when with a significant other. Otherwise, the cameras must be on at all times, even at times we ordinarily think of as sacrosanct. How many important legislative proposals might start as simple conversations over the dining room table?

The feeds from all those cameras will be live all the time in a special Internet zone, and they will be archived forever, always available for scrutiny by any member of the electorate. Any official with an unexplained gap in footage will be brought before a citizens committee, under threat of indictment and subject to severe penalties for perjury, to explain the lapse.

We don’t want to be hasty with the proposal. We can be properly cautious like the Indiana Supreme Court and try it out as an experiment in

just one jurisdiction – the General Assembly might be a good place to start – before the plan is rolled out universally. It might not give us better state laws, but at least we’d know for sure which politicians to run out of the state.

Let’s get going on this. We need to really put “public” in the concept of public servant.

Sniffing Out the State Smell

(Feb. 13) – I am not the world’s greatest housekeeper, so if you enter my home, you are likely to detect a musty, stale odor or two.

I don’t notice them myself. Being around them all the time, I can easily forget they are even there.

You’ve undoubtedly experienced the phenomenon. You visit a friend really into pets and are assaulted with the strong smell of wet dog fur or an unemptied cat litter box. But the longer you stay, the less bothered you are by the fragrant air.

At the extreme, this olfactory peculiarity is why you can take a bathing break during vacation and walk around all stinky and sweaty, obliviously happy, though friends will stop calling you and strangers will cross the street to avoid you. If Robert Burns had thought about it, he might have wished for some power the giftie gie us to smell ourselves as others smell us.

It’s called nose blindness, also known as olfactory fatigue or olfactory adaptation. It’s the brain’s way of filtering out scents we are frequently or constantly exposed to as a way to avoid sensory overload. It also helps us detect a sudden, out-of-the-ordinary smell like burning toast or a gas leak.

And thank goodness there is such a thing, or people in at least a couple of Indiana localities would probably go mad.

My apologies if folks there have addressed the problem in the few years since I passed through these places, but the odors were so powerful I’m surprised I didn’t drive the car off the road.

One place was Westville in Northwest Indiana, which had a company that collected and refined waste oil. Stench. The other was along U.S. 30

somewhere around Plymouth, where rumors had it there was a rendering plant. Gag-inducing, eye-watering, double stench.

Neither one of those smells, it is safe to say, will be under consideration if Indiana legislators endeavor to designate an official Hoosier odor.

And they certainly will, if only to keep up with New Mexico in the great Pointlessly Bestowing State Imprimatur sweepstakes. The legislature of the Land of Enchantment (its official nickname, of course) has become the first in the nation to consider an official state aroma.

And that aroma is the smell of green chiles roasting on an open flame. I have no idea why New Mexicans identify with the aroma, given the above-mentioned nose blindness. Perhaps visitors from Arizona or Colorado were driving through and kept remarking, “Ooh, that smell.” (I am not going to make the Lynyrd Skynyrd reference you thought I might, so settle down.)

But gauntlet thrown. What smell could we come up with as the official Hoosier aroma?

No fair coming up with a sweet aroma universally considered pleasing, like vanilla or freshly ground coffee or roses or warm spring rain. Likewise, we can’t dredge up a universally detested odor to mock-disparage our state, such as sweaty feet or overflowing sewers.

We need an odor that is distinctly, uniquely specific to Indiana.

There is a company that makes candles with state-specific scents, and for Indiana it has chosen “a light vanilla finish balanced by coconut and white musk,” which is supposed to evoke memories of “summer festivals in the Hoosier state, from kettle corn and hay to selvedge denim.” I dunno. Sounds to me more like what you’d smell in a room with bean bag chairs and blacklight posters on the wall.

When I moved from a rural area to the great urban center of Fort Wayne, I detected a sharp change in odors, from a mixture of growing plants and animal excretions and laundry on the line to a blend of concrete dust, automotive exhaust and wafting cooking vapors. I have since thought of them as the “country smell” and the “city smell,”

but I don’t know that either one of them, or a combination thereof, would be peculiarly Indiana.

Quite the conundrum.

But I think our legislators are up to the task. Any group of people with the creative depth to designate a state fossil and the courage to name a state sandwich can surely handle sorting through all the available odors and proudly declaring one of them to be our very own. They must be the best collection of great minds since the Founders met in Philadelphia or even since Plato learned from Socrates and then taught Aristotle.

Or perhaps I have just been around them too long.

Good Advice from Mitch Daniels

(Feb. 6) — If you were a hall monitor back in your school days, I apologize for the insult, but I did not care for your kind.

I was one of the crossing guards, and we considered ourselves a far superior breed.

Crossing guards stood at busy intersections, brave young arms extended, to keep dimwitted classmates from rushing out in front of demon cars. We were true public servants, and courageous ones at that, since in those unenlightened days we were allowed to perform the task without adult supervision.

Hall monitors roamed the corridors just before class start times in search of hapless friends without passes, eager to turn in their names to authorities in the naïve belief that this somehow made them part of the power structure. They were, if you’ll pardon the expression, wannabe goody two-shoes.

To put it into modern political terms, and to paraphrase the great Ronald Reagan, crossing guards were like the public officials who get elected to do something, and the hall monitors were like the ones who get elected to be something.

Which brings us to former Gov. Mitch Daniels, who also referenced the Reagan quote in announcing that he will not be seeking the U.S.

Senate seat about to be vacated by fellow Republican Mike Braun.

I'm not here to defend Daniels' record. I liked some of his accomplishments (cutting the government workforce and capping property taxes), remain ambivalent about some (getting a one-time, upfront payment for privatization of the toll road) and strongly object to some (pushing through the despicable Daylight Saving Time).

But I've always liked and admired him as a public figure, and I've never doubted his integrity in pursuing his visions for policy or his sincerity in explaining his reasons for them.

So I believe him when he says, elaborating on the Reagan quote, that he has a preference for the "citizen servant approach to public life. I believe that politics and government are worthy pursuits, which men and women of good will should undertake if they can, not as a life's work or an end in itself, but to try to ensure that the important realms of society – the private economy, our voluntary associations, local communities and neighborhoods – can all flourish."

The concept of "citizen servant" is one of those elemental ideas that looked great on paper but never quite worked in the real world. Clearly, the Founders envisioned politics as a mechanism for getting ordinary people into and out of public office. But it almost immediately became a lifelong pursuit for those in a whole new class of professional politicians eager to belong to the Ruling Elite.

As a result we have far too many people who seek office to be something, far too few who want to really do something, in the sense that Reagan and Daniels meant. We have too many hall monitors who want to massage and manage us, the equivalent of chiding us for being late to class, and too few crossing guards who would try to keep danger at bay but otherwise let us simply live our lives.

And it can be a fine line, public servants who start out seeking to do but get sucked into the allure of just being in a class above the common herd.

Just consider that Braun has tasted the life of a senator and now wants to be governor. Jim Banks is already a representative but now wants that Senate seat. Have they crossed the line from doing into being? They should honestly ask themselves that question, and voters should think about it, too.

And whoever gets that Senate seat should heed these words from Daniels:

"People obsessed with politics or driven by personal ambition sometimes have difficulty understanding those who are neither. I hope to be understood as a citizen and patriot who thought seriously, but not tediously, about how to be deserving of those labels . . ."

Yes, you, too, can be a crossing guard, even if you're a recovering hall monitor.

The 'Packsaddle Librarians'

(Jan. 30) – They were known by various names – the book women, the book ladies, the packsaddle librarians.

From 1935 to 1943, they rode through the hills of Depression-era Appalachia, hundreds of miles a week on difficult trails through sometimes awful weather, circulating a few books, magazines and greatly outdated newspapers to people living in isolated mountain cabins in areas where there were no libraries and few schools.

About 30 packhorse libraries reached between 100,000 and 600,000 people and also provided books for about 155 schools in the counties they served. The women were paid \$28 a month by FDR's Works Progress Administration and had to provide their own mounts – horses, mules, even donkeys. Sometimes they went by boat, and sometimes they walked.

And the women did something even more remarkable. They harvested knowledge as well as dispensing it. They collected recipes, folk remedies, local history lore, prayers and songs and other items and pasted them into scrapbooks, which they also circulated among their patrons. They even put together picture books for the children.

In 1956, Kentucky Rep. Carl D. Perkins, who had benefitted from the program as a teacher in Knott County, sponsored the Library Services Act, which provided the first federal appropriations for library service.

I was raised in Eastern Kentucky, but too late to benefit from the book women's efforts. Until we were old enough for school, my brother and sister and I had to make do with the few books our parents could afford, which became worn and ragged and finally fell apart from overuse.

I've been an obsessive collector of books ever since. The overflow at my house is stacked up on one side of the staircase to the second floor, even though most of my reading these days is on an e-reader. One of the greatest discoveries in my Indiana teenage years was that the bookmobile came to within half a block of my house, delivering precious copies of science fiction by Robert Heinlein and Ray Bradbury and saving me long treks to the library.

In these days of the great political divide, we can't seem to talk about anything without rancorous argument, even books, and lately especially books. We are at odds over what is in them, where they are, who has access to them, what use might be made of them.

We lose sight of the big picture. Books are the repository of human endeavor, the complete record of all we have done, what we have dreamed and where we have failed. Books are the reason humanity can advance, learning from what has gone before, not having to start all over each generation. Without books, we would still be scratching in the dirt and ignorant of the stars.

And until we all start trying to learn and grow by listening to podcasts and watching YouTube videos, books are still the key to knowledge. They are just as important today in urban Indiana as they were during the Depression in rural Appalachia. And sometimes, they can be just as difficult to access now as then.

Luckily, we have a modern equivalent of the book women, and her name is Dolly Parton. Bless her and the project she started in her home county in East Tennessee in 1995. Her Imagination

Library gave each preschool child in the county one good quality, age-appropriate book a month, mailed directly to their home addresses.

The first book order sent out just over 1,700 books. But the program has since been replicated elsewhere, and today, the Imagination Library sends more than a million books a month to children around the world.

The participants include 56 providers in Indiana, cities and counties and school districts spread throughout the state. Gov. Holcomb has included \$4.1 million in his budget proposal to make the program statewide for two years.

For a state that has \$6 billion in reserves, it's a puny percentage of a pittance. As a fiscal conservative, I normally look for ways to save money, but I can think of few initiatives for which such a great return can come from such a small investment.

At another time, in another context, we can put the books on our political agendas and argue away. But not now.

In fact, the only reason I can't wholeheartedly endorse the governor's plan is the fear that government might take something good and screw it up.

(Writer's note: If you want to know more about the Depression-era Packhorse Library project, I strongly recommend "The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek," Michele Richardson's meticulously researched and engagingly written 2019 novel.)

Maybe Spending Has Something to Do With It

(Jan. 23) — When the coal started running low at the mine my father worked in, he considered several options.

The one he decided on was to relocate from Kentucky to Fort Wayne, which had two major advantages. It was large enough to have plenty of employment opportunities not involving coal mines, and his sister and her husband already lived here and could help his family navigate the new environment.

Not once did he think about the comparative tax rates, the cost-of-living implications or the quality-of-life amenities advertised in Chamber of Commerce brochures.

Whether to relocate is a complicated decision, myriad factors coming into play that are different for each individual potential migrant. It is not the simple cause-and-effect choice sociologists seem to be fond of.

And here I am, my father's son, having lived in Fort Wayne off and on all these years, now happily retired and pursuing my goal to grow old disgracefully. It matters not one iota to me on a personal basis, therefore, that Republicans in the General Assembly might explore the possibility of eliminating the state income tax. As someone on a fixed income, it would however matter to me very much if they proposed an increase in one of the taxes affecting my cash flow, such as property, sales or excise taxes.

It turns out that being a "taxpayer friendly" state is complicated, too, involving much more than telling mostly conservative voters in a mostly conservative state that elimination of a specific tax is under consideration.

Unless, of course, you are delusional and think the state will simply do without the money now collected by the income tax. It brought in about \$8 billion last year, accounting for nearly 39 percent of the state's total revenue haul. However much of that amount the state decides to keep spending, it will have to get the money someplace else.

Will it raise property taxes after spending years bragging about how much it has cut them? Will it bump up sales taxes, already on the high end at 7 cents on the dollar, not to mention any local add-ons? Will it start charging fees for everything we now take for granted as free? Will it be satisfied with the \$1 billion a year it already collects in gambling taxes or encourage us to make even more foolish bets?

Republicans are proposing a two-year, blue-ribbon panel to consider both eliminating the income tax and examining "the whole spectrum of taxation in the state of Indiana," according to the

proposal's author, State Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle. We can only hope they will focus more on the latter than on the former.

If they concentrate on eliminating the income tax, they will find reasons to do it, confident it will be the magic missing piece in the "attracting jobs" puzzle they have been trying to assemble for so long. They will be blind to the negative possibilities of raising other fees and taxes, each of which has unintended consequences, opportunity costs and a tendency to inhibit the behavior of those taxed.

If they instead concentrate on "the whole spectrum," they could come up with an overall tax structure that is fair, transparent and sufficient to the task of governing, as well as diverse enough to meet two criteria: 1) It won't overly burden one group of taxpayers; and 2) it will survive a downturn in one or more economic sectors.

I happen to think we have a pretty good mix of taxes right now, but I'm no expert so won't argue too strongly with an economist who says otherwise. It is a matter worthy of healthy debate.

But I do know one thing as one of the citizens who help fund state government: Any "comprehensive look" at taxation that doesn't start with how much we spend and on what and for what reasons is a pointless exercise. Where the money goes is at least as important as where it comes from.

Let the Hoosier Mystique Alone

(Jan. 16) — I have always been proud to be a Hoosier, proclaiming it boldly even to coastal snobs who almost think of it as a confession of mental deficiency.

I was not born in Indiana, but I was raised enough here to have adopted its values as my own — hard work, thrift, loyalty, integrity. Consider me a backward rube if you must, but I wear this state's nickname as a badge of honor.

But it turns out I may have been a little reckless in my enthusiasm, because "Hoosier" is not official. It has never been formally adopted by the state legislature, which as we know is a

prerequisite for acknowledgement in polite society. Just ask supporters of the mastodon, our approved state fossil, and the lovely Say's Firefly, our sanctioned state insect.

So, "Hoosier" is just a rogue phrase, which should be whispered instead of shouted lest the nickname police hunt us down and shame us like the sobriquet-spewing dogs we are.

Happily, the General Assembly is coming to the rescue. After ignoring the issue all the way from its 1816 inception, that venerable body is finally considering a resolution to make "the Hoosier State" Indiana's official nickname. We can all come out of the shadows and never have to deny our true nature again.

Of course, the legislator behind the resolution – Republican Rep. J.D. Prescott of Union City – is going a tad too far, as legislators tend to do. He wants not only to ensconce the name but formalize an origin story as the accepted version of how the name came to be.

And that is just so wrong.

You've heard some of the Hoosier legends.

It goes back to "hoozer," a dialect term from England that meant anything large, like a hill. It evolved from a greeting a visitor heard when knocking on a cabin door in Indiana, "Who's yere?" Indiana's early settlers were such violent fighters that whenever a barkeeper saw a stray ear on the floor, he asked, "Whose ear?"

The version Prescott wants to immortalize is the one about "Harry Hoosier" an itinerant Methodist minister who, though, illiterate, preached with such passion that his congregants became ardent followers and gladly took the name "Hoosiers" in his honor.

I'm not saying this story is impossible, just improbable. For one thing, his name may actually have been "Hozier." For another, he was well-known throughout the country, and his preaching took him to several states – why did his name stick in this particular one? Also, there was another fellow, name of Sam Hoosier, who was hired to build a canal in the 1820s, a decade before the nickname took hold.

But advocating the improbable with sincere conviction is what lawmakers do, and the closer something gets to highly improbable, the closer they get to absolute certainty. So perhaps we will be stuck with the story of Harry Hoosier.

The problem with that is not that it would be wrong. It's that it would be forever accepted as reality, correct or not, and that would destroy the mystery our nickname has always had.

Let's face it. Indiana is a mid-size state of no particular distinction in the middle of the country, no perfect weather, no outstanding geographical features, no historic milestones of epic proportions. All we have is the reputation we build from the present on.

And the mythological allure we can preserve from the past, which is what our nickname does.

No other nickname can match ours. The Buckeye State and Bluegrass State? How prosaic. The Show Me State? Too corny by half. The Empire State and Golden State? Gaudy and pretentious.

Only the Hoosier State has a nickname that remains elusively, tantalizingly mystical and enigmatic. Replace the perplexity with certainty, and the magic will be gone.

In other staggering news of legislative significance, the General Assembly will consider a measure to make the breaded tenderloin our official state sandwich, so put down that baloney on white with mayonnaise and promise to sin no more.

And from this day forward, pi will be 3.2, so go square all those circles.

My Guide to the Legislature

(Jan. 9) — As another Indiana legislative session begins, there is an interesting dynamic at work.

Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb, proposing his final two-year budget as a lame duck, is laying out an ambitious and in some ways historic spending plan. He endorses hundreds of millions more for such things as education, public health, economic

development and increased salaries for teachers and other public employees.

And it is the Democratic caucus that has responded enthusiastically, even giddily, to the governor's proposal. His fellow Republicans in the Legislature are the ones going, "Well, now, let's not get too ambitious here."

Whatever spending plan finally emerges, two things are virtually certain.

Republicans will complain that the amount is higher than it should be, given the waste and fraud that will occur and considering how overburdened taxpayers already are. No cost-cutting will ever be enough.

Democrats will complain that not enough is being done. Government exists to improve lives, and Hoosiers can no longer tolerate mere token attention to some of their most severe problems. No amount spent will ever be enough.

Certainly, there will be other metrics by which to judge the session.

Many of us, for example, will be following the "culture war" bills that come up on race, sex, gender identify, abortion and other so-called divisive social issues, rooting for one side or the other. And there are sure to be at least a couple of proposals so patently absurd that they invite universal derision – remember the great effort to make the mastodon our official state fossil?

But really, we should mostly follow the money, for the obvious reason that government is a taxpayer-supported enterprise and we should pay attention to what is being done with our money and in our name. How the General Assembly allocates funding will determine in large part what kind of lives we will have for the next two years.

And there will be plenty of money to spend. The revenue forecast that came out in mid-December projects healthy growth, with about \$1.6 billion in new money available. And of course the state already has about \$6 billion in the bank unspent. So we can safely say that budgeting will be more a matter of what legislators want to do rather than what they feel they have to do.

And that leaves us free to judge, proposal by proposal, whether they should "do something" or not.

I did that for more than 30 years as an editorial writer, and I offer my criteria as a guideline. I know I've done this before, but, honestly, somebody should point in out at the beginning of every legislative session in Washington and in all 50 states.

For every single bill that comes up for vote:

Is this really needed?

If so, would government or the private sector be the best option?

If government, which level should address the issue, federal, state, local or some combination?

How much will it cost?

Who will pay?

What are the potential unintended consequences?

Will it add to or subtract from individual freedom?

Will the benefits to all outweigh the burden to some?

Is there a sunset clause, or will this go on forever whether it works or not?

My list was a little longer than that, but that's plenty to think about. In fact, just considering the first two should help you vote no on the majority of legislative initiatives. And the next three should show you that even if government identifies the right problem, it seldom has a clue about the right approach to take.

Bless the Storm's First Responders

(Dec. 26) — It was just last week when I announced my intention to embrace the joy of the Christmas season, "wherever I find it, even if I only stumble across it by accident."

Little did I know that it would don a disguise and hide, daring me to find it.

My car wouldn't start on Wednesday, which was annoying for me, since it was my scheduled bridge day, and more so for my bridge partner, who had an hour added to his drive time after

volunteering to pick me up and return me home. Such is modern life that not even card-playing buddies live near one another anymore.

I called AAA and had my car towed to the dealership, which informed me I had a nearly dead battery and an incipient oil leak. Not to worry, it would add only about \$400 to my holiday expenditures, and just think of the gas I wouldn't be burning through while my car was held captive.

Furthermore, I was stranded at home – literally stranded – while the temperature hit 9 below, the wind howled and the snow blew – well, you remember what last week was like. I should have been glad to at least be inside with sufficient food and other necessities, but a knot of anxiety kept me company for a day and a half.

What if my electricity went out? The last time I lost power for days – during an ice storm, also in December, several years ago – I packed the cat carrier and scooted off to a pet-friendly residence hotel in a part of town that still had electricity.

What would I do this time, with no car, no escape? How is it in the 21st century that we can go from self-satisfied comfort to dire isolation in a heartbeat?

But as the hours crawled by and the lights stayed on, I calmed down. I even took a measure of comfort from reports on TV of the legion of dedicated workers ready to jump into action.

I mean the first responders, and not just the usual unsung heroes – the police and firefighters and medical technicians ready to rush to our rescue when we fall victim to circumstances or do something stupid. I mean the state and city highway and street workers ready with their plows to open up the roads, the power company employees ready to get the lines back up, the grocery clerks managing the aisles against hordes of panicked shoppers. There was probably even an Uber driver or two ready to take a certain columnist to a brightly lit motel.

If we don't take those people for granted, we do tend to keep them in the background of our consciousness, along with all the other people in

our lives who are paid to deal with us. But when they're needed, they are there, and bless them all.

I used to be one of those guys, you know, the ones on the front lines ready to roll when disaster strikes. Yes, children, it was during the Great Blizzard of '78, when I was a reporter in Michigan City.

(Memo to Scott W., who posted rather snidely in my Facebook feed, "Really excited to hear about the stupid Blizzard of '78 every time we get snow this winter." Shut up and take your medicine, you silly child, or I'll tell all your friends to text you about the Great Flood of '82 every time it rains in Fort Wayne. Did you know it was young people who saved the city? Or so I've heard.)

Anyway, that '78 storm was a true wrath-of-God, once-in-a-lifetime catastrophe of epic proportions. The wind howled in from Lake Michigan, piling snow many feet high in some places. Nothing moved, nobody left home. The city was paralyzed.

And yet, a tiny but hardy band of intrepid reporters and editors braved that ferocious onslaught and made it into work. In those pre-Internet, pre-cable TV days, people still depended on an actual newspaper for actual news. We might not be able to deliver it, but by God we were still going to publish one that day.

Hooray for us.

That reminds me. All that news about how bad last week's weather was and how many people were marshaling to fight it came from a hardy band of news folks who somehow made it to the TV and radio stations to tell us how awful it was and how lucky they felt to make it in. Real news actually still matters. So, hooray for them, too.

And thank goodness it only lasted as long as it did. Had it gone on one day longer, we would have learned about how we bickered along our partisan divide over dealing with the storm. Red Staters say this and the other side is crazy, Blue Staters say that and the other side is just plain mean.

Mother Nature, the great unifier, if only briefly.

Regardless, Merry Christmas

(Dec. 19) — You realize that it's not a proper Christmas season unless the realist killjoys among us start whining about "It's a Wonderful Life."

This year, we have two contenders for top curmudgeon.

The saga of small-town hero George Bailey saving Bedford Falls from the despicable Henry Potter "grievously misrepresents the truth," writes George Michelsen Foy in *Psychology Today*. "In the real world, I would argue, Potter is winning . . . In the richest country that has ever existed . . . the wealthiest 1 percent of the population owns 32 percent of all the wealth, while the bottom 90 percent own 30 percent."

And Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown used the movie as some sort of white supremacy allegory in a case about whether it violates the First Amendment to compel a Web designer to create a same-sex wedding site. "I want to do video depictions of 'It's a Wonderful Life' and knowing the movie very well I want to be authentic, so only White children and families can be customers for that particular product."

In the spirit of yuletide grouchiness, I could complain that nearly all Christmas movies are similarly flawed.

"Miracle on 34th Street" attempts to prove Santa exists by bringing to court sacks of mail addressed to him from the U.S. Postal Service — how believable is it that the Post Office is a beloved institution and the federal government a trusted source?

"A Christmas Carol" strains credibility by asking us to accept that a nasty old man with a lifetime of meanness can be transformed into a saint by one sleepless night of bad dreams.

And in "A Christmas Story," of course, Ralphie's hunger for a Red Ryder BB gun illustrates the gross commercialization that has turned the holiday into a consumer-driven materialistic frenzy.

After that, I could go one of two ways in my holiday rant.

I could get personal.

Instead of wishing my brother in Texas and my sister in Indianapolis a happy holiday, I could berate them for abandoning me in Fort Wayne, creating a fractured family no one would ever make a Christmas movie about. I would rag my brother over the phone about his status as the neglected middle child and remind my sister over our Christmas feast that she is nowhere near the cook our mother was.

Or I could get spiritual, sort of.

I could hunt down all those people who go on and on about "the reason for the season" and celebrating the birth of the baby Jesus and blah, blah, blah, and point out Christ may have been born in the spring and that Dec. 25 may have been an attempt to absorb the traditions of the pagan Saturnalia festival. Goodness, that's an even bigger lie than the one about Thanksgiving being a celebratory reminder of Pilgrim-Native American friendship.

But I think I'll go a different way.

I'll remind myself that certainly Christmas movies are unrealistic. They depict life not as it is but as we would like it to be if we behaved better toward each other. That's even sort of the point.

And I will remember that without our families, whatever their faults and circumstances, we would be alone in facing a world that can be indifferent or even hostile.

And I will vow not to let my celebrations — of any holiday, anniversary, birthday or any special day of any kind — be sidetracked by anybody who insists that nothing in the world today measures up to the standards of human perfection all the best people accept.

In short, I will embrace the joy, wherever I find it, even if I only stumble across it by accident.

Quietly and modestly, of course, without calling undue attention to my unorthodox behavior, the way I sit in the back room with the lights off during trick-or-treat.

On, you know, Halloween, when we send our children out to demand candy from strangers in celebration of the pagan festival of Samhain, in

which people lit bonfire and wore costumes to ward off ghosts.

Merry Christmas.

The Bulls in the China Shop

(Dec. 12) —Poor Eric Doden.

The Fort Wayne businessman has been hugely successful in large part because of his ability to maneuver through bureaucratic government mazes. He calculated that his close ties with the ruling class, an early announcement and a campaign war chest approaching \$3 million might give him an easy run as Republican candidate for governor.

But as familiar as he might be with the club, he is not yet a member, and those who already belong are too busy working out job swaps to worry much about a barbarian at the gates.

Gov. Eric Holcomb is constitutionally prohibited from seeking a third term, so he might run for the U.S. Senate seat that will open up because Sen. Mike Braun has decided he'd rather be governor. Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch also reportedly wants the job, and there are hints that 3rd District Rep. Jim Banks might jump in.

If Holcomb seeks the Senate, he might face Attorney General Todd Rokita, U.S. Reps. Trey Hollingsworth, Victoria Spartz and, oh, yes, Banks. Oops, this just in: Former two-term Gov. and outgoing Purdue University President Mitch Daniels might give it a go as well, which would really liven things up.

All those people, for both races, are Republicans, of course. Democrats in Indiana are such a weak force in statewide politics that it's not worth even talking about them. Despite pretty poor approval ratings – 48.7 percent for the governor, 42.5 percent for the General Assembly – the GOP manages to keep power all in the family. Like a fractured, dysfunctional family in which the relatives squabble over the estate after the patriarch has died without leaving a will, but a family nonetheless.

At the national level, the ruling class at least lets voters pretend they matter by passing

authority back and forth between the two parties, and for awhile there it seemed as if it were truly becoming a family affair.

George W. Bush, who inherited the presidency from father George H.W. Bush, was ready to pass the baton along to younger brother Jeb, governor of Florida. Bill Clinton handed off to wife Hillary. Two great dynasties going head-to-head – it would have been epic!

But along came a stink bomb named Donald Trump, who threw the establishment into absolute chaos, and the country had four years of a political bull running amok in the Washington swamp's china shop. The establishment dispatched him easily and quickly, naturally, so now we have Joe Biden as a place keeper while things return to normal.

Chelsea Clinton, 41, and Jenna Bush Heger, 42, are waiting in the wings, so we can only hope the dust has settled before they take their rightful turn,

Some scholars, by the way, think “bull in a china shop” might come from Aesop's “ass in a potter's shop,” which is quite the fable. An ass belonging to a gardener complains to the gods about his lack of food and asks for a change in masters. He is transferred to a potter, but he asks for another change because of the heavy workload. Finally, he is transferred to a tanner, the worst master of all, and regrets having ever spoken up.

A Middle Ages version of the story tells of monks who prayed for the death of their abbot, who gave them three courses at a meal but not enough to satisfy their hunger. He dies and is replaced by an abbot who gives them only two courses. Finally comes an abbot who allows only one course, and one of the monks prays for him to have a long life lest they all starve to death under another successor.

We all should wish Joe Biden well, we really, really should.

And in Indiana, we can only hope the new governor, whichever Republican it is, won't add too much to the state's embarrassing \$6 billion

surplus and will leave the state at least as stable as he or she found it.

The goal should be to be as unthreatening to fellow Hoosiers as Henry Smith Lane, surely the governor who did the least harm to his state. He was elected in 1861 when voters truly did not matter in certain races, before the 17th Amendment allowed them, instead of state legislatures, to select U.S. senators.

Lane told his running mate, Oliver Morton, that if their Republicans took control of the General Assembly, Morton could assume the governorship and he would move on to the Senate.

And that's just what happened. He served as Indiana governor for two days.

Watch Out, They're Rethinking School

(Dec. 5) — No sentence should strike more fear into the hearts of Hoosier parents than this one, variations of which have appeared in numerous recent news stories:

“Speaker Todd Huston, R-Fishers, said a top priority for House Republicans is to ‘re-invent’ high school, so that students can work and use job-based opportunities to receive credit toward graduation.”

I'd love to list all the things high schools do well and poorly so I could fairly judge legislative attempts to ‘fix’ the situation. But the truth is that I would be basing my judgment on what high school was like 50 years ago, and I have no idea how well that equates to what is going on in today's classrooms.

I remember being partly inspired, frequently bored and sometimes terrified for those four years, and I know I have spent a lifetime since romanticizing the good parts and mentally burying the unpleasant parts. It is probably true that most of us never really get over high school.

It is certainly true for legislators, who assumed more and more authority over what was meant to be a local endeavor and have spent decades tinkering with the system in a never-ending attempt to keep repairing what they've kept

breaking. Anyone who expects the General Assembly to approach the task with humility and caution has not been paying attention.

It is more likely to just blunder ahead in arrogant assurance.

Just consider the very premise on which the presumed need for change is based: Too much emphasis on college preparation, not enough on marketable job skills. Huston says schools need to ditch subjects like calculus and replace them “work-based learning.” Like what?

That's a debate that has been going on since at least my time in high school, when typing was added so that some students could go sweat in office pools instead of in factories alongside the students who took mostly shop classes. Specific skills for specific jobs multiply and divide by the thousands, too quickly for schools to keep up, but the need remains constant for reading, writing and math skills and a basic understanding of the way the world works.

And if our schools are over-emphasizing college prep, they haven't been doing a very good job of it. Fewer than half of Hoosiers have an associate degree or high-quality credential, according to an Indiana Chamber of Commerce report, ranking the state 37th in the nation. Only 89.6 percent of students graduate after four years of high school; only 43.3 percent of that number go on to college, and only 22.8 percent of that group complete college.

If that's how well we do while focusing on college prep, what kind of results can we expect when job readiness is the focus?

As the legislature studies the issue – if it studies the issue – it could do worse than considering the Amish.

You have to admire their approach to education, even if you don't like their simple, unworldly life. They generally teach their students through the eighth grade, giving them basic skills and a smattering of subjects like history, geography and science, enough that they can both participate in their communities and deal with the outside world. After that, they go out among other Amish and learn Amish ways as they go along.

The Amish know who they are and what they want, and their education system is designed to pass that community's values along to the next generation. Whether we agree with their goals and objectives, we could learn a lot from that focus and commitment. Amish parents know very well what goes on in their classrooms.

How many Americans today can honestly say that, even the ones caught up in the passions of today's hot-button education debates like race and gender and sexuality and environmentalism?

If I had school-age children, I would certainly make it my business to know before I turned them over to the whims of a reckless legislature. If I didn't like what the public schools were doing, I'd check some of the options in the "school choice" market offered by the state. But I'd probably feel a little trepidation there, too, like I was jumping on a life raft of uncertain stability provided by the very people who had drilled holes in the ship in the first place.

I might end up becoming one of the parents who have been joining the home school movement in droves in recent years. It costs them less than farming out the education, and their children outperform their contemporaries academically and in the workforce.

A lot more of us may become more like the Amish before the legislature is done.

Politics and the Mongolian Sheep

(*Nov. 28*) — There was a story out of Inner Mongolia in North China last month about a flock of sheep in a farmer's pen walking around and around in circles for 12 days.

Sheep are famous for copying the behavior of other members of the flock, which causes them to, among other things, follow the animal in front of them to avoid predators and make the individual less vulnerable.

Still, this walking-in-a-circle phenomenon was a bit extreme, leading some to speculate that the sheep were suffering from listeriosis, also known as the "circling disease," and others to suspect a hoax of some kind.

Whatever the reason, it's a great metaphor, isn't it?

"Not only do you idiots follow your leaders like a flock of sheep, you don't even care that they are just taking you around in the same old circle."

It has its limits, unfortunately. It suffers from the same weakness as the charge of hypocrisy so carelessly thrown around by political opponents.

We are all hypocrites occasionally, in that we say one thing and do another. But we tend to recognize the fault in our opponents more so than in ourselves or our friends. So, when you call someone a hypocrite, all you are really doing is revealing your own political predisposition.

It's the same with telling someone to get the flock out of here.

Our side of the aisle comprises thoughtful, analytic voters who carefully weigh the issues and come to a reasoned conclusion. The other side is a bunch of sheep who just blindly follow the party line, no matter how patently absurd it might be.

Or they might be parrots, who merely repeat what they are told, or moths heading for the flame, or the dog being wagged by the tail, or even lemmings. But you get the point.

It would be helpful for our growth as members of an informed electorate, if that is indeed our aspiration, to acknowledge that all of us are, from time to time, subject to the circling disease. It happens for the same reason those sheep in China were in a holding pattern — no outside influence to break the pattern. In political terms, this means there are no consequences for blindly adopting the group's default position.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has been called out for his "political stunt" of busing illegal immigrants to New York City, Chicago, Washington D.C., and other self-proclaimed "sanctuary cities." But what he really did was call their bluff and show them the real consequences, although on a small scale, of being flooded with needy newcomers.

They have been overwhelmed and can no longer pretend they are acting in a vacuum.

The Supreme Court did the same thing to pro-life Republicans when it overturned *Roe vs.*

Wade. It is one thing to take a hard line against abortion when abortion is the law of the land and nothing can be done about it. It is another thing when there are pro-choice measures on ballots being approved by voters in several states. Now, there are real-world consequences that Republicans must deal with, one way or another.

We can only hope our politicians, once pulled out of their patterns, will look at issues with a fresh perspective, a new set of questions and a real appreciation of the real-world consequences. As voters and constituents, we have the obligation to at least make that journey ourselves.

Do voter sheep follow the leader sheep, or are the leader sheep just getting ahead of where the voters are going? A better question might be, if we're going around in a circle, how do we even tell who the leader is? ♦

Mark Franke

Mark Franke, M.B.A., an adjunct scholar of the Indiana Policy Review and its book reviewer, is formerly an associate vice-chancellor at Indiana University-Purdue.



The Essentiality of the Constitution

“To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America.”

(March 8) — These words represent the first purpose for the existence of the American Legion and holds this place of honor in the preamble to its constitution. I recently attended the American Legion’s National Legislative Conference and was reminded once again of its priority.

This lofty principle sounds fine when recited, and we do recite the preamble at every meeting, but what does it really mean in practice? Do we ever mention the Constitution when we debate an issue?

All government proposals should pass a constitutionality test before even discussing whether it is a good thing, let alone whether it should be done by government at taxpayer expense rather than let our free enterprise system determine its worthiness.

I would hope that those who hold liberty dear and the Constitution as the ultimate defender of that liberty would think this way first. Unfortunately this litmus test has not always produced very positive results in Indiana.

I mention just two recent illustrations of how this isn’t happening. And I hope these two are exceptions which don’t prove the rule.

First, an adjunct scholar of this foundation, Jason Arp, has been maintaining a database of Indiana General Assembly votes on bills affecting property rights. The picture is not encouraging as two-thirds of legislators score in a middling range of 40-60 percent favorable to this essential liberty. It is especially discouraging that many self-

proclaimed conservatives, a political philosophy constructed to protect liberty, score so poorly.

Second, a recent bill before the General Assembly removed from National Guardsmen the right of appeal to a court-martial in non-judicial punishments. I don’t think I was the only one to see this as a negation of rights under the Sixth, Seventh and Fourteenth amendments. The Indiana American Legion did its best to bring the constitutional issue to the forefront of the legislative debate but without success.

This brings us back to the legislative checklist mentioned above. Perhaps it should be a requirement that all bills introduced contain first a constitutional compliance statement before its financial and environmental impact is addressed.

The problem is that such a requirement would degrade to just one more auto checkoff without serious study. It might be better to add this to the procedural rules of the party caucuses as they determine how to vote on specific bills and to what extent member compliance will be enforced.

Here’s a better idea: Required that each lobbyist begin his spiel with a factual statement about how his group’s advocacy on this specific issue upholds the Constitution.

I am not so naïve to think that any of my three suggestions will be adopted or honestly applied. At least I personally can continue to give priority to the constitutionality of all legislative proposals.

And I will do the same for court issues. I won’t assess Supreme Court rulings based on whether “my side” won but rather if the Court ruled strictly on constitutional rather than political concerns. I know that won’t always make me more popular with my informal focus groups of friends and fellow travelers, but so be it.

The student loan forgiveness court case is an example of our (and by that I mean John Q. and Jane Q. Citizen) loss of constitutional focus. Nearly every opinion I hear expressed on how the Supreme Court should rule is based on whether the individual thinks student borrowers should receive forgiveness. I drove by the Supreme Court building last week and all the protestors’ signs reflected the political stance of the sign holder.

The last thing we want the Supreme Court to do is rule on the policy aspects of student loan forgiveness. We elect a Congress to do that, not the Supreme Court. Whether the President can spend these funds without Congressional authorization is the real issue before the Court. That, and whether states have standing to sue the federal government on this issue, something I will leave to my lawyer friends to explain.

I concur with George Will's idea of activist courts. They should actively review administrative and legislative actions for their compliance with the Constitution and be quick to void them when questionable. This is not the common understanding of an activist court but it is the correct one.

Perhaps we are too politicized to let the Supreme Court do its constitutional duty without picketing the justices' homes and harassing them outside restaurants. This may be hyperbole but I believe the Supreme Court is our last bastion for defense of liberty.

In the final analysis there are only two options: Either one pledges to "uphold and support" the Constitution or one views it as a speed bump along the path to political victories.

The life of our republic depends on us all choosing door one.

Redeveloping our Socratic Skills

Arthur Bryant — I miss the richness and clarity of our language. If you avoid argument and offense you never develop conversational skills.

John May — That's why you never stop talking.

Arthur Bryant — I'll be happy to discuss that with you.

(*March 1*) — The dialog above, quoted from one of the weirdest fictional series ever written, sums up my disappointment with our current state of discourse in this brave new world. "The interlocutors," British police detectives in the Peculiar Crime Unit novels by Christopher Fowler, are octogenarians but refuse to retire just so they

can continue irritating their political masters. While I insist I have nothing in common with Arthur Bryant, he and I tend to look at the world askance and neither likes what he sees.

Arthur is just plain weird but he has a way of asking why the emperor is wearing no clothes. And he sorely misses the past, in his case a London of centuries past. My medievalist soul gets that.

As one reads Fowler's books, and I swear each time never to pick up another but there you go, you get attached to Arthur as a mix between a quirkily senile grandfather and a utterly demented uncle. One never knows which detour his mind will take but his colleagues do their best to keep up. Often there is wisdom there, wisdom offered in a kindly if curmudgeonly way.

He asks questions no one else would have asked. His team must put the brakes on their opinions to think along new lines.

How often does that happen these days? When was the last time you were part of a conversation that was more than unsupported opinions? One delving deeper and deeper into the topic rather than flitting from one judgmental soundbite to the next? One that consisted more of questions than answers?

Does anyone actually think before they talk anymore?

I find myself as guilty of this as everyone else. I fear my intellect has become both slothful and slovenly. I'm not sure I have the desire or energy to act as if there are adults in the room; it is much easier to make pronouncements than to query the depths of existential issues. Is there a goal to our discourse or are we just trying to beat some metaphysical 30-second shot clock?

In this case as in nearly all others, I look to the past, Arthur Bryant style, to clarify the present. I read Socrates as an undergraduate, or perhaps more accurately read Plato channeling Socrates, and I remember more of his style than his actual philosophy. It went beyond mere question and answer; its goal was to force a student to think ever more deeply about a proposition, to the point of discovering its inconsistency or fallacy.

Socrates knew what he was doing in his method of teaching, one that carries his name to this day.

I stand condemned for my un-Socratic behavior but throw myself on the mercy of the court, if only I could find a court worthy of Socrates (but keep the hemlock, please).

And I can dream of reliving my undergraduate days when we sat around much of the night debating whatever serious or nonsensical issue someone proposed. Sure, there were adult malt beverages involved but I can absolutely assure you that these beverages stimulated the intellectual processes to incisive highs. Well, at least that is my memory of those nights.

Socrates no doubt would have been appalled at our defective application of his method, but we did try. There was no shouting and no leaving mad, and we looked forward to getting back together next time to solve the next list of world problems. Politics, philosophy, economics, theology — every discipline was in our rhetorical toolkits to be used without apology.

I can't go back there, as much as I would like to, but I can attempt to reprise the best of those heady times in my own conversational life.

I am writing this on Ash Wednesday so I will offer a personal sacrifice. For the rest of Lent, I will minimize declaratory sentences and maximize interrogatory ones. And I will listen carefully to what I hear and focus on formulating the next question rather than a rebuttal.

This will be more God-pleasing than giving up some minor corporeal pleasure or venial sin, which typically just hibernates for 40 days and then comes roaring back to make up for lost time.

My mantra will be: Ask, don't answer. We'll see how that goes. Those 40 days of Lent is a long time but then repetition is always the best teaching method. It is the only way to learn new habits, even at my age.

Do I have any chance of success? (Note I concluded this column with a question, so that's a start.)

A DAR Induction

(Feb. 22) — I am proud of my wife. Now that can be taken as a generalization, given that we have been married for more than 50 years. But in this instance it is very specific.

Earlier this month she was inducted into membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

That is a big deal. I am a Son of the American Legion based on my father's service at D-Day and then again during the Korean War but I only had to trace lineage back one generation. Tommy, my wife, needed to document generation by generation to a veteran of our War for Independence.

A Chinese proverb goes something along the lines that a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step. In my wife's case it also involved multiple dead ends when either a single link could not be documented or the ancestor in question was in a collateral family line. Still, she persisted.

What got her research started was information received from a cousin that a family grave was found in Terre Haute which pointed to a possible Revolutionary era connection. This proved to be a false alarm but once the train left the station, it was on an express line.

She began with her paternal grandfather, diverted from him to her maternal grandfather, and then finally settled on her paternal grandmother as the best path to take. Literally hundreds of hours were spent on the internet after subscribing to ancestry databases and newspaper archives, all of which left her just shy of the necessary documentation.

She even did the DNA testing thing. She received results, valid in her mind but specious in mine. However, I am a scientific Luddite and don't trust this sort of thing as a matter of creed.

There were some dark days during all this research. She would not have made it through if it were not for the friendly and expert assistance offered by the local DAR chapter and the genealogical librarians at the Allen County Public Library. Not only did they find sources hidden to

my wife, they continually encouraged her to keep moving forward during those times of emotional and intellectual despair.

She did learn some interesting facts about her European forebears. One, himself a cognatic descendant of the House of Stewart, was created Earl of Rothesay by Scottish King David II but the title reverted permanently to the crown and was carried by James VI to England when he succeeded Elizabeth as king of all Great Britain. If I can trust the internet, and why shouldn't I, the title is still personal to the royal family, currently held by Prince William for use when he is in Scotland. I doubt it warrants a private tour of Buckingham Palace by invitation of Cousin William but it does invest bragging rights over my peasant farmer ancestors.

She also learned that another ancestor in this Scottish branch was hanged, drawn and quartered as a Roman Catholic martyr during Elizabeth's (the first one) reign. I wish I had known this when we first married as her devout Free Methodist grandmother, the one in this martyr's line, was appalled that Tommy married a Lutheran, no better than a Catholic in her piety. Maybe it's a good thing I couldn't bring this up at the time or she might have erected a stake and began gathering firewood.

I suggested that perhaps I could qualify as a Son of the American Revolution — and there is such an organization — but only if I could claim one of the Hessian troops hired by King George to supplement his army. All my ancestors, German to a fault, immigrated to America after 1800. Perhaps there is an organization for sons of the Thirty Years War . . .

Again, this is a big deal. The process not only provided a treasure trove of family history, it also opened up an avenue for patriotic community service. I suspect my wife will get involved with DAR's educational programming given that she is a retired teacher and principal. DAR stands for many of the same principles as the American Legion and now we each have our own calling to promote the best of Americanism in a time when it is sorely needed.

Induction ceremonies are special. In this case our two local grandchildren were present to witness it. They politely sat through the entire two-hour meeting including all the committee reports and then stayed for the guest speaker, although I should confess that the speaker was their 14 year-old neighbor reporting on her community service project supported by the local DAR chapter. She is an impressive girl, no doubt the subject of a future column.

DAR's motto is "God, Home and Country." God doesn't need their help but America and its homes surely do. Now my wife is officially part of this worthy cause.

Future of the Two-Party System Is in Question

(Feb. 15) — Several books and opinion columns I've read in the past months have sounded the death knell of the two-party system in America. Or at least encouraged those bells to toll.

The basic argument is that both the Republican and Democrat parties have become too entrenched within the Washington elite so that there are no significant differences in how the parties conduct legislative business. These elites have a razor focus on their own exercise of power and control of the nation's financial resources. It doesn't matter whom you vote for or which party wins, nothing really changes.

Or so the argument goes.

I don't buy the premise but am willing to consider the proposed solution—that of a multi-party electoral system.

First, let's debunk the notion that it doesn't matter whom you vote for as nothing will change. Is the Biden presidency simply an extension of Trump's which in turn was nothing more than an extension of Obama's? I don't hear many of my conservative friends saying that it didn't matter that Biden was elected and I can still hear the metaphorical gnashing of teeth among liberals because Trump won in 2016. Elections don't matter anymore?

Like most imperfect premises, there is a kernel of truth to be found. Recall Donald Trump's

promise to drain the swamp. The swamp is still there, more dangerously virulent than ever. The Deep State is not just a figment of some talk show host's fevered nightmare. Witness the chilling actions of the FBI over the past two election cycles.

So I will concede partial validity of the problem statement and move on to the proposed solutions.

One I hear most often is the necessity of a viable third-party option. But what has been the historical outcome when such an option existed in the past?

Going only from memory of presidential elections in my adult lifetime, third party candidates succeed only in the spoiler role. Ross Perot in 1992 siphoned enough Republican voters from George H.W. Bush to ensure the election of Bill Clinton. Then there was the 2000 Florida vote counting marathon that may not have been necessary if Ralph Nader hadn't pulled sufficient Democrat voters from Al Gore to give George W. Bush just enough of an edge to win the state and the White House.

Additional speculation about 1996 and 2016 would be a fun exercise in counterfactual history, at least in terms of total popular vote. And one mustn't forget John Anderson and George Wallace as third-party breakaways from the mother party, although each had the misfortune of irrelevancy in what proved to be a landslide election.

Even if one goes back to the simmering political cauldron of antebellum America in the 1840s and 1850s, there is no strong case to be made for third parties. One could conclude that the multiplicities of minor parties then were no more than farm teams for what eventually became the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln.

So why would someone cast a vote for a third-party candidate who has no chance of winning?

I have a self-elected focus group which offers trenchant commentary on these columns so I ran this question by them. One, who voted for Perot in 1992, complained about how bad a president Clinton was. When I pointed out that he and the other Perot voters arguably elected Clinton, he

responded that he didn't care. It is more important to him that he can vote in good conscience for a candidate of like ideology than to vote for the winner. Heads nodded in agreement around the table.

Do I sense a forlorn hope among these voters that their candidate might actually win? Is it a matter of self-absolution after doing their patriotic duty to vote, free of any moral responsibility for the ultimate outcome? Or is it something else entirely that my left-brained logic fails to see?

I am reminded of a game theory exercise from graduate school called the prisoner's dilemma. In this game two members of a criminal gang are given the opportunity to inform on each other and get a reduced sentence. The problem sets rational self-interest against loyalty to the partner. When gamed in a classroom, the outcomes can be interesting and unpredictable.

Is third-party voting a simplistic application of the prisoner's dilemma in the real world? Since I have never voted for a third party candidate — although I should confess to voting frequently for a long-shot underdog in the primary — I can't and shouldn't judge those who do. If I can't be enlightened as to their motives, at the least I can be charitable.

So is this the death knell for our two-party system? I don't think so, at least not yet. But John Donne's quote does come to mind, as does Ernest Hemingway's novel. DNC and RNC, take note.

'Natural Rights' Founded on a 'Natural Law'

"[All men] are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." — The Declaration of Independence

(Feb. 8) — The above snippet is from the most well-known and beloved paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. School children are taught it . . . well, used to be taught it at least. Even if most adults cannot quote any other phrases from the Declaration, this one should ring the metaphysical memory bell.

I find it ironic if not amusing that Thomas Jefferson, a deist or agnostic or probably even an atheist, would appeal to the Creator to support his case against tyranny. Recall that Jefferson decided the Gospels needed editing so he ruled out the sentences he found objectionable in his own Bible. Forget divine inspiration; God was at a disadvantage when competing with Jefferson's ego.

But I am too hard on old Tom as my Jeffersonian wife keeps telling me. I do stand in awe of his intellect, even if I find it misapplied in his frequent flights of fantasy about a utopian agrarian republic. There is no doubt he was an excellent writer as the Declaration attests. He did have an inspiring way with words.

It is another implication in Jefferson's language that I find fundamental to a true understanding of these unalienable, God-granted rights.

How, or why, do we have these rights?

Even Jefferson did not claim that we deserve them autonomously. They are "endowed." They come to us from outside as a gift by a power above and beyond us.

If these rights are endowed then there must be some transcendental source for them. If they are bestowed as natural to the entire human race, it is absolutely essential that they have a basis in something objective, universal and intelligible. These are the adjectives invoked by philosophers to describe natural law.

Natural law is that which defines us as more than autonomous individuals living in what Enlightenment thinkers called a state of nature. Recall Thomas Hobbes' pithy comment about how life in a state of nature was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." Unfortunately Hobbes proceeded to enthrone absolutist government as the ultimate arbiter and protector of natural rights. I never quite understood while reading Hobbes how he, an atheist, could point to absolutism when it was based on the theory of the divine right of kings. Do you find it as ironic as I that two anti-religionists such as Jefferson and

Hobbes can't but help appealing to God, no doubt reluctantly but there it is.

The logic of rooting natural rights in natural law seems simple and clear to me. The next step in this progression seems even more so, self-evident to steal from Jefferson. How can natural law exist unless there is a lawgiver? And who meets the threefold requirements of objective, universal and intelligible? Only God.

Jefferson's appeal to natural rights was not overtly based on the popular notion back then that these were the rights of Englishmen. Most probably believed that as evidenced by the writings of the time. They certainly found it useful in justifying their protests and ultimate rebellion. Although true in a political sense, the rights of Englishmen still needed a point of origin.

The English Bill of Rights of 1689 was the foundation for the Glorious Revolution, settling the crown on William and Mary but only with their assent to protecting the enumerated rights of their subjects. It is instructive that God is mentioned five times in this legislation even without the poignancy of Jefferson's memorable phrasing. Still He is there, assumed to be the highest power of all.

So the question remains: Can there be natural rights without natural law emanating from a supreme lawgiver?

The pop philosophy of our postmodern age is based on the denial of any transcendent reality. If that proposition is to be taken as true, then what is the source of reality other than one's own illusions or delusions? Maybe Hobbes was right, as frightening as that sounds. If Dr. Who could bring him forward as a time traveler, Hobbes could claim he told us so with some justification. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

A friend who never ceases to amaze me in his eloquence sums it up this way: "Tell me a time when the entire reality which lies outside the psychic self is denied, when the substance and the foundation of identity is on the vagaries of psychic instabilities."

I call this a figment of one's imagination but then I can't articulate ideas like my friend can. Or like King Solomon could. "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." (Ecclesiastes 1:2 ESV)

Let me suggest a word to describe this postmodern mindset: conceit. The Oxford English Dictionary defines conceit as "excessive pride in oneself."

Yes, the appropriate word is conceit.

The Travails of Local Government

"I don't do this for the money. I do it for the late-night phone calls." — a Monroeville councilman

(Jan. 25) — Nearly everyone I know is disgusted with the current state of our national government. Many also feel the same way about our Indiana state government, but then I tend to associate with others of like mind so this is hardly a representative sample for statistical purposes. Still, it is what I hear often enough to think there really is fire behind the smoke.

I hear this less about local government. Is it the people? I have friends who are involved in local government as councilmen or school board members or first responders. They are all, without exception, dedicated public servants who do it for other than pecuniary reasons.

So perhaps my cynicism about government should be qualified. I simply have given up on government run by people who don't live close by. I am not the only one. Recently I have read numerous journal articles and op-ed newspaper columns from conservative/libertarian writers who advance the proposition that we can only take back our government if we begin at the local level.

Thomas Jefferson wrote that "the government closest to the people serves the people best." He was on to something. At least that level of government should be the most responsive. Try calling the White House and asking to speak to the President. Good luck. Even calling your local Congressman will get you shuffled among aides depending on which staffer is assigned your point of interest.

It's not that these staffers are automatons. I know several of them in the local congressional office and they care deeply about assisting constituents. But I also learned years ago how Congressmen gauge local opinion on legislative topics: They count letters and email messages but with a sophisticated heuristic for determining which are form letters produced by an organized campaign and which are individually written. The latter receive more attention.

Not so with the local officeholder who doesn't have a sophisticated staff at hand. Let's take my city councilman for example. If I call his published number, my call will be answered by him or one of his family members. He really can't avoid me and even may recognize my name on caller ID. This is hypothetical in my case because I have never called any local politician. However, it is very real for these public servants. See the quote above.

My friend whom I quoted is a town councilman in Monroeville, located in southeast Allen County. He assured me my understanding of this is a true one. Put aside the fact that I am descended from several large German immigrant families which settled near his town. The fact that maybe a third of his constituents are distant cousins of mine is not something he holds against me personally. At least I hope not.

I don't live there but enough other people do to keep his phone ringing. More than a few of them have a low threshold for barking dogs, especially after dark. Or for loud exhaust systems on passing cars. Or for fireworks...and what is the deal with people setting these things off at the slightest provocation? My modest proposal is that fireworks should only be sold to people who can recite at least one sentence of the Declaration of Independence and who know what single day of the year we celebrate it.

Annoying fireworks aside, my friend does empathize with his fellow citizens. It is the other agencies of government which irritate him most. To validate Jefferson's theory mentioned above, this town councilman much prefers to request help from township or county officials than from state or federal. It's not that the state people are

unhelpful; it just takes more calls to get to the right person.

My friend responds to every call he receives no matter the pettiness. In his words, he “checks it out.” He understands his role, one he voluntarily assumed for the benefit of his town and the two and a half streets of residents he represents.

The same holds true for school board members, homeowner association board members and officers at every church or charitable organization. Why these people do this is beyond my comprehension. But I am very grateful they do, and with very little in the way of financial remuneration or ego-stroking civic acclaim.

If our democracy is to survive, it will be due to these local officeholders who answer their phones well after dark and patiently listen to whatever has set off that constituent. One need not look to Washington or Indianapolis for solutions to our current state of affairs. Look closer to home, perhaps to the next street over.

Just resist the urge to call after 10 p.m.

Due Process for the Indiana National Guard

(Jan. 18) — One trend at the national level is the proliferation of law judges in the federal agencies. They can streamline adjudication of legitimate citizen and taxpayer issues so there is some value added.

The problem is that often these cases involve fines and penalties imposed by the agency whose hearing officer is ruling on its appropriateness. Even worse, there is often no effective appeal from these administrative decisions to the courts. These officials serve as both prosecutor and judge as many unfortunate defendants have learned to their hurt.

The problem is that this is a quintessential Catch 22 for the accused. The administrative route can save money and time for both sides but at the cost of the accused’s waiving constitutional rights as granted by the Sixth, Seventh and Fourteenth amendments to the Constitution.

In that regard the process is similar to arbitration clauses found in most commercial

contracts. These clauses may specify arbitration as the first step but often establish it as binding. That makes sense when only money is at stake.

With tongue planted firmly in cheek, I would also compare it with being sent to the principal’s office. The school makes the law, the school charges students with violating the law and the school judges on the student’s guilt. At least in this situation, there is an appeals process to the local school board, although one I suspect is more theoretical than real.

More than having to stay after school is at stake in a measure now before the Indiana General Assembly. It would remove the right of an Indiana National Guardsman to appeal a disciplinary penalty assessed by his commanding officer to a formal court martial.

Proponents of this change to the state’s military code argue that the current right of appeal could overburden the governor’s office where responsibility for convening courts martial lies. As a partial remedy for this, HB 1076 authorizes the Indiana Adjutant General to convene courts martial in lieu of the Governor.

When asked how many of these appeals reach the Governor’s desk, the number could not be given. That tells me that it is small, hardly enough to distract the Governor from his more urgent tasks.

I admit to being pedantic about our rights as American citizens, both the natural rights cited in the Declaration of Independence and the enumerated ones in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. The Constitution was not written to construct an efficient government but a limited one, purposely constrained in its authority. Government inefficiency may be a running joke among us taxpayers, perhaps even more true in actuality than in our humor, but I contend that this inefficiency serves as an unintended brake on expansive governmental overreach.

I also admit to a tendency to oversimplify things but I am notorious for keeping Ockham’s Razor to hand. Look for the principle at stake and cut away the arguments for efficiency. There is a cost to everything but not always one that can be measured in dollars or in time. In this case the

potential cost to be paid by National Guardsmen under the military code is too high to pay for some unclear improvement in the Governor's time management.

I realize military justice follows a different path from that on the civilian side. Procedurally it is done differently for obvious reasons but the principle is the same. Provide the accused justice which means per force due process and equal protection, terms found in the language of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In this case as in most others, there are two sides to the story. My touchstone on issues like this is to default to individual liberty. This puts me in the Guardsmen's corner. Their rights as Americans supersede any concern I would otherwise have for governmental efficiency.

The Indiana American Legion through its legislative committee is opposed despite its endorsement by the state's other veterans service organizations. (In the interest of full disclosure, I am a member of this committee.) To these veterans' thinking, this is an inappropriate usurpation of service member rights. I consider it more than inappropriate; it is unconstitutional.

This is only a sample of one but I asked a friend, a member of the Indiana Air National Guard, if he had an issue with the legislation. Clearly, he did. "I didn't waive my rights when I enlisted."

He also told me that in his 27 years of service, he could not recall any courts martial. So much for the metaphoric gnashing of teeth about the Governor's workload.

If we expect these people to put their lives on the line to preserve our rights, we ought to be equally diligent in preserving theirs.

This bill needs to die and be buried . . . and without an American Legion color guard at the funeral.

Is This the Government We Deserve?

"You get the government you deserve."
— Thomas Jefferson

(Jan. 11) — I don't have a Ph.D. in political science but one is hardly needed to realize something is seriously wrong with the current state of our government.

It isn't that the President commits oral gaffe after gaffe or that the House Republicans resolved to play family feud in public. These are only symptoms, a list which is too long to enumerate here, but they are warning signs we have ignored for too long. Since we take a perverse enjoyment from rehearsing the wrongs, have we made a serious attempt to determine what the root problem is?

As a classical liberal with profound respect for the ideals of our Constitution and their expression in the actual text, my considered opinion is to point to the near-total disregard by our ruling class for the government that venerable document created.

Consider each of the branches in turn. Congress can certainly spend money but does it actually legislate as Article I demands? How often is the legislative function delegated or disingenuously defaulted to executive agencies? Why does Congress spend so much time investigating and so little on everything else other than loading spending bills with earmarks?

Article II states the President is to enforce the law, being held individually responsible for that. Does he? Can he? The term "Deep State" explains things sinisterly well as federal agencies seem to act autonomously, a word taken from the Greek idea of being a law unto oneself. Donald Trump called it a swamp and promised to drain it. It's still there.

The courts have usurped the power to make law rather than interpreting it. No wonder they are criticized from both ends of the ideological spectrum. Calling the Supreme Court activist doesn't mean it actively examines legislation for its adherence to the Constitution as George Will would have it. Rather, it has come to mean actively searching for opportunities to expand the law into areas the legislature feared to tread.

So back to Congress. If both the executive branch agencies and the courts make law, what is

it that Congress does other than spend money that the government doesn't have?

I know I live in the past but that is where I find reasonable explanations for today's questions. I take counsel from the great philosophers of the past and often end up with Plato. His "Republic" has aged well over the past twenty-five hundred years. How could he so accurately describe our society unless human nature hasn't changed?

Plato's cave looks to me like the American polity. We citizens, prisoners in Plato's terminology, sit in the dark watching shadows being projected to us after careful filtering by the image-makers. If we try to turn away from these force-fed images and past the image-makers, the sunlight of reality hurts our eyes and we scurry back to what we perceive as safety. That's what Plato wrote then and what we still do today.

How many of us are willing to read several insightful essays on an issue and then spend the time necessary to understand and decide? Or would we rather just regurgitate the 30 second sound bites from our preferred cable news station? These are the modern manifestations of the shadows on Plato's cave wall. We are prisoners of our own prejudices, constantly seeking self-validation.

We all take refuge in these prejudices, supported too often by our own intellectual sloth. Serious thinking is hard work as is training one's mind to foster a state of contemplation. No wonder we opt for the easy path. And no wonder our politicians have learned how to encourage us down that path. Jefferson had it right.

I am not a fan of the nominalist philosophy of William of Ockham but I do credit him with providing me the most important tool on my philosophical workbench. His principle of parsimony, better known as Occam's Razor, should be kept to hand whenever someone wants to seriously think things through.

Simplifying things is not as simple as it sounds but it can be done if one keeps focused on what is truly essential to the situation. The opposite approach is paralysis by analysis. Why overthink things when the obvious answer is hidden by

extraneous solutions often dictated by our own conceits?

Consider this example from Dickens' "David Copperfield." When the young and ragged runaway David shows up at his persnickety Aunt Betsey's house unannounced and pursued by his despotic stepfather, she becomes flustered and unable to decide what to do. Her boarder Mr. Dick, portrayed as simple-minded, responds, "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly." Brilliant. David stays; the mean stepfather is shown the door.

Does this label me as simple-minded? I hope so. And if that is what it takes to escape the cave prison of the image-makers, I am content with that.

There Still Can Be Hope

"You can observe a lot just by watching." —
Yogi Berra

(Jan. 4) — Writing a weekly column isn't as glamorous as my editor described it when he recruited me to do this. Finding an idea worthy of 800 cogent and coherent words every seven days is not as easy as one would think. It's like that homework assignment from hell: Write a three-page theme due Friday. No greater terror could strike the adolescent heart than those words.

At least those grammar-school writing assignments included a prompt of some sort. Not so with the Indiana Policy Review. I am on my own to identify and expound on a topic of my choice, assuming of course that it will demonstrate affinity with the foundation's principles.

So I get my ideas from varied sources. I read a lot, both books and journal articles. These tend to get me thinking, sometimes resulting in a reaction to what that writer said. Usually these are positive commentaries but every so often one sets me off, absolutely requiring refutation.

But I can't go wrong to follow Yogi's advice — just observe or, in this case, listen to what people are talking about around me. Perhaps the most inspirational place for me to do this is my

American Legion post. Let's call it my muse, mixing Greek mythology with patriotic Americanism.

Last week I was listening in, let's not call it eavesdropping, on a conversation at the table next to mine. These are friends so I wasn't committing any social indiscretion by doing so. This is what I overheard:

"Hope is just the first step to disappointment."

I could not but interject myself into this discourse.

Did the speaker actually believe this? Is his life history nothing more than a never-ending sequence of unwelcome disappointments?

I've known him for many decades so this surprised me. He is not by nature a negative or pessimistic person. Was this an off-hand comment tossed onto the table to get a reaction? Well, he got one from me.

One must admit that hopeful people can suffer disappointment on occasion. Does this stop them from hoping? I think not. "Hope springs eternal" as Alexander Pope claimed. Hopeful people are by their very nature optimistic about the future.

What is the tipping point for a hopeful person to degenerate to disappointment? Perhaps there are two levels of disappointment for these souls. One is only temporary; they soon rally by pulling from their nature or their religious faith or their determination the pertinacity to be happy. Attitude is after all a choice, as a former coworker was wont to say.

It is the second threshold, that one from which there is no return, that hopeful people have learned how to stop short before transgressing it. "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here" is one of the most memorable lines of Dante's *Inferno*. Note though that this is posted at the third circle of hell. Not to put too fine a point on it, why not misread Dante and apply this saying to our own state of mind when disappointment looms and we resolve not to go through that gate while there is still time to turn back?

One anecdote, a personal one. I was fortunate to be a volunteer assistant coach for one of the most successful NCAA men's volleyball programs

of its era. In my nearly 30 years of doing this, we lost a lot of matches including a national championship in 2007. Yet, somehow, the sun came up the next morning after even the most bitter of losses. And we got a chance to play again, the next night or next week or next season. I tried to learn something positive from every defeat. Otherwise all those airline flights and bus rides home would have been intolerable, let alone going on court for the rest of the season.

I am reminded of the canard that an optimist sees the glass as half full while the pessimist sees it as half empty. A corollary to this has the skeptic wondering why they used such a large glass while the cynic demands to know who has been drinking out of his glass. There are too many cynics, skeptics and pessimists in this world. Call me naïve, but at least I am an unabashedly optimistic naïf.

Hope is something we should never lose. It defines us as Americans, descendants of immigrants whose ancestors believed in the American Dream. We owe them to remain resolute in our hope.

Recall the fable of Pandora's Box. It was full of really bad things, things that would torment mankind forever. But the last thing to come out of that box was hope.

I move that we declare hope to be our motto for 2023. All in favor, say "aye."

My New Year's Resolution

(Dec. 28) — It's that time of year when all insist on putting themselves through the annual ritual of making New Year's resolutions, resolutions honored mostly in the breach. Instead, I intend to spend my intellectual energy reflecting on the major issues of our day.

Why does January 1 get to be the start of the new year? Why not March 25 or March 1? This is no flippant question. These dates were the mark of the new year in centuries past. Even Easter was unofficially the mark for the new year's coming for tribes recently converted to Christianity.

I know January is the month closest to the winter solstice, that mini-second in time each

Dec. 22 or thereabouts when the sun is farthest away. If the day is shortest then in terms of sunlight, marking its nadir makes sense. But why not renumber the days so that Dec. 22 becomes Jan. 1? That would be more logical and, given that I am of German heritage, I like order.

The problem is that this rationale only works for the northern half of the globe. My friends from Australia tell me that their New Year's Day is when the days begin getting shorter. Does that make any sense? If I can figure that out, I may take on the epistemological question of why toilets flush clockwise south of the equator while swirling counterclockwise here.

I realize the actual moment of the solstice can drift by a day every so often, but we already have leap year to realign our calendar every four years. Except for the year 2000, which still has me metaphysically scratching my forehead.

This philosophical question did not just arise while I was in my cups. I recall learning in an elementary school history class that colonial America observed the official new year on March 25. It was an act of Parliament in 1750 that moved it to Jan. 1 as the collateral damage of replacing the antiquated Julian calendar with the Gregorian. Poor Caesar; first he gets assassinated then proto-wokists cancel his calendar. *Sic transit gloria.*

Our Anglo-Saxon political forebears assumed the year changed in November when their winter season began. This was an agricultural calendar whose seasons preceded ours by about six weeks. I guess they assumed the year changed once all the harvest was in. Makes sense to me

One practical problem is inserting the falderal of New Year's Eve into the middle of what traditionally is the Christmas season. Remember that song about the 12 days of Christmas? New Year's is day eight, representing a secularized interruption of the sacred season. I know; the Christmas season is now nothing more than a retail saturnalia of consumer spending beginning sometime around Halloween and ending with a punctuated exclamation mark at midnight on Dec. 25. Note how the TV commercials change; do we

see any snow in commercials after Christmas Day?

Wouldn't New Year's Eve be much more fun in July? The parties could be outside, the barbecue grille fully aflame and no worry about driving home on icy roads. Plus we could benefit from our political masters' distortion of the diurnal clock with profane daylight savings time. It will be light outside until 10 p.m.

Of course Congress would succumb to the uncontrollable urge to mandate that New Year's Day always fall on a Monday. Or it could just merge it with Independence Day and make it a four-day weekend to keep the federal employee unions happy.

Perhaps I am overthinking this. I can tell when I do that; my wife rolls her eyes and tells me to clean up the stack of books on the floor of my study. I clean it up and then it just grows again like Topsy. Something nefarious is at work here. Maybe it is Amazon, which feeds more than one of my addictions.

In the final analysis Caesar wins from the grave. The ancient Romans gave the month of January, named for the god Janus who was their god of beginnings, primacy in the calendar. We just can't escape those pesky Romans.

One final reflection: The fact that I can spend my time worrying to death such a trivial subject rather than fretting about how to house, clothe and feed my family is sobering albeit in a pleasant way. For everything that appears to be going wrong in this country, and I have my rather lengthy list, so much more still is right.

Curmudgeon that I am, I can appreciate the blessings bestowed on America and me personally. So perhaps I do have a New Year's resolution for 2023. I resolve to work harder at suppressing the curmudgeon and freeing the thankful inner me.

That should prove more beneficial to those around me than however much weight I lose or daily steps I take.

Blessings to the poor in spirit, especially in this year of our Lord 2023.

A Contemporary Christmas Carol

(*Dec. 21*) — Anne Perry is a popular author of Victorian era mysteries. She writes several series using her stable of inter-related characters. I've read some and understand why she has such a fan base.

Every Christmas she releases a novella using her regular characters but not in their usual milieu of murder and depravity. The focus of these short books is on charity, redemption and forgiveness. She writes them for the Christmas season, after all. And I read each one as soon as it hits my local library.

I can't write like Perry but I do have a true story to tell, one that might not meet Perry's standards for her Christmas tales but still should warm the cockles of most hearts.

We know the devastation wreaked by Hurricane Ian. Here in Fort Wayne, we all have friends and neighbors who spend their winters in Florida along the west coast in the St. Petersburg area. Someone told me once that there are more Fort Wayne natives in Fort Myers in January than in Fort Wayne. I don't intend to field test that theory as I love our seasons here, all of them. And might an early winter presage a white Christmas? My grandchildren sure hope so.

So what does Anne Perry have to do with me? My wife's sister and her husband have a home in Ft. Myers that they had hoped would be their retirement residence . . . except that it bore the brunt of Ian, causing extensive wind and water damage. Their home didn't quite meet the FEMA standard for demolition so they are faced with the effort and expense of rehabbing their house.

Think about the difficulty of finding a competent, reputable contractor to help with that. The state or feds run commercials to hire only licensed contractors. That may be sound advice but it is not natural law. My in-laws are a case in point.

My wife's brother-in-law was working on his house when someone came to the door. He introduced himself as Carlos, a demolition contractor working on several houses on that

street. Licensed or not, he gave the appearance of both professionalism and honesty. He was hired on the spot.

His work was excellent and priced appropriately. Now don't get me on a high horse about the immutable law of demand and supply. Yes, costs go up after a hurricane as businesses move products and services to the affected area. I get tired of self-serving politicians screaming price-gouging whenever they see an opportunity to score a political point. Price controls may be appealing to the economically illiterate but they only harm in the long run.

Carlos did excellent work, on time and within budget. Compare this to the licensed contractor who showed up with an offer to replace the siding. His price was three times the going rate. Fortunately this is still a free country and my brother-in-law politely refused the offer. So much for governmental licensing.

But the story doesn't end here. My wife's sister was at a local big box lumber yard buying a shower stall wall. What she didn't anticipate was that something this large was not going to fit into her vehicle. And forget about store delivery any time soon.

She heard a voice calling to her from across the parking lot. It was Carlos, and I'm sure you anticipated this, asking if she needed help. He offered to use his pickup truck to provide immediate delivery to their house and refused any payment for this service. He also offered to transport any other oversized products they needed. Note that this was after he had completed work at their house and was paid.

Anne Perry has it right. There are things that can't be reduced to economic calculation. Or should I say a monetary one. Economists understand that value is subjective and personal. A dollar sign can be put on some things but not all. Another economic law is that people act rationally in their own interest. That means in their self-interest, but which oftentimes is driven by kindness.

There must be millions of Carlos types out there, people who see serving their fellow man as

the motivating principle of their lives. Sure, Carlos was paid for his work at their house; after all, it is his vocation. Yet Carlos clearly does not subscribe to a purely mercenary philosophy of life. He marches to a higher drummer.

It is now the season of Advent. We Christians go through four weeks of contemplation, repentance and anticipation. Then we worship awestruck on Christmas Eve and, for many of us, return to our churches on Christmas morning for a festive service of adoration as we contemplate the ineffable miracle of the Incarnation. Nothing compares. Nor can it.

Merry Christmas, Carlos. The Star of Bethlehem shines through you.

Prudence: Now More Than Ever

“O, Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, pervading and permeating all creation, mightily ordering all things. Come, and teach us the way of prudence.”

(Dec. 16) — For liturgically minded Christians the Great O Antiphons mark the most contemplative part of Advent. Meant to be chanted one each day beginning on Dec. 17, these short reflections focus on various characteristics of the anticipated Messiah.

Their origin is unknown but the tradition for early authorship and use in the church is strong. The Roman Catholic Church attributes them to Ambrose in the fourth century and the martyr Boethius referred to them in his “The Consolation of Philosophy,” written in the early sixth century. They have been cherished by the church for centuries.

The first of the seven, quoted above in a translation used by my Lutheran church, calls the Messiah “Wisdom” and then unites Him with us humans as the teacher of prudence. Why is prudence given precedence in the O Antiphons and what is its connection to wisdom?

There must be more to prudence than our current usage of the word. When we call someone prudent, it almost seems like a backhanded compliment. Those of my generation should recall

the epithet “prude,” an insult even before all sexual rules were flushed to oblivion.

Has the connotation of the word changed over the centuries? I know little Latin and even less Greek, but I do know that one should not assume a classical word that survives in modern English has the same meaning as it did back then. Is that the case with the Latin *prudencia* or its Greek predecessor *phronesis*?

To the ancient Romans, acting with *prudencia* meant acting wisely with foresight but with a sense of caution. Clearly this was an important virtue for a society that stressed virtue, albeit with an incongruous underlying appetite for cruelty but that is a rant for another day. Perhaps the Greeks are a better source for understanding *phronesis*. Even though I am a Platonist, turning to Aristotle in this instance is instructive. Aristotle viewed prudence as a practical virtue, one that serves well for informing the virtuous life.

So how did Aristotle define prudence? To his way of thinking, only a prudent person can be temperate, no surprise there, but he also sees it as a precondition for being just. I don’t think he was speaking of justice as our contemporary social justice warriors define it.

Note also that the term “virtue” was heard in both Athens and Rome. For all their faults both societies stressed virtue as the highest of human achievement. Philosophers throughout the ages concur, mostly. So then prudence as a virtue must be more than simply avoiding acting dumb. There must be a heartfelt desire for prudence to place this first in our appeals to the Messiah. And, significantly, linked to the holy attribute of wisdom.

Look around today. Are we practicing prudence? Are we acting temperately, wisely and justly? Do we carefully think through the repercussions of our actions or, more importantly, our speech? Do we inspire our interlocutors to virtuous thoughts leading to beneficent works? Merriam-Webster defines prudence as self-discipline coming from reason. Aristotle would agree, or perhaps I should say the dictionary

editors agree with Aristotle. Reason is the means to the end of ascertaining truth and informing our actions in line with this truth.

Sad to say, truth has become an irrelevant word today. Have you ever heard some use the term “subjective truth”? Now there is an oxymoron. Truth by its very nature must be objective and universal, a proposition that produces bile in a postmodern world anchored on the “truth” that there is no truth. Philosophical skepticism has devolved to nihilism. I think the current term for this denial of all external reality is solipsism, one I don’t recall hearing during my student days.

The ancients strove to discover truth, using different methods and sometimes arriving at different answers. But the existence of eternal, objective, absolute truth was never doubted. This was their path to wisdom in thought and their prescription for prudence in action. So it makes perfect sense that the Church today still chants the O Antiphon that asks Wisdom to teach us the way of prudence. We need it now more than ever, even here in God’s country of northeastern Indiana.

But if a renaissance of prudence is to occur, why not right here, right now? While I didn’t read the book, only the book review, author Jon Lauck may be instructive. His recent book, “The Good Country,” points to the Midwest as a paragon of prudence. Whether he cites Aristotle, Ambrose or Boethius is something I need to check out, but I’m sure he is on to something.

And I have the four weeks of Advent to contemplate it.

What Does ‘Conservative’ Mean?

(Dec. 14) — Most people probably think of the ideological spectrum as a straight line, running left to right or right to left depending on one’s perspective. This places the extremes at the edges, furthest from each other. The middle holds the moderates, those who are considered the most reasonable and open-minded, if one identifies with them, or as the just plain mushy and

unprincipled when one views them from either extreme.

That is the textbook illustration, one we all learned in school. But how accurate is it?

During my college years I was attracted by libertarian philosophy. I didn’t consider that to be on the extreme end but traditional conservatives did. And not without reason. There were certainly extremists among the libertarians, not quite anarchists but close to it. Antinomian, without law, is a word borrowed from the Greek which suited them quite well.

One unoriginal insight I had back then was that the spectrum was not a straight line at all but a circle that didn’t quite meet at the ends. I thought this obvious after finding it difficult to distinguish the most ardent libertarians from the self-proclaimed radicals trying to emulate the SDSers active on major campuses. You couldn’t tell them apart in appearance; everyone wanted to look like a hippie in those days. The absolute disdain for any type of authority was shared as well. They certainly agreed on legalizing marijuana.

Why were the extremists so much alike in those days? Is it still the case today?

It was not until I came across a recently released book that I saw the piece I was missing in my mental jigsaw puzzle. Forcing ideology to conform to a straight or even a curved line is simplistic and not useful for understanding where we are today.

Instead, as Jim Belcher argues in his book “Cold Civil War,” we should think in terms of a quadrant presentation. Many of us suffered through this kind of graph in our college classes, whether in the business school or the psychology department or wherever. They might have been called by different names but most would recognize them as four quadrant graphs, a square with a horizontal divider and a vertical one.

These graphs are only useful when you have two continuums, not just a single one like we traditionally use for political ideology. So if we keep a traditional conservative-liberal spectrum

for one axis, what is the other? Belcher has a simple but elegant answer: freedom-order.

How does this apply to both sides of the scale?

There are conservatives, and I number myself among them, who value liberty above all. They, we, tend to favor personal charity to government programs, private enterprise to statist capitalism and free choice over mandated behavior. Other conservatives, as exemplified by the common good thinkers, harken back to classical and medieval philosophers to place priority on a well-ordered society to provide justice and protect liberty.

The left leaves me confused. I'm not sure where the woke progressives line up. They might argue that they are for freedom but the freedoms they champion are those most offensive to conservatives. And they certainly do not propound freedom for those who hold opposing viewpoints. Just Google a list of canceled speakers on college campuses and elsewhere. Freedom of speech or religion or assembly is not part of their Bill of Rights. And are you as tired as I of hearing the "threat to democracy" mantra whenever they don't like an election result? Their definition of democracy is different from mine, and from Noah Webster's.

Belcher's thesis is that we need to achieve what he calls a "New Vital Center," a circle in the middle of the graph where the most moderate in each quadrant can meet to forge a workable consensus.

This presents two significant difficulties to my way of thinking. First, can we ratchet down the hyperbolic vocabulary which holds back intelligent discourse? Perhaps, but only if enough of us want to.

Second, and this one may be the more difficult, can we reconcile our most deeply held principles with the pragmatic need to find policy solutions?

Not every belief we hold is a hill to die on. Some are, to be sure, but we need to apply Occam's Razor to our catechism. Moral imperatives must be held but how long does that list need to be? I am wrestling with my own list so I certainly can't offer advice to others . . . even should they ask.

I will leave this as an open question, one I would love dearly to discuss with others of whatever ideology but equally concerned with our uncivil society. We had such a discussion last week at an extended family dinner. No one left mad. There is yet hope. ♦

The Bookshelf

The Peacemaker

I am an unabashed admirer of Ronald Reagan for his love of liberty, strategic insight and unimpeachable character. So is William Imboden as detailed in his book “The Peacemaker: Ronald Reagan, the Cold War, and the World on the Brink” (Dutton 2022, 488 pages plus extensive notes, \$28 hardcover at Amazon). Imboden’s focus is how Reagan won the Cold War because he believed it had to be won.

Imboden makes much of Reagan’s horror of nuclear war as envisioned by both American and Soviet policy makers through mutually assured destruction, the acronym MAD being a skintight fit for this insanity. His determination to rid the world of nuclear weapons drove him to bring along Congress, his own senior staff and the Soviets into acquiescing to his vision. He stopped negotiations on SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) and initiated START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) to the chagrin of the MAD disciples.

One cannot but sympathize with Reagan as Imboden recounts the constant battles within the White House such as among the National Security Council and the State and Defense departments. Suffice it to say that George Schultz (one of the heroes of the book) did not get along with Caspar Weinberger, and neither with whatever NSC director was in office at the time. Imboden does not hesitate to name the bad guys, such as Alexander Haig.

Even though I thought I followed international affairs closely during the 1980s, I found it overwhelming to keep track of all the crisis points Reagan had to face—Central America, Libya, Poland, Taiwan, Iraq, Iran and just about

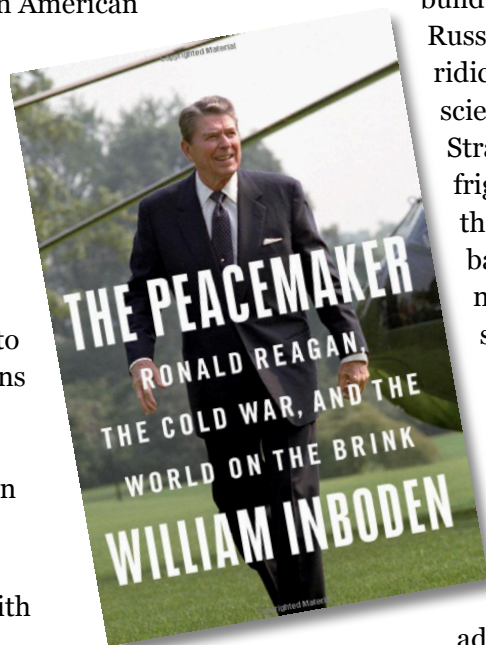
everywhere in Africa. It was whack-a-mole for Reagan yet he never lost sight of the key issue: the evil Soviet empire. When asked how he intended to pursue the Cold War, he simply responded with, “We win.”

What I did not know was how much advice, mostly but not always useful, came from Richard Nixon. Dwight Eisenhower was an early advisor as well. Contrast these past presidents to Jimmy Carter and his personal foreign policy intrusions to undercut Reagan’s credibility with the Soviets, unprecedented in U.S. history.

Reagan’s strategy was to fight the Cold War as a battle of ideas not weapons. He used his military buildup to address the arms gap with Russia but only as a tactic. Despite the ridicule he received from politicians, scientists and journalists about his Strategic Defense Initiative, it frightened the Soviet leadership to the point of bringing them to the bargaining table. His favored negotiating tactic was carrot and stick, with military buildup competition being the biggest stick and its reduction the most lucrative carrot.

Documented elsewhere but recounted in this book is Reagan’s battle with his speechwriters and political advisors over his ability to turn a phrase. His memorable line about the “evil empire” and his call to Michael Gorbachev to “bring down this wall” are just two examples of Reagan’s own linguistic insertions. I would posit that Reagan’s heritage will include his speech making skill.

Imboden heaps praise on Reagan for his handling of American allies, both in Europe and the Pacific Rim. It was Reagan who brought Japan into close alliance while maintaining friendly relations with China. His ability to mollify European leaders who were suspicious of American pullback is a masterpiece of diplomacy. Of course there was his special relationship with



Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul as skillfully described by John O’Sullivan’s “The President, the Pope, and the Prime Minister: Three Who Changed the World.”

An amusing anecdote emphasizes the latter two points. While preparing remarks to be made at the Vatican, his aides told him he mentioned God too often. At a meeting with the Pope?

Imboden does a good job of summarizing Reagan’s foreign policy accomplishments. The Iron Curtain and the Soviet Union faded into the “ash heap of history.” Every nation in Central America other than Nicaragua became more democratic. Trade barriers with Japan were lessened. Dictators in South Korea and the Philippines stepped down voluntarily (sort of). Reagan’s failures pale by comparison and the subsequent alienation with China cannot be laid at his door.

While domestic issues are not the focus of this book, Imboden mentions one that is relevant today. Reagan negotiated an immigration bill with Congress that is still the law of the land. It increased penalties for hiring illegal aliens while at the same time granting amnesty to nearly three million already in the country. Reagan’s attitude was that illegal aliens were hard to live with but even harder to live without. We are still debating that conundrum 35 years later.

Although this is a long book, it reads like a novel as Imboden moves easily among the major actors and world stages. It is every bit as good a book as Jay Winik’s excellent “On the Brink: The Dramatic, Behind-the-Scenes Saga of the Reagan Era and the Men and Women Who Won the Cold War.” Imboden’s dual career as a State Department and NSC policymaker and as an academic is evident.

Recommendation: Read this book if you were an adult in the 1980s and especially read it if you

were too young to understand what happened then.

Uncommon Wrath

Our Founding Fathers used classical examples when building a new government from the ground up. Several of these came from Republican Rome, a noble experiment to begin with but one which ultimately failed for several reasons. Historian

Josiah Osgood suggests one that had not occurred to me. “Uncommon Wrath: How Caesar and Cato’s Deadly Rivalry Destroyed the Roman Republic” (Basic Books 2022, 284 pages plus notes, \$25 hardcover at Amazon) announces his theory in the cover’s subtitle. But did he make a convincing argument?

Most casual readers of first century B. C. history tend to blame the civil war between Caesar and Pompey or the following one between Octavian and Mark Antony. Osgood correctly takes the story back to the Marius/Sulla political battles early in the century and the fallout from Sulla’s bloody dictatorship.

There were lessons to be learned, and Cato and Caesar learned very different ones although both were anti-Sulla.

These were two characters on opposite ends of the personality scale. Each tended to accentuate his eccentricities as the political stakes rose—Cato with his lifestyle purportedly mimicking the early republican fathers and Caesar with his extravagantly spendthrift inducements to the lower classes. Half-hearted attempts at compromise left both men dissatisfied.

Osgood gives a full account of the so-called Cataline conspiracy, a fascinating insight into Roman politics in the raw. The philosopher cum politician Cicero was at the center of this, his finest hour perhaps. Or was it? Roman politics changed for the worse and permanently in its aftermath.



The result was a burst of violence in the Forum, often as not incited by Caesar or his allies, and counterattacked by Cato's strong-handed political maneuvering in the Senate and the citizen assemblies. Osgood called this a "theater of power."

Rome elected its highest magistrates annually and a quick survey of these elections in the early sixth decade of the first century before Christ provides this litany of shenanigans: arbitrary changes in the election rules, incitement to violence through proxies, voting irregularities, cancellation of speakers and extra-legal actions by incumbents. Any of this sound familiar?

Osgood paints his characters in primary colors. Caesar is an overly ambitious politician with few principles. Cato is overly principled with an irritating personality. Both possessed shrewd political minds and chose their tactics, Caesar's manipulation of the mob and Cato's manipulation of parliamentary maneuver. My sympathy is with Cato even if not entirely. So was George Washington's, who thought Joseph Addison's 1712 play established Cato as a paragon of virtuous republicanism.

Of course none of this would lead to a happy ending. Cato committed suicide rather than submit to Caesar in the civil war and Shakespeare has portrayed Caesar's assassination with his usual panache. The republic was long gone; it took a final convulsive war between Caesar's nephew Octavian and his top lieutenant Marc Antony for the republic to finally morph into an empire ruled by a military dictator.

Osgood ends the book with this poignant summarization of what went wrong: [B]ut before civil war, bitter partisanship comes that justifies almost any deed and ravages all trust. We know that the attack is wrong, that it will damage all of us, but it feels so good to strike that we find it hard to stop. And so the chain of disaster really starts."

Was he talking about Rome in the first century BC or America in the twenty-first century AD?

Recommendation: Written in a journalistic style to make for easy reading. I know much more about Cato now although I'm not convinced he was Caesar's primary foil.

The Russian Who Saved the World

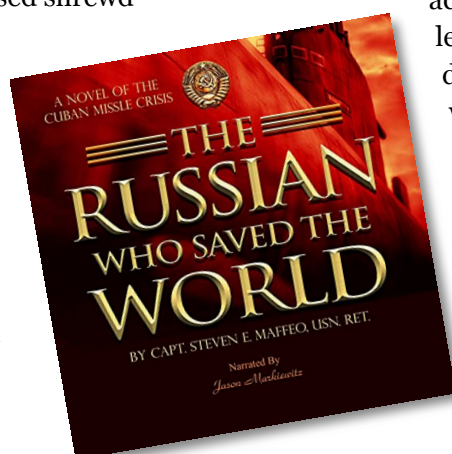
I should have a better recollection of the Cuban Missile Crisis than I do. I was in sixth grade at the time and I'm sure my teacher talked about it. But then that was well before 24X7 news channels. What news we got was generally through the local newspaper or perhaps from the network news show each night.

Much of what went on at the White House and the Kremlin was classified at the time. Individual actors kept quiet after the fact, at least until the Cold War ended. We didn't know, thankfully, how close we came to full nuclear war due to a rogue Soviet submarine captain's attempt to fire a nuclear torpedo at the U. S. fleet quarantining Cuba.

Into this breach goes Steven Maffeo, a retired Navy captain, who attempts to recreate the pressure-cooker environment onboard Soviet sub B-59. This is

historical fiction but fiction written with a professional's understanding of naval life. "The Russian Who Saved the World: A Novel of the Cuban Missile Crisis (Focsle 2019, XXX pages, \$27 hardcover at Amazon) takes us inside the submarine as it traverses the Atlantic on a secret mission, one with orders to fire the nuclear weapon if attacked. Think about that: A boat commander had the authority to begin World War III so long as he got two other officers on board to agree.

The story is told as a reminiscence by the only officer of the three who refused his consent. I generally don't like this writing style, finding the never-ending monologue tiring. Maffeo is also quite liberal with transliterated Russian words



that sound similar to their English counterparts. Why he chose this style, who can say?

The background is that this officer—Captain Vasiliy Arkhipov in real life—was the last living eyewitness and finally unburdened his soul to an unnamed listener. Given Maffeo’s naval background, there is verisimilitude in his description of the intense pressure felt by all the men on B-59. He builds that sense of increasing pressure as the sub heats up in tropical waters and begins experiencing a lack of oxygen as American search ships prevent its coming to the surface to recharge batteries and to ventilate the internal air.

There are several actual histories of this drama based on archival records recently declassified. One such is Serhii Plotkhy’s “Nuclear Folly” which successfully reports the crisis from the perspectives of Castro, Khrushchev and Kennedy. Robert Kennedy’s “Thirteen Days” is a good insider’s account of the White House deliberations although he clearly paints brother John as the hero of the hour.

Recommendation: OK but I much prefer the actual histories such as Plotkhy’s. Will appeal to lovers of the thriller genre.

Coup d’Oeil

“Cold Civil War: Overcoming Polarization, Discovering Unity, and Healing the Nation” (Intervarsity Press 2022, 352 pages, \$18 hardcover at Amazon) is a book on political philosophy written by an Evangelical pastor for other Evangelical pastors although hoping to reach a larger audience of citizens appalled by the tenor of our national discourse. His basic thesis is that we should not think in simple liberal/conservative ends of a linear spectrum but in a quadrant format with a vertical axis of freedom/order. He then draws three concentric circles moving from the outer, most extreme corners of the graph toward an innermost circle he calls the new vital center. His is essentially a call for moderation in political speech and compromise in political action. I oversimplify this but Belcher wants the Christian church to lead in this movement to the center. I like his quadrant

analysis but haven’t been convinced of the practicality or viability of his solution. But then I am a “freedom right” in his model yet one who certainly desires moderation in our public discourse. I agree that the church can lead on this and enjoyed his discussion on the biblical basis for natural law based on revelation.

“The Wandering Mind: What Medieval Monks Tell Us about Distraction” (Liveright Publishing Corp. 2023, 197 pages plus extensive notes, \$27 hardcover at Amazon) by medievalist Jamie Kreiner attempts to explain why our modern inability to concentrate is not unique to our digital age but was also experienced by monks in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Her history of monasticism is interesting although mostly one of anecdotes about individual monks and houses. Apparently our religious predecessors were in a continual battle with distraction just like we are. Isolation vs. community, silence vs. discussion, physical labor vs. devotional contemplation were the points of disagreement on the best way to lead a meditative life. Kreiner suggests they were no better at eliminating the outside world than we are, only curable then and now by being united with God at death. While we blame our distractions on the culture or technology or work stress or whatever we can point to outside ourselves, these monks blamed their failures on being disconnected from the Divine. It was part of “the warp of the world” as Kreiner describes it. Our world is still warped and at the speed of pixels on digital displays. We can learn much as Keiner contends from the resiliency of the monks to confront distraction and “stay in the fight.”

“Relighting the Torch” (self-published 2022, 178 pages plus notes, \$16 paperback at Amazon) by Andrew Horning can be described as a radical libertarian manifesto in that it demands nothing less than to upset the entire political applecart. Horning, a member of this Foundation, is always bold, frequently provocative and sometimes outrageous in his analysis of the current state of affairs and his not-so-modest proposals to fix it. The book is organized into three sections: his diagnosis of what is wrong (and there is much wrong in his opinion); a section-by-section

commentary on the good, the bad and the ugly in the Constitution and its amendments; and his suggestions for specific legislation to fix it all. By fix it all, he means elimination of the two-party electoral system in favor of a wide-open process and a return to a very strict construction of the Constitution's language and intent. Sometimes he is unpredictable in his solutions. For example he is for ranked choice voting but opposed to a convention of the states. I agree with his fear of a convention of states but remain wary of the mischief that can come out of ranked choice voting. I also take issue with his nullification resolutions; we have been there several times in our history and the result was military force or its threat. Many of the others, however, should be attractive to libertarians and even traditional conservatives (although Horning hates that designation's use for limited government proponents). His utopian republic may not be achievable but a lot of his ideas are worthy of debate and adoption. ◆



Thomas Hoepker, Sept. 11, 2001

The Outstater

Goodbye, Dilbert

(Feb. 28) — This morning my egregiously silly local newspaper declared that it is taking a most serious stand on the highest moral ground. In a one-paragraph front-page notice it canceled the comic strip, “Dilbert.”

The strip is drawn by Scott Adams, winner of the national Reuben Award for Best Newspaper Comic Strip. Adams made a comment that the editors judged “racist.” That’s all they think we need to know. Courage displayed. Postured assumed. Verdict delivered. End of story.

But as in all woke executions, it takes some digging to learn what exactly was said and in what context. Keep in mind that the accused is a humorist. He makes his living saying outrageous things.

It all happened during an interview in which the results of a national poll by Rasmussen came up. The poll asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “It’s OK to be white.” Forty-seven percent of black respondents answered that either it was not OK to be white or that they weren’t sure. Here is Adams’ reaction:

“If nearly half of all blacks are not OK with white people — according to this poll, not according to me — according to this poll, that’s a hate group. That’s a hate group and I don’t want to have anything to do with them. And I would

say, y’know, based on the current way things are going, the best advice I would give to white people is to get the hell away from black people.”

Gasp!

Lost in the pearl-clutching was that Adams was wrong about the poll. “That’s not what the poll says,” argued the political columnist John Derbyshire. “What it says is that nearly half of all blacks are not OK with white people asserting their whiteness. Perhaps they just don’t like identitarianism of any variety.”

So, all things considered, what we have is an outrageous comment from a person who makes a living being outrageous. Off with his head!

Maybe, though, the more thoughtful at the beheading would be interested to know that black communities do have a problem related to the flight of whites (and, for that matter, blacks). The problem is crime, justified some say by sociological conditions, but crime nonetheless. Perhaps Adams’ bit of advice was even superfluous. Derbyshire says that — like it or not, and we don’t — national patterns of residential and educational choice show that whites already are fleeing as fast as the law allows.

Why? You can blame racism and we won’t argue. But the fact that black males aged 18-24 are nearly 28 times as likely to be violent offenders than their representation in the national population also might have something to do with it. Now, according to Rasmussen, you can add attitude to the calculation.

The point here is that a national pollster thought it important to ask a racially provocative question and the black community responded in a shocking way indicates there are profound social changes afoot in America.

Summarily firing a cartoonist didn’t address them.

Clothes Make the Man — Sad to Say

(Feb. 25) — I used to follow men’s fashions. I had learned to trust it as a barometer of the male zeitgeist and an indication of the national direction. Men’s fashion moved more slowly than

women's and was therefore the more predicting. This was a time, please know, when men still mattered — somewhat and sort of.

What kind of information did men's fashions carry? Well, you are probably aware that the heavy brass buttons on men's blazers originated with an order by the great Napoleon Bonaparte. It was to keep his troops from wiping snot on their sleeves.

And you may know that the creases ironed into men's pants are an attempt to duplicate the creases occurring in clothing packed for shipment overseas from Savile Row in London.

Or that button-down shirts were the innovation of British polo players to keep their collars from flapping about. And that Playtex made the spacesuits for Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin when they went to the moon.

During the 1950s, Madison Avenue types took special care of their footwear for fear of being judged “down at the heel.” Finally (we hope), hippies liked to pin to their clothing the odd item picked up during a psychedelic trip, including cigarette butts and dried dog poop

A few weeks ago I used birthday money to buy an authentic Indian Madras shirt. I wear Madras as a symbol of overseas military service, a fashion that began with officers of the British East India Company. The tradition can be observed today in the jumble of colors tumbling down the gangplank as petty officers are whistled off a U.S. Navy ship for shore leave.

Madras also was the fashion among teenage boys in the 1960s, at least in certain parts of the country. As close as can be determined, they saw it as a status symbol, perhaps because Madras in those days bled horribly and could ruin everything else in the wash, meaning only those boys with particularly loving and attentive mothers could manage the style preference. (In a conflicting message, Levi 501 jeans that mothers had accidentally bleached in splotches — or had been commanded to do so — were the rage.)



MEN'S CASUAL CHECK LOOSE KNIT

\$59.95



MEN'S RETRO CHECKERED

\$49.95

This all may be overthought. Whatever, as a result of my shirt order, the Amazon algorithm mistakenly pegged me for a wild, devil-may-care fellow. I began getting messages from something called the Manly Clothing Company.

Right here, if this were an interactive medium, I would ask your reaction to the catalogue poses above. The models are wearing the “men's casual-check loose-knit” and the “men's retro-checkered” outfits. The Manly Clothing Company says they are among its most popular.

My own reaction is confused. Even as a veteran fashion-watcher I'm having trouble unraveling what it is they are trying to tell me. Do you get a hint, if only the faintest whiff, of “a destitute migrant rummaging in dumpsters on his way to a job interview”?

About this same time, I received an email from a friend alerting me to a policy statement by the owners of the men's clothing store in my city that happens to carry the Manly brand. It reads in full: “This store sits on Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), Peoria, Bodéwadmiakiwen (Potawatomi) and Miami land.”

Does this mean that those native-American tribes owned the land jointly? Unlikely, since they did not have a written language with which to draw up the necessary LLP paperwork. Rather, it must mean they owned it in succession, one hunter-gatherer group taking possession after another, in which case my pioneer forefathers

deserve to be listed as well — last man standing and all that.

Taking another look at the Manly Clothing Company models, however, I have decided not to press that point with the management. The store headquarters sits on land in California, which, along with nine other states, was claimed by Mexico until “stolen” in 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

Clothes can tell you a lot about a man — and, sadly, about our national destiny.

A Brief Monograph on Facial Hair

(Feb. 6) — MEN’S FASHION in facial hair should be taken seriously. Throughout history, it has informed the observant of societal bent, usually downward, sometimes in a martial direction.

Look, I don’t have anything against mustaches and beards intrinsically. I grew a mustache in the Navy because I imagined it would make me look grownup and formidable. Fifty-five years later I am considering growing another, this time to make my face more grandfatherly and less frightening to small children.

For background, this brief beard history is from the website adverdermatology.com:

“In ancient Greece, beards were seen as signs of virility, manhood and wisdom. They were cut only during a time of mourning or as a form of punishment to Spartans. The ancient Romans decided to distinguish themselves from the Greeks by being clean-shaven. It was so important to Roman culture that religious ceremonies were held when boys shaved for the first time. By the years 330 – 1750 in Europe, facial hair had mixed support. While knights maintained beards as a sign of masculinity and honor, King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth weren’t fans, at least on those they ruled. King Henry kept his beard while everyone else had to pay a tax for growing one.”

I have a neighbor who grows a full beard in winter when he ostensibly needs the warmth. He

shaves clean in summer when it would be itchy. That makes sense.

What make no sense, historically or otherwise, is the stubble beard or three-day growth that is so de rigueur these days. It is harder to maintain than a daily shave. You need expensive equipment to keep it looking right. It has you rubbing your chin all day.

UCLA basketball coach John Wooden famously rejected Hall of Fame inductee Bill Walton’s request to be exempted from the team’s prohibition on facial hair and hair longer than two inches. “That’s good Bill, I admire people who have strong beliefs and stick by them, I really do,” Walton remembers the coach saying, “We’re going to miss you.”

Wooden further explained that if he relaxed the prohibition he would have to hire another coach or two to measure haircuts. It wasn’t in the budget and had nothing to do with winning basketball games.

A restaurateur friend refuses to hire men with any sort of beard. His 60 years in the business tell him the bearded do not make reliable employees or the kind who win promotion. I would suppose that is especially true of applicants who appear too lazy to shave. Just saying.

So why the stubble?

Early on, there was a rationale of sorts. And you may be interested to know the stubble is not all that new. It was invented as a fashion by Don Johnson in the character of Sonny Crocett on the 1984 television series “Miami Vice.”

Back then, a three-day growth on a plain-clothes vice detective might have served as a deception. Regular cops in those days had morning inspections in which daily shaving was the rule. For that reason, Johnson’s character, with a stubble, couldn’t be the police, or at least not in the minds of the more gullible of the television bad guys.

More importantly, it developed the character of Crocett as an independent even romantic force, not some time-puncher under workaday supervision. If you regularly sported a three-day growth in the ‘80s you were someone — or meant

to seem as someone — either with special skills or so wealthy you didn't go through no stinking hiring process. (A decade later the “man bun” attempted the same message.)

Let me veer off for a moment. I had always wondered why Hitler wore such a silly-looking mustache. For whatever he was, he was not silly. I now learn that it signaled that he had been on the front lines of WWI, where soldiers trimmed the edges of their mustaches so a gas mask would fit more perfectly.

Mustaches and beards, you see, are not wanton. They are meant to say something.

But not every man can grow a good-looking one — genetics, you know. Everyone, though, can grow a stubble. But its popularity is more complex than that. Nor does it signal an independent disposition or idle wealth. Indeed, too many men are wearing it to have any distinguishing purpose whatsoever. So what are they trying to say?

Well, there's this: Young women have begun telling pollsters in recent years that they prefer men with a heavy stubble.

Could young men be wearing stubble beards only because some woman — probably not their mother — has told them it makes them handsome? Do we have a generation of men so hollow that they allow the disinterested, i.e., women playfully testing their power to flatter, to dictate grooming habits?

Another reason we should pray for peace.

‘ . . . Jus from How Dey Talking’

(Feb. 2) — I think I get it now — wokeness, I mean. My office is on Indiana's sanity fringe, and up until now I've been living in the 1980s, some say in the 1960s. But an article landed on my desk this morning that may bring me up to date.

The headline reads “Against Copyediting.” It is by someone named Helen Betya Rubinstein writing in something called the Literary Hub, the Jan. 26 issue to be exact.

Ms. Rubinstein's argument is that copyediting is racist. Here's the crux:

“It's clear that copyediting as it's typically practiced is a white-supremacist project, that is, not only for the particular linguistic forms it favors and upholds, which belong to the cultures of whiteness and power, but for how it excludes or erases the voices and styles of those who can't or won't perform this culture.”

I couldn't agree more. Indeed, since I first entered the profession I have fought against any such grammatical tyranny. I wanted my words to be free as birds, to write like Donald Barthelme or E.E. Cummings, using “if,” “am” and “because” as nouns or whatever and assigning my own meanings to words while stringing them together “like pearls in Cleopatra's necklace,” as Kurt Vonnegut put it.

But English, as you know, is a particularly tricky language. That is because it had to accommodate the diverse (mark that word) invaders of the British Isles, including the Angles, a Germanic tribe from whence English gets its name, which makes no more sense than its tortured grammar and quirky spelling.

Ms. Rubinstein suggests a better way. She quotes Lee A. Tonouchi's work, “Da State of Pidgin Address.” Mr. Tonouchi, writing in what he says is Hawai'ian Creole English, or Pidgin. He notes, “dat da perception is dat da standard english talker is going automatically be perceive fo' be mo' intelligent than da Pidgin talker regardless wot dey talking, jus from HOW dey talking.”

Again, I couldn't have said it better. I, too, have a favorite language. It is Tuyucan, spoken in a remote area of Brazil. It has word endings designed to express whether the speaker fully understands what he or she is talking about.

That said, I begrudgingly memorized the Associated Press Stylebook and other despotic tracts and began a lifetime of worrying about using “who” or “whom,” “that” or “which” while keeping an eagle eye out for the breath-pause comma and the obligatory umlaut.

But what Ms. Rubinstein inadvertently makes clear is that her complaint has nothing to do with language or race or skin pigment or even slavery,

which, once ubiquitous, was first banned only in English-speaking nations. Rather, she insists any thought white people have had is racist dating back two thousand years or so, including the English language and, one supposes, anti-racism itself.

Ominously, Ms. Rubinstein blames it all on Western Civilization, which she seems to want stamped out. It can only follow that she thinks that copy editors, the policemen of her civilization's hated but predominate language, are in the service of white supremacists or worse. And as with policemen, it doesn't matter that an editor may be a person of color themselves.

"It remains socially acceptable to call oneself a grammar 'Nazi,'" says Ms. Rubinstein, leaping to an even more fiendish language.

Yes, you must take her seriously, but know that white people only incidentally invented the hated civilization. Anyone could have done it. And in fact it has been put to good use by people of color throughout the world, many of whom having learned to speak perfect English. Singapore, Botswana, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Chile and increasingly in India all have adopted its tenets (but not, interestingly, ultra-woke but impoverished Zimbabwe, Venezuela and South Africa).

English, historically, like it or not, is the language of success as measured by living standards as well as accomplishments in the arts and sciences — by magnitudes.

The em dash in that last sentence might be superfluous, or misplaced altogether.

'We the People' Pays Well

"Show me a man who gets rich by being a politician, and I will show you a crook." — Harry S Truman

(Jan. 28) — Have you ever wondered why so many congressmen, Republican and Democrat, are rich? Of course you have, and your best guess, depending on your disposition, is that they are either hard-working or corrupt, or hard working at being corrupt.

You will have your answer this session — maybe.

Before we get into that, please know that it is a critical question in a constitutional republic. For if we have members of our legislative branch trading favors for profit then they are no better than members of a medieval court or the cabinet of a third-world despot, a parliament of whores, as the late P.J. O'Rourke put it. For them, the constitution would be just a display in the National Archives Museum.

To start, they have made it difficult to gauge what a lawmaker is worth for regulatory purposes. The disclosure forms do not require exact values. To use an example from the watchdog group Open Secrets, a congressman might say his or her rental property is worth somewhere in a range of estimates. This provides a minimum, maximum and average value of the asset. However, to calculate net worth we must apply a formula that includes a lawmaker's ranges of assets and ranges of liabilities.

In short, there is what the economists call a moral hazard built into the job description. The foxes are guarding the hen house.

To get a true picture, we would need a couple of private detectives and a forensic accountant. While the rest of us have to calculate our profits and losses to the penny at risk of imprisonment, congressmen in this instance can just take a stab at it. As it were and if you will, more than half the members of Congress have somehow become millionaires without having to turn over much in the way of real numbers.

Apologists will tell you that many wealthy congressmen were wealthy to start (another problem entirely). But of those, Nancy Pelosi coming to mind, some have turned out to be uncommonly good traders of stock, so uncommonly good that their trades outperform by multiples any stock index.

And the others ask us to believe they made their millions on a \$174,000-a-year salary in a place with the highest cost of living in the nation by taking a sharp pencil to the family grocery budget.

OK, but here's where you get your answer. This session, follow your congressman's vote on a bill introduced by Sen. Josh Hawley from "Show Me" Missouri. It bars lawmakers and their spouses from owning or trading stocks while in office — period. A simple "yes" or a "no." should be decisive.

"For too long, politicians in Washington have taken advantage of the economic system they write the rules for, turning profits for themselves at the expense of the American people." Hawley said this week in support for his Preventing Elected Leaders from Owning Securities and Investments Act (PELOSI). "As members of Congress, both Senators and Representatives are tasked with providing oversight of the same companies they invest in, yet they continually buy and sell stocks, outperforming the market time and again."

The Government Accountability Office would audit member compliance with the Act. It would prevent the possibility — the practice, really — of sharing expert stock tips delivered sotto voce as a reward for favored legislation.

But as you try to determine the position of the Indiana delegation, if in fact the leadership allows the bill to get to the floor, consider that there will be multiple votes on committee advancement, amendments, alternative versions and other procedures and changes written in during a confidential markup session. Also, it may be attached to another measure of inarguable worth that demands support. And if a congressman still casts what in effect is the killing vote he or she can claim they voted for it before they voted against it. Then there's how "stocks" and "trading" and "will" and "shall" are defined in the final language as read by a politically vetted judge.

And so it goes, as Kurt Vonnegut so aptly observed.

Stopping and Frisking Saves Lives

(Jan. 18) — As complicated as democracy is, you can clearly see it working in Marion County.

You can tell by the high murder rate. Marion voters, the reasons for which they are quite proud, have decided to elect a mayor and prosecuting attorney who demonstrate their social compassion by abiding homicide.

Not everywhere, of course. There are two places in Marion County — that place and the other place. The murders are concentrated in a small part of that place, in one or two zip codes, actually, and perhaps within only a dozen square blocks.

In the other place nobody gets murdered much at all. The citizens there like to be called progressive. Their votes may ensure that the citizens in that place, alas, get murdered in record numbers but are respected for just who they are. The mayor and the prosecutor live in the other place (again, democracy is complicated).

It was mentioned earlier that the murders are concentrated. That raises the question of why police don't concentrate as well. Indeed, a new study suggests that the mayor and the prosecutor should order exactly that.

The Crime Prevention Research Center reported yesterday that some 73 percent of all murders in the U.S. take place in just 5 percent of counties, with Marion County being in the top 10. Fifty-two percent of all counties report no murders at all.

"Murder isn't a nationwide problem," the study found. "It's a problem in a small set of urban areas and even in those counties murders are concentrated in small areas inside them, and any solution must reduce those murders."

That solution is no mystery. It was worked out in New York City beginning in the Giuliani administration. It is called a "Terry Stop" after the 1968 Supreme Court ruling in *Terry vs. Ohio*. The Court found that police should have the power to search, even without probable cause, to protect themselves from weapons. The Terry Stop operates under the assumption that although stop-and-frisk is an intrusion the potential harm from weapons outweighs it.

That flies in the face of current racism narratives, but at some point it must be

acknowledged that we are not having a discussion over lunch in the faculty lounge. Rather, this is a matter of life and death. Here is Heather McDonald of the Manhattan Institute:

“Proactive police stops are among the most effective crime-fighting tools that cops on the beat have. The New York Police Department’s use of the tactic helped bring the city’s homicide rate down another 50 percent during (Mayor Mike) Bloomberg’s tenure in office from 2002 to 2013, something few criminologists believed possible. Sixteen hundred minority lives were saved in the process.”

And in the case of a smaller city like Indianapolis, the murder rate also could be dramatically lowered by stationing police in statistically selected urban blocks. Modern crime data is that good.

Still, as it were and if you will, the mayor and prosecutor aren’t going to do any of that — not at least to an effective degree. At the risk of seeming cynical, maybe the murder rate isn’t high enough yet in that place to kill off the margin of voters they need for reelection (democracy is very complicated).

It could be worse. The Washington D.C. City Council yesterday overrode a veto in order to lower its crime rate by declassifying most serious crime.

In such calculations, the voters not yet murdered in that place would not be as important as the voters in the other place, who imagine those in that place are children and enforcing the law would hurt their feelings.

Democracy, once more, is very, very complicated — inscrutable, some think

Yes, You Live in Corruption

“Nothing happens until the right people own the land.”— anonymous

(Jan. 16) — The most basic economic statistic is how many are coming and how many are going. So how do you explain that Indiana is now second

only to Illinois in the number of people skedaddling. The national moving company Atlas says that 59 percent of its Indiana customers are leaving.

As with everything these days, there are two explanations. The economic-development experts says it’s just people wanting to get closer to loved ones. Others say it is the economic-development experts.

The past three Indiana governors have pretended that dollars leveraged by regional development plans, tax increment financing, public-private partnerships, government grants, deferments, complex bonding and tax rebates are the same as free-market investments. They have used that money to create regional fiscal kingdoms, in effect awarding royal titles, charters and warrants to those willing to play their game. Campaign donations to malleable local officials are a given.

In sum, modern economic development (eco-devo) can be thought of as using laundered government money to build sports venues, mixed-use luxury apartment complex, acres of parking garages, downtown renovations, etc., without much thought to market forces, productivity or missed opportunities. The tons of cement and rebar sold seem to be the measure of success.

The experts told the governors this was all “progress” but nobody seems to have been fooled. These machinations are what a former scholar here, Tad DeHaven, dubbed “press-release economics.” Others have likened them to the mercantilism that ruled back when Shakespeare was writing sonnets.

In any case, the millions and millions of eco-devo dollars should have made at least some difference. But no, how many taxes are we willing to rebate to pay for each lost resident? Would we have done better dropping the money from helicopters?

Another basic lesson of economics that has been lost to our governors is that the security of property matters. Tom Lincoln, father of Abe, moved his family from Kentucky because Indiana’s property titles were more secure. Today,

it is political connections that matter, not the best use of freely traded land.

If you doubt that, take a look at IndianaScorecard.org, an independent web site that ranks legislators on how they voted on matters affecting private property. Only the top-scoring few list any regular citizens among their donors. The low scorers, though, are financed by corporations and the ubiquitous political action committees. Those are the same legislators who score well on a competing rating by the Chamber of Commerce, as good a measure of cronyism as you will find.

It gets worse. The Indiana Policy Review took a close look at who donates to the typical mayoral reelection campaign. Most of the money came from architectural, engineering, contracting, surveying and legal firms or their family members, employees or associates, many of them out of state.

To put it brutally, if you haven't been invested by the local eco-devo princes, you can't do business in their kingdom, or you do so at a disadvantage. Our study estimated in one city that almost \$100,000 in total donations produced more than \$128 million in direct payments from city hall. The study, conducted by a former banking analyst concluded this:

"Currently, Indiana has the highest business personal property tax in the Midwest, and the worst tax environment for manufacturers according to research from the Tax Foundation and the auditing firm, KPMG. This provides a deep moat and a high barrier to entry in the market. As a result, the Chamber/eco-devo conglomerate holds both the key to entry and a substantial amount of power."

It turns out that handing over control of your state's future to unaccountable medieval schemers isn't a good business plan.

It's a Dunder-Mifflin World

"There is beauty in ordinary things; isn't that kind of the point?" — Pam in the last line of "The Office."

(Jan. 9) — Overcast, frigid, January is a good month for reruns and deep thoughts, or at least as deep as one's thinking mechanism allows. Here's one: Maybe the politicians aren't to blame; maybe this is our own darn fault.

The thought accompanies a fear that we are trapped in a Dunder-Mifflin world, mimicking a functional society while waiting for someone or some event to save us.

So it was encouraging to read an article by the Federalist's John Daniel Davidson. The title makes the point: "Ordinary Americans Are Going to Have to Save the Country Themselves, One Town at a Time."

That, at least, has been our experience. After 30 years we have tired of sending one politician after another to Washington only to see them consumed by the concerns of the powerful.

Davidson argues with us that few average citizens have the ability to worry the ambitions of a congressman or senator. Most of us, though, could mount a respectable primary campaign at the county or town level, perhaps beginning a movement that threatens the political status quo of an entire state.

"The plain truth is this: You're going to have to save the country yourselves," Davidson writes. "Donald Trump isn't going to save it. Ron DeSantis isn't going to save it. There's not a snowball's chance in hell that a GOP majority in Congress is going to save it."

He doubts, then, there is any point in sending another suit to Washington. Rather, he recommends something more ordinary — using your money, energy and time taking over the mundanity of civic life, organizing and winning elections for mayor, council and school board, finding the Jim Halperts and the Pam Beeslys willing to run against the Michael Scotts and the Dwight Schrutes.

"It's going to be a long, thankless slog," Davidson warns.

That understood, this foundation dedicates the current Indiana Policy Review to the slog, profiling therein the experience of councilmen throughout Indiana known for voting their mind.

We list the steps to a successful primary challenge. There is a handbook on education reform written by Andrea Neal, former member of the Indiana Board of Education. This spring we will co-sponsor a seminar on Indiana's councils and school boards.

We call all of this “the Foothold Project.” We mean to make available the tools our members need to follow Davidson’s advice, to give the next generation a fighting chance — that and to take heart, our challenges being woeful but surmountable.

The Congressional Trapeze

(Jan. 5) — The provost of my daughter’s college quipped there is only one thing that is exactly as it seems, professional wrestling. I would add two others, the trapeze and Congress.

Reading the news of the attempt to name a new Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, I found myself thinking of the Flying Wallendas, the family of trapeze artists, and that difference between phony and authentic.

The Wallendas are authentic. But no, they don’t actually fly but they are nonetheless the real deal. In fact, six of the family members have died in falls from the trapeze or the high wire.

As a young man I saw the Wallendas perform live. One of them, I can’t remember which, was to attempt the great Quadruple, something generations of circus artists in more than 150 years of trapeze history had been unable to perform. Burt Lancaster in the iconic movie “Trapeze” was only attempting a Triple.

Anyway, I watched as the young Wallenda made his four somersaults only to crash to the net after narrowly missing his catch. I was crestfallen but the trick, if that’s the right word, would be accomplished in a live performance years later by Miguel Vazquez of Mexico’s Flying Vazquezes.

To give you an idea of the difficulty, this is from the front-page account in the New York Times of Vazqueze’s feat:

“It takes a rare athlete to complete four midair somersaults while positioning perfectly to be

caught by the wrists, but also because of the problem it poses for the catcher. Hanging upside down from his horizontal bar, the catcher must grasp his partner as he spins out of his fourth somersault with explosive speed. The final somersault must be carefully timed so that the force of the fall does not dislocate the catcher’s shoulders. The power of this somersault has been known to strip the skin off the fingers of the aerialist.”

Sort of like electing a Speaker of the House? Not exactly. Sometime the Wallendas worked without a net, as their fatalities testify. Our congressmen hardly ever do. The re-election rate is now above 94 percent.

But there are similarities. For example, counting on a congressman to perform as rehearsed during the election campaign can be risky. The “catch” is often missed or the “catcher” fails to show up on time — if at all.

And yes, they both perform in a circus.

The Power of Individuals

“Top management is discouraged and saddened, and middle management is drinking too much. Morale in the newsroom is fair, because of the recent raises, but the shining brows of the copy boys, traditional emblems of energy and hope, have begun to display odd, unattractive lines. At every level, people want management to stop what it is doing before it is too late.” — Donald Barthelme in the New Yorker, 1980

(Dec. 31) — It is unfashionable to say in this time of group identity but we hold it to be true — Individuals matter. And if the Declaration of Independence is too old school for you, we have updated it in our mission statement. “Emphasize the primacy of the individual in addressing public concerns,” we vow.

By individual we mean a single person with a soul, an immaterial essence, animating principle or whatever you want to call it. If you are part of an organization that is not accountable to such persons, however humanly flawed they may be, you are at the mercy of the arbitrary.

I have seen a great industry ruined by the transfer of ownership from individuals to corporations. Newspapers were once the largest manufacturing classification in the nation. Circulation began declining steadily in the 1970s as inheritance tax law pushed the sale of home-owned newspapers into the hands of corporations.

Know that this decline was independent of the development of the Internet. First, the evidence is clear in the annual data tables of Editor & Publisher that newspaper circulation began falling well before the Internet took hold. Second, the increasingly bizarre, often reader-contemptuous content of the corporate newspapers didn't change when the switch was made to digital. Systemic changes had trumped technical changes.

"Each new generation born is in effect an invasion of civilization by little barbarians, who must be civilized before it is too late," the economist Thomas Sowell warns. For my profession, the civilizing came too late — or more accurately it was abruptly curtailed. No longer were there adult supervisors. That is, there were no owner-publishers who sat down at the local coffee shop or dined at the town's popular restaurant, approachable to varying degrees by readers and, whether they liked it or not, facing a street-level market test of their products and views each and every day.

It turns out that these men and women were all that had held back the default setting of the profession. That default being a continuing invasion of journo-barbarians coming out of hyper-liberal J-schools determined to change the world to the measure of their limited understanding. Their wildest ideas, the ones that eventually would tank circulation, until then had been unceremoniously spiked.

No longer. The owner-publishers were replaced by revolving corporate managers, "occupiers" a senior editor friend called them. They could ignore the warnings of the market, the profits of the industry now being driven not by circulation or advertising but by a false reputation for being an inflation-proof

investment. Managerial arrogance abounded. Immaturity and narcissism, imagining themselves to be Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman, ran riot. The quarterly profit-loss statement was god.

At the time, I wrote the following for the Wall Street Journal editorial page, presciently may I say:

"Things aren't working out the way Mr. Knight and Mr. Gannett and Mr. Copley envisioned. And management is coming to understand that this problem is systemic, that there is little it can do about it. Readers have made it clear to media researchers that instead they want papers to have a personal identity — that a newspaper is like a guest into their homes every day. And even though corporate managers have done their best to give them that identity through reader sensitivity campaigns, signed editorials and celebrity columnists, the surveys continue to show something critical is missing. My guess is 'it' is a person who has an overwhelming interest in how the newspaper is viewed in the community. 'It' is person, however bothersome to the various political factions about town, who can be counted on to avoid posture and seek conviction when sorting the issues of the day."

But by the millennial, just as the nation was beginning to realize the calamity that was the new journalism, Walter Cronkite, "the most trusted man in America," threw in his two bits: "The profession of journalism ought to be about telling people what they need to know — not what they want to know."

And that's the way it is, as the old fraud liked to say.

We Have Questions

(*Dec. 18*) — I'm not proud of it but I sent another of my ineffectual, never-to-see-the-light-of-day screeds to the local newspaper, this one asking why coverage of the city council couldn't include at least a thumbnail account of the dissenting votes.

What set me off was a glowing account of the council's passage without debate of an almost \$2 million tax break for an eco-devo scheme or scam (depending on your perspective). The degree of acclamation was such that the reader would have been surprised to learn that there were any votes against it at all.

In fact, though, one councilman did vote against this purported civic boon. Had he dozed off? Was he drunk? Was he merely disgruntled, defeated by the overwhelming forces of progress?

We don't know. The reporter didn't ask him or even note his vote.

That was a pity. For who won a particular vote is only part of the story. It can be determined by anyone with basic math skills. Those on the losing side, though, often have the more interesting and perhaps prescient observations and questions, in this case whether there was any actual evidence that such tax breaks create jobs.

It is why the Romans pulled winning generals from the field. It was understood that winners have trouble understanding why they won, their egos having taken over at the moment of victory to credit a heroic vision rather than, say, the simple and more determinant lay of the battlefield.

Losers, though, know exactly why they lost. They spend a lot of time thinking about it.

It was Rudyard Kipling's definition of a man: "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same." Or if that is too old school for you, there is Donald Trump: "Sometimes by losing a battle you find a new way to win the war."

How many can remember the score of the 1979 championship between Larry Bird and Magic Johnson, the game that popularized big-time college basketball? And was the score the important thing? As broadcaster Al McGuire said after the game, "Winning is only important in war and surgery."

In any case, you would think it a basic of the journalism craft to be curious about the reasoning of those on the losing side of a public discussion. The economist Thomas Sowell suggests three

questions that can serve as a guideline for council reporters:

Compared with what?

At what cost?

On the basis of what hard evidence?

My guess is that the winners of most votes by our local council could not answer all or maybe any of those questions. But journalism owes it to readers to at least ask them.

Money and Malleability

(Dec. 16) — Some hold hope that the Indiana Republican Party in its supermajority or even democracy in general is going to get us back on course. That hope doesn't appear to float.

Transparency USA tells us that the top three Indiana GOP Senate fundraisers all won reelection outspending their opponents in both the primary and general elections by at least 2:1. Their positions on the issues didn't seem to be a factor. All three scored below 50 percent on IndianaScoreCard.org, a measure of core Republican issues, including and especially protection of private property and personally liberty.

To our shame, special-interest money and incumbency are the primary factors in election. But shouldn't it matter just a tiny bit that these high-riding Republicans vote only marginally better than Democrats? And considering the state of mass media, does the electorate even know that is the case?

Tell me again what's wrong with term limits.

Knock, Knock . . .

(Dec. 6) — I read a lot of headlines. To save time, I've learned to sort them into three stacks. The one is announcing that someone has devised a way to help absolutely everybody absolutely equally. The other is that the Biden administration, which has promised to destroy the nation for reasons that only future historians will understand, is in fact destroying the nation.

I don't need to read those stacks. The remaining stack is much, much smaller. Indeed,

this week it consisted of a single article from the Associated Press, “U.S. Police Rarely Deploy Deadly Robots to Confront Suspects.”

What could go wrong? Still, as I have aged I have paid more attention to adjectives. In this case, I began the article looking for qualification of “rarely” and “deadly.” Finding none, I moved on to imagining who I know in government who could be trusted to program or direct mechanical enforcement of our Constitution.

My mailman seems a nice guy; maybe he could do it. Or whoever writes the OSHA warnings on step ladders.

Or maybe not.

The San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 8-3 this week to permit police to use robots armed with explosives. They can now unleash a robot dog “in extreme situations where lives are at stake and no other alternative is available.”

How do you feel about eight San Francisco politicians deciding what is an “extreme” situation, when lives are “at stake,” and where no “alternative” is “available”?

Myself, I’m not that worried. Government is rarely — there’s that word again — primarily interested in killing its own citizens (although several have done an impressive job of that). What government is most interested in is collecting taxes.

Given no change in the inutility of Republican leadership, the unobstructed path open to robots is in front of us — leading directly to government epitomized.

That is, there will be a well-oiled, armed robot at the front door asking you to gather up your receipts and pay slips for digital uploading. He/She/It is there to settle any balance owed as a result of recent perhaps unannounced changes in the tax code. While you are at it, bring your cell phone and the trip tickets from your electric car. And while you are doing all that, be sure not to make any sudden moves.

He/She/It will be happy to wait.

New Boss Just Like the Old Boss

(Nov. 29) — The Indiana Senate leadership announced new committee chairmen recently for the 2023 session. We thought it would be interesting to compare the outgoing chairmen with the incoming chairmen.

A handy way to do that is to compare ratings of the individual legislators on IndianaScorecard.org, an independent web site that measures how our representatives vote on central issues such as private property and personal liberty. Has the leadership sensed new populist vibes? Is it picking up its step to stay ahead of the parade? The people wanted to know.

But we also needed a cynicism check. Was it wrong for us to assume that the leadership would choose chairmen not on the basis of expertise but rather on malleability? Was our bet wrong that the new chairmen would not be charged with any fresh thinking?

No, it was not. On average the new chairmen scored almost exactly the same as the old chairmen (46.4 to 46.1 on a scale of 100).

Ain’t democracy great?

Civil Rights Rethought

(Nov. 28) — Hold on to your hat we’re going to talk about race. What would you think if your city council started all over on civil rights, dismantled its “equity” mechanisms and agencies, erased all references from the municipal code and operations?

Before you answer, know that we have reached a point where we don’t have a classless society but rather two classes at each other’s throats. The one is made up of the assorted, ever-expanding, intersectional and overlapping groups claiming victim status and demanding a special deal. The other is cisgender, able-bodied, fully employed white males with their supposed privileges.

That’s not going to work. A system of social justice makes no sense that has ratcheted full circle to again allow individuals of one race to be treated as secondary or inferior.

But would we be returning to 1964 and the days of Jim Crow?

Many, many people have been taught that would be the case. Peter Wood of Boston College laments that this generation seems to have accepted “the terrible falsehood” that racism is and always was the dominant ideology here. If that stands, Wood warns, the American experiment “will hang by a thread and we would have no Lincoln to save it.”

Still, everyone in this foundation would vigorously oppose any change if they thought that Jim Crow or even separate-but-equal would be the result. Could we agree, though, on some policy going forward that would avoid the divisions now being sown?

Otherwise, we end up with social-justice system tied in knots. The civil rights bureaucracy cannot handle situations where there is a hitch in its simplistic black-white indices. Richard Samuelson, professor of government at Hillsdale College, in his essay “The Great Unwakening,” outlines some problems with that:

“What if, say, a black trans-lesbian brings a lawsuit against a disabled Polynesian immigrant?” Samuelson asks. “Without a reliable means of determining who is the ‘up’ and who is the ‘down’ group, the whole system, run by legions of enforcement bureaucrats, activists, and lawyers, hits tilt.”

“At Harvard, an Asian-American student must score 450 points higher on the SAT to have the same chance of admission as a black student with otherwise the same qualifications.”

“Twenty-seven percent of black students on elite campuses come from the immigrant community rather than descendants of American slaves. Black students at top schools are thus increasingly less likely to be descendants of the people whom legislators in 1964 had specifically in mind.”

“The great-grandson of an S.S. officer who fled to Argentina, and whose grandchildren moved to the U.S., would be listed as ‘Hispanic’ and benefit from affirmative action. But the great-granddaughter of a Jew he had killed would not.”

In addition, there is the question of where exactly in an individual’s ancestral makeup does

one race begin and another end. And are German indentured servants here owed some sort of reparation? How far do we go back — to the Norse enslavement of the Irish, to the Muslim enslavement of the Slavs, to Native American enslavement of other Native Americans, to the Roman and Greek enslavement of almost everybody? Candace Owens, author of “Blackout,” cites a time when slavery was the primary commerce involving an estimated one-third of the world’s population. Are we going to need mandatory DNA testing to officially determine whom is more historically deserving than whom?

Samuelson has another idea — from before Jim Crow, from before 1619 even. He shares Founder James Madison’s admiration for London’s Royal Exchange of 1571. There, Christians, Jews and Muslims interacted as equals in a sphere of commercial exchange. It is argued that the positive experiences and associations stemming from that free exchange eventually led England to be the first nation to ban slavery. Madison’s idea was to expand that sphere in the United States to include not just commercial contact but all social contact. Discrimination was to carry its own penalty in lost associations, lost opportunities and lost profits, just as the economist Thomas Sowell has shown that it in fact does.

So again, after these last years of social experimentation and engineering, why not dismantle the “equity” mechanisms and agencies, erasing all references to race in your city’s municipal code and operations? Who’s for a reset?

Don’t everybody raise your hands at once.

Ouch, the Bigot Card Is Played

“Fires will be kindled to testify that two and two make four. Swords will be drawn to prove that leaves are green in summer.” — C.K. Chesterton

Chesterton

(Nov. 16) — In a 50-year career in journalism it was bound to happen, especially given the times. They have played the “bigot” card on me with the

label “white supremacist dinosaur” thrown in for good measure.

The surprise was that this ad hominem attack came from KPC Media, a chain of papers in Northeast Indiana with which our foundation has a more than 30-year relationship. Indeed, the company’s founder, the late George Witwer, donated our first office space and was a mentor until his retirement — a great journalist, by the way, and a formidable tennis player.

I am told his company has sold in part or whole, and it shows.

To back up a bit, the opprobrium stems from my Nov. 10 essay on the midterm election, “An Electorate Gone Bad.” KPC’s new executive editor didn’t agree with it — not one bit.

And although I appreciate the new management calling attention to my essay, the criticism might have been more credible if the editor had actually published the work or touched on its central point or even read past the first paragraph. As it was, he took that single paragraph and explicated it in the clever way that sophomore editors do, sprinkling name-calling and characterization throughout in hopes of provoking the ire of the dean.

Ignored was the argument that electorates change, often suddenly, with import that should be noted and discussed. In this case, credentialed experts seeing a marked shift toward envy-driven political trends that if continuing will be disastrous for this nation.

Again, this all was dismissed as “bigoted.” But the word, properly used, requires an “unreasonable” aspect. It is not bigoted, for instance, to describe women who say they are against families as “women against families” or to describe ethnic groups who have not assimilated as “unassimilated ethnics.” Otherwise, it would be impossible to describe them at all, a situation that any newsman must deplore. And a distinction in group voting patterns, unfortunate or not, is important news.

Until recently, journalism was biased. Now it is just horrid.

Trash In, Trash Out

(Nov. 15) — I love the idea of recycling. It makes such illuminating public policy.

Recycling is good. I know that because people, some of them in high office, have been telling me that for the last 20 years. Indeed, they made it mandatory. What they did not tell me was that it made no sense.

“Americans who’ve spent the last few decades recycling might think their hands are clean. Alas, they are not,” writes John Miltmore of the Foundation for Economic Education. “As the Sierra Club noted in 2019, for decades Americans’ recycling bins have held ‘a dirty secret,’”

That secret is that half the plastic and much of the paper did not go to your local recycling center but was sold to China. “There, the dirty bales of mixed paper and plastic were processed under the laxest of environmental controls,” discovered the investigative journalist Edward Hume. “Much of it was simply dumped, washing down rivers to feed the crisis of ocean plastic pollution.”

Why didn’t somebody tell us that? Two decades. Not a word.

Well, we don’t deal in motives here but we do deal in incentives. There was a lot of money to be made in mandatory recycling. Mandatory was the trick. One day you were a junk dealer, the next day you were a global empire.

Previously, they picked up your trash and hauled it to a dump (which, it turns out, we have plenty of land to accommodate). In fact, you didn’t even have to pay; many of us did it ourselves.

Later you had to hire experts to sort, classify, wash and repurpose it each step of the way. Bureaucracies had to be set up to manage it at every level of government — very, very expensive, and profitable. If you didn’t help there were fines and criminal penalties.

The people who got good at convincing you all of that was saving the earth are retired now living on the Gulf somewhere in beach houses. Considering the national wealth these men wasted for personal gain, they should be sought out and hung upside down from lamp poles. A lot of them

would be politicians. There may not be enough lamp poles.

I love the idea of electric cars. What a wonderful world it would be if we could buzz around without emitting hateful carbon. A lot of people, some of them in high office, would make that mandatory . . .

I think you know where this is going. ♦



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