

The Fortnightly Rant

A Little Inconvenient History

Ron DeSantis—the only sitting governor known to have both committed torture* and gotten married at Disneyland—rampaged through the Granite State recently.

Can we say rampaged? After careful consideration, yes, we can. Other candidates—normal candidates—campaign. When you try to drum up support by threatening to slit the throats of federal workers, rampage is actually a euphemism.

DiSantis volunteered this insight into his management style at a July 30th barbeque held in Rye, just down the road apiece: “On bureaucracy, you know, we’re going to have all these deep state people, you know, we’re going to start slitting throats on Day One and be ready to go.”

It was not an errant slip of the tongue. The week before, when asked what changes he might make at the Pentagon, he suggested that he might ask the Secretary of Defense to “slit some throats.”

This earlier bit of bloody business seems to have been lost in the kerfuffle. Perhaps it’s because civil servants are so rarely called upon to kill, whereas at the Pentagon, next to burning up taxpayer dollars and fossil fuels, killing people is Job One.

DiSantis was invited to Rye by Scott Brown, who some may recall as the failed 2014 carpet-bagger Republican nominee for Senator from New Hampshire. Brown later served

* DiSantis, as a young Navy lawyer at Gitmo, was asked by his CO how to deal with hunger strikes. By his own admission in 2006, he recommended force feeding. Former inmates who were force fed there say he was in the room, overseeing it all and, some say, enjoying the spectacle. No Tom Cruise, he—more like Col. Jessep. Force feeding is considered torture under the terms of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. The U.S. is a signatory to the Treaty. Before signing, of course, we carved out a slew of caveats, exceptions, and “understandings.”

a single term as the Senator from Massachusetts before ending up in New Zealand. He’s a handsome, multi-talented guy, athletic and musical, but geographically he’s all over the map—and apparently careless in his choice of acquaintances. *The Hill’s* account of the Florida governor’s blood-curdling yelp does not mention any reaction from Brown. Perhaps he was busy tending bar.

Plenty of other people did respond, few of them favorably.

Tony Reardon, the president of the National Treasury Employees Union, which, according to the *Washington Post*, “represents about 150,000 employees at the Internal Revenue Service and 30 other federal agencies—called the comments ‘repulsive and unworthy of the presidential campaign trail’ in a statement. Reardon is right to take alarm. If there’s a purge, IRS workers will be prime targets.

In their own defense, the right wing goons who use this kind of language suddenly become linguistic scholars; readers of Chomsky, no doubt: it’s metaphorical, it’s hyperbole.

It’s pick your own lame excuse, is what it is, and a fig leaf for stochastic terrorism.

Everett Kelley isn’t having any of that “only kidding, just figure of speech” BS. “We’ve seen too often in recent years—from the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 to the sacking of the Capitol on January 6, 2021—that violent anti-government rhetoric from politicians has deadly consequences. Any candidate who positions themselves [sic] within that shameful tradition has no place in public office.” Kelley is the National President of the 700,000 member American Federation of Government Employees.



THE DEEP SOUTH, CIRCA THE 1800s - FREE AGRICULTURAL TRAINING PROVIDED BY BENEVOLENT PLANTATION OWNERS

We will give DeSantis credit for having the guts to show his face in this vicinity. After all, we’re pretty woke around here.

Woke seems to give him the heebie jeebies. What he and his cohort call woke is actually just a reflection of reality—and he can’t handle that. You can tell by the measures they’ll take to distance themselves from it.

Perhaps the high water mark for this effort—or low-water mark, if you prefer—is his state’s school system trying to pass off enslavement as some sort of benevolent jobs program for African immigrants who, by the way, got free passage across the Atlantic. It’s so crazy you have to laugh. Or cry.

Here in Portsmouth we have an African Burying Ground Memorial. It gracefully commemorates the lives of hundreds of Africans—some free, some enslaved—who lived, worked, and died here. Its general whereabouts were long know, but the site was ignored until twenty

years ago. These days you just can’t find people buried under the street and go on pretending it’s no big deal.

We feel a particular attachment to the Burying Ground because Primus, an enslaved African man, is almost certainly buried there. Primus worked the press for Daniel Fowle, the founder of this newspaper, first in Boston, and then up here. Without the benefit of Primus’ forced labor, over the span of more than thirty years, would Daniel have been the success that he was? We can never know, but his debt—and thus ours—is undeniable.

From the lore we have about him, Primus was more than a worker. Though bent by his labors, he was unbowed in spirit. And the cosmos gave him one long, last laugh. We can, and do, visit Primus’ grave. The whereabouts of Daniel’s bones are unknown.

We indulge in this reverie because recently, another long-forgotten African graveyard has been in the

news. Using DNA, scientists have found more than 41,000 genetic descendants of 27 enslaved people buried 220 years ago in the vicinity of Maryland’s Catoctin Furnace. We won’t presume to guess what this means for these descendants.

We’ll gleefully speculate, though, that if Ron DeSantis knew the truth about early American iron works, his head would explode.

According to the National Park Service’s Ethnography Program, African men with iron making skills were essential in the development of the colonial iron industry. Iron workers were an elite group in West and West Central Africa. By 1775, the colonies were the world’s third largest producer of iron.

In the 1780s, Britisher Henry Cort was hailed for inventing a revolutionary process for converting pig iron into wrought iron. Recent scholarship shows that he probably filched the process from Black Jamaican iron workers.

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The Cold War Continues

The Soviet Union fell more than thirty years ago, but the Cold War continues—at least, here in New Hampshire.

Merrimack County Superior Court is the site of the latest battle. Andru Volinsky filed a lawsuit there Monday, calling for the restoration of a state historical marker remembering Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, also known as “The Rebel Girl.”

The marker had been placed in response to a public request, in accordance with established process. After a review for historical accuracy and relevance, and a final OK of the wording, molten aluminum was poured into a mold, giving the marker its final, familiar, and iconic shape. On May 1st, workers for the state’s Department of Transportation placed it atop a pole at the corner of Court and Montgomery streets in Concord.

A freakout immediately ensued. The *Union Leader’s* Kevin Landrigan reported on May 3rd, “Executive Councilors David Wheeler, R-Milford, and Joseph Kenney, R-Wakefield, said the decision to place a marker about the life of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in Concord was an insult to all veterans, and state officials should have blocked it in the first instance.

“Every man and woman who served in uniform as a Cold War warrior and our sisters and brothers, we do not support at all that this particular person gets a historic marker,” said Kenney, a Gulf War veteran.”*

According to a press release sent

* For the record, this statement is factually inaccurate. This newspaper could easily name a score of Cold War—and hot war—veterans who would favor a historic marker remembering Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.

by the plaintiffs, “two days after the Flynn marker was installed [Executive Councilor Joe Kenney] demanded it be removed. Governor Sununu agreed, and the marker was taken away by the Department of Transportation on May 15th upon the order of Sarah Stewart, Commissioner of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources [DNCR], which includes the Division of Historical Resources.”

Wheeler, according to N.H. Public Radio, “called for the [Executive Council] to have final approval of all signs moving forward.” Carrying out such a power grab would presumably require passage of a bill in the legislature.

“The marker was illegally removed based on ideological considerations that fly in the face of the historical marker program’s purpose,” said Sargent, who taught American history

for several decades at colleges and universities in the Midwest and in New Hampshire.

Further legal details were included in the press release, as follows:

“The case is filed at Merrimack County Superior Court as Case Number: 3127558.

“The Historical Marker Program was established under R.S.A. 236:40, which provides, ‘The commissioner of transportation may erect historic markers or signs within the right-of-way of any class I, II or III highway. He shall put up a marker upon the petition of 20 or more state citizens.’

“According to the lawsuit, the policies and guidelines which the DNCR uses to run the program are invalid because their adoption was not consistent with the requirements of the Administrative Procedures Act.

“Neither were rules governing historical markers ratified by the State

Historical Resources Council, as required by RSA 227:C5, the complaint said.

“Moreover, the complaint asserts, Commissioner Stewart did not even follow her own invalid guidelines, which require DNCR to consult with the State Historical Resources Council before markers are retired.”

“Nor is there anything in the law or DNCR guidelines which provide for markers to be removed ‘on grounds of political or personal ideology,’ the complaint says.

“Commissioner Stewart herself told Councilor Kenney that the purpose of the marker program is to inform the public about New Hampshire history,” said Alpert, a longtime New Hampshire activist.

“According to the complaint, Stew-

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art's response to Kenney on May 3rd was consistent with her department's stated policy, which says the purpose of historical markers 'is to educate the public about New Hampshire's history, not to honor, memorialize, or commemorate persons, events, or places. Because Historical Highway Markers are not honorific in nature, they do not serve the same purpose as monuments, statues, memorial plaques, or war memorials.'

"Describing appropriate subjects for historical markers, the Division of Historical Resources policy statement also says, 'The person, place, event, organization, or innovation to be marked had a significant impact on its times and has demonstrated historical significance.'

"There is no doubt that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was a significant historical figure," Alpert said.

"The complaint asked the court to declare the existing policies of the historical marker program invalid, to declare that Commissioner Stewart violated the plaintiffs' rights, and order the Flynn marker to be reinstated at its prior location."

"Today is the 133rd anniversary of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's birth to Annie Gurley and Thomas Flynn, who at

the time were living at 12 Montgomery Street in Concord."

Thus endeth the press release, to which we would only add the following:

A Note on Objectivity in the News

Many people seem to think that newspapers should be "objective," meaning they should steer an editorial course that is midway between the positions held by two opposing factions. That widespread assumption can create a dangerous situation. A power-hungry faction can ignore the truth and roll right over our supine media like Soviet tanks pouring through the infamous Fulda Gap.

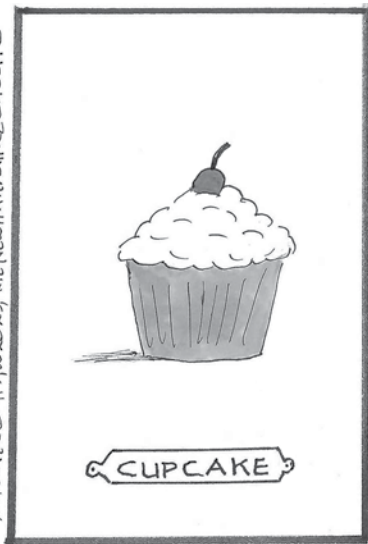
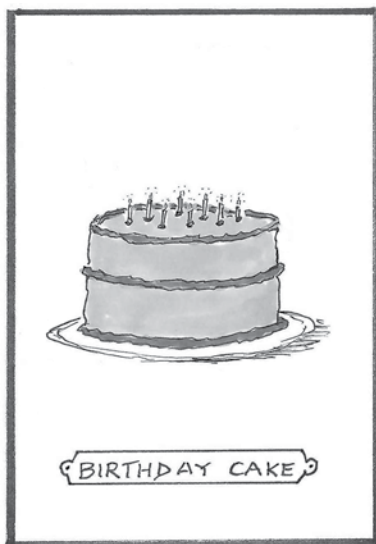
So, pardon us for dispensing with polite fiction, but we believe that George Orwell would immediately recognize this attempt to un-person Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. The Flynn Historical Marker went through all the proper channels before it was created and installed. Powerful individuals in state government disregarded all that, and are, in effect, governing to suit their personal whims.

A Trump-esque disregard for proper order is the thin edge of the fascist wedge. A restored marker would indicate a healthy political environment.

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Arnie Alpert and Mary Lee Sargent stand before the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Historical Marker. Installed, in accordance with the law, at the corner of Court and Montgomery streets in Concord, near Flynn's birthplace, on May 1, 2023, it was subsequently and irregularly removed a fortnight later to accommodate certain political figures. Photo by Barbara Keshen.



A Precursor in Soviet Graphic Arts?

U.S. Cold Warriors used to love mocking the Soviet practice of censoring photos so that Stalin's former comrades who had fallen into disfavor would, as if by magic, disappear from the past. Here we see a classic example:



First we see Josef Stalin and Nikolai Yezhov beside the Volga-Don Canal, then we see only "Uncle Joe," our WW II ally. Yezhov headed the NKVD during the Great Purge of 1936 - 1938. A special execution chamber was built to his specifications. In 1940, he was taken there and shot. Gone from the real world, and gone from the photographic record.

The recent removal of the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Historical

Marker by Governor Sununu and his Council cronies is, of course, in no way related to the ways the Soviets used the graphic arts.

Why is it any different, you ask? Isn't it obvious? Nobody's been shot yet. Beyond that, the distinction gets hazier. We've got a robust imagination; give us some time. Perhaps we can come up with another reason.

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Cold War Trojan Horse Mourned

This right wing tizzy also reminds us somehow of Epsom's Trojan horse. Erected during the Kennedy administration, this cobbled-together bit of folk art, assembled from scrap lumber, stood just north of Route Four. It stood as a proud warning to all who passed: beware the United Nations!

The splintery old nag was surrounded by small white crosses bearing the names of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and all the other Captive Nations on the Wrong Side of the Iron Curtain. The gist of the ensemble being that continued deference to the UN would eventually result with the U.S. of A. getting a white cross of its own.

Somehow that never happened, at least, not yet. Tell that to today's Republicans, though.

Back in those halcyon pre-Dolt #45 days, the Trojan Horse served as a Rorschach test of sorts. Some—perhaps a minority, but who

knows?—took it exactly as intended: an altogether serious warning, ignored at our collective peril.

More, we suspect, may have seen it as we did—as a unique bit of folk art, truly representative of New Hampshire in all its goofy glory. We don't recall, though, any left wing mobs demanding that it be removed from the roadside and expunged from memory.

The horse did go up in smoke, early one Sunday morning in 1987. UPI, which was still a thing in those days, covered the story.

"Firefighters found a gasoline can on the axle, which along with the wheels were all that remained of the horse," Police Chief Peter Burgess said.

"But Burgess said the fire was not directed at the anti-communist fervor of Barbara and Peter Frank Anderson, the couple who displayed the horse in front of their home.

"Politics had nothing to do with why it was burned," Burgess said. "It was vandalism, criminal mischief."

The Andersons weren't about to let a couple of miscreants end their crusade, though. A replacement took the horse's place.

In 2016, according to AP, a subsequent owner put it out to pasture in an obscure field in Chichester, fearful that its deteriorating condition might inspire some firebug to repeat the 1987 blaze.

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No Such Thing As Structural Racism, Eh?

The Center for Economic and Policy Research [CEPR] has released an important study which will, we fear, take the country by snores.

We can't put our finger on it, but CNN and the *New York Times* just don't seem to pay much attention to stories like the following. Maybe they just assume that it's not news because, as Leonard Cohen put it: "Everybody knows the fight was fixed/The poor stay poor, the rich get rich."

But enough of our jabber. Here's CEPR:

By investigating a variety of White-Black unemployment-rate comparisons, this report reveals that White people as a group always have better employment outcomes than similar Black people. Among veterans, people with disabilities, people who were formerly incarcerated, and the foreign-born, the data suggests that employers prefer White candidates over their Black peers. White people fare better in finding employment even when educational attainment, skills, and city

of residence are the same.

Key takeaways:

From 2000 to 2022, in 14 out of 23 years, the overall Black unemployment rate was higher than the rate for White high school dropouts.

Across five different categories of college majors, the Black unemployment rates are double the respective White rates.

The Black teen unemployment rate is nearly double the White rate. Even when employers have little or no skill requirements, they still prefer White candidates.

The White-Black unemployment disparity is much larger within Chicago, New York, and the District of Columbia than in the nation overall.

Some of these outcomes can be attributed to overt anti-Black attitudes, while others to the more covert form of discrimination that results from hiring within White social networks. To address these trends, the U.S. needs stronger anti-discrimination enforcement, a Federal Reserve committed to achieving maximum employment, and a national, subsidized employment program targeted to high-unemployment

communities. None of these policy solutions can stand alone, but rather can work alongside one another to close the White-Black unemployment gap.

To go beyond the Executive Summary, visit: <https://cepr.net/report/the-continuing-power-of-white-preferences-in-employment/>

When Confederate Monuments Went Up, Black Voting Went Down

by Alexander N. Taylor

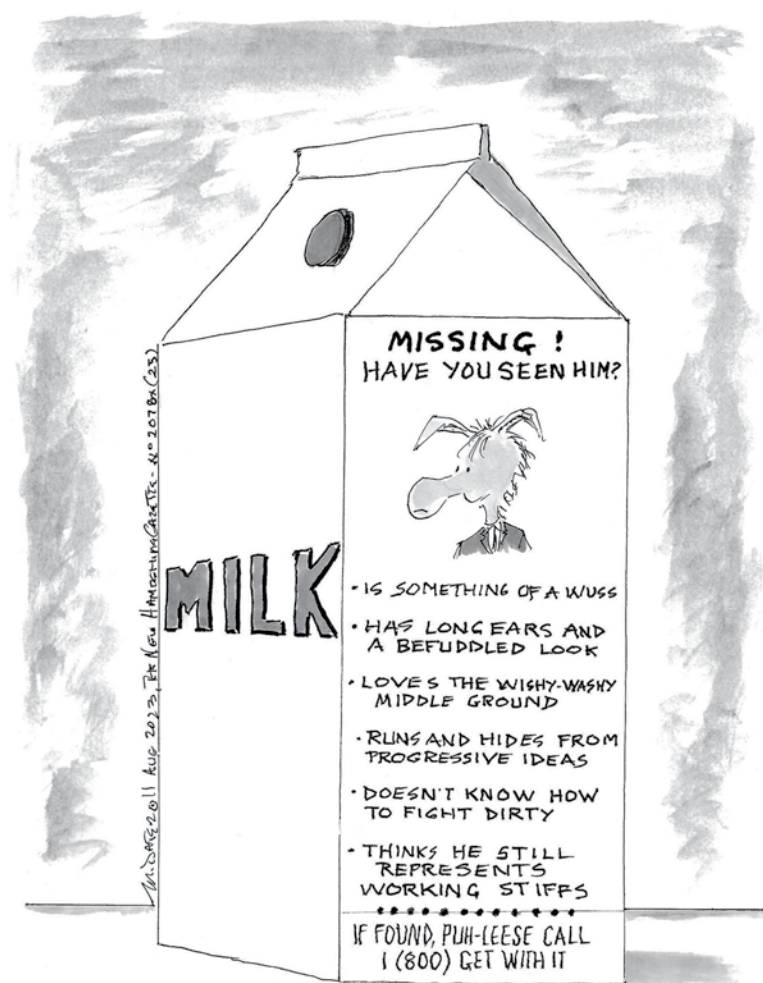
Confederate monuments burst into public consciousness in 2015 when a shooting at a historically Black church in Charleston, South Carolina, instigated the first broad calls for their removal. The shooter intended to start a race war and had posed with Confederate imagery in photos posted online.

Monument removal efforts grew in 2017 after a counterprotester was killed at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, where white supremacist groups defended the preservation of Confederate monuments. Removal movements saw widespread success in 2020 following George Floyd's death at the hands of the police.

These events linked Confederate monuments to modern racist beliefs and acts. But whether monuments carry inherent racism or are merely misinterpreted requires further exploration.

Research by economist Jhacova A. Williams has shown that Black Americans who live in areas that have a relatively higher number of streets named after prominent Confederate generals "are less likely to be employed, are more likely to be employed in low-status occupations, and have lower wages compared to Whites."

I study economic and political history and have researched the effects of Confederate monuments in the post-Civil War South. I found that these symbols helped solidify the Jim Crow era, which established segregation across the South and lasted from the 1880s until the 1960s. These symbols were accompanied by increases in the vote share



The altogether splendid nao Trinidad, a reproduction of Ferdinand Magellan's flagship, visited Portsmouth late last month as part of Sail Portsmouth. The successful circumferential voyage, though a heroic feat in its day, had negative consequences for many. Not least among them was Magellan himself. He was killed in the Philippines by natives who resented the suggestion that they ought to change their religion, and his body was kept as a trophy. Then there are those who died of unfamiliar diseases, or were forced into enslavement. But we digress. This sure is one boaty boat.

of the Democratic Party—the racist party that had supported slavery and, after the Civil War, supported segregation for another century. The building of these monuments was also accompanied by reductions in voter turnout. Further research I conducted shows that these political effects disproportionately occurred in areas with a larger share of Black residents.

In other words, as these monuments were erected, the vote increased for members of the then-racist Democratic Party, and people turned out to vote in lower numbers in predominantly Black areas.

These findings demonstrate that a connection existed between racism and these monuments from their inception—and provide context for modern monument debates.

Monumental History

The South saw almost no mon-

ument dedications during the Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. Monuments first appeared during the Reconstruction era—1865 to 1877—when Southern states were occupied by the North and integrated back into the Union.

Reconstruction-era monuments in general did not glorify the Confederacy. These monuments largely honored the dead and were placed in cemeteries and spaces distant from daily life. They compartmentalized the trauma of the war, commemorating lives but not placing the Confederacy at the center of Southern identity.

As Reconstruction neared its end in 1875, a Stonewall Jackson monument erected in Richmond, Virginia, foreshadowed the different monuments to come.

The Alleged News®

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Murph's Fortnightly Quote
"If you can't explain it to a six year old, you don't understand it yourself."
 — Albert Einstein

"The moment I found out Trump could tweet himself was comparable to the moment in Jurassic Park when Dr. Grant realized that velociraptors could open doors. I was like, 'Oh no'."
 john@wordpraxis.com — Justin McConney, former Trump social media manager

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What We're Not Told About New Nukes
To the Editor:

It's important to see past the hype about future allegedly-small nukes. They will almost certainly continue to be uneconomic and slow to build.

The original designs for various types of next generation nukes were in the 50 to 70 megawatt [MW] size. The argument is that these new 50 MW nukes, compared to the more familiar 1,000 MW plants, would be inherently safe, installable almost anywhere, mass produced in factories, and standardized and plopped down in big cities and adjacent to industrial plants.

That is not happening. The NuScale Power Corporation's plans for its first plant would put five or six 60 MW NuScale reactors at a single site, for a total capacity of about one-third of a traditional 1,000 MW plant. This would mean connecting and controlling five or six reactors at the same site, which adds all sorts of design, piping, and control problems—quite the opposite of factory built standardized design.

Anyone who has worked around power plants with multiple units, whether nuclear, fossil fuel, or renewable, knows that multiple units means all kinds of site-specific problems. I was a founding member of the U.N.H. energy office in the 1980s. The University had a central boiler plant with two venerable boilers burning sludgy bunker oil which by their nature needed careful attention.

This was evidenced by the blast doors on top of the boilers where, on occasion, control and sensor problems lead to a small explosion that would lift the heavy blast doors into the air with little or no damage to the boiler.

The University then added a commercial incinerator using municipal waste stream to generate power in an adjacent building. It never worked well. It frequently did not reach necessary temperature to combust the fuel properly and showered dark crap on the university. It was scrapped after a few years.

I suspect that the early generations of multiple reactor units will be expensive to build and operate and, unless

endlessly subsidized, too expensive to run. Security and safety requirements mean that new nukes must be large enough to even dream of being cost effective. Add nuclear waste to this mixture and costs will continue to skyrocket.

The era of large base load plants is ending. [The generating equipment normally operated to serve loads on an around-the-clock basis. — The Ed.] The future will be millions of points of renewable generation and millions of points of storage. Already there are virtual power plants combining thousands of small rooftop systems with storage able to be dispatched to meet utility needs. The many millions of EVs will also provide enormous storage resources.

There is no place for a base load plan that pushes expensive nuclear fuel to operate 24x7.

Form Energy has an iron-air battery capable of storing energy for 100 hours, at a small fraction of the cost of lithium batteries. It will further crush the economics of expensive fossil fuel and nuke power. Solar and wind have zero fuel costs.

Storage and renewable generation will be dispatched based on price and demand.

There will simply be no takers for high priced nuke power, beyond people who have signed long term fixed-price contracts.

They can plan all they want and talk of new nukes. But the market will have zero taste for that.

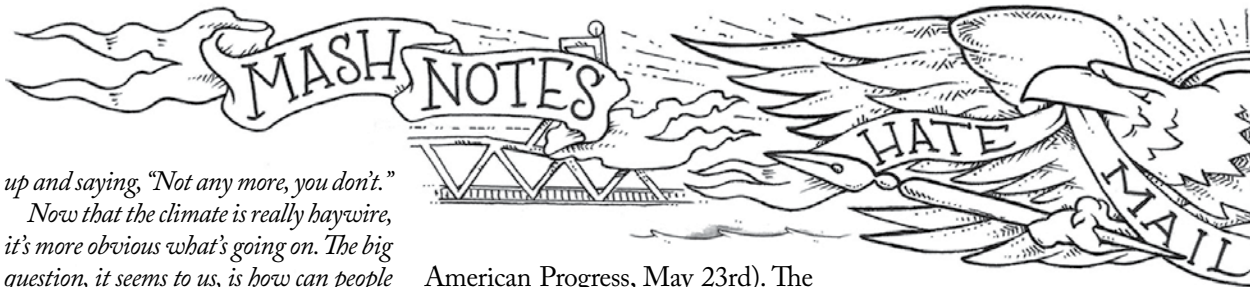
Roy Morrison
Slingerlands, N.Y.

Roy:

You have addressed the technical issues, and some of the financial issues. It's all very interesting. The path forward would seem to be pretty clear—if this were a better world. The big problem is this: those who have big stakes in the polluting industries see their vast wealth endangered.

Again, in a better world, it might be fun to say to them, "You've had a nice ride. The party's over." The trouble is, their money = political power. Just ask the Supreme Court.

Our only salvation is going to be numbers. Big numbers. Lots of people standing



up and saying, "Not any more, you don't." Now that the climate is really haywire, it's more obvious what's going on. The big question, it seems to us, is how can people unite to demand change.

The Editor

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The Right's Record of Wrongs

Dear Sir:

We have all heard the saying two wrongs do not make a right. However, I wonder how many wrongs it takes for the right to finally get it right? Since at least the 1980's the right-wing Republicans have been wrong on the major issues of abortion, climate change/environment, democracy, taxes/economy, education, LGBT rights, history, guns, public health, and health care. While I am sure some will take exception to my characterization of who is wrong on these issues, the facts, as one writer stated, "speak for themselves."

With regard to abortion, a June 2023 Gallup poll found that 69 percent of Americans support legal abortion in the first three months of pregnancy. The results of the 2022 mid-term elections also support this polling. With regard to climate, one need not look far: the U.S. has broken more than 2,000 high temperature records in the past month, and that the water temperature at the tip of Florida has exceeded 100 degrees. On democracy, the right wing now embraces autocrats like Orban of Hungary, holding their CPAC convention there and inviting him to speak at their gatherings here. They also continue to support Donald Trump despite his obvious attempt to overthrow the 2020 election and his disregard for the laws of the nation. The right continues to support more tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations despite the fact that their previous tax cuts have added \$10 trillion to the national debt and are responsible for a 90 percent increase in the debt ratio if you exclude the one-time COVID and 2008 Great Recession expenditures (Center for

American Progress, May 23rd). The right also continues to oppose any reasonable gun safety reforms, despite the fact that 87 percent of Americans favor criminal background checks, 77 percent favor a 30-day waiting period, and 61 percent favor a ban on assault weapons (FOX News, April 23rd). The right also proved to be dead wrong with regard to public health. A recent study determined that Republicans experienced a 43 percent increase in excess mortality after the COVID vaccine was made available (NPR July 23rd). I could go on, but you get the point.

Unfortunately, the right has still not gotten the message on many of these issues, even though the 2022 midterm elections should have sent off alarm bells. To make up for their losing positions Republicans have resorted to extreme gerrymandering and voter suppression to maintain control of statehouses and, for the moment, the House of Representatives. Considering the changing demographics of the nation, and how far out of touch the right is with the younger generations, this strategy will also prove to be wrong. Hopefully we will still have a country by that time.

Rich DiPentima. LTC, USAFR, Ret.
Portsmouth, N.H.

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Calling All Heathen Carnivores...

To the Editor,

In order to save God's creatures from unnecessary harm, our political representatives should support increased public funding for cultivated-meat research. For those who don't know, cultivated meat is grown from animal cells, without slaughter. It has the potential to eliminate tremendous suffering we inflict on livestock.

While the revolutionary product is already for sale in select restaurants,

further development is needed for cultivated meat to reach price parity with incumbent offerings. This is crucial for widespread adoption. Christians should remember that in the Garden of Eden, God's ideal, there was no killing.

Jon Hochschartner
Granby, Conn.

Jon:

We were not expecting that turn at the end, about the Garden of Eden. Yes, all very nice...

One little bite of that apple, though, and BAM: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."

Seems harsh...

The Editors

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Ewing Defines Our Terms For Us

To the Editor:

Like comen everywhere, leftists/Marxists/Democrat leaders ("Democrats") often use commonly understood benign-sounding words to deceive people. Examples:

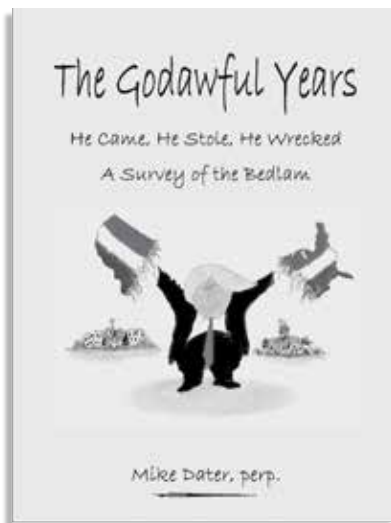
People understand that "Justice" means impartial punishment or award based on law and people's actions, without regard to the individuals involved.

When "Democrats" qualify the term "Justice," e.g., "environmental justice" and "social justice," they want you to assign it the attributes of "Justice." But qualified justice isn't "Justice." Qualified justice means punishing people for something he/she/they didn't do to reward people who he/she/they didn't harm.

"Democrats" use "Diversity" and "Inclusion" to demand that you accept their Marxist ideology; but their "Di-

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Crystal Mason was sentenced to five years in prison for accidentally casting a vote in violation of a confusing voting statute, while a draft-dodging, tax-dodging, rapist former President who tried to steal the whole damned country is walking away with the nomination to serve another term in the White House.

As for your whining that "non-Marxists" are being silenced, that is just dumb-founding. If they're being silenced, why is the din of their voices so unavoidable?

Thanks for writing, though. We spend most of our time dealing with sane, smart, funny people. They're a joy to know, which can be misleading. Your letters really help us to bear in mind just how screwed up this world is.

The Editor

=====
No Spanish Government Can Form Without Puigdemont's Support

To the Editor:

State elections were held in Spain on 23 July. President Sánchez, of the PSOE, hoped to beat his rival, the PP, by stoking the fear that, if they did not vote for him, a right-wing government could be formed with the extreme right (PP + VOX), which is what all the polls predicted.

In the end, although the PP won with 136 seats, with the 33 of VOX and the 2 of two right-wing regional parties, they have 171 seats and fall short of the 176 (half plus one of the total of 350) that they would need to be able to invest Feijóo. Nor does the "left-wing" bloc add up to enough seats for Sánchez to be invested: 122 for the PSOE plus the seats of five other parties that already supported the PSOE in the last legislature (one pro-independence party, ERC) make up only 172 seats, falling short of the 176.

Therefore, although in Catalonia there has been a high abstention of pro-independence supporters disap-

pointed with the pro-independence parties, the results of these parties are decisive: The Catalan pro-independence party, JUNTS (of the Catalan President in exile, Carles Puigdemont), with seven seats, is indispensable for Sánchez if he wants to be invested. But JUNTS' condition for the investiture of any president is that the Spanish state recognises Catalonia's right to self-determination.

The truth is that the Catalan independence movement is not very motivated to invest Sanchez, as it has received violations of rights by his government at the same level as the previous government of Rajoy's PP: reprisals, illegal spying with Pegasus, infiltration of spies in peaceful social movements, police set-ups to accuse this movement of being violent, inclusion of Catalan independence on Europol terrorist lists, state operations to prevent pro-independence parties from gaining institutional power, attacks on the Catalan language, mockery of Puigdemont, non-recognition that he is a political exile and threats that he will be arrested, demonstrations that Catalonia is better off simply because there are not so many demonstrations in the streets, but without having addressed their desire to be able to decide their political status....

And furthermore, the day after the elections, when it was clear that Sánchez needed Puigdemont to be able to form a government, the public prosecutor's office (which depends on the government) asked to reactivate the Euro-order to try to arrest Puigdemont in Belgium. And on the same day, JUNTS MEP Ponsati was arrested to make her testify in court in Barcelona, thus violating her parliamentary immunity.

For his part, Sánchez has been quick to declare that he will never grant a referendum on self-determination, nor an amnesty for the 4,400 repressed Catalans. But if Sánchez refuses to allow a referendum, JUNTS will vote

against it and the elections will have to be repeated. This would be the sixth election since 2015, whereas if Spanish politics were not so convulsive, only two elections would have been held in this period. This shows that the unresolved conflict with Catalonia and the undemocratic way it is being managed is dragging the Spanish state into an increasingly disturbing instability for the EU.

In new elections, the vote would be concentrated in the two big parties and would beat the PP, but the two blocs would probably tie again. Catalan pro-independence supporters, motivated by the usefulness of their vote, would vote massively for JUNTS to push even harder for a referendum or, if the candidates refuse, again block the governability of the state.

In the end, it is possible that in order to overcome the blockade, the PSOE could invest Feijóo. It would show that they are more Spanish nationalists than democrats. The PP is a party founded by Francoists, very far to the right, so it has no problem making a pact with the extreme right. It may cause astonishment in Europe that the PSOE prefers a far-right government rather than allow a referendum in Catalonia.

A final note: The PP+VOX in Spain (excluding Catalonia and the Basque Country) have 55 percent of the seats. On the other hand, in Catalonia, they only have 17 percent. This clearly shows that Spanish and Catalan society would like to carry out antagonistic social projects and it would be more democratic if each could develop its own path.

Jordi Oriola Folch
 Barcelona, Catalonia
 Jordi:

We hope our readers find this as fascinating as we do. The history and governmental structure of the U.S. and Spain could hardly be more different. The machinations of power you describe here, though, seem strangely familiar.

The Editor

=====
On Pernicious Doctrines

To the Editor;

To paraphrase John Maynard

Keynes, the lives of ordinary people are often influenced by the ideas of long dead economists. Keynes was right to point out that ideas have consequences. What he left out is that those ideas can produce unpredictable outcomes with both good and bad effects. The ideas of Milton Friedman and his cohorts of the Chicago school of economics are a good example. Though they have contributed to GDP growth, the growth has primarily benefitted the top one percent while causing pain for the bottom 50 percent as well as catalyzing unintended social consequences.

Perhaps the most pernicious of Friedman's doctrines is that the most important responsibility of corporate managers is to maximize shareholder wealth. This idea gained credence among business leaders in the late '70s and became a mantra for management in the '80s. The prior thirty years had been a period of shared prosperity, marked by relatively cooperative relationships between labor and management. During the post-war period, labor gained bargaining power which it used to increase wages and benefits and improve working conditions. By the '80s, competition from global competitors had caused corporate execs to look for ways to improve profitability and labor costs became the prime target. Friedman's doctrine was just the ticket to help them jettison cooperative relations to drive down the costs of labor. Whereas labor's share of GDP had been increasing since WW II, it began to decrease in the '80s and has been declining ever since. Instead of being a partner, labor became a cost to minimize.

Labor's bargaining power was severely reduced during this period by two strategies. The first was globalization as large corporations increasingly moved production facilities overseas in the search for cheap labor. Large numbers of blue-collar jobs were offshored as the heartland lost the factories that had provided middle class prosperity to less educated workers. The second

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iversity" and "Inclusion" don't include your non-Marxist ideology. People rejecting Democrats' Marxist ideology are often punished: e.g., threatened, cancelled, fired, injured, had their personal information exposed, and/or prevented from speaking in public.

(Note: "Diversity" doesn't make a nation strong; diversity is a divider. Strength comes from shared values; that is why our motto is "E Pluribus Unum.")

"Equity" generally means fairness and impartiality. "Democrats" use "equity" to claim that people must compensate other people that they didn't harm and perhaps were never harmed; e.g., requiring people who weren't slave-owners to reward people who were never slaves. (Our courts exist to punish criminals and resolve real claims for injury.)

When "Democrats" speak, look beyond their words to their true meaning.

Don Ewing
 Meredith, N.H.

Don:

Due, perhaps, to an undiagnosed case of masochism, we've now read your letter a couple of times: first to get the gist, then to decode the twist.

In classic Bizarro fashion, you describe a world where familiar elements take on contradictory characteristics. It makes perfect sense, once you think about it: how else could one come to a conclusion that is the absolute antithesis of reality?

In this fortnight's diatribe, you ascribe to Democrats the practice of using benign-sounding language to hide their sinister motives from hapless voters. Shades of Newt Gingrich, the GOP's pioneer in using pejorative language to describe the routine functions of government.

It takes some real gall for a Republican to talk about misusing the term "justice."

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 In 1623, David Thomson settled at Odiorne Point. 2023 celebrates 400th Anniversary

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The monument's dedication drew 50,000 spectators and included a military-style parade. The potential presence of a local all-Black militia proved to be controversial. To avoid accusations of race mixing, organizers planned to place the militia and any other Black participants in the back of the parade.

The militia did not attend, likely in anticipation of the controversy, and the only Black Southerners present in the parade were formerly enslaved people who had served in the Confederacy's Stonewall Brigade. This stark picture of Southern race relations served as a preview of political developments to come.

This trend continued after Reconstruction, which ended with the Compromise of 1877. This compromise settled the disputed 1876 presidential election, giving Republicans the presidency and Democrats, then a pro-segregation party, full political control of the South. Democrats subsequently established what would become known as Jim Crow laws across the South, an array of restrictive and discriminatory laws that disenfranchised Black Southerners and made them second-class citizens.

Monuments played a cultural role in establishing the Jim Crow South. Unlike Reconstruction monuments, post-Reconstruction monuments were erected in prominent public spaces, and their focus shifted toward the portrayal and glorification of famous Confederates. Monument dedication ceremonies were particularly popular around the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War, peaking in 1911.

Additional Confederate monuments have been dedicated since that period, but those numbers pale in comparison to the monument-building spree of 1878 to 1912.

Monumental Effects

My research investigates the political effects of Confederate monuments in the Reconstruc-

tion and early post-Reconstruction—1877-1912—eras, namely their effects on Democratic Party vote share and voter turnout.

I expected monuments' potential effects to be directly related to their centrality to everyday life and glorification of the Confederacy. This is the primary difference between soldier-memorializing Reconstruction and Confederate-glorifying post-Reconstruction monuments.

I expected to find little political effect from soldier-memorializing Reconstruction monuments, but some pro-Jim Crow effects from Confederate-glorifying post-Reconstruction monuments. As monuments moved from cemeteries into central public spaces such as parks and squares, I expected them to affect voters' decisions.

That is precisely what I found.

During Reconstruction, counties that dedicated Confederate monuments saw no change in voter turnout or Democratic Party vote share in biennial congressional elections. These symbols were soldier-memorializing and physically separate from public life and did not influence voter decision-making.

However, when monuments began to glorify the Confederacy and shifted into public life, political effects emerged.

Counties that dedicated monuments in the early post-Reconstruction period saw, on average, a 5.5 percentage point increase in Democratic Party vote share and a 2.2 percentage point decrease in voter turnout compared with other counties.

As monuments changed, so did their effect on the public. Glorifying public monuments communicated to the public that the Confederacy was worth preserving, thus strengthening Democratic majorities and lowering participation in the political process.

Larger Democratic majorities alongside lower voter turnout already suggests Black Southerners, who almost exclusively voted for Republicans at that time, were voting less in areas with monuments. I

conducted further exploration and found that these political effects disproportionately occurred in counties with larger Black populations. This suggests that Black voters were more responsive to Confederate monuments, which suppressed their political activity by signaling they were not accepted by the local community.

The effects of post-Reconstruction monuments suggest that they played a role in continued racism throughout the South into the early 20th century.

Their controversy today demonstrates the values still conveyed by their presence in society. Recent research has demonstrated the long-run effects of the spread of Southern white culture and prejudices across the United States post-Civil War, connecting it to higher levels of modern-day Republican Party voting and conservative values.

It is thus no wonder Confederate monuments, as prominent symbols of pro-Confederate, Southern white culture, continue to be—and are likely to remain—cultural flashpoints.

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Alexander N. Taylor is a PhD Candidate in Economics at George Mason University. This work is licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0). Feel free to republish and share widely.

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Ohio Voters Reject GOP 'Power Grab' Aimed at Thwarting Abortion Rights Amendment
by Jake Johnson

Ohio voters on Tuesday decisively rejected a Republican-authored measure that would have made it more difficult to amend the state constitution through the ballot initiative process, a billionaire-funded effort aimed at preempting a November vote on abortion rights.

If approved by voters, the measure known as Issue 1 would have raised the threshold for passage of a constitutional amendment from a simple majority to 60 percent. The measure also would have imposed more stringent signature requirements for Ohio ballot initiatives.

The GOP proposal—which was the only item on the ballot in Tuesday's special election—failed by a vote of 43 percent to 57 percent,

according to the Ohio secretary of state's office.

"Issue 1 was a blatant attempt by its supporters to control both the policy agenda and the process of direct democracy," said Rachael Belz, the CEO of Ohio Citizen Action, one of the groups that mobilized in opposition to the proposal. "When they forced Issue 1 onto the ballot, they awakened a sleeping giant and unleashed a movement. And that movement isn't going away tomorrow. It will continue to build and grow and to carry us through to victories in November and beyond."

The Republican push for Issue 1 drew national attention given the implications for both the democratic process and reproductive rights in Ohio, where abortion is currently legal through 22 weeks of pregnancy—though the state GOP is working to change that.

A proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot in November would codify the right to abortion access in the Ohio constitution, stating that "every individual has a right to make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions, including but not limited to decisions on contraception, fertility treatment, continuing one's own pregnancy, miscarriage care, and abortion."

Frank LaRose, Ohio's Republican secretary of state and a U.S. Senate hopeful, said in June that Issue 1 was "100 percent about" preventing passage of the abortion rights amendment.

Recent polling indicates that around 58 percent of Ohioans back the proposed amendment—a level of support that would have been insufficient had Issue 1 succeeded.

"From defeating Issue 1 tonight to submitting nearly twice the amount of signatures needed to get a measure protecting abortion access on the ballot in November, Ohio voters have made clear that they will settle for nothing less than reproductive freedom for all," Mini Timmaraju, the president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, said in a statement late Tuesday.

"Republicans should be ashamed of their efforts to subvert the will of voters," Timmaraju added. "Seeing this measure defeated is a victory for our fundamental rights and our democracy. We're grateful to our part-

ners on the ground for their tireless efforts to secure abortion rights and access. We look forward to fighting by their side to lock this fundamental freedom into law in November."

The Republican attack on the ballot initiative process in Ohio is part of a nationwide GOP effort to limit direct democracy as the party—emboldened by the right-wing U.S. Supreme Court—continues its effort to roll back abortion rights and other freedoms.

According to a March tally by election analyst Stephen Wolf, Republicans have recently tried to make it harder to pass citizen-led ballot initiatives in at least 10 states, including Ohio, Florida, Arizona, and Arkansas.

"In the many states where the GOP has refused to take action, activists have used ballot initiatives to expand Medicaid, raise the minimum wage, secure abortion rights, protect the right to vote, curb gerrymandering, legalize marijuana, promote gun safety, and more," Wolf wrote. "How have Republicans reacted to this? By trying to make it harder to pass initiatives in the first place."

Catherine Turcer, executive director of Common Cause Ohio, said Tuesday that "since 1912, Ohioans have had the right to collect signatures and bring proposed constitutional amendments directly to voters."

"This is an important check on the state legislature, hyperpartisan politicians, and special interests who did everything they could to take away that right," Turcer added. "It was the hard work and resilience of Ohioans of all parties that prevented the destruction of a foundational right we've held for 110+ years."

"Tonight's results," Turcer said, "are a resounding victory for Ohio voters who helped stop this power grab by the state legislature and Secretary of State Frank LaRose."

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— A.J. Liebling

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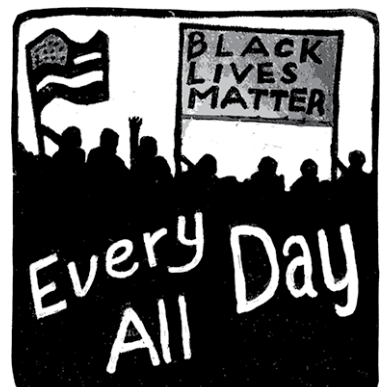
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How Is This Possible?

by W.D. Ehrhart

Where do I begin? Let's just dive right in:

Donald J. Trump claims he is the same as a veteran of military service because he went to a military academy as a schoolboy, though he avoided military service during the American War in Vietnam by obtaining a medical deferment for bone spurs from a podiatrist who was financially beholden to Trump's father.

Apparently, he learned a lot about war at the New York Military Academy because he has subsequently claimed that he knows more about war than career generals and admirals. He has considered awarding himself the Purple Heart Medal while musing aloud over the graves of American dead at Arlington National Cemetery, "I don't get it. What was in it for them?"

In his stellar career as a successful businessman, he has presided over the failures of Trump Steaks, GoTrump, Trump Airlines, Trump Vodka, Trump Mortgage, Trump The Game, Trump Magazine, Trump University, Trump Ice, The New Jersey Generals, Tour de Trump, Trump Network, and Trumped!, as well as the bankruptcies of Trump Taj Mahal, Trump's Castle, Trump Plaza Casinos, Trump Plaza Hotel, Trump Hotels and Casino Resorts, and Trump Entertainment Resorts.

He has openly ridiculed handicapped people, mimicking their speech and movements on television for an international audience. He

has bragged about grabbing women by their genitals, and expressed sexual attraction for his own daughter. He has resorted to sex with prostitutes while his (third) wife was nursing his newborn son. He has been found liable for sexual abuse in civil court.

Speaking of "voluptuous" Ivanka (dad's description), after Trump became president and appointed her a senior advisor, the Chinese government granted her multiple trademarks on everything from sunglasses, handbags, shoes, and jewelry to beauty services and even voting machines.

U.S. military personnel have frequently stayed at Trump Turnberry Resort, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of U.S. taxpayer dollars, though there are multiple less expensive hotels much closer to the Scottish airport U.S. military planes often use.

Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., which Trump retained ownership of until last year, became a magnet for diplomats, lobbyists, and sycophants seeking Trump's attention and favor.

Trump has called Vladimir Putin a "genius," praised Putin's methods of dealing with troublesome journalists by physically silencing them (*i.e.* by having them murdered), and characterized Putin's invasion of Ukraine as an effective negotiating tactic.

Of North Korea's dictator Kim Jong Un, he has said, "We fell in love." Of Turkey's strong-armed president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "It's my honor" to be his friend. Of

Chinese president Xi Jinping, who made it possible for Xi to rule with no term limit, "He's a friend of mine who's a very, very good man."

Trump has spoken just as warmly of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the general who overthrew the only democratically elected government in Egypt's history; Mohammad bin Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, who ordered the murder and dismemberment of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi; and Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte, who instigated non-judicial summary execution of anyone suspected of dealing drugs.

He has been impeached not once but twice—one of multiple "firsts" in his presidency—and would have been convicted and removed from office if the Senate had not been controlled by a Republican Majority whose Senate leader denied Barack Obama the constitutional right to appoint Supreme Court nominees only to ramrod through three radical Republican appointees nominated by none other than Donald Trump.

He has steadfastly denied the legal results of the 2020 presidential election, though every credible source has found it to be the most transparent and fair election in U.S. history. He has been recorded asking Georgia's Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensberger to "find enough votes" to overturn that state's election results.

On the very day the election was to be officially certified, he urged his supporters to descend upon the Capitol and "fight like hell" in an attempt to disrupt the peaceful trans-

fer of presidential power for the first time in U.S. history, saying to the insurrectionists, "I'll be there with you," and describing them as "peaceful people, these were great people."

Nevermind the state criminal charges pending for his payment of hush money to the hooker he was screwing while Melania was nursing his latest child, or his federal indictment over mishandling of classified documents, or even this newest indictment stemming from the events of January 6th. The laws he so openly disdains say he's innocent until proven guilty.

Those last three items aside, have I missed anything? Probably. But this should be enough to raise the question: How in the name of Abraham Lincoln can Donald J. Trump still be a viable candidate for another term as president of the United States, let alone the front runner for the Republican Party? What does this say about the Republican Party, once the party of Lincoln?

Even more damning is the question: What does this say about the American electorate, roughly half of whom continue to support this shameless, lying, narcissistic, ignorant, mean-spirited, sexist, racist, incompetent grifter? Of the people, by the people, and for the people? God help us.

====

W. D. Ehrhart is a retired Master Teacher of History & English, and author of a Vietnam War memoir trilogy published by McFarland & Co.

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Breaking News: New Life for Local Newspapers

by Jim Hightower

How about a little bit of good news for a change? Specifically, good news about news.

The demise of local newspapers has been a very depressing story in the last few years, with several thousand of them gobbled up by Wall Street profiteers. Those money powers loot the publications' assets, then callously shut down each community's paper, or reduces them to empty news shells. So that's that—local print journalism is passé, right?

Wrong! High-spirited, community-minded subscribers in places like Glen Rose (Texas), Hamburg (Iowa), Portland (Maine), and International Falls (Minnesota) are humming an upbeat tune of regeneration that could be titled "Not Dead Yet!" In Maine, for example, five of the state's six daily papers and 17 weeklies were sinking under the ownership of an investment group. But all were recently bought by the National Trust for Local News (nationaltrustforlocalnews.org), a non-profit started two years ago. The Trust is turning each publication over to local owners and helping them find ways to become sustainable.

Another new effort, called Cherry Road Media, has bought 77 rural papers in 17 states, most from the predatory Gannett conglomerate that wanted to dump them. Cherry Road's business plan is simple, old-time genius—return editorial decision-making to local people and journalists who know the town, be an active presence and participant in community affairs, make the locals responsible for sustaining their town's paper—and most important, reinvest profits in real local journalism that advances democracy.

In both of these new initiatives, the foremost mission is to serve the common good of the communities, not to pad the wealth of a few distant financiers. To learn more about these models (and how you might implement something similar in your town), contact Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues: RuralJournalism.org.

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Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

from page five

trend was the move to factory automation. Advances in robotics meant that machines could perform factory tasks with more efficiency and lower total costs than blue collar workers. The result was that factory production that remained in the U.S. required fewer workers.

The effect of these profit maximizing strategies was to significantly reduce the demand for labor, driving down wages for unskilled workers and reducing the bargaining power of labor unions. Relative wages to workers either declined or remained stagnant as GDP increased. It was as if a giant pump was draining wealth from the working class into the top

10 percent comprised of owners of capital (especially to the top one percent) and knowledge workers. It is no surprise that both income and wealth inequality in the U.S. has reached levels not seen since the Roaring Twenties.

There is a reason that Trump says he loves the uneducated. The wealth pump, activated by corporate strategies based on maximizing return to owners of capital, has immiserated the uneducated working class while enriching the top 10 percent. Accompanying economic insecurity has been the destruction of social cohesion in working-class communities as demonstrated by increased drug use and "deaths of despair." It is this alienated class that constitutes Trump's rabid political base and al-

lows him to maintain a stranglehold on the Republican Party. Their support enabled him to initiate a populist power struggle within the Party and has empowered right wing radicals such as the so-called "Freedom Caucus" who prefer to burn down the house rather than work within the system. The radical right has no agenda beyond the destruction of the current system. Likewise, the Republican voting base has no loyalties beyond a devotion to Trump and a hatred for the coastal elites. It is the radical right that constitutes the greatest threat to democracy in the U.S. It is ironic that this movement has been initiated within a party that was formerly controlled by the plutocrats and now constitutes the greatest threat to their interests.

It is unlikely that Friedman could have envisaged the effect of his economic ideology on social and political events, but ideas have consequences that are often unpredictable. Friedman's "maximize shareholder wealth" mantra certainly has had a role in generating strategies that produced a great economic divide between the owners of capital and workers. The perception among the working class that they were being treated unfairly bred dissatisfaction and helped to generate right-wing reaction and social disorder. The ultimate resolution of this conflict is just as uncertain as was the blowback from Friedman's doctrine of maximizing shareholder wealth.

Robert D. Russell, Ph.D.
Harrisburg, Pa.

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