

The Fortnightly Rant

A Sermon From the Printer's Devil

Brethren and sisters, &c., we take our text today from Twitter, the Book of @KateAronoff, Chapter 3/15:

"one sign of a thriving democracy is that a coal baron elected by less than 300,000 people gets to take a sledgehammer to everything."

We are shocked—*shocked*—our own selves to see these disparaging words on the screen before us. They appear, it would seem, of their own volition, in spite of our intention to inscribe on these pages only the most wholesome advises and dispatches, suitable for all readers. We can only have been possessed—possessed by the Printer's Devil.*

With 265 years of tradition driving us, though, go forward we must—albeit in great trepidation as to what we may inscribe.

Compounding the threat to this congregation's faith in our sacred Constitution is a bitter truth: Joe Manchin, the miscreant in question, is not even a member of the Party now marching under the banner of sedition!

If it would be easy to fall into error regarding the gentleman's political affiliation because he doesn't work for his money, he has money that works for him. His ownership of a coal brokerage pays him as much for lounging on the back of his yacht as 33 West Virginians make working for minimum wage.

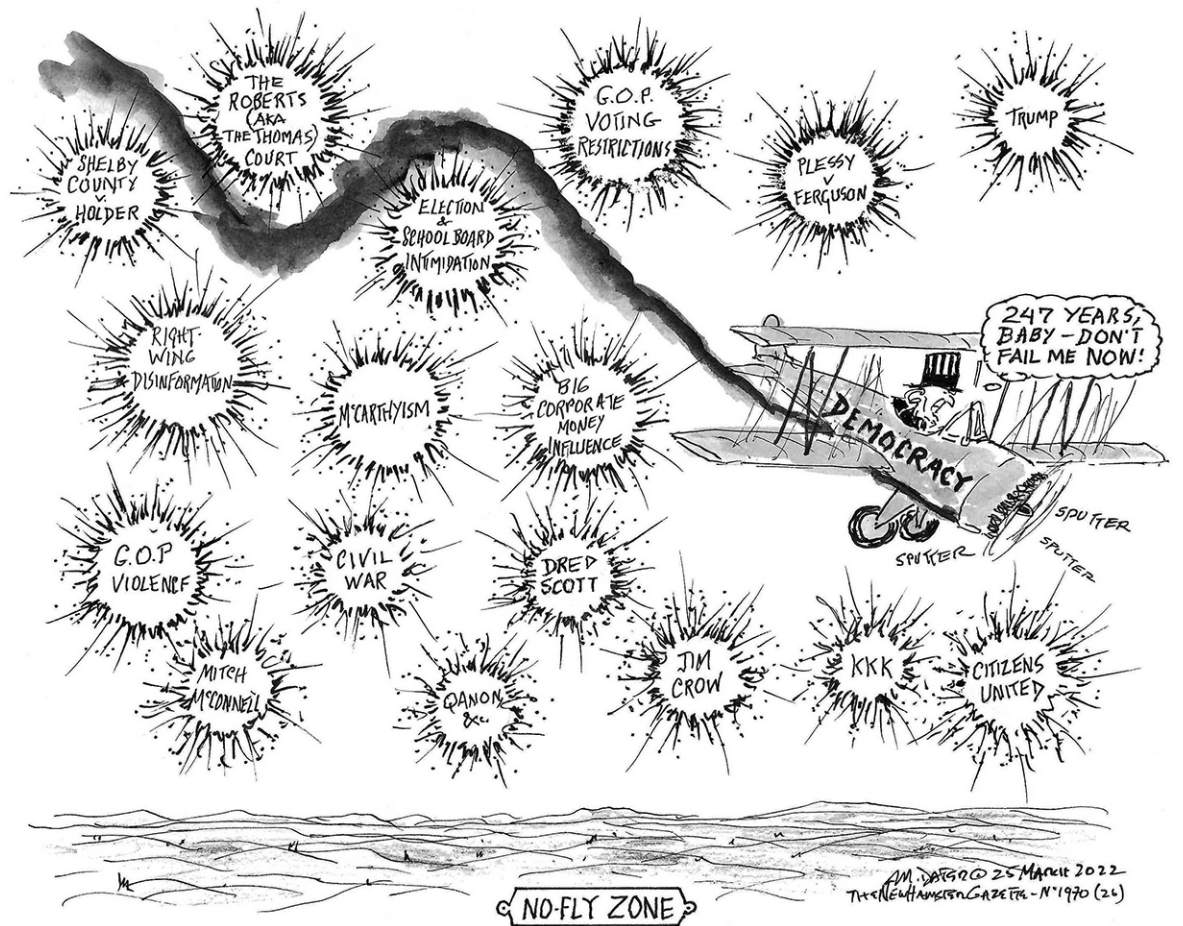
* **Printer's Devil:** Printing was originally associated with black magic because of the marvelous uniformity of printed works as compared with handwritten manuscripts. Printers cherished their air of mystery and dubbed their young helpers evil spirits, or "devils." Also, some European apprentices were considered permanent menial laborers and so received a disreputable name. In America the term lost its connotation of magic, but the chore boy or youngest apprentice was still called the printer's devil. Educated in setting type and working the handpress, these workers sometimes became master printers, publishers, or writers. With the mechanization of printing, apprenticeship declined, and the printer's devil became obsolete. [Though not in this shop. — The Ed.] — *Encyclopedia.com*

In the spirit of forbearance, though, before condemning this piece of grit jamming Democracy's Gearbox, fairness requires that we consider his background, in hopes of discerning what drives him to embody the mission of William F. Buckley's *National Review*: standing athwart history, yelling "Stop."

When Joe Manchin was but a babe in swaddling clothes, his uncle A. James Manchin—said to be "colorful" and "controversial"—was elected to West Virginia's House of Delegates at the age of 21. Joe was a teenager when the young, Catholic President John Fitzgerald Kennedy appointed the young, Catholic A. James Manchin to be the State Director of the Farmers Home Administration. The reasons for that appointment have no doubt been lost to history but could conceivably have had something to do with Kennedy's win over Humphrey in the state's 1960 Democratic Presidential Primary.

After a term as Secretary of State, A. James became Treasurer in 1985. Presumably this was when he earned the adjectives cited above because somehow or other, during a three-month period in 1987, the State of West Virginia managed to lose \$279 million. Manchin was then impeached for maladministration, incompetency, neglect of duty, and high crimes and misdemeanors.

Manchin, a Democrat, denied any wrongdoing. He said, according to the *Fredericksburg, Va. Free Lance-Star*, that he "knew nothing about finances and hired subordinates to do the work." He vowed to stay in office, then reneged; by resigning before a trial, he protected his pension and preserved his right to run for future office. Sure enough, in 1998 he was elected to the House of Delegates, where his colorful and controversial career had begun, half a century earlier.



On his death in 2003, Manchin's son Tim inherited was appointed to fill his father's seat.

The uncle's peccadilloes may not directly align with the nephew's political perversities. The two men do seem, however, to share a certain disdain for the point of public service.

Lately it seems like Maserati-driving Joe Manchin has been playing the Whack-a-Mole, popping up his head every time a useful piece of legislation appears on the brink of passage.

Is the problem really just Joe, though? To believe that would be to imply that West Virginia could solve the nation's problems just by giving this guy the boot. That seems much too simple.

Besides, we can think of several other members of the World's Most Self-Regarding Deliberative Body who would probably walk over their grandmothers to take his place before the cameras.

Arriving at that conclusion suggests that Elie Mystal may be right. Mystal is an attorney, justice correspondent for *The Nation*, and an author. His *Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution*, is currently on the *New York Times*'s Best Seller list. The title, derived from a line spoken by Samuel L. Jackson in the movie "Pulp Fiction," accurately reflects the book's take-no-prisoners approach.

According to *RealClearPolitics*, here's what Mystal said about the Constitution on ABC's "The View":

"The Constitution is kind of trash. ... It was written by slavers and colonists, and white people who were willing to make deals with slavers and colonists. They didn't ask anybody who looked like me what they thought about the Constitution."

"This document was written without the consent of Black and Brown people in this country, and without the consent of women in

this country.

"And I say, if that is the starting point, the very least we can do is ignore what those slavers and colonists and misogynists thought, and interpret the Constitution in a way that makes sense for our modern world."

With one political party openly embracing armed sedition, the other undermined by a one-man Fifth Column—while Earth's polar caps experience simultaneous heat waves—a clear-eyed reassessment of the nation's operating system would seem to be in order. If that makes some folks squirm in their pews, perhaps they've been too comfortable for too long.

Mystal just Tweeted that he hopes Justice Thomas recovers because he wants change "through reform not death and also I don't want to spend the next six months watching Joe Manchin stab the entire country in the back repeatedly."

Amen, Brother.

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Burning the Earth at both ends

[Muttering in the newsroom: "If only we could think up a clever way to put this... maybe that would make it more palatable. On the other hand, there's much to be said for brutal honesty. Have to check with Legal, and see if there's any case law on criminal liability for printing news that's just too godawful to be read safely..."]

Oh, pardon us, dear reader. We were just trying to decide whether to continue publishing this newspaper, or to don sackcloth and ashes, join a mendicant pilgrimage, and walk barefoot to....

Well, that's just it, isn't it? Where the hell do you go when Earth has been used up for profit?

People used to burn candles at both ends. Now the Earth is getting that treatment.

From Our North Pole Bureau

"Using advanced underwater mapping technology, researchers [from the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute] and their collaborators revealed that dramatic changes are happening to the [Arctic] seafloor as a result of thawing permafrost. In some areas, deep sinkholes have formed, some larger than a city block of six-story buildings. In other areas, ice-filled hills called pingos have risen from the seafloor."

And what might be the implications of this surprising discovery?

"Permafrost contains large amounts of biomass and decomposed biomass that has been stored as methane and carbon dioxide, making tundra soil a carbon sink.

As global warming heats the ecosystem and causes soil thawing, the permafrost carbon cycle accelerates and releases much of these soil-contained greenhouse gases into the atmosphere." — *Wikipedia*, the hack editor's best friend.

Thawing permafrost is one of the effects of global warming. Meanwhile, global warming is one of the effects of melting permafrost. It's like that scene in *Chinatown* where Evelyn Mulwray explains her daughter's parentage to Jake Gittes—"my sister...my daughter"—except, being real, this is even more harrowing.

Surprisingly, though, Kanye West's SUV may not be the cause of these huge divots in the floor of the Beaufort Sea. Scientists are attributing

these particular sinkholes and pingos to natural causes.

"While the degradation of terrestrial Arctic permafrost is attributed in part to increases in mean annual temperature from human-driven climate change, the changes the research team has documented on the seafloor associated with submarine permafrost derive from much older, slower climatic shifts related to our emergence from the last ice age. Similar changes appear to have been happening along the seaward edge of the former permafrost for thousands of years."

So, no problem, right? Uh, no. Drawing on our vast ignorance of the topic, our North Pole Bureau is assuming that:

A) the greenhouse gas released by

this phenomenon cannot have been accounted for in present climate models; therefore,

B) as always seems to be the case, the situation is more dire than we thought; and furthermore,

C) if this newly-discovered phenomenon of thawing submarine permafrost is a consequence of the trailing end of the Ice Age, even humanity's most heroic efforts are unlikely to be able to mitigate it.

There's also this: that "bomb cyclone" that slammed New England about a fortnight ago kept on trucking right up to the Arctic, bringing with it temperatures that were 50° F above normal. "It's a highly unusual

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and extreme bout of circumstances,” according to the *Washington Post*, “particularly considering the North Pole is still in a nearly six-month period of darkness known as ‘polar night.’ The sun doesn’t fully rise above the horizon between fall and spring equinoxes, contributing to the bone-chilling temperatures customary to the inhospitable region.”

A team of climate scientists from Leipzig told the *Post*, “We are trying to put together some of the puzzle pieces of the so-called ‘Arctic Amplification’ (stronger warming of the Arctic compared to [mean] global warming). And warm air intrusions are actually one of the candidates to explain this phenomenon.”

From Our South Pole Bureau

What about the other end of Earth—any hope to be found down there?

Oh, dear. Last Friday a *Washington Post* headline read, “It’s 70 degrees [F] warmer than normal in eastern Antarctica. Scientists are flabbergasted. ‘This event is completely unprecedented and upended our expectations about the Antarctic climate system,’ one expert said.”

It’s frustrating. On the one hand, scientists keep learning more and more about how global climate systems work. On the other hand,

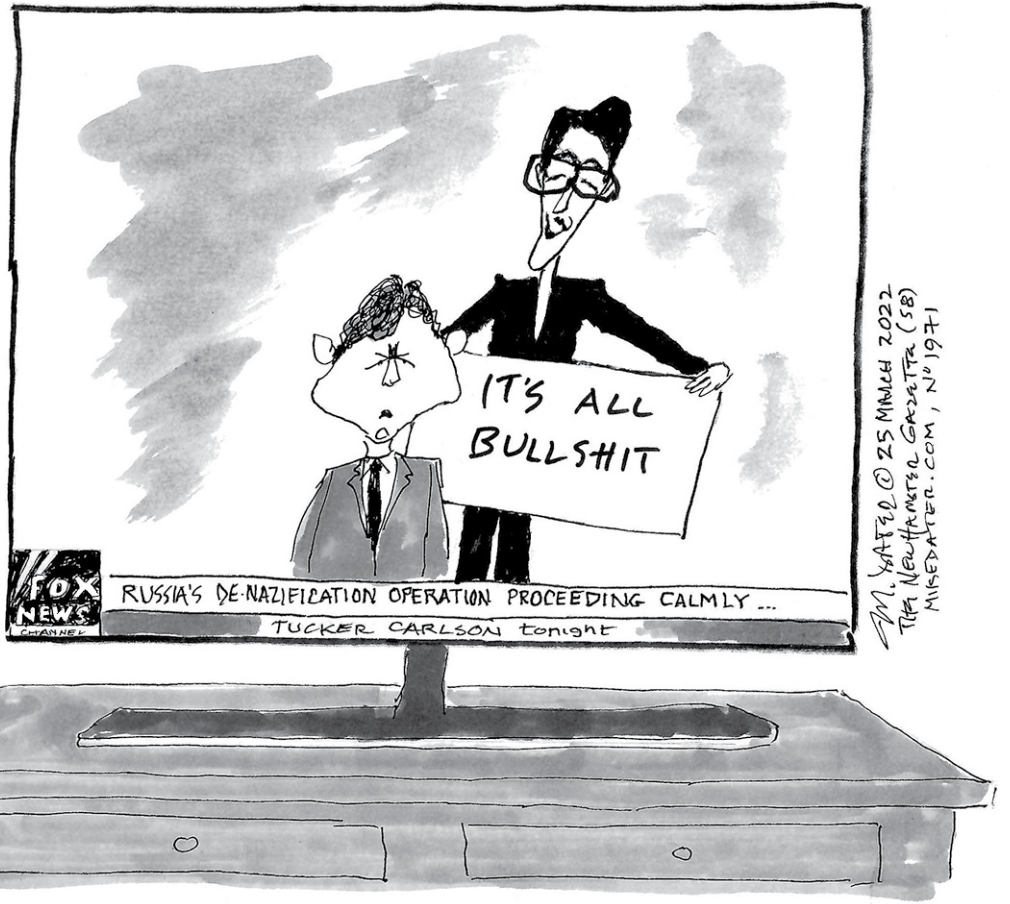
no one can seem to come up with an effective for us to stop making it worse.

Why is this so hard? Let’s ask Nick Beams:

“As soon as we begin to consider climate change,” Beams wrote 12 years ago, “two things become apparent. The first is that, by its very nature, the problem is global and no national solution is possible. The second is that the productive activity of man, that is the development of economic and social life, cannot be considered outside of mankind’s relationship to nature. Or, to put it another way, there is no separation between the activities of mankind, a part and product of nature, and the rest of nature, upon which mankind depends. Mankind’s productive activity must be carried out, not independent of, but in accordance with, the laws of nature. In considering these questions, however, we run headlong into the very foundations of the global capitalist order.”

Beam’s analysis plausibly explains why, despite clear evidence that the climate is growing increasingly erratic, our political and economic systems are still conducting “business as usual.”

Putting it less abstractly, a relatively small number of billionaires are frog-marching us all into a barren, overheated dystopia.



RACHEL TAKES A PAGE FROM RUSSIAN STATE TV

Beams’s assessment borders on the obvious, but profit-making news media have been inexplicably reluctant to explore this angle. Maybe it’s that Beams used “capitalist” in a negative context, or that he published his work on the World Socialist Web Site [wsrus.org].

Rude behavior like that is what prompted The Google to re-set its algorithm some years ago, thereby sending wsrus.org to the internet’s digital dungeon. Meanwhile blow-hard Senators who complain they’re being “cancelled” get to grill Supreme Court nominees about paranoid nonsense.

Despite all this, something new is happening: scientists are becoming activists, planning a Scientist Rebellion for April 4th–9th. @ScientistRebel1 says on Twitter that hundreds of rebel scientists will be carrying out “direct non-violent actions of civil disobedience in 27 countries across the globe.”

Watchdog Finds Postal Service Could Serve 99% of Routes With Electric Fleet

Naturally, with the climate going to hell in a handbasket, an appointee from the Former Guy’s administration, who is holding on with the tenacity of a barnacle despite blatant conflicts of interest, is doing his damndest to make sure that the USPS spends the next thirty years saddled with a vast fleet of vehicles powered by the very same fossil fuel technology that’s ruining the planet.

Common Dreams’ Jessica Corbett reports:

“A gas-guzzling fleet is clearly the wrong choice.”

That’s what Congressman Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) said in response to a new report from the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) about how transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) would impact the USPS.

The OIG analysis, released last week, came as Huffman and other

Democrats in Congress are challenging Postmaster General Louis DeJoy’s contract with Oshkosh Defense for new mostly gas-powered mail trucks, given climate experts’ warnings about the need to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

“The U.S. Postal Service employs 217,000 delivery vehicles to deliver mail and parcels to more than 135 million addresses. Many of these vehicles are beyond their intended service life and expensive to operate and maintain,” states the report. “The Postal Service is at a critical inflection point for its aging fleet and is preparing to acquire and operate a new generation of delivery vehicles.”

The OIG “identified several clear benefits of adopting electric vehicles into the postal delivery fleet, including improved sustainability and environmental impacts,” the document continues. “Electric vehicles are generally more mechanically reliable than gas-powered vehicles



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and would require less maintenance. Energy costs will be lower for electric vehicles, as using electricity to power an electric vehicle is cheaper than using gasoline.”

“Our research confirms that electric vehicle technology is generally capable of meeting the Postal Service’s needs,” the analysis adds, pointing out that of the roughly 177,000 USPS routes nationwide, only “around 2,600 of these routes (1.5% of the total) may be poorly suited to electric vehicle deployment.”

Most of the routes that are not well-suited for an EV are longer than the vehicle’s 70-mile range, though the paper notes that some shorter routes “may also experience range limitations if they include hilly terrain, since acceleration up steep slopes can reduce the range of a fully charged battery.”

The document also emphasizes that despite the higher upfront cost of buying new EVs and installing charging infrastructure, “the adoption of electric delivery vehicles could save the Postal Service money in the long term,” particularly for longer routes that are up to 70 miles, because the USPS would save on rapidly rising gas costs.

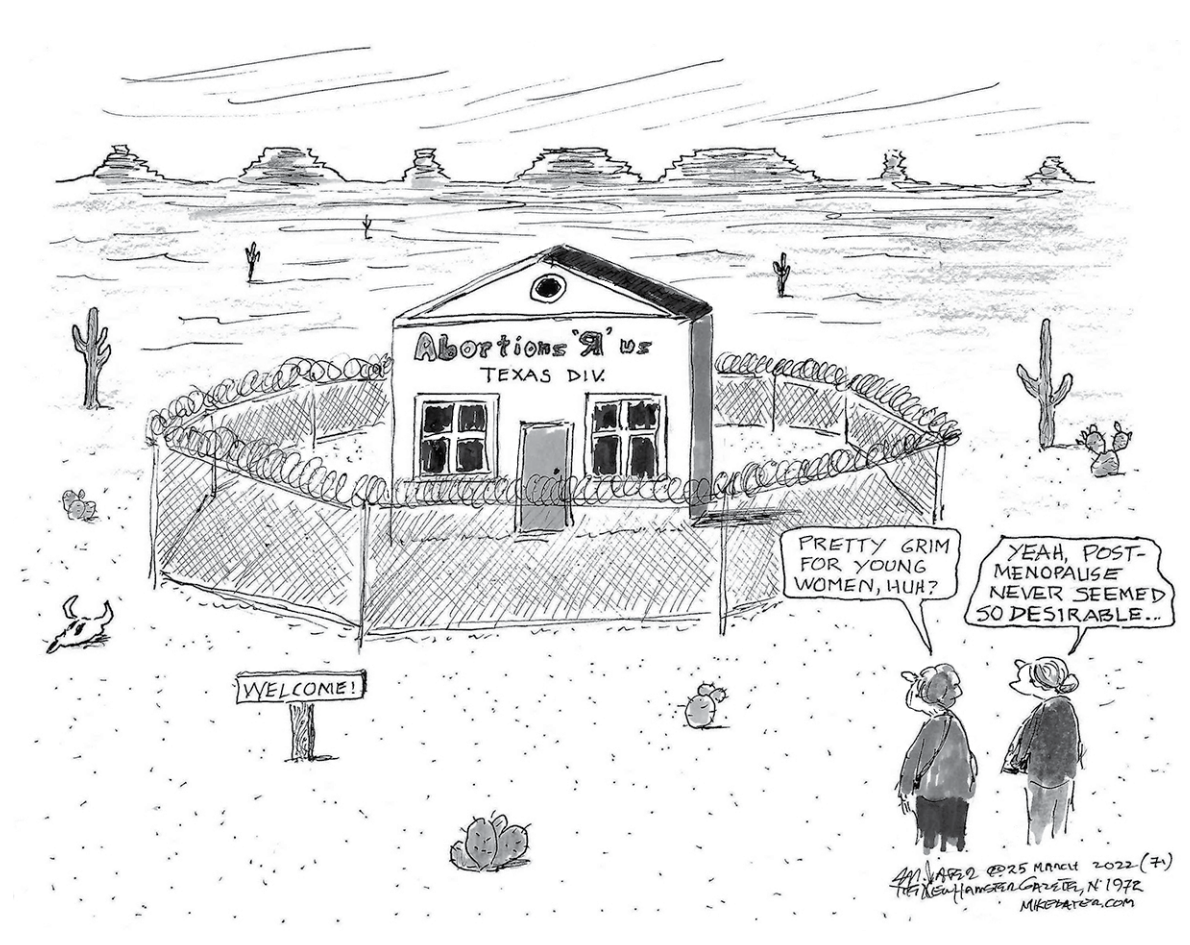
As Government Executive reported Tuesday:

Postal management took significant issue with the IG’s analysis, calling for corrections and further clarifications. It estimated, for example, that each charger would cost \$18,000, whereas the IG said it would only be \$7,300. The IG failed to consider the need for operational flexibility when suggesting the vehicles did not always need to stay fully charged, as well as the impact of postal-specific driving on a vehicle’s drivetrain. The IG stuck by its analysis, saying no changes were necessary.

The outlet also noted that “postal management said it could fully electrify its fleet with an injection of \$6.9 billion: \$3 billion for the higher vehicle cost and \$3.9 billion for the chargers. If such funding were provided, the IG said the lifetime cost of EVs would be 11% lower than gas vehicles. It added that USPS may be eligible for local incentives as well.”

Though Congress recently passed a Postal Service reform bill, the bipartisan legislation did not include funding for EVs—and the House-approved Build Back Better package, which could provide billions of dollars for the USPS, remains stalled in the evenly split Senate.

Earlier this month, Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-Va.) introduced



the Green Postal Service Fleet Act, which has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. The bill would block the embattled postmaster general’s contract by requiring that at least 75% of new USPS vehicles are electric or otherwise emissions-free.

When he unveiled the proposal, Connolly called the contested USPS contract a “flagrant contradiction” to President Joe Biden’s goal of a fully electric federal fleet as well as “a devastating blow to our climate, to our effort to lead the world in green technology, and to our beloved Postal Service.”

Last week, Connolly and Huffman joined Democratic Reps. Brenda Lawrence (Mich.), Stephen Lynch (Mass.), and Carolyn Maloney (N.Y.), chair of the oversight panel, in calling for an OIG probe of the contract. Upon releasing the new report, the watchdog said that it “will be doing additional work in response to that request.”

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Happy Vietnam Veterans Day!

With March 29th approaching, we naturally aimed our MilSpec browser at www.vietnamwar50th.com, to see how a grateful nation is celebrating that dwindling cohort of national heroes who prevented a bunch of pajama-clad, sandal-wearing rice farmers from beaching their sampans on San Diego’s pristine Coronado Beach and marching inexorably eastward.

“The 5th anniversary of National Vietnam War Veterans Day (NVVWD) is less than two weeks away!,” the site breathlessly announced. “We stand amazed at the remarkable number of upcoming events and recognitions—more than 900—planned across the country and abroad to thank and honor our Nation’s Vietnam veterans and their families! Some wonderful oppor-

tunities to participate are outlined below....”

Military.com puts the glorious day in perspective: “Americans celebrate Vietnam Veterans Day annually on March 29 thanks to a measure signed into law by then-President Donald Trump in 2017.” As the honorably-discharged bearer of a DD 214 documenting his participation in the event in question, the editor can assure our readers that nothing could possibly be more appropriate than for this commemoration to have been codified into law by a dubiously-draft-exempted, multiply bankrupted, twice-impeached leader of a failed self-coup.

Editor Bites Dog

First Republicans in the State House launched us into the Second Congressional District. Now the Governor is proposing to throw us back into the First district.

Can this be? Ye Olde Rag, rooting for the Guv?



The Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, afloat in the fog last Saturday morning.

Murph’s Fortnightly Quote
*“Flashing for the warriors whose strength is not to fight
 “Flashing for the refugees on the unarmed road of flight”*
 — Bob Dylan, from “Chimes of Freedom”

“If you set to work to believe everything, you will tire out the believing-muscles of your mind, and then you’ll be so weak you won’t be able to believe the simplest true things.”
 — Lewis Carroll
john@wordpraxis.com

“If you aren’t careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.”
 — Malcolm X
 — Not-So-Random Thoughts from an Oregon Subscriber

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**Ukraine Needs Weapons—
“Offensive” and “Defensive”**

To the Editor:

To date no country wants to be blamed for supplying fighter jets to Ukraine. The assertion is that fighter jets are offensive weapons and would raise the risk of expanding the war in Ukraine to more (or all) of Europe. But Stinger and Javelin missiles are okay. Isn't it an oxymoron to try to designate weapons as either “offensive” or “defensive”?

Weapons that blow-up vehicles and injure and kill people are destructive weapons, period. It is absurdly specious to argue that fighter jets are somehow “not okay,” but rockets, mortars, and missiles are “okay.” The United States and its allies should not hesitate any longer regarding supplying fighter jets to Ukraine—Ukrainians are dying hourly while their allies are too cowardly to send to Ukraine the fighter jets it says it needs. What will Ukraine's allies do when they are the next to receive the “knock on the door”?

Paul Cully
Dover, N.H.

Paul:

Americans watch too much TV, and don't read enough philosophy. We're as guilty of this as anyone, but at least we don't make the mistake of believing there's a neat solution to every terrible problem.

To begin with, the semantics of “offensive” and “defensive” are irrelevant and immaterial. What's at issue here is hardware. Stingers and Javelins are shoulder-fired, have limited range, and limited destructive capability. They are in no way comparable to fighter jets.

The scenes coming out of Ukraine are enough to break anyone's heart. Strangely, that doesn't seem to be the case with Afghanistan, Yemen, Haiti, the Gaza Strip, &c., &c.

No one in any of these beleaguered territories will benefit, though, if Joe Biden or any other world leader decides to get all John Wayne against the guy in the Kremlin with his finger on the button.

It's a lousy situation. Maybe it's a lousy world. Maybe it can be improved—if we don't blow it up first.

Dr. Imre Somssich wrote to us on this

topic. His letter, up next, is well worth reading.

The Editor

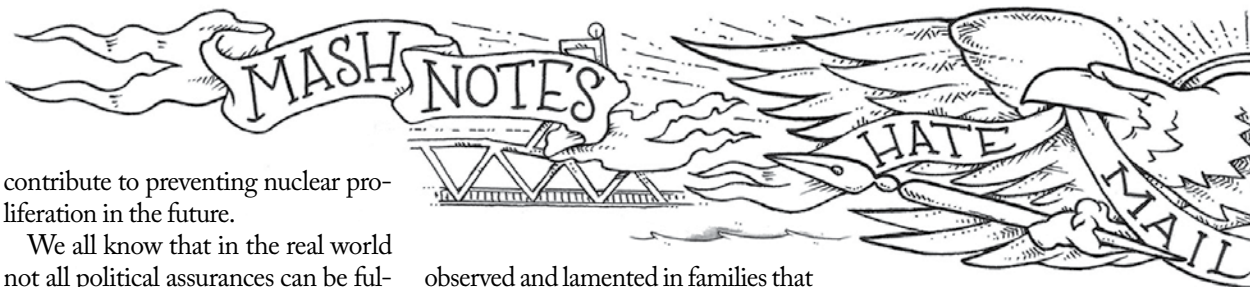
Our Moral Obligation to Ukraine

To the Editor:

As Americans we have a special moral obligation to Ukraine to protect it against this unprovoked and illegal attack by Russia on this sovereign state. One should keep in mind that after the U.S.S.R. collapsed in 1991 Ukraine inherited over 2,700 strategic and tactical nuclear missiles, making it the world's third-largest nuclear power at that time. Particularly the U.S. and Russia were interested in limiting the number of countries having nuclear arsenals and thus, in 1994, after long and difficult negotiations involving President Bill Clinton, British prime minister John Major, Russian president Boris Yeltsin, and Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma jointly signed the Budapest Memorandum. Under its terms Ukraine agreed to dismantle and transfer its nuclear warheads to Russia for disassembly. In return, Ukraine received the assurance that Russia, the U.S., and the UK would refrain from threatening it and respect its “independence and sovereignty and the existing borders.” An additional key aspect of the arrangement was the readiness of the United States and Russia, joined by Britain, to provide security assurances. The Budapest Memorandum committed Washington, Moscow, and London, among other things, to “refrain from the threat or use of force” against that country.

There is no doubt that Putin has violated those commitments several times over (annexation of Crimea, use of Russian forces to help armed separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk). I can fully understand that Ukrainians now regret giving up these nuclear weapons, which may have proved a potent deterrent against the current Russian invasion.

Although the U.S.A. did not give legally binding guarantees, living up to its obligations is an important issue and preserving the credibility of security assurances would also certainly



contribute to preventing nuclear proliferation in the future.

We all know that in the real world not all political assurances can be fully met due to the fact that they may result in more serious overall consequences. Military intervention by the U.S.A, U.K. or N.A.T.O. bears the risk of triggering an all-out war, which would not be in anyone's interest.

But we, as civilians, can all support our moral obligations to the Ukraine by donating generously to serious organizations that are assisting the millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing their country from the Russian aggressors' bombing of cities and towns. Moreover, we should demonstrate clearly to Putin that we can and will tolerate higher prices for oil, gas, and other commodities, although painful, because freedom, democracy, and sovereignty are some of the highest values that we are determined to defend.

Dr. Imre Somssich

Cologne, Germany

Dr. Somssich:

Thank you for providing us, in this fraught time, with a thoughtful and well-balanced assessment of this deplorable situation.

The Editor

**Biden Derangement Syndrome
Demands Treatment**

Dear Editor:

Our Sunday drive took my husband and me on a different road, where we saw an “F___ Biden” flag flying underneath a flagpoled Stars and Stripes. I wondered again about these macho-seeming men who want to have sexual intercourse with the bony, elderly statesman that is our President. It is so blatantly announced with these manufactured flags that it is troubling. If these hurting people have Medicaid, or Medicare, or VA care, or Obamacare, professionals could be sought out to counsel them. Do they have children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews, in-laws? It must be quietly

observed and lamented in families that such perversion is among them.

Lynn Rudmin Chong
Sanbornton, N.H.

Lynn:

Thanks for ruining our lunch. Worse yet, you got us thinking—always a bad thing: how many of these guys have government-subsidized prescriptions for Viagra?

The Editor

Public Schools Failing Taxpayers

To the Editor:

[Deleted: All 442 of the writer's utterly disingenuous words.]

Don Ewing
Meredith, N.H.

Don:

Thanks for writing. Sorry we didn't have room to actually publish your lamentation about the so-called “failure” of public education. Besides, the crocodile tears smeared the ink.

Sanctimonious quotations from the Preamble of the Constitution cannot disguise the Herculean efforts you and your ilk—Commissioner Edelblut, we're looking at you—have devoted to wrecking public education.

The logic you purport to use has more holes in it than the shot-up car of a young Black man, stopped by cops for a burned-out tail light. Your touting of “school choice” is the modern day equivalent of 19th century snake oil.

We choose to believe that you spout this stuff because you're but a dupe—and that's being generous. We suppose you could be a profiteer.

The Editor

**Senate Unanimously Wrong
On Daylight Saving Change**

To the Editor:

Everyone is deliriously happy that the Senate actually passed something—with unanimous approval! Amazing! Unfortunately, in their haste

to do “something” they passed something dangerous that could kill some of our children.

During the darker months of October through February, year-round Daylight Saving Time will require us to wake up before sunrise for work or school. Our kids will be walking to school as the rising sun shines directly into the eyes of commuting drivers. Somebody's child is gonna get run over.

It seems our Senators are so befuddled with changing their clocks, they'd rather endanger our kids. Passing wimp legislation is worse than passing nothing at all.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

Bruce:

It's a picture-perfect Republican “solution.” Permanent Daylight Saving doesn't just put Dick and Jane walking to school in danger. It has also been shown to drive up the rates of cancer, diabetes, and obesity.

Fortunately the House is going to get a crack at this, and if it squeaks through there, Biden can veto it.

Mistakes like this happens in an eye-blink. Constructive legislation? What's that?

The Editor

Sununu Needs to Nix Gerrymandering

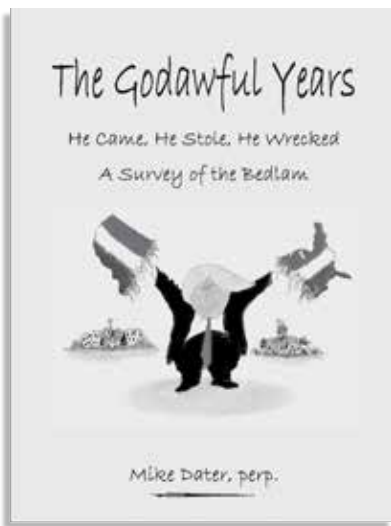
To the Editor:

Chris Sununu has been governor for five years. He is the son of a governor. He should know the process of law making. The legislature writes the bill and the governor either signs it into law or vetoes it because he is against the bill entirely or in order to seek changes to make the bill acceptable.

Governor Sununu vetoed over 80 bills when Democrats controlled the State House. He should know how

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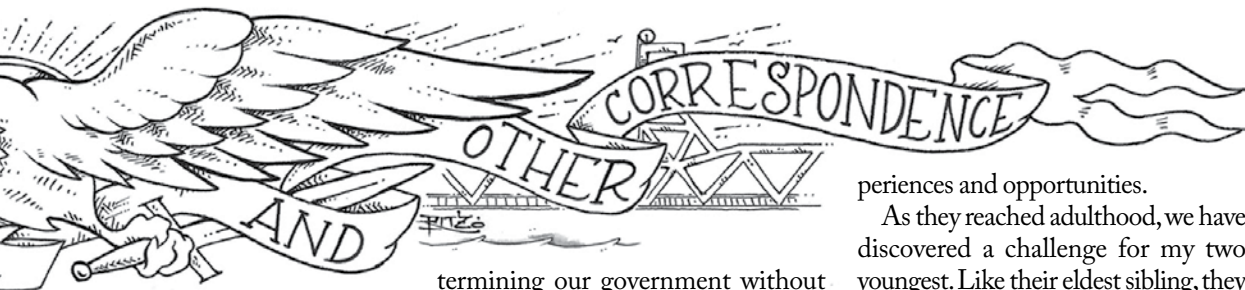
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the process works. Yet he has taken to signing bills into law, sticking his finger up to see which way the wind blows, and then asking the legislature to change the law they just passed. He has already tried this trick with the anti-abortion bill he signed which defunded Planned Parenthood and required women to undergo vaginal ultrasound tests.

Will he repeat this trick when his party passes the most extremely gerrymandered congressional districts in the State's history? He has said he is against gerrymandering, but he also claimed to be pro-choice. If you do not want rigged election maps, let the governor know he will no longer be governor if he signs those maps into law even if he asks his party to repeal them.

Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth, N.H.

Walter:

No one reading this newspaper could ever mistake us for members of the Sununu Clan Fan Club.

That said, if Sununu the Lesser vetoes that egregious Congressional District map, he'll buy himself some goodwill here.

The Editor

====

**Principles vs. Profit =
Life vs. Death of Free World**

To the Editor:

Russia and China only account for 20 percent of the world's economy with the rest of the world contributing approximately \$68 – 70 Trillion in trade.

Trump was right to force people to promote Free World geopolitical policies. "Make America Great Again" meant make the principles of the free world great again. Bully or fascist—socialism or Marxism has been arming up to defeat the principles of our "We the people" liberty of free will and de-

termining our government without wars, or oppressions from within.

China realized this since Trump and the rest of the world stuck their collective heads in the ground ignoring it for short-term profits: This Putin war is the result.

They should have adhered to George Washington's model: "the best defense is a strong offense"—both militarily and with trade.

Yet even today after this spectacle of carnage they blame Trump. It is NBC after all, who would have guessed?

"But Trump did all that single handedly—while simultaneously damaging ties with Europe and provoking uncertainty among U.S. allies in Asia."

Any uncertainty now?

Trump was _____ (fill in your opinion) but not like Putin a monster or Xi Jinping. Both were kept in peace with him. The world stayed in peace.

<https://www.cbc.com/2022/03/09/china-watches-as-ukraine-war-makes-us-eu-and-japan-show-unity.html>

Jeff Frost
Alexandria, N.H.

Jeff:

Extrapolating from your logic here, we can conclude that 2 + 2 = the square root of the hypotenuse of Friday afternoon.

The Editor

====

March is Disability Awareness Month

To the Editor:

I have three children. They all participated in various activities, such as soccer, basketball, volleyball, karate, fencing, and horseback riding. They have been active members of the community, have volunteered, and had jobs. They have friends who have stood by them in difficult times, such as when their Dad died after a 4-year battle with cancer. My children, now 25, 22, and 18, have shared similar ex-

periences and opportunities.

As they reached adulthood, we have discovered a challenge for my two youngest. Like their eldest sibling, they want a place of their own to call home. My two youngest have a diagnosis of Down syndrome. For them, this means needing a little extra support with some daily living skills. Currently, there exists few options for them to live outside of their family home and inclusively in the community where they grew up. They are not alone in this challenge. A movement has begun across the country to address the deficit of inclusive, supportive, accessible, and affordable housing options. To create inclusive communities, municipalities and developers must build residential properties which include units for people with and without disabilities. Whether someone has a sensory or cognitive challenge, uses a wheelchair, or needs extra help with daily living tasks, our uniqueness shouldn't be a barrier to having a space of our own to call home. Please consider supporting the movement to create inclusive housing, which will build true community for people of all abilities. Visit www.ourplacenh.org or email lisab@ablenh.org.

Peggy Mace
Dover, N.H.

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**Sununu Must Keep Promise and
Veto Gerrymandered Districts**

To the Editor:

Governor Chris Sununu said on WMUR, "If it doesn't pass the smell test and it looks like gerrymandering districts, of course, I'm going to veto that." The new gerrymandered proposals do not even meet the Governor's own criteria.

We are seeing war crimes taking place in Ukraine because the elections in Russia were rigged, allowing fascists to take over the government. We need to ensure this has no chance to happen here in America.

According to polls done by UNH

over 80 percent of Granite State residents feel that these maps are unfair.

The Former Republican Speaker of the New Hampshire House called the map "a pretty radical one." Former New Hampshire Republican party Vice-Chair and Congressional candidate Matt Mayberry wrote that they are "far fetched and blatantly political." And former Attorney General and GOP National Committeeman from New Hampshire Tom Rath said, "[Congressional Districts] where candidates have to earn votes each cycle rather than relying on registration is much more the New Hampshire way."

If Republicans have to cheat to win elections there must be something wrong with what they are trying to do.

Governor Sununu, stay true to your word, use your own criteria of what a gerrymandered district would be, and veto these proposals if they make it to your desk. If you do not, then what is your word worth? Nothing.

Call Governor Sununu at (603) 271-2121 and tell him his maps don't pass the smell test! Tell him to veto them as he promised!

David Holt
Somersworth, N.H.

David:

The Governor has talked himself into a corner. Now he has an opportunity to demonstrate true leadership.

Unless, that is, he's already calculated that a wink-and-nod veto will be overturned at no political cost to himself.

The Editor

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Ukrainian Lives Worth Higher Gas Prices

To the Editor:

Remembering the horror and anguish I felt when that apartment building collapsed in Florida killing hundreds under falling rubble, I feel avenging anger toward the psychopath commander of Russia's army as he orders them to blow-up dozens of apartment buildings in Ukraine every night.

President Biden is now leading the world to block Russia's largest source of income by stopping purchase of Russia's oil. That raises the price of oil, but I'm willing to pay more for gasoline because it punishes Putin.

We must assure, however, that those higher gasoline prices do not bestow higher profits on gas and oil companies. Those profits must be taxed, and the money must be used to supply Ukraine with all the resources they need to punch-out Putin's army.

Let's punish Putin at the pump to punch-out Putin's army!

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

Bruce:

It shouldn't take a war in Europe to impose taxes on fossil fuel companies.

If such a tax were to be imposed, though, low-income Americans would be hit the hardest—another reason for a wealth tax!

The Editor

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A Lot of Gall

Dear Editor:

Recently Rep. David Muese posted the results of a number of public health related bills that were either passed, defeated or tabled at a recent New Hampshire House of Representatives session. The list is a frightening display of the anti-science, anti-public health, anti-life positions of the Republican majority, and their selective respect for individual freedoms.

HB 1088 would have allowed employees the right to protect themselves from Covid-19 by wearing masks despite their employer's wishes. It was killed. Republicans claim that forcing a person to wear a mask against their will is a violation of their personal freedoms, but those personal freedoms do not apply to individuals who are forced to *not* wear masks to protect themselves and their co-workers.

HB 1022, permitting pharmacists to dispense the drug ivermectin without a prescription, was passed. This drug is a powerful anti-parasitic drug that if used improperly can cause serious side effects and even death. The Republicans in the House are now attempting to practice medicine without a licence.

HB 1221, prohibiting school districts from mandating Covid-19 vac-

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

to page six

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Gas prices, propaganda, war, and politics

by Wim Laven

I come from oil country, so does House Minority leader Kevin McCarthy. My hometown—Bakersfield, in Kern County, California—Kern County was once the top producer and has been a top three oil-producing county in the U.S. as recently as 2014.

Both of us know he is lying when he blames: “These are President Biden’s prices.”

Petro Online, an oil industry news source, reports that on average it takes a month for oil to get pumped from the ground to complete the refining process (if it does not become part of reserves). I remember working on oil production equipment on September 11th when my boss said, “you better fill up before the prices go up.” They did.

On the House floor McCarthy says, “Democrats want to blame surging prices on Russia. But the truth is, their out-of-touch policies are why we are here in the first place.”

In reality, it’s simply *laissez-faire* piratical opportunism.

Until they run into trouble, corporations love to tout, and practice, free market capitalism, preferably completely unregulated. The gas stations only have a few days of product available in their tanks, and they set prices according to the “replacement cost,” which the *Washington Post* describes as: “Every \$10 increase in the price of crude oil adds about 24 cents to the cost of each gallon of gasoline and is quickly reflected in what you pay at the pump.”

McCarthy knows who sets gas prices—Big Oil—and how they gouge Americans; from “January to September [2021], the net income of the group, which includes Exxon, Chevron, Shell and BP, was \$174 billion.” Shell jumped on the opportunity to buy heavily discounted oil from Russia, and defended themselves: “We will continue to choose alternatives to Russian oil wherever possible, but this cannot happen overnight because of how significant Russia is to global supply.”

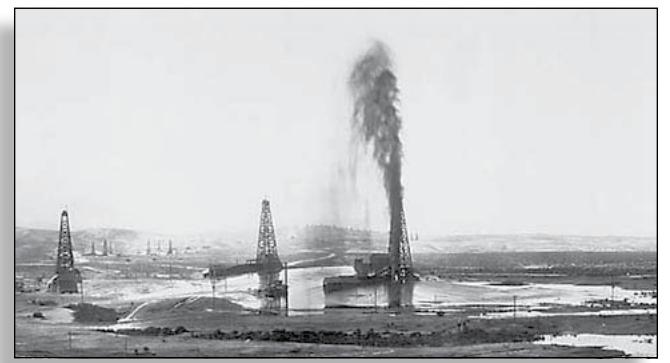
McCarthy and the GOP would blame President Biden if a solar flare affected the GPS in his smart watch or a dog bit a child in Patagonia. Gas prices are just one more example. The politically opportunistic deceit is as deplorable as it is routine for them.

Propaganda, be it from McCarthy or Putin, is intended to foment hatred of a foe, warn of the impact losing will have, and idealize one’s own position. In this case it is particularly dangerous because McCarthy’s lies help Putin.

Putin’s propaganda is being challenged in beautiful, bold, and provocative ways by brave Russians speaking it out loud despite Putin’s brutal repression. In the end, the integrity and courage of the Russian people may be a more powerful factor in the fall of Putin than all the NATO weaponry pointed at him.

Exposing the lies of self-promoting leaders is the work of citizens everywhere.

McCarthy’s propaganda also needs to be condemned. I am all for



When Kevin McCarthy blames high oil prices on President Biden, he’s just carrying on an old Kern County tradition: spewing noxious toxins. In 1910, “Dry Hole Charlie” Woods’s oil rig hit what he later called “an artery of the earth’s great central storehouse of oil, whereas all previous wells had been merely pinpricks in the earth’s thick hide.” The Lakeview Gusher remains the largest accidental oil spill in history, topped only by Saddam Hussein’s intentional arson of Kuwaiti oil fields in 1991.

the debate and exchange of competing ideas in a democracy, but there is no room for dishonesty. The trope is timeless, and there is evidence that some votes are cast according to gas pump thinking, but it is time to finally dismiss the lie that Biden controls gas prices.

Forcing Biden to fight a propaganda war at home while trying to create peace abroad is a strategy Mc-

Carthy believes may earn him command as Speaker of the House, but innocent lives hang in the balance. Let us hope that truth also brings McCarthy’s lies down.

Wim Laven, Ph.D., syndicated by PeaceVoice, teaches courses in political science and conflict resolution.

from page five

cinations, was passed. So much for local control.

HB 1369, a bill that would have allowed performing arts venues like the Music Hall to set their own policies on masking, was tabled, effectively killing this bill. So now, the so-called “pro business,” “anti regulation” Republicans are telling private businesses what they can and cannot do in their own facilities.

HB 1455, prohibiting the state from enforcing any federal requirement for a person to submit proof of vaccination against Covid-19 as a condition of employment, was passed. This would apply to the federal requirement for health care workers in hospitals, nursing homes etc.

HB 1481, which would have repealed the bill passed last year that prohibits the state or any of its po-

litical subdivisions from requiring Covid-19 vaccination to secure, receive, or access any public facility, any public benefit, or any public service, was tabled, effectively killing this bill.

HB 1495, which broadly forbids the state of New Hampshire from requiring any business—not just government contractors—from requiring a vaccine or proof of vaccination was passed. Thankfully, an amendment exempting health care facilities was also passed. Once again, the Republican majority that claims to be against regulating business, is telling private businesses what they can or cannot do to protect their employees and customers.

It is no wonder that the United States has led the world in deaths

and cases of Covid-19. The relentless politicization of a public health crisis has resulted in countless preventable deaths and the ongoing disruption to our society. The Republican majority in the New Hampshire Legislature seem to be trying to outdo their colleagues in Florida in helping the coronavirus to continue to spread, mutate and infect even more people. And they have the gall to call themselves “pro life.”

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

Rich:
For a moment there, we found ourselves in agreement with Pat Buchanan: the Fifties were better than this. Here’s the difference, though:



He seems to miss Bull Connors, segregation, and police brutality.

We miss seeing the John Birch Society way out there on the political fringe.

The Editor

The New Republican Movement

Dear Editor,

Not content with its 2020 anti-democracy movement, Senate Republicans today have proudly crafted a new anti-children movement.

They want to suffocate the current federal virus aid proposal, which would provide tests, treatments, and vaccines giving children a pathway to growth, health, and security in an Armageddon-like world.

Polio vaccines for kids saved World War II era kids from debility

and death. But now, as World War III looms, Republicans want to hold everyone else’s mostly poor kids hostage to their own peculiar notions of good health and good science.

The Republican “health” program seeks to immunize the ultra-luxury class from any interference with their immoral financial activities, and the Republican science program seeks to promote the science of despotism.

One example of the Republican pro-despotism philosophy is their insistence that the Biden administration “repurpose” money for the virus that is already out there in the spending pipeline.

This is essentially asking for unconstitutional “impoundment” of funds, like President Nixon did in the 1970s and President Trump did to find money for his wall. It is an impeachable legal offense, but really a cool tool for dictators who want to overturn the Congressional power of the purse.

Kimball Shinkoskey
Woods Cross, Utah

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What Is a Bayonet? or, Who Wins and Who Loses?

by W.D. Ehrhart

Lately I have been revisiting one of my favorite writers, Stephen Crane. Most famous for his novel of the American Civil War, *The Red Badge of Courage*, his collected writing—fiction, poetry, and journalism published by the University of Virginia Press—runs to ten full volumes. So enamored of his poetry was I that I still have a slim volume of his poems I “removed” (*stole* would be more accurate) from the Pennridge High School library back in 1965 or 1966. (In my defense, the town I grew up in didn’t even have a bookstore, and I wanted to possess those poems.)

The best of his short stories and novellas are enduring masterpieces: *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, *The Monster*, “The Blue Hotel,” “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky.” And “The Open Boat” is among the greatest short stories ever written. In the years since my own encounter with war, however, I came to believe that *The Red Badge of Courage* is the least of his accomplishments, the least interesting, the most sadly conventional.

In his first battle, the book’s young protagonist succumbs to fear and runs from the fight as far and as fast as he can go. But after assorted encounters in rear areas with dead men, wounded men, and a dying friend, Henry rejoins his regiment and fights bravely “with his soiled and disorderly dress, his red and inflamed features surmounted by the dingy rag with its spot of blood, his wildly swinging rifle and banging accouterments[.]” And after the battle, “he felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood.... He was a man.”

The message of the story, in fact, is about as conventional as it gets. Back in the old days, before dashing Marines dueled flaming dragons in electronically generated television recruiting pitches, the poster that caught my eye in front of the U.S. Post Office in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, was a nearly life-sized Marine sergeant in Dress Blues with a caption that said, “THE MARINE CORPS BUILDS MEN.”

That’s what I wanted to be! So I signed up, only to discover that being a man wasn’t all it was cracked up to be, that men who are horribly mangled in battle really do cry for their mothers, that war is neither ennobling nor uplifting but instead mostly degrading, diminishing, and dehumanizing.

Crane, to his credit, seems to have come to the same conclu-

sion. At the time he wrote his Civil War novel, he had never heard a shot fired in anger. But after experiencing a real war in Greece—including not just the battlefield fighting, but the suffering and terror of civilians—he wrote a very different story called “Death and the Child.”

In this story, the young soldier also runs away from battle, though he receives his “red badge of courage” in the form of a mortal bullet wound, and with his dying thoughts, reflects upon the ordinary soldiers who make up all armies, and “who, throughout the world, hold potentates on their thrones, make statesmen illustrious, provide generals with lasting victories, all with ignorance, indifference, or half-witted hatred, moving the world with the strength of their arms and getting their heads knocked together in the name of God, the king, or the Stock Exchange—immortal, dreaming, hopeless asses who surrender their reason to the care of a shining puppet, and persuade some toy to carry their lives in his purse.”

It is perhaps the most bitter sentence Crane ever penned, and every word of it is true. One is reminded of the question: what is a bayonet? Answer: a tool with a worker at either end.

Or consider Philip Freneau’s poem “The American Soldier”:

Deep in a vale, a stranger now to arms,
Too poor to shine in courts, too proud to beg,
He, who once warred on *Saratoga’s* plains,
Sits musing o’er his scars, and wooden leg.

Remembering still the toil of former days,
To other hands he sees his earnings paid;—
They share the due reward—*he* feeds on praise.
Lost in the abyss of want, misfortune’s shade.

Far, far from domes where splendid tapers glare,
‘Tis his from dear bought *peace* no wealth to win,
Removed alike from courtly cringing ‘squires,
The great-man’s *Levee*, and the proud man’s grin.

Sold are those arms which once on Britons blazed,
When, flushed with conquest, to the charge they came;
That power repelled, and *Freedom’s* fabrick raised,
She leaves her soldier—*famine and a name!*



Stephen Crane (1871–1900), 17, in his Claverack College cadet uniform.

This was written about the American Revolutionary War, but it could surely apply just as well to the Peloponnesian Wars, the Napoleonic Wars, the American War in Vietnam, or [*provide your own favorite war*]. The losers are the soldiers who generation after generation willingly offer themselves up as cannon-fodder, and the civilians who get caught in the middle. The winners are the arms merchants, the defense contractors, the oligarchs (do you really think the only oligarchs are Russian?).

So now we’ve got another war on our hands. This time it’s young Russian soldiers and young Ukrainian soldiers who are killing each other while who-knows-how-many thousands of Ukrainian civilians are suffering and dying. So far, at least, young American soldiers are not yet engaged, though additional U.S. forces have been deployed to Poland, and the public clamor to “do something” to help Ukraine grows louder and ever more shrill with each passing day. Let us all hope this war spreads no farther, and comes to an end as mercifully soon as possible.

But whatever happens, it is highly unlikely that ordinary people, everyday folks like you and me—whatever our nationality—will be among the winners.

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W. D. Ehrhart is an ex-Marine sergeant who holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Wales at Swansea, and taught for many years at the Harverford School for Boys.

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Now, Robots are Coming for White-Collar Jobs

by Jim Hightower

In CorporateSpeak, there are no “job cuts.” Instead, firings are blandly referred to as “employment adjustments.”

Now, though, corporate word-smiths will need a whole new thesaurus of euphemisms, for masses of job cuts are coming for employees in the higher echelons of the corporate structure. Don’t look now, but an unanticipated result of the ongoing pandemic is that it has given cover

for CEOs to speed up the adoption of highly-advanced RPAs (Robotic Process Automation) to replace employees once assumed to be immune from displacement. As one analyst told a *New York Times* reporter, “With RPA you can build a bot that costs \$10,000 a year and take out two to four humans.”

Prior to the Covid crisis, many top executives feared a public backlash if they pushed automation too far too fast. But, ironically, the economic collapse caused by the pandemic

has so discombobulated the workplace and diverted public attention that corporate bosses have been emboldened to rush ahead. While the nationwide shut-down of offices and furloughing of employees has caused misery for millions, one happy purveyor of RPA systems notes that it has “massively raised awareness among executives about the variety of work that no longer requires human involvement.” He cheerfully declares: “We think any business process can be automated,”

advising corporate bosses that half to two-thirds of all the tasks being done at their companies can be done by machines.

Conventional corporate wisdom blithely preaches that all new technologies create more jobs than they kill, but even those pollyannish preachers are now conceding that this robotic automation of white-collar jobs is being imposed so suddenly, widely, and stealthily that losses will crush any gains. “We haven’t hit the exponential point of

this stuff yet,” warns an alarmed analyst. “And when we do, it’s going to be dramatic.”

====

Populist author, public speaker, former Texas Agriculture Commissioner, and radio commentator Jim Hightower writes *The Hightower Lowdown*, a monthly newsletter chronicling the ongoing fights by America’s ordinary people against rule by plutocratic elites. Sign up at HightowerLowdown.org.

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