

The Fortnightly Rant

Will the Truth Even Matter?

Just a few days into the January 6th hearings, one thing already seems clear: the Former Guy is guilty of everything we watched him do on live television. Under the circumstances it would be incomprehensible if he were to somehow evade justice yet again.

On the other hand, this is the United States of America. What is our history if not the record of us repeatedly machine-gunning ourselves in the feet?

Hell, never mind history. Consider this single aspect of the present: Liz Cheney has become the Ranking Apostate of the Republican Party, due to her work on the House Select Committee investigating the attack on Capitol. Under the “enemy of my enemy principle,” 42 percent of Democrats have a favorable view of her, despite the fact that she has voted with Trump 93 percent of the time.

After the Big Loser lost the 2020 election, he and his Band of Boondlers did as all the self-help gurus advise, Monty Python included: they looked on the bright side. What they saw was another opportunity to fleece the rubes.

Yes, it was venal and self-serving—but give credit where it's due. They were upholding an American tradition, one meticulously documented by Rick Perlstein in the 2,484 pages of his three highly acclaimed histories.*

Fortunately for our narrative purposes, Perlstein succinctly summed it all up in an interview by Greg Sargent in Tuesday's *Washington Post*.

“This phenomenon of conservative Republican leaders seeing their constituencies as a pool of marks to squeeze money out of really does go

* *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (2001); *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (2008); and *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (2015).

back to the beginnings of the conservative takeover of the Republican Party in the 1960s,” Perlstein said.

“As is so often the case in the Republican Party under the Trumpist reign, it takes normal historical patterns of behavior and turns them up to 11.”

The violence of the Proud Boys was presaged when the Ku Klux Klan murdered three civil rights workers in Mississippi one month before Barry Goldwater's nomination. Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign began 16 years later with a speech praising “states rights” at a fairground located just seven miles from the place where the bodies of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney were hidden.

When Sargent suggests that “the big lie” is really just “the big grift,” Perlstein says it's both.

“It's partially an opportunity to raise money. It's also partially an opportunity to keep power. The important thing to understand about how grifting works in conservative culture is that the two things work together.

“It's impossible to understand where the ideological con ends and the money con begins. They work together.”

They have done so for more than 50 years. Brad Parscale, the Trump campaign's digital guru, was preceded by Richard Viguerie, the pioneer of hate-filled, scare-mongering direct mail political fundraising.

When fat-cat Republicans supported Nelson Rockefeller in 1964, Goldwater's campaign was left to go after small donations using direct mail campaigns.

They didn't succeed, but Viguerie was inspired nevertheless by the possibilities of the technique. He copied, by longhand, the names of 12,000 donors to the Goldwater campaign. Starting with that core he built his own mailing list. It grew



larger and more effective with every election. As it did, right wing candidates began to be able to fund their own campaigns, freeing themselves from the squeamishness and ideological constraints of the Republican National Committee.

Viguerie's fee structure—he seems to be still at this, at the age of 88—allows for an easy buy-in. He offers a no-loss guarantee. In exchange he takes a healthy cut of up to 50 percent. And he retains all clients' mailing lists. As with cancer and capitalism, constant growth is the goal.

Having spent their lives within a fundamentally corrupt political culture, it was only natural that all the President's goombahs went right to work shortly after his 2020 defeat. Claiming that funds were desperately needed to pursue a host of righteous legal cases—filed, apparently, in the previously unknown Court of Mass Delusion—they bombarded

the usual victims with as many as 25 pleas in a single day.

The Committee alleges that these flim-flam artists successfully shook down America's Most Gullible for a whopping quarter of a billion dollars. That's enough to buy 51,124,744 Big Macs. If Dolt #45 were to shove one down his throat every ten minutes, eating them all would take him 972 years. Of course he could never do it, but we'd love to see him try.

Out of this huge sum, a mere \$10 million has been accounted for by the Committee. A small fraction of that—a mere \$60,000—went to Don Jr.'s girlfriend, Kimberly Guilfoyle, for yelling at the mob before it stormed the Capitol. Some critics were shocked she was paid so much for a speech that lasted just 86 seconds. Perhaps she was paid by the decibel.

It's perfectly reasonable to be shocked at the amorality of this ma-

chine. As @SusanofTexas reminds us, “Rich people kill you for money.” On Monday the *Scientific American* reported that lack of universal health care has cost us 330,000 lives from Covid alone. We should not be surprised, though, at its efficiency—it's been perfecting itself for more than half a century.

We hesitate to end on a downbeat note. On the other hand we'll never break this cycle by pretending it's not real. So let's get optimistic. Note that in the last sentence of this quote from Carl Sagan, he qualifies “never” with an upbeat “almost.”

“One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we've been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We're no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It's simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we've been taken. Once you give a charlatan power over you, you almost never get it back.”

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A Flag Day That Will Live In... We're Not Quite Sure What

Scrolling through our Twitter feed on Tuesday, June 14th—our No. 1 choice of distractions while avoiding productive work—we encountered a tweet from @newtgingrich. “Did you know in 1949 National Flag Day was established by an Act of Congress?” it asked. “Find out more at <http://flagpoleoffreedom.com>.”

Unable to resist, we clicked and were astonished. In the midst of a broad vista of low, forested hills, fringed off in the distance by blue ocean waters, rose a flagpole of such gigantic proportions that, in comparison, the treetops below might as well have been some grassy green-sward—or, considering the oversized golden finial atop the pole, a golf course branded with the name of a certain former would-be despot.

This colossal preposterousness [see photo at right] will, according to its promoters, stand 1,461 feet high, and be “the tallest flagpole in the world, waving the largest American flag ever flown.... At 74,048 square feet—the equivalent area of almost 1-1/2 football fields.”

Since the chosen site is atop a hill that stands 315 feet above sea level, the maximum elevation of the whole shebang will be exactly 1,776 feet. Sadly, that patriotic feature will be gradually eroded by sea level rise, but a myriad of other features should compensate for that: The Village of Old Glory, six Halls of History...

What lucky locale will be graced by this immense symbol of America's overwhelming and unstoppable... American-ness? Columbia



Falls, Maine, pop. 476. It's just a brief four-hour trek up Route 1 from Portsmouth—on a good day.

One might wonder how such an obscure spot got picked for this high honor. Apparently for convenience, by and large. The promoters are the Worcester family, proprietors of the Worcester Wreath Company in nearby Harrison, Maine.

For a couple of decades, Worcester Wreath's primary business had been to supply seasonal greenery to L.L. Bean. That arrangement ended

in 2008, when the U.S. economy briefly stood revealed for the sham that it was.

As it happens, Worcester Wreath had been laying its unsold wreaths on veterans' graves at Arlington National Cemetery since 1992. In 2005, a Pentagon photographer happened to take a wide shot of hundreds of snow-covered graves decorated by wreaths. Appearing during the Christmas season, in the midst of the Global War on Terror, the photo brought global attention to the gesture.

That increased interest seems to have prompted the formation of a 501(c)3 non-profit called Wreaths Across America. The organization, run by members of the Worcester family, solicits donations to purchase

wreaths from Worcester Wreath which are then placed on veterans' graves across the country.

The *Portland Press Herald* reported in 2018 that Wreaths Across America's annual revenues had risen from \$227,000 in 2011 to \$14.6 million in 2017. “Wreaths Across America paid \$10.3 million—70 percent of its revenue—last year to Worcester Wreath for about 1 million circles of balsam.... In five years the company has nearly tripled its business from the nonprofit.”

The total cost of the Flagpole of Freedom Park is estimated at \$1 billion, give or take. No word on how much of that will go to greenery.

The Alleged News®

from page one

“Unknown Territory”: Antarctic Glaciers Melting at Rate Unprecedented in 5,500 Years: Study

by Julia Conley

The human-caused climate crisis is pushing crucial glaciers in Antarctica to lose ice at a rate not seen in more than 5,000 years, according to a new study published Thursday.

Researchers at the University of Maine, the British Antarctic Survey, and Imperial College London found that the Pine Island and Thwaites glaciers on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet could cause global sea level rise of up to 3.4 meters, or over 11 feet, in the next several centuries due to their accelerated rate of ice loss.

The glaciers—one of which, the Thwaites, has been called the “doomsday glacier” by climate scientists because of its potential to raise sea levels—are positioned in a way that allows increasingly warm ocean water to flow beneath them and erode the ice sheet from the base, causing “runaway ice loss,” the University of Maine team said in a statement.

The researchers examined penguin bones and seashells on ancient Antarctic beaches in order to analyze changes in local sea levels since the mid-Holocene period, 5,500 years ago.

Sea levels were higher and glaciers were smaller during the mid-Holocene, as the climate of the planet was warmer than it is today.

Since then, according to the study published in *Nature Geoscience*, relative sea levels have fallen steadily and the Thwaites and Pine Island glaciers have stayed relatively stable—until recent decades.

Ice loss was likely accelerated just prior to the mid-Holocene, and since then, the rate of relative decrease in sea levels over the past 5,500 years was almost five times smaller than it is in present day, due to “recent rapid ice mass loss,” according to the scientists.

“That the present-day rate of glacier retreat has doubled over the past 30 years is, indeed, unprecedented,” wrote Caroline Brogan, a science reporter at Imperial College.

With the Thwaites spanning an area of more than 74,000 square miles and the Pine Island glacier



spanning more than 62,600 square miles, the rapid ice loss of the two glaciers could cause major rises in sea levels around the globe.

Dylan Rood of Imperial College’s Department of Earth Science and Engineering, a co-author of the study, likened the two glaciers to arteries that have burst.

“These currently elevated rates of ice melting may signal that those vital arteries in the heart of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet have been ruptured, leading to accelerating flow into the ocean that is potentially disastrous for future global sea level in a warming world,” said Rood. “Is it too late to stop the bleeding?”

The study follows increasingly urgent calls from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Energy Agency, and climate scientists around the world for an end to fossil fuel extraction, which is needed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and limit the average global temperature from rising more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Scientists have warned that the

accelerated melting of the Thwaites glacier is likely irreversible.

“We’re going into unknown territory,” Scott Braddock, a researcher at University of Maine, told *Science News*. “We don’t have an analog to compare what’s going on today with what happened in the past.”

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“Deny, Deceive, Delay”: How “Evolving” Disinformation Tactics Stymie Climate Action

by Jessica Corbett

Leading up to the next global climate summit in November, a report released last Thursday uses climate mis- and disinformation related to last year’s conference to spotlight emerging strategies that impede action and to offer Big Tech and government clear solutions.

“Far from helping to mitigate this issue, tech platform systems appear to be amplifying or exacerbating the spread of such content.”

The report—entitled “Deny, Deceive, Delay: Documenting and Responding to Climate Disinformation at COP26 and Beyond”—was published by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and the coalition Climate Action Against Disinformation (CAAD).

ISD and CAAD point out that institutions worldwide recognize misinformation as a barrier to action, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) did in a February report underscoring the need for governments—particularly those of rich nations—to improve their responses to the planetary emergency.

“Rhetoric and misinformation on climate change and the deliberate undermining of science have contributed to misperceptions of the scientific consensus, uncertainty, disregarded risk and urgency, and dissent,” the IPCC report states. “Additionally, strong party affiliation and partisan opinion polarization contribute to delayed mitigation and adaptation action, most notably in the U.S.... but with similar patterns



Tens of thousands of visitors strolled through the streets of Portsmouth on Saturday, June 11th, as Market Square Day resumed its traditional place in the city’s annual roster of events. According to our Wandering Photographer, the percentage of them wearing masks was statistically insignificant. Based on the official seven-day average, approximately 277 residents across New Hampshire contracted Covid that same day.

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Sometimes Old is Good

The Fechheimer Building, one of the finest examples of a cast-iron facade in Portland, Oregon, was built in 1885. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it was restored in 1981 by Russell Fellows Properties, the principals of which enjoy a subscription to this newspaper.

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As the new publication’s executive summary explains, “Drawing on research compiled over the past 18 months, and especially in the margins and aftermath of COP 26, we have clear evidence of the challenge at hand: The failure to stem mis- and disinformation online has allowed junk science, climate delayism, and attacks on climate figures to become mainstreamed.”

“Our analysis has shown how a small but dedicated community of actors boast disproportionate reach and engagement across social media, reaching millions of people worldwide and bolstered by legacy print, broadcast, and radio outlets,” the report continues. Such actors include right-wing figures Dinesh D’Souza and Sebastian Gorka, self-described “Greenpeace dropout” Patrick Moore, University of Toronto professor Jordan Peterson, the Canadian group Friends of Science, and the media company PragerU.

“Far from helping to mitigate this issue, tech platform systems appear to be amplifying or exacerbating the spread of such content,” the document adds. “Moreover, the taxonomy of harm relating to climate mis- and disinformation has been

poorly defined to date, providing an inadequate basis for response.”

Jennie King, head of climate disinformation at ISD, said in a statement Thursday that “our analysis has shown that climate disinformation has become more complex, evolving from outright denial into identifiable ‘discourses of delay’ to exploit the gap between buy-in and action.”

The report warns that “even with broad consensus on the issue of climate, there is a long road ahead to achieving meaningful policy change in line with IPCC warnings and the goals of the Paris agreement,” and those opposed to bold moves scientists say are necessary—such as phasing out fossil fuels—focus on that gap to “maintain the status quo.”

As the document details:

“Arguments framed as ‘pro-green’ can still advocate for inertia or in-activism, often using the veneer of fiscal pragmatism, free market logic, and concerns about individual liberty. In this way, environmentalism has followed policy issues like migration and public health as a new front in the culture wars, becoming ever-more enmeshed in broader identity and grievance politics. Whether through conspiracies like ‘climate lockdown,’ or by conflating climate



with divisive issues like critical race theory, LGBTQ+ rights, and abortion access, the goal of much climate change mis- and/or disinformation is now to distract and delay. Yet, with the window to act deemed ‘brief and rapidly closing,’ such an approach may prove fatal.”

Social media monitoring by CAAD during and after COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland revealed four key discourses of delay—hypocrisy and elitism, absolutism, unreliability of renewables, and ineffective electric vehicles—though the report acknowledges that “such narratives are not always clear-cut and in some cases overlap.”

King said that “governments and social media platforms must learn the new strategies at play and understand that disinformation in the climate realm has increasing cross-over with other harms, including electoral integrity, public health, hate speech, and conspiracy theories.”

“We’ve proposed seven concrete measures they can take to thwart the prominence and impact of this content, in order to build public

mandates based on credible science and good-faith debate,” she noted.

Those seven “policy asks” are:

- Implement a unified definition of climate mis- and disinformation within key institutions (e.g. IPCC, UNFCCC) and reflect these criteria in tech company community standards or terms of service;
- Enforce platform policies against “repeat offender” accounts;
- Limit media exemption loopholes within legislation;
- Improve transparency on climate disinformation trends and the role played by algorithmic amplification;
- Strengthen platform labeling on “missing context” and the re-posting of old or recycled content;
- Restrict paid advertising and sponsored content from fossil fuel companies, known front groups, and/or actors repeatedly found to spread disinformation around climate; and
- Enable API image-based searches to support research on viral disinformation.

“While climate misinformation

continues to evolve and undermine the work of well-meaning companies, NGOs, and government bodies, those same institutions are often fighting against it like we are still in the 1990s,” declared Stop Funding Heat campaign manager Sean Buchan. “We need to catch up fast. We hope this report will help kickstart a step change in how we come together and fight this incredibly dangerous problem.”

Michael Khoo, co-chair of the Climate Disinformation Coalition at Friends of the Earth U.S., emphasized that “governments must require social media companies to be transparent and accountable about the harms their products create, as they do with every other industry from airlines to cars to food processing.”

As Khoo put it: “We should not continue this endless game of climate denial whack-a-mole.”

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The compelling sound of bagpipes floated through downtown last Saturday, courtesy of this dapper, kilt-clad gentleman. Traffic was still blocked off for Market Square Day, so the sound of the highlands was not disturbed by the mechanical flatulence of Harley Davidsons.

Murph’s Fortnightly Quote
“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”
 – Vaclav Havel (1936-2011)
 dissident, poet, playwright, president

“Hitler resurrected a beaten, bankrupt, half-starved nation with hatred and nothing more. Imagine that.”
 – Kurt Vonnegut
 john@wordpraxis.com

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What Does the 2nd Amendment Really Mean?

Dear Editor:

The 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The phrases within this single sentence are connected, and together they form a single concept or meaning. The words "a well regulated militia" are directly connected to the words about the right to keep and bear arms not being infringed. They are not two separate concepts or ideas.

At the time of the writing of this Amendment, the United States had no standing army to defend against any foreign aggression, or even attacks by Native Americans. In the place of a standing army were the State Militias, often referred to as the Minutemen, since they would be ready to defend their community on a minute's notice. In order to be ready to respond quickly, these militia men needed to have readily available weapons. Thus the right to keep and bear arms was a necessary part of national security at the time.

Fast forward 235 years. We now have a huge standing active and reserve military to defend our nation against foreign aggression, and multiple layers of law enforcement departments at all levels of government to protect the population and enforce the laws. Quite a different situation from when the framers wrote the 2nd Amendment. However, even as the 2nd Amendment currently reads, and keeping in mind the times when it was written, there are reasonable and constitutionally based laws that can be passed to help curb the epidemic of gun violence in America.

Why can't we pass a law requiring anyone purchasing a gun to certify and identify that they are members of a legal, well regulated militia? If they are not part of any such well regulated militia, then, according to the 2nd Amendment, their right to keep and bear arms can be infringed.

The word infringed does not mean to prohibit, but to place some limits on the right to keep and bear arms.

This would not mean individuals not part of a well regulated militia could not purchase arms, but it would allow constitutional limits on things like the type of gun a person could purchase and what size magazine it could hold. Potential requirements could include licencing, training, a background check, and a short waiting period before the purchase was finalized. Only those who can certify and identify legal membership in a legal well regulated militia would be free from any infringement on their right to keep and bear arms.

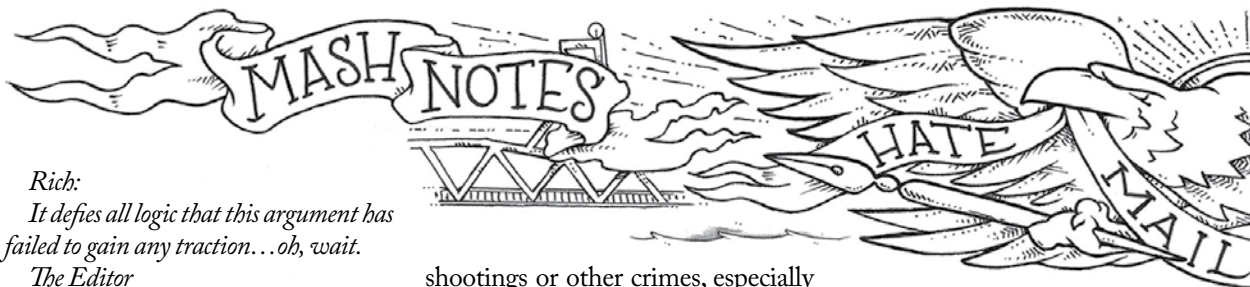
This was the intent of the 2nd Amendment's when it was written. In the day of the framers, to "bear arms" meant to be part of a well regulated militia.

This approach is supported by a decision of the Tennessee Supreme Court in 1840. The court wrote, "A man in pursuit of deer, elk and buffaloes might carry his rifle every day for forty years, and yet it would never be said of him that he had borne arms; much less could it be said that a private citizen bears arms because he has a dirk or pistol concealed under his clothes, or a spear in a cane." As such, the 2nd Amendment did not apply to these "private citizens" and their right to keep and bear arms could be legally infringed upon, since they were not part of a well regulated militia.

If you believe in Constitutional originality, and what the intent of the framers was, in a time without any standing army, the right to keep and bear arms without any infringement belonged only to those who were part of a well regulated militia. In those days, that was necessary to protect, preserve and defend a weak young nation in its infancy.

Gun safety regulation is not a zero sum game. It is not all or nothing. People can still enjoy guns for sport, collection and even self defense. But that does not mean that there should not be any limits on gun ownership, as a part of the safety and security of our communities. All rights come with responsibility and limits.

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



Rich:
It defies all logic that this argument has failed to gain any traction...oh, wait.
The Editor

The Don of Meredith Pontificates Again

To the Editor:
I'm tired of millions of law-abiding citizens with no relationship to school shooters or responsibility for protecting schools being blamed rather than the shooters themselves and those people with the authority, ability, and responsibility to stop these criminals.

Almost all school shooters have long records of mental illness, violence, and threats that are known to parents, public officials, school officials, mental health professionals, and law enforcement. Why don't they do their jobs to protect society?

If our thousands of laws don't provide the authority to keep known dangerous people from legally getting guns, why haven't politicians provided it?

It seems politicians won't do anything to protect children unless the solution advances their political objective of disarming law-abiding Americans.

After decades of horrible examples, every parent, teacher, health professional, and public official should recognize their responsibility and authority to help troubled children and protect others from them.

Politicians' workplaces are protected, why not our schools? Why haven't the lessons from previous school shootings been implemented everywhere? Don't officials care? Why isn't the excess Covid money spent on protecting schools?

As President Obama indicated, fatherlessness causes many of our children's problems. Our laws must stop encouraging fatherless families and encourage fathers to be positive role models for their children.

Taking guns from millions of law-abiding citizens won't stop school

shootings or other crimes, especially when violent criminals aren't prosecuted, given light sentences, or released early to resume preying on innocent people.

The solution to school shootings is to deal seriously with troubled and/or violent people, keep fathers with their children, and protect our schools.

Don Ewing
Meredith, N.H.

Don:
You write as if this country had a functioning system for treating mental illness. Are you crazy?

Someone in Congress could propose one, of course—but why bother? Mitch McConnell would never let it come up for a vote—any more than he would a bill that provided, as you put it, "the authority to keep known dangerous people from legally getting guns."

The Editor

Scanlan Gaslights New Hampshire Voters

To the Editor:

Statistically there is no voter fraud in New Hampshire or in America.

Secretary of State Scanlan's bogus special committee on voter confidence is gaslighting Granite Staters. The Secretary of State's Special Committee on Voter Confidence is giving a platform and legitimacy to those that say voter fraud exists. I have 100 percent confidence in the integrity of our voting system.

I attended the Committee's meeting in Derry the other week. I would have testified, however so many elected Election officials showed up to testify against the false narrative that our elections can't be trusted, that I had to leave. Numerous elected officials testified that there are no issues with the current voting system and definitely no fraud. They all stated voter apathy was the largest issue and most suggested the need for education on the

current system.

If Secretary Scanlon had the interest of the people of New Hampshire at heart, or any conscience about performing his duties, he'd have been loudly proclaiming that our current system was safe, functioning, that there was no fraud, and that we should all have confidence in the current system. Instead, Scanlon is creating confusion and misinforming Granite Staters, implying we need a Committee to look into something that doesn't really exist. I can only assume the intent of this deception is to pass restrictive partisan laws that will disenfranchise poor and working people in New Hampshire and make it harder for them to vote.

David Holt
Somersworth, N.H.

David:
You paint a dismal picture. Sadly, it seems to be 100 percent accurate.

The Editor

An Imperious Reader Deigns to Lecture Us

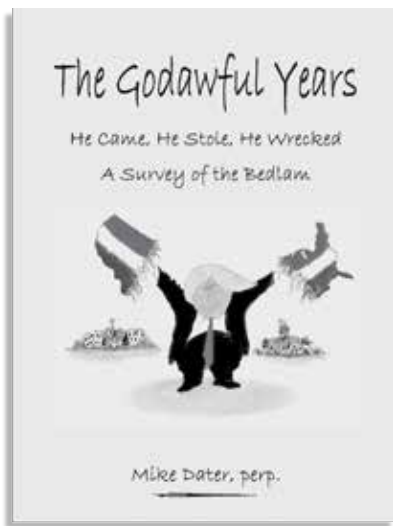
To the Editor:

Greetings. After you do the reading I will suggest I suspect you may change your tune regarding the second of the "twin pandemics" and the "array of beliefs" you characterize as "toxic." [Mr. Robinson refers to our Rant entitled, "Culture War Memorial Day," in our paper of June 17th. — The Ed.]

I direct you to the following pages: phmpt.org; which reveals the true nature of the FDA/CDC/HHS cabal (Does the list of signatories on this site look "fringe" to you?). The fact that FDA was duplicitous is revealing isn't it?, and to goodjobsfirst.org in which you will find their "violation tracker," where you can click on the parent companies of any of our gracious providers of "vaccines" and you will find a splendid selection of nasty dirt. J&J,

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Being of the old school, among those who believe that a gentlemen never gives offense unintentionally, we must ask: When you presumed that we would “do the reading” you prescribed, and subsequently “change our tune,” did you intend to give offense, or was that effect merely accidental?

You did inspire us to Google the names of a few of the 600 or so signatories at phmpt.org. We could find no evidence of any Dugler Horwitz, MD. We also have doubts about the existence of a Dr. Hu Mungous, PhD. Somewhat to our surprise, Dr. Festus Krebs III does seem to be real—and a proponent of hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin, to boot.

Stella Immanuel, MD, is also real, and also a proponent of hydroxychloroquine as a treatment for Covid. She also claims that Joe Biden, Bill Gates, and Nancy Pelosi are all dead, and that we are being deceived by their evil clones.

As for goodjobsfirst.org, frankly we’re shocked that you seem to be shocked to learn that a list of corporations which have misbehaved should include the names of pharmaceutical companies involved in the vaccine business. If you want to astonish us, show us a pharmaceutical company that is innocent of wrongdoing. Where else can we turn, though, for a Covid vaccine?

Finally, you ask if we have written about “the trampling of liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights?, freedoms of association, assembly, movement?” Granted, we usually write about these things in the context of systemic felonious Republican criminality. We have limited space and resources, though. You can hardly expect us to scurry around tallying up Democratic parking tickets.

The Editor

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This Is A Mass Disabling Event

To the Editor:

The pandemic is far from over, and in fact we are in what is arguably the

worst point of the pandemic yet. We are in the midst of a silent surge that is not being reported or addressed due to cuts to funding for tests, treatments, research, and surveillance. The U.S. reported 219,267 confirmed cases yesterday. Conservative estimates of the true number suggests that it was actually over 1,000,000.

The repeated mass infection of the population will undoubtedly lead to more preventable deaths and disability. The Biden administration has warned that the U.S. could see another 100 million infections by the end of the year. The CDC has also said that one in five adult Covid survivors have developed Long Covid, a term describing the postviral complications of Covid. It includes conditions such as lymphopenia, dysautonomia, myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome, diabetes, and cortical gray matter loss.

This is a mass disabling event and constitutes a serious threat to the long-term health and economic wellbeing of the country.

The unmitigated spread of a biosafety level 3 virus known to cause blood clots, strokes, heart attacks, cognitive impairment, immunodeficiency, and autoimmunity should not be tolerated. The idea that the virus will become milder over time is a misunderstanding of pathogen evolution and ignores the characteristics of Omicron and its subvariants. Furthermore, vaccination and infection have not produced durable immunity in the population. That is why I am urging Granite Staters to mandate universal masking (N95/ equivalent or better), use HEPA filters and Corsi-Rosenthal boxes in shared spaces, and stay home if symptomatic. Until we have sterilizing vaccines, nonpharmaceutical interventions can still reduce transmission.

It is often said that Covid precautions are a personal choice, but the pandemic has proven that they are a social one. We must protect each other

to protect ourselves.

Creighton Ward
Exeter, N.H.

Creighton:

Thank you for this concise presentation of a dire reality which far too many people seem bent on trying to wish away. If there’s one thing this country does not need, it’s the loss of more cortical gray matter.

The Editor

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GOP Values Chickens Over Children

Dear Sir:

If you really want to understand just how out of touch, insensitive and desperate Republicans have become regarding gun safety legislation discussions, just listen to some of their comments defending the continued sales of guns like the AR-15 to the general public. First, Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.) defended not banning the AR-15 based on the events of 9/11 stating, “airplanes were used that day, as a weapon to kill thousands of people and to inflict terror on our country. There wasn’t a discussion about banning airplanes.” Or there was this from Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.): the continued sale of the AR-15 is essential because, “vermin like prairie dogs and raccoon are the main targets for people owning AR-15 style semi automatic rifles.” Ken Buck (R-Colo.) went on to say that, AR-15s were needed to stop raccoons “before they get to our chickens.”

In light of the ongoing slaughter of children and teachers, like those from Newtown, Connecticut or Uvalde, Texas, and the random slaughter of people visiting grocery stores, churches, synagogues, movie theaters, night clubs, colleges &c., it is impossible for me to determine which of the above comments from Republican lawmakers defending the continued sale of AR-15 style weapons is the most disgusting, insensensitive, ridiculous and outright pathetic. How do you even try to compare killing prairie dogs and raccoons with an AR-15 in the same discussion involving the slaughter of babies in school? How distorted can one man’s mind be to even think of such lunacy? Imagine a

parent of a child killed in one of those school massacres hearing or reading such comments? Have these people no compassion, no human feelings and no sense of decency?

If the arguments defending the continued sale of the AR-15 and weapons like them as presented by Scalise, Buck and Thune are the grounds for its continued sale to the public, then there is no doubt that they should be banned again, as they were in 1994. Their arguments are not even worthy of consideration. The 2nd Amendment was not put in place to protect people and chickens from prairie dogs and raccoons. And, in case Rep. Scalise missed some little details about planes, you need specific training and a licence to fly a plane that is registered and inspected. We also did not ban fertilizer after the Oklahoma City bombing.

The ongoing debate regarding gun safety legislation in Congress has become a tragic comedy. Republicans completely refuse to consider any meaningful legislation that could actually have some impact on reducing the violence. In the end, some pathetic do-nothing legislation will pass so as to give members of Congress another temporary time-out with the voters, while the carnage continues. And then, after the next slaughters, we will keep repeating the same exercise in futility *ad nauseam*. All this while the world watches and shake its head in disbelief.

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

Rich:

What other evidence do you have that Republicans value chickens over children...besides all their other policies, of course?

The Editor

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Let’s Get Sensible

To the Editor:

It’s time to enact sensible firearms regulation in New Hampshire. Call it “gun control” if you want; I think of it as “gun violence reduction.”

Let’s steer away from rhetoric like

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.

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What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?



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Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.
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“Democrats want to take away your guns” or “Republicans care more about the Second Amendment than second graders.” And let’s get something done to protect the lives of Granite Staters in schools, churches, shopping malls and other public venues. Let’s enact practical legislation that prevents the next gun massacre from being here in our state.

Other states have legislation that protects the rights of gun owners while reducing gun violence. In Hawaii, rifles and handguns must be registered. Background checks are required. Individuals with drug or violence convictions and those with restraining orders against them are prohibited from buying or owning guns. Gun deaths per capita there are 25 percent below the national average.

But here in New Hampshire? Is a permit required to purchase a rifle or handgun? No. Is registration required? No. Is the sale of assault rifles or semiautomatic handguns prohibited? No. Is there a limit on magazine cartridge capacity? No. Are gun owners required to have a license? No. Is gun safety education required of new gun owners? No. Are background checks required? No. Is there a “red flag” law that prevents convicted felons from purchasing firearms? No. Are handguns prohibited from school grounds? No.

What we do have is a law that says state legislation pre-empts local legislation. We cannot, on a local level, enact regulations to protect our children and ourselves. It’s up to our state officials. It’s time for them to do something to prevent gun violence in our beloved state. It’s well past time to go beyond “thoughts and prayers” and take action. Now! Before we too make national headlines. Please!

David Wessel
New Durham, N.H.

David:
If logic and democracy ruled in

this country—or state—this problem would have been solved long ago.

It’s a matter of numbers and power. Right now we have minority rule. The big question is how to flip that equation on its head.

This next letter provides one answer.
The Editor

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Democracy From the Ground Up
To the Editor:

Well, this is a fine mess that We the People have gotten ourselves into! Our democracy is divided and dysfunctional, Mother Nature is in a global warming, chemical contaminated decline, we can’t make heads or tails out of this pandemic with vaccines that may or may not work, wars for oil and Wall Street greed ongoing, inflation for Wall Street greed too, and a corporate owned mass media that will not tell us the truth.

So what do we do? The N.H. Community Rights Network is working to get people organized on the local level so we can get back in control of our government! True democracy does not trickle down on us from Washington D.C., or even from Concord N.H.; democracy originates from the people and grows from our towns up, because that’s where We the People live and can be empowered to act.

What we are missing is the silent majority, most of whom cannot name their elected representatives and have no idea what those elected are doing. Many people have escaped to entertainment, sports, and leisure time and have abandoned their responsibility to be involved, and that’s the biggest problem our Nation faces!

If you want to be part of the solution, go to www.nhcommunityrights.org and get a group of active citizens going in your town that can protect your ecosystem and unite people to work together! There is no time to waste and every person counts!

Peter A. White, Treasurer, N.H. Community Rights Network
Nottingham, N.H.

Peter:
We’re always happy to hear from an organization which represents not just the opposite, but the antidote to top-down astroturf corporate apologists like Americans for Prosperity.
The Editor

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Childrens’ Game Ineptly Hijacked
To the Editor:

If you’re over 50 you may remember a childhood game called “Simon Says.” Simon was an imaginary King who couldn’t make up his mind about anything. He would say one thing and then say the exact opposite or something totally contrary to what he just said.

Here we are 50 years later and we’re still playing “Simon Says” in the political theater of the absurd. Here are some examples.

Simon says, “The World is getting colder.” Simon says, “No! The World is getting warmer.”

Simon says, “People cause global warming.” Simon says, “No! Cows cause global warming.”

Simon says, “Global warming causes forest fires.” Simon says, “Only cows can prevent forest fires.”

Simon says, “You must believe in science.” Simon says, “Now fire all the scientists that disagree with me.”

Simon says, “Separation of Church and State.” Simon says, “Now do as I say because God talks to me.”

Simon says, “God wants us to be compassionate and open our borders to oppressed people.” Simon says, “Now ship all the Cubans back because they know communism doesn’t work.”

Simon says, “Fly an airplane into a building, then go to heaven and get 70 virgins.” Simon says, “Too bad! Your 70 virgins come with padlocked cast-iron chastity belts.”

Simon says, “Only a fool could think the election was stolen.” Simon says, “Now spend 2 years trying to prove the election was stolen from Hillary Clinton.”

Simon says, “Only a fool could think 120,000 DEAD people voted in Wisconsin.” Simon says, “I DO, I DO BELIEVE IN SPOOKS!”

Simon says, “Antifa is just an idea.” Simon says, “So when they burned down neighborhoods in Seattle, it was all in your imagination.”

Simon says, “Book banning is the work of right-wing kooks.” Simon says, “Now ban the Dr. Seuss books because the Little Elfkings are white supremacists!!!”

Simon says, “Restrictive gun laws help fight terrorism.” Simon says, “Now leave behind 80 billion dollars worth of guns, tanks, and bazookas for the terrorists.”

Simon says, “The First Amendment is necessary for a free society.” “WAIT A MINUTE! Get rid of the First Amendment before someone exposes my corruption!”

Whoops! I forgot to say “Simon says”!

Francis Cormier
Portsmouth N.H.

Francis:

We remember the game “Simon Says.” It appears that you do not.

None of this fatuous gibberish bears any resemblance to the game as we once played it—back in the day when ordinary working people were able to make a living in this country.

Granted, Tail-Gunner Joe McCarthy was riding a wave of anti-Communist hysteria, and the Defense Department was engaged in an arms race that threatened to wipe out humanity in defense of capitalism, if corporate pollution didn’t kill us first.... Yeah, now that we think of it, this country has been kind of nuts going back as far as we can remember.

To go back to your letter, you appear to have discarded the original game entirely, while conjuring up an imag-

inary King as an excuse to hang onto the name. And why? Apparently just to create a bogus context for some equally bogus right wing talking points.

It’s as if you’d been borrowing talking points from Major Mike [see below].

The Editor

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Major Mike Strikes Again!

To the Editor:

[Disclaimer: We cannot vouch for the veracity of any of this. In fact, we suspect it’s safest to assume that nothing herein is accurate or true. We publish it to provide documentary evidence of what’s going on in the mind of a person who purports to be a retired field-grade officer of the United States Marine Corps. — The Ed.]

Dear Congressional Leaders from New Hampshire,

Do you know how many Americans have been tried and convicted of INSURRECTION for the January 6, 2021 protest?

I do, ZERO. Why is that?

That’s because there was no “insurrection.” That narrative was made up by political hacks, and force fed to us by a complicit, dishonest and corrupt media. This “story” was also helped along by the department of injustice and their federal bureau of insurrectionists, who helped “stage” the scene.

Do you know how many people were murdered that day?

I do, ONE. Why are your peers lying about that?

One unarmed female Veteran was executed by an incompetent capitol police officer that day. Nobody was killed by the crowd, that’s a flat out lie, and everyone knows it.

In case you didn’t know, the victim was Ashli Babbitt. You and your peers don’t seem to care much about her murder, why is that?

Do you know how many National Guardsmen defended the capitol that day?

I do, ZERO. Why is that?

That’s because Nancy Pelosi refused them. She did however allow

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The Way Things Are

by W.D. Ehrhart

Back in the May 20th issue of the *Gazette*, readers may remember an essay of mine called “Woe Is Me!” I began by cataloguing a litany of disasters and lunacies that leave me feeling hopeless about the future of this country and the planet. But then I spent a wonderful day with some friends of mine reminding me that there are indeed still many good things in this world, and lots to be grateful for.

Which is certainly true. The world is full of sad stories, but none of them are mine. And for some people, life is better now than it ever has been. One example: just yesterday, I marched with my Veterans for Peace chapter in the Philadelphia Gay Pride Parade. And while homophobia still exists, gay people are mostly no longer treated as criminals or mental patients.

But just four days after my essay ran in the *Gazette*, an 18-year-old murdered 19 elementary school children and two teachers, and wounded 17 others, with a military-style assault rifle while heavily

armed police stood around with their thumbs up their asses for an hour and a half as the slaughter went on within feet of them. So much for good guys with guns.

And the response to this latest madness is as predictable as the tides. Politicians and pundits who think the 2nd Amendment was chiseled in stone by God’s hand will argue that it’s not a “gun problem,” but only a mental health problem (while slashing funding for public health programs), and the solution is to arm teachers.

Politicians and pundits who advocate more stringent gun controls will once again call for banning assault rifles and instituting universal background checks, limiting the capacity of magazines, and other half-assed measures.

Everyone will fly flags at half-mast for a few days, and offer up prayers for the souls of the dead and pleas for divine intervention. And then the discussion will fade away again until the next massacre. And nothing will change. Absolutely nothing.

How the hell am I supposed to

console myself—or anyone else—by pointing out that there is still a lot of good in the world; that flowers are still beautiful; that I have not (yet) been a victim of the rampant gun violence in this country; that regardless of the Supreme Court or state laws, I will never need an abortion; that my child is far beyond school age, so why should I care about school boards that believe Critical Race Theory isn’t just history, period, but rather some colossal lie cooked up by trolls who hate America; that I will be long dead before the full impact of global warming kicks in?

Honestly, I don’t know what to do or where to turn or how to move forward. Maybe this is just what happens to old men who know they are nearing the end of their lives. You look back and you realize that nothing much has really changed since you were a young man, that human nature is what it is, and there is really not much difference between the lunacy of the Spanish Inquisition and the lunacy of the National Rifle Association, and you are only a little man in a very big universe with very little power to influence anything,

and you can either accept that or not, but you can’t change it.

Well, I’m trying to accept it. I’m trying to stuff my ego into the tiny box where it belongs, to remember that I am not nearly as important as I’ve spent my life believing, to embrace the reality that I can only take care of my side of the street, that my only real option is to choose to do “the next right thing,” however small or insignificant that might be, and to keep trying to do the next right thing for as long as I have the power to make the choice.

A few years ago, a friend of mine posted lines from a Leonard Cohen song, “The wilderness is gathering all its children back again,” something like that, and challenged his poet-friends to turn it into a poem. I came up with this:

What It Is Worth for Doug Rawlings

A team of misfits, yes, I guess that pretty well describes us, thinking we could find a home, build a world that we could live in, one that everyone could live in

peacefully. How we doing so far? Not so good? As you say, ‘Ah, well.’ Cuchulain couldn’t defeat the sea, but that didn’t stop him from trying. The wilderness may well be calling her children back; I wouldn’t know about that. I only know we’ve done what we can; we can look at ourselves in the mirror and not be ashamed. Maybe a little foolish for being naïve enough to think we could make a difference, even after all these years of failing to register even a blip on this lunatic world. But I’d rather live with that than live with knowing I did nothing to try to fix the mess we’re all of us in.

— From *Wolves in Winter*, Between Shadows Press, 2021.

Some days I find myself believing the effort has been worth it, even in failure. Some days, I feel very foolish indeed.

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 Haverford School for Boys.

How Can Democrats Save the Party... From Their Own Leaders?

by Jim Hightower

“It’s over.” “Biden’s numbers are in the ditch.” “Democrats are doomed.” “Call the priest.”

These are Democrats talking! Even before November’s congressional elections are run, many conventional-thinking Democratic operatives are surrendering to a presumed Republican sweep. You don’t need a political science degree to know that if you start out announc-

ing that you’ll lose, chances are you will—after all, who wants to vote for a party that shows no fighting spirit, no confidence in the appeal of its own ideas?

What’s happening here is that the Party’s top leaders have decided their candidates can’t win in rural areas and smaller factory cities—so they’ve quit trying. Worse, they blame the voters, claiming that Trumpism, Fox News BS, and culture war nonsense have poisoned the

minds of people “out there.” Thus, Party leaders have retreated from the countryside to focus entirely on big urban areas. Democratic Congressional leaders even killed their rural outreach programs, and the Party’s chairman in 2018 meekly declared: “You can’t door-knock in rural America.”

Actually, sir, you can. And if you choose to abandon this whole working-class constituency—surprise!—it will abandon you. Worse, than

failing to campaign along America’s dirt roads and factory streets, national Democrats have actively been pushing corporate policies that have ravaged families living there—including trade scams that suck out union jobs; shamefully bailing out Wall Street bankers who crashed our real economy (while ignoring millions of devastated workaday people); and doing nothing about the corporate-caused farm depression still ripping across our land.

Washington Democrats have largely betrayed this vital, FDRish constituency of millions that they now blithely dismiss as irredeemable.

Did Party poohbahs think voters wouldn’t notice or care how they’re being treated? If we want them back on our side, then let’s go to them... and get back on their side!

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the capitol police, abetted by government agitators, to open the capitol doors and let the protestors in.

Do you know why only selective video footage from that day has been released?

I do, because they’re hiding the truth. Transparency and light are a

disinfectant for scum, and must be avoided by them at all cost.

The corrupt committee “investigating January 6th” will not ask any of these questions during their sham presentation, why is that?

Maybe because the answers would indict them. So instead of seeking the truth, they’ve chosen to “take the 5th.”

Maybe this committee should be

looking for traitors, instead of insurrectionists, I think they’d have more convictions that way.

Michael Petruzzello
Major, USMC (Ret)
Wolfeboro, N.H.
Major Mike:

We don’t know what’s scarier: the thought of you commanding Marines, or serving in some staff position.
The Editor

“Today, you people are no longer pukes. Today, you are Marines. You’re part of a brotherhood. From now, until the day you die, wherever you go, every Marine is your brother. And always remember this: Marines die, that’s what we’re here for. But the Marine Corps lives forever, and that means you live forever.”

— Gunnery Sergeant Hartman,

“Full Metal Jacket” (1987), by Stanley Kubrick, Michael Herr, and Gustav Hasford, Warner Bros.

“They [the U.S. Marines] have a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin’s.”

— President Harry S. Truman, letter to Rep. Gordon L. McDonough [R-Calif.], August 29, 1950

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